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THE ARCHIPELAGO AND THE ARCHIVE:  
TRANSNATIONAL ARCHIVAL MODES AND MEDIUMS  
IN CARIBBEAN LITERATURES AND STATES

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the

Graduate School-New Brunswick

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Graduate Program in Comparative Literature

Written under the direction of

Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel

And approved by

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New Brunswick, New Jersey

May 2019

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

The Archipelago and the Archive:

Transnational Archival Modes and Mediums in Caribbean Literature and States

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While the archival turn in the Humanities has, by and large, focused on metaphysical conceptualizations of archives, the field of Archival Science privileges the study of the physical characteristics and material importance of our modern archival records and repositories. Both assume the nation-state and continental frameworks as their units of analysis. My dissertation, drawing on (Spanish, Anglophone, and Francophone) Caribbean literature, history, and politics, thus attends to ways that Afro-Caribbean and Caribbean diasporic narratives representing (trans)national archival practices illustrate archipelagic and decolonial conceptions of archiving and diasporic belonging; which I find capable of bridging the material/metaphysical, national/transnational, together with insular/continental interruptions that characterize modern archival theory and practice in the Humanities and beyond. Drawing on an assemblage of literary, historical, legal, visual, and scientific texts, including the *crónicas* of conquest from the early colonial period in the Americas, the drama of William Shakespeare and Simone Schwarz-Bart, fiction by Andrew Holleran, Tiphany Yanique, and Junot Díaz, nonfiction by Jamaica Kincaid, and archival video footage of the U.S. National Archives Building, I formulate a theory of the colonality of modern archival power; showing how the legacies of the global history of

European colonization—starting with(in) the Caribbean archipelago—continue to shape our archival imaginaries, records, and repositories today in the era of postcoloniality. In all, the broader intellectual contributions of the project are twofold. *The Archipelago and the Archive* demonstrates the value of Comparative Literature to the field of Island Studies, the latter of which has, until more recently, overlooked the methodological contributions of literary analysis in favor of quantitative and qualitative Social Science research methods. Second, the dissertation foregrounds the role that archipelagic and decolonial frameworks of analysis play in efforts to understand the respective histories of Western modernity, the modern nation-state, and the modern (national) archive and how the three, together, consolidate in the crossing of archival power and the coloniality of power.

Engaging with the archipelagic staging of modernity's war paradigm in William Shakespeare's final play *The Tempest* (1611), chapter one asserts that the transnational history of nineteenth and twentieth-century U.S. imperialism abroad in the Caribbean contributes to the domestic history of the U.S. National Archive building in Washington, D.C. established in 1934. Shifting from chapter one's consideration of the physical space of the modern (national) archive, chapter two turns, instead, to an analysis of the coloniality of archival power through a close reading of the archival imaginary in Andrew Holleran's debut novel *Dancer from the Dance* (1978). I argue that the canonical *Dancer* articulates a literary archive of gay 1970s NYC evidencing the insular sites and sights of the novel's white middle-class gay male characters exclusively; and by doing so, contributes to a queer/ing of coloniality and the Wynterian category of Man, one and the other together. The third chapter integrates the study of coloniality, archival institutions, and archival imaginaries together to address the role that non-human actors or agents too play in the

production of history. Through a close reading of Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* (1988) and Tiphonie Yanique's "The Bridge Stories," I conceptualize the mold that jeopardizes the material integrity of historical records preserved in the tropical archives of the Caribbean today as a heuristic for explaining the imperiled conditions of many of the Caribbean's colonial archive in the era of postcoloniality. Now equipped with a view from the "underside" of the Modern/Colonial/Capitalist World-system, the fourth and final chapter of the dissertation returns to the question of the (national) domestic archive broached in chapter one. I perform a comparative analysis of Simone Schwartz-Bart's only play *Your Handsome Captain* (1987) and Junot Díaz's first novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007), focusing specifically on the respective representations of the domestic archives of the working-class communities of the Afro-Caribbean diaspora. The final chapter argues that in these literary representations of the domestic archives we find an alternative vision of the modern archive: one realized between and beyond, rather than exclusively within, national and continental frameworks.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to begin by acknowledging and giving thanks to the ancestors, for with them we are all things and without them nothing. To my parents, Rosa and Jesús, my sisters, Tanya and Carolina, my maternal grandmother, Juana Antonia, and the untold number of aunts, uncles, and cousins who, in many ways, have inspired this project: know that I could not have arrived at the culmination of my formal education without your love and support. Thank you for believing and investing in me. *¡Se los agradezco mucho!*

I am also especially grateful for the intellectual guidance, mentorship, and care that each of my Dissertation Committee Members, Drs. Nelson Maldonado-Torres, Michelle Ann Stephens, and Ben Sifuentes-Jáuregui, has given me. I thank each of you for modeling what it truly means to be a scholar-educator-activist. Moreover, for inspiring and nurturing my early research interests as an undergraduate, the very seeds of this dissertation project, I am much obliged to Drs. Amy Kaplan, David Eng, David Pérez II, Deborah Burnham, José David Saldívar, María del Pilar Díaz Castañón, and Román de la Campa.

Numerous individuals and institutions helped clear the path so that I, as a queer, working-class immigrant American and first-generation college student, might fortuitously find my way to and through college and then safely into graduate school: Mrs. Goodman; my teachers in the Camden Honors Intermediate Program for Scholars; New Jersey SEEDS; those connected to Asheville School including Arch Montgomery, Catherine McClain, Dr. Daniel Cogswell, Jay Bonner, Kathy Leiner, Kevin O'Connor, Mary Elizabeth Martin, Laura Legg, and Sharon Campbell; together with Katrina Glanzer, the Africana Studies Summer Institute, Penn College Achievement Program (PennCAP),

Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship (MMUF), McNair Scholars Program, *La Casa Latina*, and LGBT Center at the University of Pennsylvania.

I owe so much to the vast archipelago of friends that I have been fortunate enough to catch sight of over the years. Together, their compassion, comradery, counsel, and conviction have both anchored and kept me afloat as was needed during many a tempest through the whole of my formal education and transition into adulthood. Benjamin Dubow, Dr. Clarence Moore, Danetsy Len, Daniel Olavarria, Darryl Nicholson-Sansani, Jacqueline Larios, Jessica Luna, Dr. Joan Flores-Villalobos, Dr. Jonathan Vaknin, KeAndra Dodds, Lucas de Lima, Malek Smith, Matthew Nicdao, Melissa Gradilla, Dr. Mónica De La Torre, Tiffany Ortiz, Tony Thieu, Vanessa Martínez, Pearl Macek, Dr. Petal Samuel, and Sydney Baloue, among so many others, thank you for always lighting the way home for me.

A special thanks is due to the community of students, faculty, and staff members at Rutgers that have contributed to the development of my research, mind, body, and soul, both in and out of the classroom: Dr. Bryan Baugh; Eileen and Grant Newman; Tara Tsu; in Comparative Literature, Jeong Eun "Annabel" We, Maria Elizabeth Rodríguez Beltrán, Rafael Vizcaíno, and Drs. Anjali Nerlekar, Andrew Parker, Carolyn Ureña, Michael Levine, Shawn Gonzalez, Richard Serrano; from History, Drs. Dara Walker, Jasmine A. Young, and Julia Katz; within Sociology, A Manda Kaplan, Haruki Eda, María Isabel Espinoza, Mario Mercado-Díaz, and Drs. Arlene Stein, Brittany Battle, and Jason Phillips; from Anthropology, Dr. Marlaina Martin; in Spanish, Elizabeth Moe, and Drs. Elena Lahr-Vivaz, Karen Bishop, Mónica R. Ríos, Zachary Campbell; at Latino and Caribbean Studies, Drs. Camila Townsend, Carlos Decena, Kathleen López, Tacuma Peters, Yarimar Bonilla, and Yomaira Figueroa; in Women and Gender Studies, Alexandria Smith, Louise Tam,

and Drs. Abraham Weil, Brittney Cooper, Deborah Vargas, J. Bragger, Carolina Alonso, Kyla Schuler, Max Hantel, Louisa Schein, and Nicole Fleetwood; from English Amadi Ozier, Kylie Dennis, Isabel Guzzardo Tamargo, and Drs. Elin Diamond and Carter Mathes; the members of the 2015-2016 Center for Cultural Analysis (CCA) “Archipelagoes” Seminar; the participants of the 2016-2017 Institute for Research (IWR) Seminar on “Feminist In/Security: Vulnerability, Securitization, and States of Crisis,” especially Drs. Krystal Ghisyawan, Maria Hwang, and Sarah Tobias; my colleagues in 2016-2018 cohort of the Center for Organization Leadership’s Predoctoral Leadership Development Academy (PLDA); the Advanced Institute for Critical Caribbean Studies (RAICCS); as well as the close to 200 undergraduate students that I have had the honor and pleasure of teaching, mentoring, and, most of all, learning from in my capacity as their instructor.

During the entirety my graduate school experience—from the frigid, late-winter day in March when I first toured the campus of Rutgers University-New Brunswick as a, then, recently admitted graduate student, to the warm, sunlit May morning on which I successfully defended my dissertation in the company of so many loved ones, family and friends alike, and still yet—there is one individual that provided steadfast and unconditional support unlike any other: my Dissertation Chair, Dr. Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel. A woman who has served so many roles in my life, from an instructor, to my graduate advisor, then my friend, and now a colleague. Yolanda, thank you for *always* having faith in me as an individual and in my abilities as a scholar, especially when I struggled to believe in myself. Your absolute benevolence and unparalleled example of academic excellence has meant the world to me and so many other first-generation



students, queer students, and students of color who have had the true privilege of calling you their professor.

Lastly, I would like to express my deep gratitude to and love for Sir Easton Rattlebottom, the First of His Name: thank you for being a friend.

## DEDICATION

To the ancestors...  
whose histories make  
my story possible.

And to those living who inspire  
this project...  
and will not read it—  
though not for lack of ability  
as for lack of opportunity.

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# Introduction

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## The Archipelago and the Archive

### 0.1 Guiding Principles

*Archê* ‘αρχή’<sup>1</sup> represents the Greek term for “beginning” or ultimate principle” (Kemerling). Blackburn and Graham add to our conceptual understanding of *archê* and the term’s general meaning within the context of Greek antiquity; there, *archê* represented not only, “the fundamental, underlying source of the being of all things,” but, “the original stuff from which the world came to be,” as well (Blackburn 28; Graham 249).<sup>2</sup> Reviewing at length Garth Kemerling’s overview of the philosophical history of the term *arkhê*, one also learns how:

The Milesian philosophers looked for a single unit of material stuff of which the entire universe is composed, while Empedocles identified no fewer than four elements whose mixture makes up ordinary things. For both Plato and Aristotle, however, the αρχή [archê] most worth seeking would be an originating power from which the material order flows and upon which theoretical knowledge of its nature might be grounded logically. (Kemerling)

People have long since questioned the ontological basis of reality and our shared material and metaphysical origins as human beings. Today, beyond the philosophical purview of

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<sup>1</sup> In English, the term appears in various forms, each with distinct spellings: as the Greek prefix *archê* or *arch-* (e.g., *archaeo-*, *archeo-*, *archae-*, *arche-*, *archa-*, *archi-*) and occasionally as the Greek suffix *-arch*. For clarity, however, when referencing the term I primarily use the spelling *archê*.

<sup>2</sup> For additional examples of words headed by the prefix *archê*, one might also look to the cosmology of the Abrahamic religions, which contains such figures as Satan, God’s principle adversary or *archnemesis*, as well as Saint Michael, who in the New Testament book of Revelations serves as the *Archangel leading* God’s armies against Satan. There is also the case of the *Ark* of the Covenant, also known as the *Ark* of (the) Testimony: the *chief* piece of gold-covered tabernacle furniture inside of which the Jews stored the Ten Commandments, two stones tables inscribed with the *principle* directives of God’s testimony or divine *rule*. Considering the semantic meaning of the abovementioned words and phrases together, then, it becomes apparent that the analysis of the term *archê* (or any of the many base words that *archê* modifies in the form of a prefix or suffix, even) is by and large an inquiry into the matter of power and the execution of authority broadly.

classical thought, modern science proposes a set of alternative frameworks for theorizing the basis of all physical matter and forces that we believe to constitute the universe: subatomic particles, matter, antimatter, etc. Much like the abovementioned philosophers, however, we continue to search for the existence of a primordial substance or essence—the “single material stuff” or “originating power”—from which all material phenomena and existence derive. Relative to the Milesians, Empedocles, Plato, or Aristotle, even, and despite our considerable strides in the scientific fields of chemistry, physics, and biology, the *archê* of our existence continues to escape us. The search nevertheless continues.

This project, too, turns to the matter of historical commencements and inaugurations, my principle concern is the shared origins of both Western modernity and coloniality. Addressing the historical trajectory extending from the original development(s) of European colonialism up through the subsequent emergence of coloniality, Aníbal Quijano frames the coloniality of power as:

still, the most general form of domination in the world today, once colonialism as an explicit political order was destroyed. It [coloniality] doesn't exhaust, obviously, the conditions nor the modes of exploitation and domination between peoples. But it hasn't ceased to be, for 500 years, their main framework. ("Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality" 170)

Building on Quijano's work on the history and heritage of European colonialism and the coloniality of power, Walter D. Mignolo, reminds us how "modernity... carries on its shoulders the heavy weight and responsibility of coloniality" ("Global Histories/Local Designs" 37). As the figurative head of Western modernity, past and present, the coloniality of power represents the principal order or "originating power" from which many, if not most, contemporary forms, systems, and states of exploitation and domination today originate. Drawing together critical insights from preceding philosophical inquiries into the



“beginning or ultimate principle” of all existence, on the one hand, and postcolonial/decolonial<sup>3</sup> thought and criticism focusing on the life and afterlife of modern colonialism, on the other, the dissertation explicitly frames the colonality of power as the representative *archê*—indeed, “the fundamental, underlying source of the being of all things” and “the original stuff from which the world came to be”—in and of the history of Western modernity. Here, my analysis contends with the heavyweight that colonialism and the colonality of power cast overtop the proverbial frame of modern history.<sup>4</sup>

It is at the interface of “the archipelago” and “the archive”, however, that my efforts to characterize the *archê* of Western Modernity surface and materialize. The two terms—archipelago and the archive—thus mark the physical and conceptual space(s) from which I trace the emergence of Western Modernity and, in there, the ordering of colonialism and the colonality of power today. In this manner, the dissertation analytically triangulates the *archê* of modernity (colonality of power) amidst both real and symbolic archipelagoes and archives; to showcase the critical insight that together, archipelagic and archival *texts* and *contexts* contribute to our understanding of the colonality of power and its material and metaphysical machinations.

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<sup>3</sup> The import similarities and differences that both align and differentiate the “colonial,” “postcolonial” and “decolonial” are a matter that exceeds the scope of this introduction. For a survey of history and criticism associated with colonialism and postcolonialism, see Loomba (2005). For an understanding of the distinct intellectual genealogies of postcolonial studies and decolonial thought and criticism, respectively, see Mignolo (“The Darker Side of Western Modernity” xxiii-xxxi) and Maldonado-Torres (“Colonialism, Neocolonial, Internal Colonialism, the Postcolonial, Coloniality, and Decoloniality”). Puri (“The Caribbean Postcolonial”) brings postcolonial studies to bear on Caribbean studies; conversely, Martínez-San Miguel (“Coloniality of Diaspora”) rehearses the limitations of postcolonial schemes to the study of history, culture, and politics of the contemporary Caribbean.

<sup>4</sup> My understanding of “modernity” and “modern history” is indebted to the work of Wallerstein (1974), Quijano and Wallerstein (1992), Wynter (1995, 2000), Mignolo (1995, 2000, 2011), and Dussel (1996, 2000) who collectively date the origins of Western modernity back to 16<sup>th</sup> century: the historical provenance of European colonialism, empire, and global capitalism between Europe, the Americas, and beyond.

Specifically, I suggest that a *principle* understanding of the original and enduring principles of Western modernity/coloniality proves possible through a joint consideration of the *archipelago* and the *archive*; in as much as our understanding of the trans-historical development, material consequences, and symbolic implications of the “Modern/Colonial/Capitalist World-system” proves impossible without a consideration of all three: the coloniality of power, the (Caribbean) archipelago, and the (modern) archive (Mignolo 2000; Grosfoguel 2002, 2007; Grosfoguel and Cervantes-Rodríguez 2002).

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## 0.2 Etymology as Methodology

In order to unpack the real and symbolic links that historically exist between the coloniality of power, the Caribbean archipelago, and the historical archive, there is need for a deeper understanding of the semantics of the Greek term *archê* and its derivative forms as encapsulated in the contemporary meaning of such terms as “archipelago” and “archive.” Today, the influence of *archê* endures, imbuing meaning into our popular lexicon. As a prefix or suffix, *archê* signifies such concepts as “rule,” “ancient”, and “chief, principle.” Accordingly, the semantic force of this particular Greek term contributes to the meaning of such common words as *matriarch* and *patriarch*, the female and male *head* of a family or tribe, respectively; *oligarch*, a larger country, organization, or institution that is *ruled* by a small group of people; *monarch*, the sovereign *head* of the state; and *anarchy*, a state of disorder due to the absence (or sheer dismissal and rejection) of *authority*; amongst others words (“#141 Arch → Rule”).<sup>5</sup> Considering the semantic meaning of the

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<sup>5</sup> For additional examples of words headed by the prefix *archê*, one might also look to the cosmology of the Abrahamic religions. There, we find mention of such figures as Satan, God’s principle adversary or archnemesi; as well as Saint Michael, who in the New Testament book of Revelations serves as the archangel heading God’s armies against Satan. There is also the case of the Ark of the Covenant: the chief piece of gold-covered tabernacle furniture inside of which the Jews in exile stored the Ten Commandments represented by two stones tables inscribed with the principle directives of God’s testimony or divine rule.

abovementioned words and phrases, it becomes apparent that the analysis of *archê* is by and large an inquiry into the matter of power and authority.

The direct link between power and the archive are well known, insomuch as, “There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory” (Derrida 4). Moreover, in “Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory,” John M. Schwartz and Terry Cook meticulously unpack the archive-and-power dyad. Citing their claims about the fundamental relationship that exists between power and the archive, Schwartz and Cook explain that:

Archives are social constructs. Their origins lie in the information needs and social values of the rulers, governments, businesses, associations, and individuals who establish and maintain them. Despite changes in the nature of records, the uses for these records, and the need to preserve them, archives, ever since the mnemons of ancient Greece, have been about power—about maintaining power, about the power of the present to control what is, and will be, know about the past, about the power of remembering over forgetting... Archives have always been about power, whether it is the power of the state, the church, the corporation, the family, the public, or the individual. Archives have the power to privilege and to marginalize. They can be a tool of hegemony; they can be a tool of resistance. The both reflect and constitute power relations” (3-13)

Historically, archives have most benefited the needs of those in power and their efforts to maintain (and expand) their capacity and influence. All the same, it is important for us to remember that the archive *empowers* as a tool of resistance, just as it *disempowers* as an apparatus of hegemony. In this manner, it is incorrect to label the archive as inherently "good" or "bad." Instead, it is important to acknowledge that, in the end, the archive's influence, be it in favor of resistance or the status-quo, indeed reflects the intentions of those wielding what Michel-Rolph Trouillot terms archival power: “the power to define what is and what is not a serious object of research and, therefore, of mention” (99). Less

clear, however, is the degree to which the question of power lies at the center of the archipelagic, just the same as it does with the archival.

In the case of the word archipelago, the presence of the Greek prefix *archê-* implies the general sense of “firstly” or “chiefly”—the word archipelago being but a compound, “of *arch* (from the Greek signifying ‘original’, ‘principle’) and *pelago* (deep, abyss, sea)” (Stratford et al. 120). Shifting focus to the forms of power at the center of the archipelago, then, we begin by acknowledging that “To island is to control” (Baldacchino “The Lure of Islands” 55). Historically, islands have represented major sites in the history of the constitution and perpetuation of power. In the case of the origins of Western modernity vis-a-vis the Spanish “discovery” and subsequent colonization of large sectors of the Americas, we find islands at both the literal and political center of the enactment and continuation of the Spanish empire.

Christopher Columbus and his maritime crew of about 100 men first landed in the New World in 1492 when they set foot on one of the islands of the Bahamian Archipelago, also known as the Lucayan Archipelago. Columbus and his crew subsequently established the colony of *Hispañola*, Spain's first permanent colonial settlement in the New World, on the insular, though technically archipelagic, territory shared today by Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Even after 1535, when the Spanish empire's central locus of power abroad shifted from its insular colonies in the Caribbean Sea to that of the continental Viceroyalty of New Spain (present-day Mexico), the colony of Cuba—an archipelago in its own right—remained crucial to the administration of Spanish imperial rule in the New World. For this very reason, the port city of Havana was designated the “Key to the New World and Rampart of the West Indies” by the Spanish crown. Between 1566 and 1790,

the island/archipelago of Cuba represented the principle stop in the New World along the *Flota de Indias* ‘Spanish treasure fleet’ convoy system. As the key to the New World, then, Cuba (above all, the port capital city of Havana) operated as the central geopolitical node linking Spain to its colonial territories located across the Atlantic Ocean on the continents of North and South America. The example of Cuba in the mid-sixteenth to late-eighteenth centuries alone demonstrates the extent to which it becomes impossible to truly grapple with the colonial history of the continental Americas *outside of* or *apart from* that of the island spaces in the Americas.

For more recent historical developments where archipelagos surface at the center of national sovereignty and imperial power, we can think of the Spanish-American war of 1898—the end of which marked the emergence of what Lanny Thompson terms the U.S. "imperial archipelago" of the early twentieth-century as Spain relinquished sovereignty over Cuba and ceded Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippine Islands to the United States for twenty million dollars; December 7, 1941 and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on the Hawaiian island of Honolulu; August 6, 1945 and the finale of World War II, as signaled by the atomic bombing of the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki located on the national, sub-archipelagic islands of Honshu and Kyushu, respectively; the Falkland Islands and the Falklands Conflict of 1982 between Argentina and the United Kingdom; nuclear testing performed throughout the Bikini Atoll in the Marshal Islands of the Pacific between the years of 1946 and 1958; the thirteen-day political and military standoff (October 14 - 28, 1962) that was the Cuban Missile Crisis, a principle moment in the history of the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union; as well as the formal end

of British Rule in China, as marked by the transfer of sovereignty over the peninsula and chain of islands of Hong Kong from the United Kingdom to China on July 1, 1997.

Despite their shared semantic roots connected back to the Greek term *archê*, the figures of the archipelago and that of the archive nonetheless embody distinct expressions of power: *commencement* and the *commandment* respectively. At the center of the dissertation, then, is the desire to place the distinct figures of the archipelago and that of the archive in such analytical proximity (a coupling that I justify given the two words' etymological underpinnings) to perform an inversion at the level of their respective *principle* meanings. This kind of etymological-analytical interchange between archive and archipelago aids me to unearth the potential that exists in (re)reading the archipelago through the framework of *commandment* and authority (in addition to *commencement*) and the archive within an order of *commencement* (as well as *commandment*). For a specific kind of analysis becomes possible when we formally link the archipelago to *commandment* and the archive with *commencement*. In particular, we arrive at a critical understanding of the historically distinct forms of *commandment*, which is to say sovereignty, governance, and power, that emerge within the space of the Caribbean archipelago—non-sovereign political designations of the Caribbean “commonwealth” and “overseas territory” island states being but two examples. This, in addition to a critical understanding of the kinds of histories that *commence* the archive, by which I mean to infer the account or record of the past that come to take primacy or *first* place in our collective imaginaries and, in doing so, are conferred more historical legitimacy when compared to those other accounts of the past deemed historically insignificant.

Placing the space of the colonial and contemporary Caribbean archipelago at the center of such theoretical provocations provides me with a geographical and social-historical point of reference about which I execute these kinds of critical interventions. Considering the historical *archive* of the history of the Americas, then, the Caribbean *archipelago* denotes both historical *commencement* and *commandment*. For “modern” (read: the colonial and contemporary) history in the Americas “commences” with Columbus’ landing on October 12, 1492 on the island of Guanahani in the present-day territory of the Bahamas; just as the European “discovery” and subsequent colonial *commandment* or rule over the New World initiates within the space of the Caribbean archipelago proper (and the space of the continental Americas thereafter).

Recognizing the range of meaning attached to forms of *commencement* and *commandment* alike that *archê* once carried throughout ancient Greece, in what ways might we draw upon the two registers of the meaning of the term *archê* at the service of analyzing not Greek antiquity but, rather, Western modernity? In other words, what do we understand to represent the *archê* in the context of the modern/colonial world system today? Another way to pose the question is to ask: *When* and *where* exactly do we locate the *commencement* of Western modernity, and what kinds of *commandments* (if any) are thus brought into being for the first time in history in the emergence of such? In short (herein deploying a Wynterian critique): What would it mean for our understanding of the fundamental relationship that exists between the Caribbean archipelago and the archives of the His/story of Western modernity if only we were to analyze “the coloniality of being, truth, power, and freedom” through an analysis of the *archê*, that is of the respective orderings of

*commencement* and *commandment*, in the context of the modern/colonial world system? It is here, then, that we arrive at the Caribbean archipelago and the modern archive.

The question of the past and the inherent evidentiary limitations of any historical records—*the archive*—have long since represented a particularly troubling matter within the context of the colonial and contemporary Caribbean alike (Trouillot; Bastian "Owning Memory"). For an early illustrative example of such archival concerns, however, we turn to the historical narrative composed by the Spanish monk and crewmember of Christopher Columbus' second trip to the Americas: Fray Ramón Pané. In his *An Account of the Antiquities of the Indians* (1498), Pané describes the social, cultural, and political practices of the members of the indigenous community living on the island of Hispaniola, what today encompasses the countries of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Here, Pané expresses his doubts about the indigenous peoples' fundamental access history, writing that, "Como los indios no tienen escrituras, ni letras, no pueden dar buena información de lo que saben acerca de sus antepasados" "Seeing as the Indians have neither writing nor print, they cannot give a good account of what they know regarding their antecedents" (7; my trans).

For Pané and his colonial contemporaries, a community's claims to history and the legitimacy of their status as historical subjects existed not in the community's collective memory of the past, so much as in their ability to produce (and maintain) in the present moment a written record of their understanding of the events of time since. From the perspective of the first colonial agents of the Spanish crown to arrive to the Western Hemisphere, that the indigenous communities living in the insular regions of the so-called New World lacked a physical record or historical archive in print form was understood as "evidence" that these groups of people fundamentally lacked *history*, which is to say, that



their societies were devoid of historical depth (and worth). The Spanish used their assessment of the local, indigenous community's supposed lack of civilization as grounds upon which to question the humanity of the Amerindian groups living in the New World. With their humanity in question, the native inhabitants of the region were subjected to genocide, forced under duress to pay into tributary systems orchestrated by agents of the Spanish crown, and conscripted into forced labor and slavery. Over five centuries later, and much like the region's previous native populations, the Caribbean and its local communities still find themselves left behind in what Dipesh Chakrabarty calls "the waiting-room of history" (October 2000). History, it seems, has and continues to "escape" the Caribbean.

In his canonical text of twentieth-century West Indian writing *The Middle Passage: The Caribbean Revisited* (1962), Trinidad-and-Tobago-born and Nobel Prize-winning Anglophone Caribbean writer of Indian heritage V. S. Naipaul echoes Fray Ramón Pané's earlier, Eurocentric conclusions about the absence of history in the space of the Caribbean or, rather, on the part of its local inhabitants. In that book-length essay, Naipaul makes the facetious claim that "The history of the [Caribbean] islands can never be satisfactorily told... History is built around achievement and creation; and nothing was created in the West Indies" (Naipaul 20). Luckily, those working in the fields of postcolonial studies and decolonial thought and criticism today help us to conclude otherwise. These scholars remind us how, from its colonial inception up through the contemporary moment, the Caribbean has continuously represented a regional site fueling unprecedented historical developments of global proportions. All the more, the Caribbean continues to represent a

major source of “raw” physical labor and intellectual material for scholars and global consumers alike.

The significance of the Greater and Lesser Antilles’ contributions, both local and global, past and present, is well documented by scholars of the Caribbean, perhaps most notably by Mintz. In his 1994 Huxley Memorial Lecture “Enduring Substances, Trying Theories: The Caribbean Region as *Oikoumenê*,” Mintz reminds us that:

The processes set in motion by the creation of the New World plantations have never stopped. But in their earliest overseas phases, they were concentrated within a definable area, of which the relatively tiny Caribbean colonies were a part. It was what these reborn enterprises achieved in mobilizing resources, adapting to stolen labour, producing capitalism’s first real commodities, feeding the first proletarians, and changing the outlook of so many people on both sides of the Atlantic, that embodied a dawning modernity. (296)

If history is built around achievement and creation, as Naipaul sets out to suggest, what then of the Caribbean and its central role in the emergence of Western modernity? Was the Caribbean's role in what Mintz describes as the production of capitalism's original commodities, the nourishing of the world's first workers under capitalism, and the shifting permanently of the beliefs and desires of people and communities the world over not encompass a historical achievement in its own right—albeit in the darkest sense of the word *achievement*? Are the Antillean origins of Western modernity not grounds—and waters—enough for one to speak with unwavering certainty of the existence of history in the Caribbean and the Caribbean as a "historic" place? This dissertation sets out to advance just as much and more.

The claims that I put forward in this dissertation, including the claim that the history of Western modernity is a story of the crossing of the colonality of power, the archipelago, and the archive set in the Americas, rests upon a broader seabed of critical thought that

runs between distinct intellectual islets that I am here strategically connecting together. The intellectual conversations and fields of study that I turn to are interdisciplinary in nature, deliberately so. Operating at the intersection of literary and cultural studies, archival theory, principles and practices, decolonial thought and criticism, and the emerging field of Archipelagic American studies, my dissertation draws on archipelagic *texts* and *contexts* to demonstrate how insular narratives (stories and histories alike) advance a critique of the principally-theoretical, national, and continental frameworks that, to date, have dominated the “archival turn” in the Humanities. Tracing the crossing of, on the one hand, what Michel Rolph Trouillot calls “archival power” and, on the other, what Anibal Quijano presents as “the coloniality of power,” the dissertation formulates a decolonial analysis of the modern archive from “below” centering the physical and figurative features alike of the transnational archives of the colonial and contemporary Caribbean and its diaspora.

Critical analysis in the form of close reading and discourse analysis mark the basis of the methodological practice that I here depend on when navigating the open waters that the overall scope, substance, and impact of my research figuratively charts. A comparative literature project by design, *The Archipelago and the Archive* turns to an assemblage of colonial and contemporary literary Caribbean and Caribbean diasporic texts (Hispanic, Anglophone, and Francophone) in the form of fiction, drama, short stories, and poetry alike. I place these Caribbean and Caribbean diasporic literary texts in conversation with nonfiction subject matter published by researchers in the field archival studies, including historical overviews of modern archival institutions and mediums, in conjunction with the literature on best practices for archives management and administration.

In doing so, this dissertation sets out to perform a number of critical interventions, its three main contributions being: 1) a critique of the “archival turn” in the Humanities by way of a dual consideration of archival materiality and immateriality alike; 2) an intervention in the field of island studies via the dissertation’s use of humanities research methodologies like literary analysis, which leading scholars in the field of island studies have overlooked and drastically undervalued in favor of quantitative and qualitative social science research methodologies; and 3) an analytical alliance between island studies and archival theory and practice, in service of a transnational theory of the archive from “below” centering the local, lived experiences of the racialized and working-class communities of the contemporary Caribbean and its diaspora.

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### **0.3 Archival Materiality and Immateriality**

From the second half of the twentieth century onward, the “archival turn” has oriented much of contemporary research in the Humanities. As its first point of critical intervention, *The Archipelago and the Archive* traces the connections, as well as the gaps, that exist between theories of the archive developed by scholars in the humanities about the curatorial procedures and protocol used by professional archivists working and researching archival science. My work here thus responds to the influence of what some have described as an “archival turn” in contemporary literary and cultural studies—the intellectual genealogy of which Euro-American scholars trace back to Jacques Derrida’s *Archive Fever A Freudian Impression* (1995), Michel Foucault’s *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1969), or Sigmund Freud’s “A Note Upon ‘The Mystic Writing Pad’” (1940). The broader intellectual reorientation or shift posed by the “archival turn” in the humanities centers the figure of the archive and, in doing so, *turns* to formally address issues posed by

the inherent and fundamental deficiencies of the historical record writ large. Even so, while this “archival turn” represents but a relatively new scholarly juncture distinguished by archives-oriented research in the humanities, professional archivists in North America, for example, have worked to address matters pertaining to the management and administration of archives at least as far back as 1936: the year that the Society of American Archivists (SAA), the oldest and largest archivist association in North America today, is formed.

Not surprisingly, tensions have emerged between those *theorizing* the archive in the humanities and those *practicing* the archive in archival science. These disciplinary tensions are largely the result of discrepancies that exist between how those in the humanities, on the one hand, and those in archival science, on the other, respectively define or image “the archive” proper. At its base, the issue is one of varying disciplinary standards and priorities. Generally speaking, the main point of contention formed between archival theorists in the humanities and professional archivists is most clearly reflected in the distinct language that the two have used in describing the archive.

The SAA provides six official definitions for the word archive, all of which stress the physical properties of archives—what I am here calling *archival materiality*. The SAA understand archives to represent:

*Materials* created or received by a person, family, or organization, public or private, in the conduct of their affairs and preserved because of the enduring value contained in the information they contain or as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator, especially those materials maintained using the principles of provenance, original order, and collective control; permanent records. - 2. The division within an organization responsible for maintaining the organization's *records of enduring value*. - 3. An organization that collects the records of individuals, families, or other organizations; a collecting archives. - 4. The professional discipline of administering such *collections* and *organizations*. - 5. The *building* (or portion thereof) housing archival

collections. - 6. A published collection of scholarly *papers*, especially as a periodical. (Pearce-Moses 30; my emphasis)

Key to understanding the disciplinary and epistemological tensions that exist between archival theorists and practitioners today is how professional archivists imagine the archive in physical form (i.e., materials, records, collections, groupings, edifices, and, above all else, print documents) yet scholars and foundational texts associated with the "archival turn" in the humanities overlook the matter of the archive's materiality.

Instead of centering the physical properties of archives and archival institutions, conceptualizations of the archive deriving out of the "archival turn" in the humanities chiefly point to figurative forms of the archive and their symbolic significance or potential, what can best be described as the metaphysical features of the archive that I here collectively refer to as *archival immateriality*. Aleida Assmann summarizes this disciplinary tendency best when she explains that, "In literary studies, the archive is a concept that, just like trauma, has moved into the center of poststructuralist and postcolonial discourse: in this career, however, it is often disconnected from the empirical institution and used in metaphorical ways as a highly suggestive trope" (102). Literary scholars' emphasis on the archive's symbolic characteristics—what I wish to refer to as *archival immateriality*—is well reflected in the work of foundational scholars associated with the "archival turn" in the Humanities.

For example, Michel Foucault's notion of the archive stands as a technical term representing, "the first *law* of what can be said, the *system* that governs the appearance of statements as unique events" (129; my emphasis). The Foucauldian archive encapsulates all of the discursive elements or feature that come to characterize a particular historical moment or of which culture in that historical moments consists of expressly. Here, the

archive is less "material" than it is a principle of human behavior—not as much a "record" in itself than it is the system of philosophy influencing the production of the said record. And while Foucault's notion of the archive does in fact encapsulate analog (and digital) "records" or "materials" (if only because such physical "collections" and "buildings" are in themselves discursive formations subjectively mediated by social practices, power relations, and systems of knowledge), the Foucauldian archive is fundamentally theoretical, by which I mean to suggest that it postulates human phenomena without an explicit treatment of the particulars of material context (i.e., geography, temporality, etc.). Such a decontextualized theorization of the archive deemphasizes the range of real, material implications that issue from the archive's immaterial countenance.

When compared to the Foucauldian archive, the Derridian archive proves all the more removed from archival materiality. In *Archive Fever* Derrida argues that "A special messianicity is at work in the concept of the archive," if only because "The structure of the archive is *spectral*. It is spectral *a priori*: neither present nor absent 'in the flesh,' neither visible nor invisible, a trace always referring to another whose eyes can never be met" (36, 84). Distinguished by its sublimity and apparitional impression, the Derridian archive fundamentally exceeds proper definition or characterization: never having formally "arrived" and yet still missing or "disappeared," visible and invisible alike, simultaneously. The fundamental spectrality of the Derridian archive thus allows for a lofty and, therefore, captious understanding of archival power that transcends the structures of historical, social, or political context or contextualization. In the absence of explicit material qualification, however, the Derridian archive approaches a disembodied and, by its very nature, *insubstantial* conceptualization of archival power. In Derrida, we arrive at a theory of

archival power that precludes a formal appreciation for the real implications of the particular place and space, not to mention the specific contents, of the archive in itself.

If from the standpoint of the SAA, the archive is a physical product produced by human beings for anticipated human mnemonic needs; then from the perspective of Derrida, the archive is a philosophical paradox, the arrival of which we cannot predict or foresee, but which we will invariably miss. Of possible consideration, then, is the unanticipated aura of irony *a posteriori*, perhaps, that haunts the claim proposed by Derrida towards the conclusion of *Archive Fever*: "Nothing is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the word 'archive'" (90). In summary, the disciplinary-archival tensions at hand between the humanities and archival science reflects the degree to which professional archivists aspire to traffic in the business of *archives* in a literal and multitudinous sense of the word. Literary and cultural studies scholars, however, theorize the historical record (or the lack thereof, even) by invoking the figure of *the Archive* in its singular and emblematic form.

Any understanding of the full power, politics, and potential of historical archives is seriously compromised—dangerously so—whenever we negate the full power of the materiality of the historical record, as much when it proves accessible as when it does not. The potential peril is twofold: a singular *materialist* conceptualization of the archive fails to account for the “trans-historicity” of the archive. By this I am suggesting that a description of the archive that only attends to its *archival materiality* invariably undercuts the archive’s revolutionary potential as either object or institution with the dual capacity to attest to what *was* (read: the past), while concurrently influencing that which *could be* or *might come to be* (read: the future). Moreover, to emphasize the *immateriality* of the



archive at the expense of its *materiality* is to allow for a historically decontextualized and, to that end, a “depoliticized” rendering of history that betrays the past, impairs the present, and cheats the future. In fear of such perils of the archive, *The Archipelago and the Archive* deliberately think the *materiality* and *immateriality* of the archive together. In this, the project explores how a consideration of the real and symbolic leads us to a more integrated understanding of archival power—not in its decontextualized or disembodied forms but, rather, as an extension of the colonality of power concerning the history of Western modernity and our narratives of the Caribbean archipelago.

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#### 0.4 Literary Island Studies

Much like archives, archipelagoes represent a space of ongoing ontological contestation. The Oxford English dictionary defines archipelagoes as "Any sea, or sheet of water, in which there are numerous islands"—in short, "a group of islands" (OED). Pungetti expands this definition, proposing that, "An archipelago is a group of islands closely scattered in a body of water, usually a sea or ocean, but it can also be a lake or river" (51). Within the context of global geopolitics, we can differentiate between three main categories of archipelagic territoriality: para-national archipelagoes (e.g. the ABC islands [Aruba, Bonaire, and Curacao], the Canary Islands, Hawaii); national archipelagoes (e.g. Indonesia, Bahamas, Australia, Greenland); and regional or trans-national archipelagoes (e.g. Malay Archipelago). We also know that archipelagoes, "are characterized typically by three relatively durable topological and binary relations: land and water, island and continent/mainland, and island and island" (Stratford et al. 113). Aligning the three forms of archipelagic topographies and territories, respectively, I want to suggest that it is also possible to speak of three main categories of spatial archipelagic

relationality: insular relations *within* an individual archipelago (island to island, as well as island to sea, connections); insular relations *across* disparate archipelagoes (island chain to island chain links); and insular relations *beyond* the archipelago (associations that emerge between the space of the island(s) and that of the continent).

Still, the fact of the matter is that there is no set standard by which to assertively define an archipelago, in and of itself. Baldacchino reminds us how islands (and by default archipelagoes)—numbering, "hundreds of thousands in the material world, countless more in the fictional one—come literally in all shapes and sizes" ("Islands: Objects of Representation" 247). All the more, we know that the boundaries are dividing land from water, though "a critical feature of islands... by no means is it definitive, for the land and sea boundary is a shifting, fractal and paradoxical one, present in many spatialities" (Stratford et al. 115). The loose definition characterizing the archipelago thus reflects the archipelago's inherent, geological and geopolitical variability; for as the shoreline shifts, so does the line at which the archipelago begins (and ends).

The archipelago's topographic contours are not its only shifting feature, for its symbolic properties prove no less fluid. Mountz notes how:

"One encounters islands everywhere. By this, I refer not to the real discovery that there are many islands in the world, but rather that the characteristics of islands as political spaces operate as a traveling metaphor with broad applicability beyond the physical space of islands. Islands and archipelagoes are powerful, recurring, and vexing to the spatial imaginary: highly unique, idiosyncratic, disparate and yet revealing, offering spatial form, pattern, and logics that are everywhere reproduced. (3).

In the real, archipelagoes represent natural, fixed, and terra-audacious geological formations; yet at the level of the symbolic, archipelagoes largely resemble metaphors in motion, ever always expanding and contracting in their representational meaning.

Reflecting on the emblematic island, Mountz notes that, "The island appears and is reproduced in other forms: bases, bodies, prisons, all islands of a kind" (3). Such sentiments are echoed in Baldacchino's claim that:

an island cannot be naively understood in its strict material, reified form: a delineated, predetermined, bordered space; it is so thoroughly spaced in 'emotional geography' that it is perhaps impossible to disentangle its 'realities' from its 'dreams'; its geographical materiality from its metaphorical allusions" (Baldacchino "The Lure of Islands" 57)

The various meanings and embodiments of the word archipelago traverse the literary and the symbolic, so much so that it becomes challenging (if not altogether impossible) to differentiate the two: "real" archipelagoes apart from those that are "dreamed" into being.

Still, despite the pervasiveness of insular figures, symbols, and icons in popular culture and figurative language, island studies scholars have yet to address the full range of symbolic implications concerning our use—and misuse—of insular imaginaries. This intellectual oversight is explained, in part, by the underrepresentation of literary analysis within contemporary island studies scholarship. The methodological hierarchies endemic to the field of island studies are due, as Adam Grydehøj suggests, to the fact that:

Much of the above social science research is influenced by disciplinary traditions from geography. Indeed, this geographic orientation [in island studies today] has sometimes resulted in the sidelining of approaches for literary studies and related disciplines. (Grydehøj "Understanding Island Cities" 4).

Elaborating Grydehøj's claims about this intellectual shortsightedness on the part of island studies scholars, Lisa Fletcher adds:

As it stands, 'island studies' scholarship is undermined by an untheorised [*sic*] distinction between the relative value of 'geography' and 'literature;' this opposition is, in part, sustained by the development of a series of interrelated hierarchical pairs (physical/cultural, reality/romance, actual/virtual, materiality/metaphor, image/word) in discussions of the physicality and culture of islands... In these terms, the commitment to 'real islands' which runs

through island studies risks missing the key fact that human encounters with the physical space are always already mediated by our position in linguistic and cultural systems of representation. ("A Critical Review of Island Studies" 18-19)

While few scholars have formally reconciled with the disciplinary homogeneity hindering the realization of more exhaustive island studies, fewer, Fletcher contents, have addressed the intersection of literature, culture, *and* islands, on the one hand, and the unique role that islands play *in* literature and culture, on the other.

In Fletcher's larger body of research, one finds a model for effective literature-oriented island studies. For example, in their joint article "The Genre of Islands: Popular Fiction and Performative Geographies" Lisa Fletcher and Ralph Crane perform a thorough study of the degree to which "islands are everywhere in popular fiction" (637). Here, their analysis considers the "performative geographies" that island spaces represent across many of the story-worlds of popular fiction today. Their extensive close reading of the hidden symbolism of island settings in crime and romance fiction, in particular, make a compelling case for the "inclusion of literary studies within island studies" (648).

Fletcher and Crane's incorporation of literary studies within island studies is not without its shortcomings, however. In their analysis of island settings in romance fiction, in particular, they arrive at the question of the erotic. Here, they acknowledge that "For countless heroes and heroines across the many and various romance sub-genres, falling in love and finding one's place in the world are twinned objectives" (645). Nonetheless, their analysis overlooks the element of sex or sexuality proper: two features fundamental to the popular literary genre of romance novels. Yes, Crane and Fletcher are correct in emphasizing the degree to which, "Popular genres are undeniably sources of *distraction* and *entertainment* for billions of readers. However, they are also systems of *meaning*,

which have an immeasurable impact on our geographical awareness and imagination" (648; my emphasis). Missing from the study of islands in popular literature is, however, formal consideration of the erotic bearings of romance fiction and the forms of pleasure and entertainment that the reader is inherently afforded by the literary medium. In short, while Crane and Fletcher convincingly unpack the "performative geographies" of islands settings in popular fiction, they do not consider the role that sexual fantasies and libidinal drives play in shaping how "contemporary romance depicts small islands as safe havens from the dangers and difficulties of life in the twenty-first century."<sup>6</sup>

Inspired by Grydehøj's, Fletcher's, and Crane's respective efforts to demonstrate the value the humanities and literary analysis, in particular, bring to the field of island studies, this project enlists the study of Caribbean history, literature, and culture to broaden and complicate the relatively narrow methodological range that, to date, has largely characterized the horizon of island studies scholarship. The quantitative and social science research methodologies privileged by island studies scholars are particularly suited for the study of insular/archipelagic phenomena in the past as they once *were* and in the present as they *are* today. These methods of analysis are less effective, however, at supporting our efforts to envision insularity otherwise: that is, the island and the archipelago in the future as they *might become* instead. In other words, the value of incorporating literary analysis to our study of insular-archival texts and contexts alike is the degree to which literature affords us the critical insight and creative space necessary for us to not only *detail* and

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<sup>6</sup> In chapter two, my close reading of the multiple island spaces and bodies at the center of Andrew Holleran's literary archive of gay 1970's NYC pushes us to consider the space of urban island geographies *in tandem with* the place of queer insular imaginaries represented literature. In doing so, my analysis of the archipelagic settings, archival impulses, and erotic desires in Holleran's debut novel widen the scope of literary island studies here set out by Fletcher and Crane's research. My incorporation of literary studies into island studies account for the element of human sexuality but expressly non-normative or queer sexualities in particular.

*explain* (the traditional function of quantitative analysis) but also *reimagine* how archival power and the colonality of power, for example, intersect in the form and function of the modern archive and the archives of modernity/coloniality, the same. Much like the Caribbean literary and cultural studies scholar Rosamond King, then, this project employs "imagination as part of a methodology" for both study and inclusion in (and beyond) the field of island studies (195).

### **0.5 A Transnational Theory of the Archive**

Writing about the relationship between literature and empire in the nineteenth-century United States, Mary Lindsay Van Tine explains how:

much work on the archive assumes a national frame (or a colonial one) in its emphasis on the absolute control over the archive wielded by the state. There has been less discussion of the archive from an inter- or trans-national perspective, and little emphasis on those moments, during war or occupation or annexation, when archives move *between* states. After all, if the archive is the instantiation of state power, what happens when that power changes hands? (9-10; emphasis in original)

As of late, the study of historical archives has become a key concern within the humanities and literary and cultural studies. Within this area of investigation, considerable research attention has been dedicated to the role of archives within national contexts. However, the role of archival theory and practice in transnational frameworks has been grossly overlooked. One decisive exception to this larger trend is the work of archivist Jeannette Allis Bastian, who analyzes the transnational history of the archival records removed from the Virgin Islands in the Caribbean and sent to both Denmark in 1917 and to the National Archives of the U.S. in the 1930s through 1950s, when the Caribbean islands were transferred from the Danish to the U.S. government. Summarizing this history, Bastian writes:

This odyssey took place within the context of colonialism, in which the colonizing powers [Denmark and the United States] that created the records then removed them to archives in their own counties. How this came about is crucial to appreciation the impact that records loss had on the community that remained behind, a loss suggesting that the evolution of any community is indivisible from the records it creates. (19)

Inspired by Bastian's comparative archival research, my dissertation embraces a transnational analysis of the explicit and implicit connections that exist between the study of modern archives, colonialism, and empire together in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Caribbean.

Engaging with the archipelagic staging of modernity's war paradigm in William Shakespeare's final play *The Tempest* (1611), chapter one asserts that the transnational history of nineteenth and twentieth-century U.S. imperialism abroad in the Caribbean contributes to the domestic history of the U.S. National Archive building in Washington, D.C. established in 1934. Shifting from chapter one's consideration of the physical space of the modern (national) archive, chapter two turns, instead, to an analysis of the coloniality of archival power through a close reading of the archival imaginary in Andrew Holleran's debut novel *Dancer from the Dance* (1978). I argue that the canonical *Dancer* articulates a literary archive of gay 1970s NYC evidencing the insular sites and sights of the novel's white middle-class gay male characters exclusively; and by doing so, contributes to a queer/ing of coloniality and the Wynterian category of Man, one and the other together. The third chapter integrates the study of coloniality, archival institutions, and archival imaginaries together to address the role that non-human actors or agents too play in the production of history. Through a close reading of Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* (1988) and Tiphonie Yanique's "The Bridge Stories," I conceptualize the mold that jeopardizes the material integrity of historical records preserved in the tropical archives of the

Caribbean today as a heuristic for explaining the imperiled conditions of many of the Caribbean's colonial archive in the era of postcoloniality. Now equipped with a view from the “underside” of the Modern/Colonial/Capitalist World-system, the fourth and final chapter of the dissertation returns to the question of the (national) domestic archive broached in chapter one. I perform a comparative analysis of Simone Schwartz-Bart’s only play *Your Handsome Captain* (1987) and Junot Díaz’s first novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007), focusing specifically on the respective representations of the domestic archives of the working-class communities of the Afro-Caribbean diaspora. The final chapter argues that in these literary representations of the domestic archives we find an alternative vision of the modern archive: one realized between and beyond, rather than exclusively within, national and continental frameworks.

In all, this project mounts an analytical scheme supporting a transnational theory of the archive from “below.” The broader intellectual contributions of the project are twofold. *The Archipelago and the Archive* demonstrates the value of Comparative Literature to the field of Island Studies, the latter of which has, until recently, overlooked the methodological contributions of literary analysis in favor of quantitative and qualitative Social Science research methods. Second, the dissertation foregrounds the role that archipelagic and decolonial frameworks of analysis play in efforts to understand the respective histories of Western modernity, the modern nation-state, and the modern (national) archive and how, together, the three consolidate in the crossing of archival power and the colonality of power.

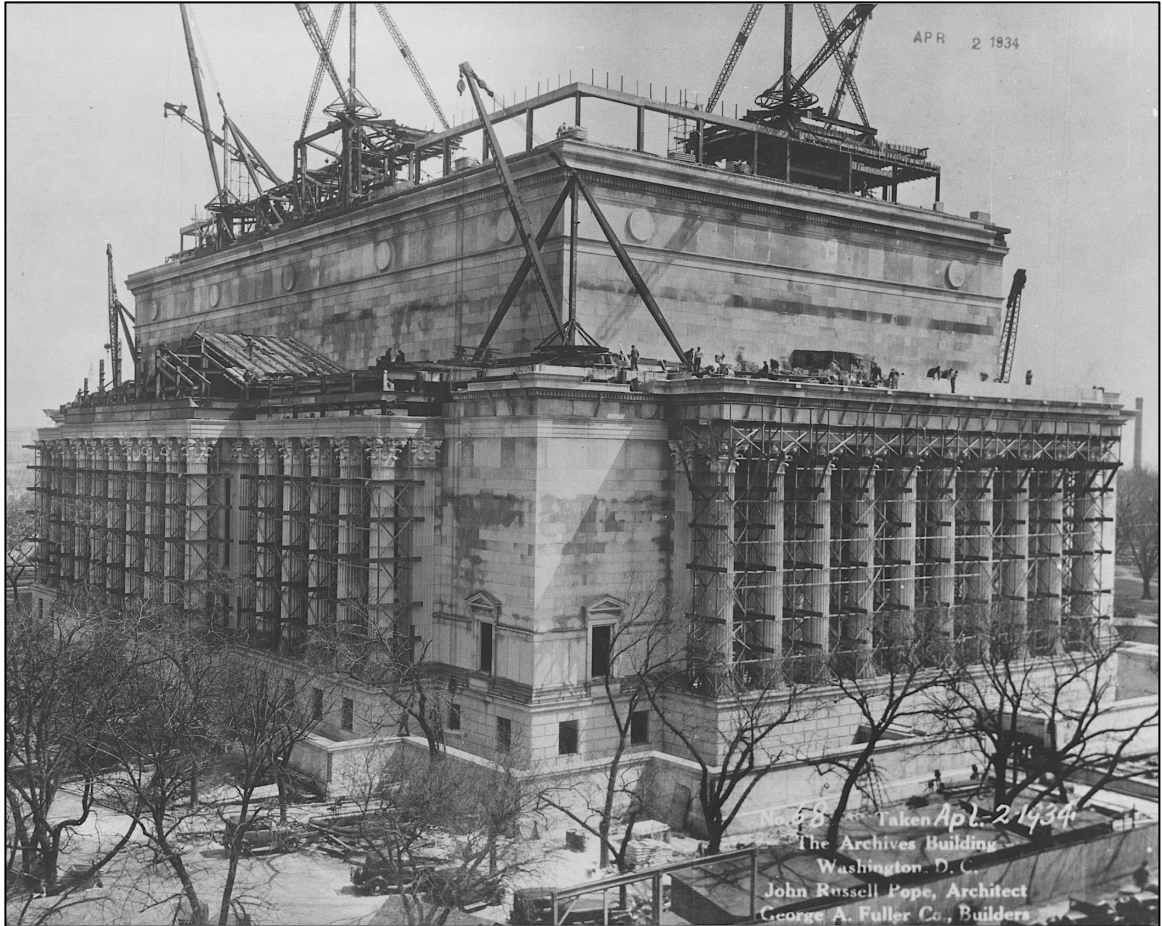
While the “archival turn” in Humanities has, by and large, focused on metaphysical conceptualizations of archives; the field of Archival Science privileges the study of the



physical characteristics and material importance of our modern archival records and repositories. Both assume the nation-state and continental archival contexts as their units of analysis. Drawing on (Spanish, Anglophone, and Francophone) Caribbean literature, history, and politics, *The Archipelago and the Archive* thus attends to ways that Afro-Caribbean and Caribbean diasporic narratives representing (trans)national archival practices illustrate archipelagic and decolonial conceptions of archiving and diasporic belonging; which I find capable of bridging the material/metaphysical, national/transnational, together with insular/continental interruptions that today characterize modern archival theory and practice in the Humanities and beyond.

# Chapter 1

## “The Past is Prologue”: Archival Anxieties and Imperial Aspirations on Stage at the U.S. National Archives



**Figure 1.1** Photograph of the almost complete construction of the exterior of the National Archives Building, Washington, D.C., April 2, 1934. (Records of the National Archives)

### 1.1 The Modern (National) Archives

Major historical events set across the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century advance the emergence of the nation-state as a modern system of political organization in contrast to preceding monarchical states of governance. Forms of social and political revolution that accompanied the rise of the modern nation-state made way for the foundation of many of Europe's national archival programs and institutions as we know them today (Schellenberg

3-10). Illustrative examples of the crossing of revolution and national independence movements in conjunction with the emergence of the modern (read: national) archive include: The *Archives Nationales* of France intermittently established between 1790-1794 owing to the events of the French Revolution in 1789-1799; and the *Nationaal Archief* of the Netherlands first formed 1802 in the midst of the French occupation of the Low Countries (1794–1815). In the case of 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain, 1838 marked not only the complete emancipation (freedom without apprenticeship) of all enslaved peoples, but that year also saw the passing of the Public Record Office Act. This Act would, in turn, give rise to the British Public Records Office: a predecessor of what today is known as the National Archives of the United Kingdom.

Shifting from the place 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe to the context of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century North America, we find parallels in terms of the establishment of federal archival programs coinciding with the advancement of national independence movements. The British North America (BNA) Act, which came into effect on July 1, 1867 and then renamed the Constitution Act of 1867, established the federal Dominion of Canada as a self-governing entity within the British Empire; six years later in 1872, the Public Archives of Canada (today, the National Archives of Canada) were created. As to Mexico, the national archive formed in 1821. That was the same year that marked the culmination of the Mexican War of Independence, at the end of which Spain formally acknowledged Mexico's national independence. In the abovementioned examples, major sociopolitical shifts and national revolutions coincide with the institutionalization of modern archives dedicated to the preservation of the nation's documentary history (both past and present records). We find, however, a striking exception in the case of the United States and the

related history of what is today known as the country's independent National Archives and Record Administration (NARA). It was not until 1934, a century and a half after the writing of the U.S. Declaration of Independence (1776) and the occasion of the U.S. American Revolution more broadly (1775-1783), that a federal archives program would formally come into being in the United States.

In *Guardian of Heritage: Essays on the History of the National Archives*, Donald R. McCoy aptly summarizes the deferred dawning of the U.S. National Archives, acknowledging how:

During the nineteenth century, most European countries would establish national archival institutions, and French, German, and Dutch archivists would develop an impressive body of archival theory and practice. The United States was, however, left at the starting gate. (1)

Nevertheless, in due time the United States would match and surpass, even, its Western European (and North American) counterparts in terms of the status and power of its national archives program. The argument stands that the twentieth century marks both the creation of a domestic (read: national) archives in the United States and its global ascendance after that.

The twentieth century would also mark the U.S.'s meteoric rise as a postcolonial empire and a global, economic and military superpower, the same. 1934 alone, the same year that U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the National Archives Act into law, marked several key developments in the history of twentieth-century U.S. American imperialism and the country's relationship to its formal and informal insular territories abroad. For example, the Tydings-McDuffie Act, also known as the Philippine Independence Act (Pub.L. 73-127, 48 Stat. 456), was enacted March 24, 1934. This U.S. federal law transformed the, then, U.S. colony of the Philippines into a U.S.

commonwealth; it also outlined the parameters for a ten-year transition period, at the end of which the Philippines' would gain its national independence from the U.S. Moreover, May 29, 1934, was the date that the U.S. and Cuba signed the Treaty of Relations of 1934. The international accord abrogated the 1903 Treaty of Relations and, in that, repealed most of the legal provisions of the Platt Amendment signed on March 2, 1901. An imperial reform by design, the Platt Amendment, on the one hand, provided the conditions for the withdrawal of the U.S. military from Cuba at the end of the Spanish-American War (April 21-13, 1898); on the other, it allowed extensive U.S. intervention in Cuban international and domestic affairs for the purported mission of ensuring Cuban independence. Incidentally, 1934 also marked the end of the U.S. occupation of Haiti first initiated in 1915.

Robert J. C. Young defines imperialism as:

the exercise of power either through direct conquest or (latterly) through political and economic influence that effectively amounts to a similar form of domination: both involved the practice of power through facilitating institutions and ideologies. (27)

Of particular significance to the scope of this chapter, then, is Young's indication that imperialism operates as a consequence of the deliberate establishment and execution of institutional and ideological instantiations of power. It is through my concern for both the concrete *building* (growth) and *buildings* (edifices) germane to 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S. American imperialism that I arrived at my study of the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration. Using post- and de-colonial criticism to approach the "archival turn" in the Humanities, I mount a critique of the National Archives' monumental—that is, its architectural, memorial, and ceremonial—features. Here, my analysis of the physical grounds of the U.S. National Archives Building reinforces the dissertation's materialist

response to the “archival turn” in the Humanities. Highlighting the physical conditions and character of the U.S. National Archives Building in Washington, D.C., then, the chapter ultimately ushers an institutional critique of 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S. American imperialism.

Overall, the chapter illustrates the degree to which the U.S. Archives Building in the nation's capital represents both a literal and symbolic *foundation*—a physical structure and ideological framework alike—that supports the promulgation of 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S. American imperialism. In support of a critical analysis of empire concerning the architecture of the U.S. National Archives Building in Washington, D.C., I close read both the discursive and visual language surrounding the history of the federal archives program in the United States. The chapter opens with a review of the significant events leading up to the construction of the National Archives Building at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, turning then to a close reading of U.S. President Herbert Hoover’s remarks during the ceremonial laying of the cornerstone of the National Archives on February 20, 1933. It is here, at the event of the cornerstone laying ceremony, that I anchor and build my own analysis of the physical space of the National Archives Building.

To illustrate how the ideology of colonialism and imperialism are reflected in the decorative features of National Archives Building in Washington, D.C., the third section of the chapter mounts a comparative reading of *The Tempest* (1611) and an inscription—itsself a reference to the William Shakespeare’s play—engraved on the front side of The Future, a statue erected in 1935 besides the front entrances to the National Archives Building. Continuing to center the physical space of the National Archives Building as *grounds* for analysis, the chapter concludes with a consideration of the Enshrining of the Charters of Freedom at the National Archives Building on December 13, 1952. I analyze

video and photographs of the Enshrining of the Charters of Freedom in conjunction with the language of U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt's speech given inside of the Main Exhibition Room of the National Archives Building as part of the ceremony in question. This visual and discursive analysis of the Enshrining, in turn, facilitates analytical aperture to consider the imperial circumstances surrounding the enactment of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico on March 3, 1952. For between the example of the political developments in Puerto Rico on March 1952 and the ceremonial procession in Washington, D.C. in the month December that same year, one finds the distinct crossing of the country's continental-archival project in Washington, D.C. together with its insular-imperial enterprise in the Caribbean.

Centering the explicit and implicit meaning of the physical features (statues) and figurative gestures (public ceremonies) mounted at the U.S. National Archives Building in Washington, D.C., this chapter investigates the archival anxieties and imperial aspirations on stage at the U.S. National Archives Building in Washington D.C. As I evaluate both the material and symbolic links that exist between the *texture* of twentieth-century U.S. imperialism across the Caribbean archipelago and the *architecture* of the country's National Archives Building in the nation's capital, I consider how the transnational history of U.S. empire-*building* abroad contributes to the domestic history of the U.S. National Archives *building* in Washington, D.C., and vice versa.

Scholars have overlooked intersections that exist between the formal establishment in 1934 (and subsequent consolidation in 1952<sup>7</sup>) of a centralized, federal archives

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<sup>7</sup> 1952 marks the long-awaited movement of the Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the United States of America from the Library of Congress to the National Archives Building in downtown Washington, D.C. on Saturday, December 13. Two days later on Monday, December 15, all three—the Declaration of Independence, Constitution of the United States, Bill of Rights (already at the National Archives Building

institution and program in the continental U.S., on the one hand, and efforts by the U.S. government and military to retain its imperial holdings in Puerto Rico (amongst other global, archipelagic contexts), on the other hand. Moreover, while standing conceptualizations of the archive have evaluated the modern archive as a national and therefore domestic, sociocultural and political phenomenon originating and operating *within* the nation-state exclusively, I argue otherwise. This opening chapter demonstrates that in the case of the history of the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C. in particular and the history of the U.S. National Archives and Record Administration more broadly, we find an example of a modern, national archives whose arrangement is shaped no less by imperialism *abroad* than it is by nationalism at *home*.

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## 1.2 Archival Antecedents

Efforts to construct a national archive in the continental U.S. predates the early twentieth-century and the signing of the National Archives Act of 1934. As a matter of national debate dating as far back as the early days of the republic, members of the U.S. government and public alike had long since made calls for a centralized archival repository capable of ensuring the immediate safety and future, physical longevity of the country's public records. These regular proposals for a national archives building would not come to fruition until the twentieth century, however. Up until then, the country's federal records existed in a state of perpetual disarray.

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since 1941)—are for the first time united for the sake of their enshrined in the Rotunda of the Charters of Freedom at the National Archives Building. Earlier this same year, the Constitution of Puerto Rico was put into effect on Friday, July 25, 1952.





**Figure 1.2** Construction of the foundation for the National Archives Building, September 1, 1932. (Records of the National Archives)

The "History" page of the National Archives website, for example, informs readers how before the construction of the National Archives, "Federal records were kept in basements, attics, abandoned buildings, and other storage places with little security or concern for storage conditions" ("National Archives History"). Enclosed within such haphazard storage conditions, the public records of the United States government were subject to the regular threat of disaster.<sup>8</sup> To but briefly return to McCoy's opening essay in *Guardian of Heritage*, there one learns how in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries environmental factors routinely threatened the integrity of the nation's federal records:

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<sup>8</sup> I further explore the question of archival disasters in the third chapter of the dissertation. Here, I wish to underscore the environmental precarity that characterized the storage conditions of public records of the United States government before the construction of a National Archives Building in the 1930s.

Fire was only the most dramatic and visible threat to safety of the federal government's records. Chemicals, extreme cold or heat, water, mold, insects, animals, and theft were among the other that took their toll. Moreover, negligence in arranging and storing records had its impact as many documents were impossible to find. (1)

Along with the natural, environmental factors mentioned above, social developments too threatened the health of the nation's historical records.

In 1904, the Public Archives Commission published "The Guide to the Archives of the Government of the United States in Washington." An important step towards the formal establishment of a national archives program, "The Guide" was expanded in the form of a second edition published in 1907. Nonetheless, the events of World War II (July 1914 – November 1918) would forestall further progress on the construction of a national archives building. At risk in the preservation (or loss) of the federal government's records was not only the subject of the country's history or, rather, the documentary remnants of country's national *past*. Also in jeopardy was the matter of the nation's *future*. In time, the congressional Elliot-Fernald Act (also known as the Public Buildings Act of 1926) would mark a significant step forward in the greater effort to create a U.S. National Archives.

The Public Building Act of 26 financed the construction of new government office buildings throughout the Federal Triangle Area of downtown Washington, D.C. including a national archives building.<sup>9</sup> Four years later in 1930, the space occupied by the Central Market—that is, the block in the nation's capital bounded by 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> streets and what was then B Street (today Continental Avenue) and Pennsylvania Avenue—was selected as

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<sup>9</sup> Construction of the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C. precedes the signing of the National Archives Act (1934). Construction originally began on May 26, 1926, and it did not end until 1937. Since then, the U.S. National Archives—today the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)—has grown significantly. Presently, the NARA resembles a national network or “archipelago” consisting of 14 regional archives (including of the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C.), 18 federal records centers, and 15 presidential libraries.

the future site of the U.S. National Archives. The demolition of the Central Marker would take place between January and May of 1931. That September, the ground was broken on the future site of the National Archives Building. The building's formal construction would not commence until a year later in September 1932. On February 20, 1933, the departing 31<sup>st</sup> President of the United States, Republican Herbert Hoover, laid the cornerstone of the National Archives Building in a public ceremony. Finally, the long-awaited dream of a National Archives Building was attained.

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### 1.3 The Cornerstone of the National Archives

As part of the symbolic function of the day's ceremonial events, President Hoover placed several symbolic items inside of the cornerstone of the National Archives Building.<sup>10</sup> Much like these emblematic objects in and of themselves, President Hoover's public remarks were also replete with symbolism. At approximately 2:30 PM on the afternoon of that Saturday, February 20, 1933, Hoover opened his remarks upon the laying of the cornerstone of the National Archives Building by drawing the audience's attention to the nation's foundation and the question of history and space. "The soil on which we are standing," Hoover proclaims, "is part of the original tract acquired by President Washington for the Nation's Capital" ("Remarks Upon") By invoking the image of George Washington, Hoover *embeds* and the National Archives Building—or rather, the physical

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<sup>10</sup> Virginia C. Purdy writes that several articles were encased within the cornerstone of the National Archives Building, including: "a Bible, copies of the Constitution of the United States and the Declaration of Independence, an American flag, copies of the public acts authorizing the construction of the building, letters of appointment of the Archives Advisory Committee, autographed engravings of President Hoover and Secretary of the Treasury Mills, a 1932 Treasury Department telephone directory, the letterhead of the Office of the Architect, a program of the ceremonies, and a copy of each Washington daily newspaper" (1985).

space over which the new National Archives Building would now rest—into a larger historical narrative of U.S. American independence.

This act of historical “emplotment” foregrounds the national values of revolution and independence, yet also it elides a larger, historical background of North American Native American genocide and dispossession (White 84). Close reading the language of Hoover's ceremonial remarks; then, one sees the degree to which the National Archives Building is built, both literally and figurative, upon the violent act(ions) of historical



**Figure 1.3** Photograph of the cornerstone ceremony for the National Archives Building, February 20, 1933. (Records of the National Archives)

erasure. In the case of the ceremony of the laying of the cornerstone of the National Archives Building in 1933, one comes to bear witness, then, to an instantiation of what Achille Mbembe identifies as "chronophagy." For Mbembe, the relationship that exists

between the nation-state, on the one hand, and its national archives, on the other, is one that fundamentally:

rests on a paradox. On the one hand, there is no state without archives—without its archives. On the other hand, the very existence of the archive constitutes a constant threat to the state. The reason is simple. More than on its ability to recall, the power of the state rests on its ability to consume time, that is, to abolish the archive and anaesthetize the past. The act that creates the state is an act of 'chronophagy'. It is a radical act because consuming the past makes it [the state] possible to be free from all debt. The constitutive violence of the state rests, in the end, on the possibility, which can never be dismissed, of refusing to recognise [*sic*] (or to settle) one or another debt. This violence is defined in contrast to the very essence of the archive since the denial of the archive is equivalent to, *stricto sensu*, a denial of debt. (23)

In the case of the United States, then, the existence of a National Archives Building both *engenders* and *endangers* a national imaginary punctuated by the lofty ideals of revolution, independence, liberty, justice, and equality for all, amongst others. Accordingly, the national archive functions to *ground* the history of nation-state to the degree that it *uproots* certain elements of the history in question.

Returning to the language of Hoover's ceremonial remarks, the President mentions the "original track" of "soil *on which* we are standing," at the same time that he neglects to address the original people *to whom* the land in question once belongs: the native Algonquian or Algonquian-speaking people known as the Nacotchtank. The dark irony of the situation is not lost. Through the discursive power and "epistemic violence" of Hoover's remarks, the National Archives Building is transformed from a physical site for the recollection of the nation's colonial past to, instead, an ideological framework in service eradicating the constitutive violence of the nation's foundational history: a function of national archives everywhere but the colonized territories of the Americas in particular here (Spivak "Can the Subaltern Speak" 24).

Hoover's comments work to exclude the national histories of violence in question from the contemporary meaning of the National Archives Building. The President's remarks continue by explaining that:

The building which is rising here will house the name and record of every patriot who bore arms for our country in the Revolutionary War, as well as those of all later wars. Further, there will be aggregated here the most sacred documents of our history, the originals of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution of the United States. Here will be preserved all the other records that bind State to State and the hearts of all our people in an indissoluble union. ("Remarks Upon")

As the proposed future home of "Charters of Freedom" (which include the Declaration of Independence, Constitution of the United States and Bill of Rights), the National Archives Building is expected to function as a repository for the nation's foundational documents and, thus, the country's national history. Here, the National Archives Building and the documents stored therein are projected to serve as a material "bind[ing]" agent uniting the national body politic of the Republic, which at the time comprised of 48 States.<sup>11</sup> Before it is described as a repository for the nation's "most sacred documents," however, the National Archives Building is specified as a site of commemoration.

Hoover's comments express that the *arche*—that is the *guiding principle*—of the National Archives Building in the remembrance and, therein, the monumentalization of the nation's military history. Here, the physical space and ideological capacity of the National Archives Building becomes *complete*—from the conjunction of the Latin intensive word form of the prefix *com-* and *place* meaning "to fill"—by the country's (trans)national histories of war or, rather, the historical documentation of the such that remain. In other

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<sup>11</sup> The territory of Alaska gains statehood on March 1, 1959, and Hawai'i is granted the same on August 8 of that same year. In consequence, Alaska and Hawaii now represent the 49<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> constituent statal-political entities of the union of the United States of American.

words, within the semantic field of the Hoover's official comments, the National Archives Building, I here propose, represents both "a temple and a cemetery" of war (Mbembe 19). Then, the nation's history of war *fills* and *fulfills* the National Archives Building.

Hoover extends his remark at the ceremony by imaging the space of the National Archive Building and its contents as the "living habitation" of "The romance of our history" (Remarks Upon"). Here, I want to underscore the literary connotations of the word romance. The Oxford English Dictionary defines romance as, "A *fictitious* narrative... in which the settings or the events depicted are *remote* from everyday life, or in which sensational or exciting events or adventures form the central theme" (OED.). In his use of the word "romance," Hoover aims to represent the National Archives Building as a national *fancy*, that is a "temple of our history" and "one of the most beautiful buildings in America."

I, on the other hand, wish to read the use of the word "romance" here to also suggest a national *fantasy*: a sensational national *history* detached from reality. Through this bilateral reading of the word romance, one comes to an understanding of the space of the National Archives Building and its physical holdings as a key site for the production of what Doris Sommer names "foundational fictions." Here, I am not drawing upon the contents (i.e., the national romances or romances of nineteenth-century Latin America), so much as I am emulating the methodology, of Sommer' research and its critical understanding of the fundamental relationship that exists between discourse, narrative, and nation-building.

The task at hand in this chapter is thus twofold: I propose that the modern, national archive represents an architectural "genre" of nation-and-empire-building. I therefore

understand the physical features and figurative gestures of U.S. National Archives Building to represent a repository for the nation's history, on the one hand, and the nation-state's foundational fictions, on the other: the fiction of U.S. American independence apart from Native American disposition; or even the fiction of U.S. American exceptionalism beyond the U.S. American imperialism in the Caribbean, amongst others grounding myths. We can also understand the national archives as a foundational fiction to the extent that this federal institution represents a physical (infra)structure—an architectural *foundation*—for amassing and preserving a complete record(ing)—itself a conceptual ideal or *fiction*—of the nation's history. Lest we forget that the nation-state is, in and of itself, a sociopolitical “fiction,” what Benedict Anderson calls an “imagined community” and whose power structures, Quijano reminds us, leads its members to experience the nation-state “as an identity” (Quijano, “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America” 557).

In the final section of his remarks, Hoovers goes on to suggest that the National Archives Building represents, “an expression of the American soul... of the American character” (“Remarks Upon”) In the figure of National Archives Building we find the crossing of violence and myth. Violence, it seems, represents a—if not *the*—ideological *cornerstone* of the nation's modern history.<sup>12</sup> As an example of what J. L. Austin (1962)

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<sup>12</sup> Aníbal Quijano reminds us that, “In Europe... the nation-state began as a process of colonization... that began as an internal colonization of peoples with different identities who inhabited the same territories as the colonizers... [and] continued, simultaneously, carrying an imperial or external colonization of peoples that not only had different identities than those the colonizers, but inhabited territories that we not considered spaces of internal domination of the colonizers” (Quijano 2000b, 558). The same can be said about the history of nationalization in what is now known as the United States of America. Only that in the case of the United States, the violent, colonial relations established in the 17<sup>th</sup> century between the British colonizers and the local Native American communities of North America varied from those previously organized in the 16<sup>th</sup> century between the indigenous groups of the Caribbean, Central, and South America and the invading Spanish colonizers. While the latter viewed Native Americans as the occupants of Spanish territory, for the British colonizers, “The Indians did not inhabit occupied territory,” but instead were, “formally recognized as nations” (Quijano 2000b, 560). These differences, amongst others, in the architecture of European-Native American relations in the early-colonial Americas would have major implications on future processes of



labels a “performative utterance,” the final line of Hoover’s remarks both *describes* and *authorizes* an archival action of national proportions: “I now lay the cornerstone of the Archives Building and dedicate it in the name of the people of the United States” (“Remarks Upon”). Bearing nationalist paraphernalia (i.e., the Declaration of Independence, Constitution of the United States, etc.), the cornerstone of the National Archives Building is thus set in place, and in this way, a national archives program in the United States decisively begins to take physical form. Like so, from the top of Hoover’s lips to the bottom of the building’s foundational cornerstone, the U.S. National Archives is *enunciated* and, in there, *enacted* into being. My claim here, which I formally unpack in the next part of the chapter, is, then, that an analysis of *both* the physical features and figurative gestures of the U.S. National Archives brings us to an integral understanding of power differential: chiefly, the crossing of archival power, on the one hand, and the coloniality of power, on the other. We now turn to the matter of the momentous signing of the Act of June 19, 1934—the “National Archives Act.”

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#### **1.4 Enacting the National Archives**

A year after outgoing President Herbert Hoover’s ceremonial laying of the cornerstone of the National Archives Building, the newly elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt would sign the Congressional Act of June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1934 (commonly referred to as the “National Archives Act”) into action. This congressional Act worked, “To establish a National Archives of the United States Government, and,” as the document’s opening informs us, “for other purposes” as well (H.R. 8910). In addition to calling for the creation of a National Archive, the “National Archives Act” of 1934 also mandated the creation of

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(racialized) nationalization during the first major wave of global, national independence movements in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

an Office of Archivist of the United States, whose privileges included an annual salary of \$10,000<sup>13</sup>; and whose authority extended to setting the “rules and regulations for the government of the National Archives,” as well as the “full power to inspect personally or by deputy the records of any agency of the United States Government whatsoever and wheresoever located” (H.R. 8910).

Altogether, the "National Archives Act" consist of eleven, sequential orders outlining specific measures in service of the establishment of a new central building and an antegrated system for safeguarding the country's public, documentary history—above all, the operational records of the Legislative, Executive, and Judicial branches of the U.S. government. For example, section 5 of the Act calls for the creation of two task groups to support all services and responsibilities charged to the National Archivist and National Archives alike. These tasks groups included both a National Historical Publications Commission and a National Archives Council. As reflected in the language of their respective formal titles, the Commission was here envisioned as aiding in the formal, “preparation and publication of annual and special reports on the archives and records of the Government, guides, inventory lists, catalogues and other instruments facilitating the use of collection;” the Council, on the other hand, was organized with the goal of supporting the National Archivist in the task of defining “the classes of material which shall be transferred to the National Archives Building and establish regulations governing such transfers” (H.R. 8910-2).

Stated otherwise, the Commission would represent the “inward-facing” side of the National Archives, therein supporting the management, preservation, and replication even

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<sup>13</sup> Using the U.S. government’s CPI Inflation Calculator, we learn that \$10,000 in June 1934 is equivalent to \$182,802.24 in June 2017 ([https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation\\_calculator.htm](https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm)).

of the existing records of the nation—which is to say, *the past*. As the National Archive’s “outward-facing” wing, however, the Council would assist in regulating not only the formal accession of all *present*, which is to say currently in use, and *future* records of the nation, but also the proper protocols for discarding of all public records no longer deemed to be of any historical import as well. Nevertheless, the eleven numbered bureaucratic directives outlined in the “National Archives Act” are not exclusively pragmatic in intent, as in the abovementioned example of the Act’s fifth section. In the political



*Figure 1.4* Original seal of the U.S. National Archives, 1934 (Records of the National Archives)

language of the National Archives Act of 1934, one finds an explicit consideration of both the utilitarian and emblematic features of the proposed U.S. National Archives administration.

Sylvia Wynter reminds us that “The use of symbols, in myth, religion, legend, literature has powerful consequences,” and the same, I here contend, is as much the case within the realm of government and national politics (Wynter 1977, 11). Section 8 of the National Archives Act, for example, signals, “That the National Archives shall have an official seal which will be judicially noticed” (H.R. 8910-2). Today, the less-known official seal of the National Archives alludes to the iconography of the more-ubiquitous Great Seal of the United States used to authenticate documents issued by the U.S. federal government. Like the Great Seal, the official seal of the National Archives features a circle, at the center of which one finds the image of the national bird, the bald eagle, with its wings and legs

spread open in a display. In both the Great Seal and the seal of the National Archives, the eagle supports a red, white, and blue shield over its chest, its left talon holding 13 arrows (a reference to the Thirteen Colonies), and the right talon grasping an olive branch symbolizing peace.

On the Great Seal of the United States atop the depicted eagle's head, one finds printed the national motto (i.e., *E Pluribus Unum* 'Out of many, one'). In the case of the official seal of the National Archives, however, the motto of the United States is replaced by the motto of the National Archives. Here, the lettered scroll depicted on the seal of the National Archives reads *Littera Scripta Manet*, a Latin expression that in English means "The voice, once heard, perishes; the letter, once written, remains" or, rather, "The spoken word perishes, but the written word remains."

If the case stands that the voice (once heard) perishes and the letter (once written) endures, then the question remains: Within the spectral history and material contents of the National Archives Building in Washington, D.C., itself the *foundation*—the physical structure and ideological framework alike—of the U.S. nation-state, whose voices are that vanishes? And which records in particular happen to remain—and why? Indeed, the question of who and what develop into the *subjects* of history and, conversely, who and what become *subjected* to the machinations of history is, at its core, a matter of power—above all, "the *uneven power* in the production of sources, archives, and narratives" (Trouillot 27; my emphasis).

In "Americanity as a Concept, or the Americas in the Modern World System," Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein demonstrate how, "even when colonial status would end, coloniality would not. It continues in the form of a socio-cultural hierarchy of

European and non-European,” adding that, “The hierarchy of coloniality manifested itself in all domains—political, economic, and not least of all cultural” (550). These existing-and-emboldened, Eurocentric socio-cultural hierarchies, themselves evidence of, “The persistence of a colonial culture in the present,” Ramón Grosfoguel and Chloé S. Georas contend, “informs and constitutes social power today” (156). Moreover, “In history,” Trouillot also reminds us, “power begins at the source” (29). Synthesizing these decolonial authors' claims about the relevance of coloniality today and the structures of state power, we come to the following understanding: That in the history of the United States and its modern, national institutions of power (of which the National Archives is its most foundational, I here argue), the ultimate source of its power is but the “coloniality of power” (Quijano “Coloniality of Power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America”).

Rereading the motto of the U.S. National Archives through a decolonial framework of analysis, *Littera Scripta Manet* reads simultaneously as a maxim expressing the endurance of the written record, just it as also alludes to the lastingness of coloniality in and of itself. The colonial elisions (re)produced through the power of President Herbert Hoover’s comments at the ceremonial laying of the cornerstone of the new National Archives Building in 1933 explicitly evidence the crossing of the coloniality of power and the power of the archive. There and then, it is the written words of the colonizer in the form of the articles encased within the cornerstone of the National Archives Building Virginia C. Purdy (i.e., a Bible, copies of the Constitution of the United States, and the Declaration of Independence, etc.) that *remain*. It is the voices of the Indigenous communities of North America, now murdered, colonized and dispossessed, that *perish*.

In this way, the national-archival imagery reflected in and through the official seal of the U.S. National Archives in particular—and the various forms of written, spoken, and visual communication more broadly related to the history of the National Archives Building—forces us to grapple with the archival implications of the coloniality of power. As a metonymic emblem, the official seal of the National Archives speaks to an explicit understanding on the part of the writers (and cosigners) of the National Archives Act of 1934 concerning the worldmaking power that exists in symbols. In the case of the National Archives of the United States, then, the creation and projection of the country's national history, identity, sovereignty and, in that respect, *power* are all contingent not only on the *conditions* of the physical dimensions the U.S. National Archives (its edifice and records of evidence) but the *connotation* of that institutions' symbolic expressions as well (the official seal of the National Archives being a case example of such).

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### 1.5 “What Is Past Is Prologue”

Outside the northeastern entrance to the National Archives Building in downtown Washington, D.C. alongside the corner of 7th Street NW and Pennsylvania Avenue, one finds an outdoor sculpture, in fact, a statue of a woman, named Future.<sup>14</sup> The veiled woman

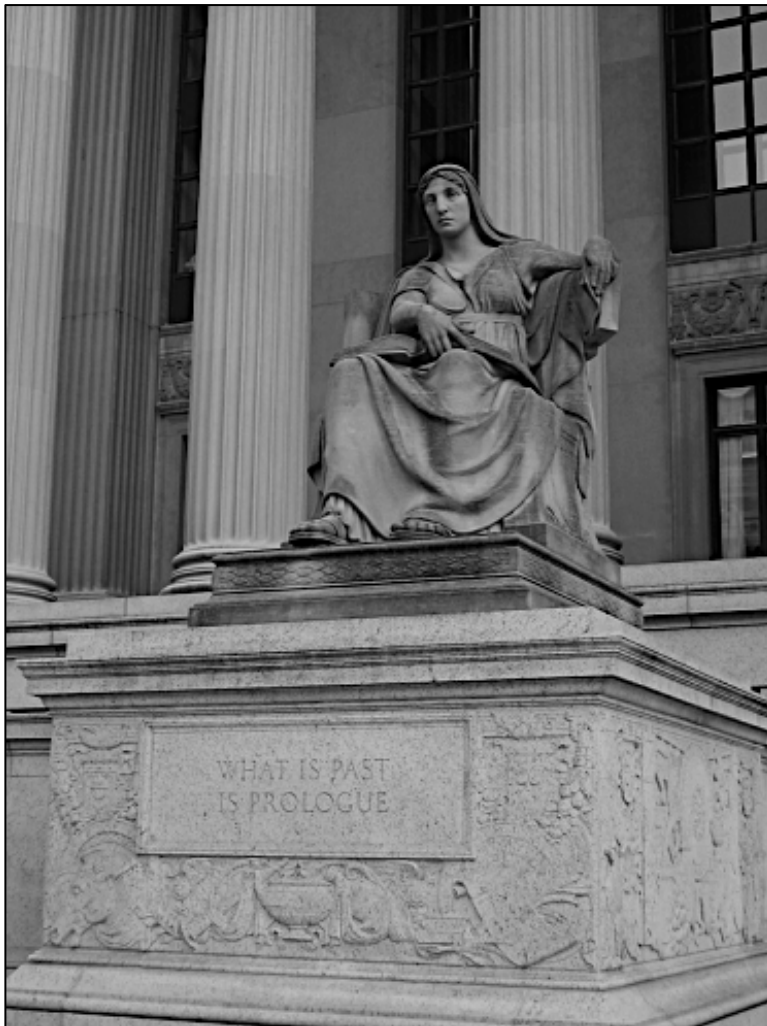
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<sup>14</sup> As a whole, the sculpture consists of two parts: the figure of Future measuring approximately 20 x 8 x 12 feet and a rectangular base approximately 12 x 12 x 15 feet, over which rests Future and the chair in which she reclines. Designed by Robert I. Aitken and carved out of Indiana limestone by the Piccirilli Brothers Company from 1933-1935, Future (originally name Present) is one of three additional statues (i.e., Past, Heritage, and Guardianship) decorating the north- and south-side entrances to the National Archives Building.

that is Future clutches a set of documents in her left hand, and with her right hand, she keeps open a book resting on her lap. On the front-side of the ornamental base beneath the seated Future, one finds an inscription that reads: "WHAT IS PAST IS PROLOGUE"—itself a phrase that originally appears in William Shakespeare's final play *The Tempest* (1610-11).

Only in recognizing the larger implication of Antonio's deep-seated artifice and sly—an evil that spans the entire story world of Shakespeare's play, its past and present time-frames alike—can one fully appreciate how profound Antonio's words to Sebastian are in

**Figure 1.5** "What is Past is Prologue" inscribed on base of Future located on northeast corner of the National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. (Photograph was taken by Flickr user Salticidae: <https://flic.kr/p/48c3go>)



and of themselves. To cite in full the character's encoded statement from Act 2, Scene 1 of the play, Antonio tells Sebastian, "And by that destiny to perform an act/of which what's past is prologue what to come/ In yours and my discharge" (2.1.288-290). In contemporary English, this citations reads: Being it our destiny to survive the shipwreck, we were given an act to carry out that, in

fact, reenacts past. The question remains then: Why is Shakespeare's Antonio—that is, the plays most villainous of characters and an archetype for conquest—cited in the form of an inscription at the base of a sculpture named Future that literally sits beside the northern entrance to the U.S. National Archives Building in downtown Washington, D.C.? Stated otherwise, what is the context, that is the reason, for which Antonio's fraught words are inscribed into the physical surface of the National Archives Building; and conversely, what content, which is to say resonance, does Antonio's statement project into our understanding of the history (and future) of the National Archives Building? In short, what are the implications, both real and symbolic, for the fact that Antonio's words (and therein Shakespeare final play *The Tempest*) are commemorated at the National Archives Building? And how exactly might critical theory help us to explore, if not answer, such questions?

Today, we understand the word statue to mean: "A representation in the round of a person, animal, etc., which is sculptured, moulded, or cast in marble, metal, plaster, or a similar material; esp. such a representation of a god, allegorical figure, or eminent person, usually life-size or larger" (OED). A type of sculpture work, statues are usually distinguished by their physical embodiment or manifestation of personification and allegory. The formal study of statues, it can thus be said, demands that one engages with the question (and politics) of the narrative. The methodology of sculpture analysis is thus akin, I argue, to the methodology of literary analysis: both modes of critical inquiry-visual and discursive analysis, alike-bear a practice of "close reading." Edward Said aptly reminds us, however, that: "no reading is neutral or innocent, and by the same token every text and



every reader is to some extent the product of a theoretical standpoint, however implicit or unconscious such a standpoint may be" (Said 173).

For the scope of the dissertation chapter but my analysis in this chapter, in particular, the broader context I here choose to close read is less story world than it is the real world, more place than it is space—and always four-dimensional: the grounds and walls of the U.S. National Archives Building. For the scope of this section of the chapter, however, the subtext that I wish us to engage with is that of the abovementioned statue and inscription. Looking to the statue of Future and its Shakespearian base text, I inquire (herein rehearsing Said's point above): what is the "theoretical standpoint," however implicit or unconscious it may be, that produces the art and architecture at the National Archives Building and that, in return, produces me as reader within the context of this dissertation chapter?

In Act 2, Scene 1 of the play, the dubious Antonio questions the cunning Sebastian about the possible political consequences of their crew's shipwrecked arrival onto the "uninhabited island"—which, undenounced to Antonio and the other castaways, has since served as home to Antonio's older brother, Prospero, and his daughter, Miranda, during their years in exile away from Milan. At this point of the play, Ferdinand (under the bidding of Prospero, that is) is separated from the other surviving members of the shipwreck. Ferdinand (son of Alonso, the King of Naples, and, thus, the rightful heir to the throne) is presumed to have drowned during the catastrophic events of the shipwreck. "Tis as impossible that he's undrowned," proclaims Antonio; Sebastian, in tepid agreement, replies: "I have no hope/ That he's undrowned" (2.1.268-21). With Ferdinand gone, then, the question of Alonso's successor emerges.

To murder Alonso, Antonio turns to conscript Sebastian as part of his dubious plot against the King. The threat of murder is all the more eminent in that the reader/audience here finds Alonso asleep and not far from the two conspirators. Antonio injects hope into Sebastian: "O, out of that 'no hope'/ What great hope have you!" (2.1.272-73). As it is impossible for Ferdinand to return from the dead (and thus inherit his father's throne), Antonio expresses his opinion that Sebastian—indeed, King Alonso's younger brother—should become the future King of Naples instead. Testing the impact of his manipulative appeals to Sebastian's ego and lust for power, Antonio asks the captivated Sebastian, "Will you grant with me/ That Ferdinand is drowned?"—that is: Do you, Sebastian, agree with me that Ferdinand has drowned (2.1.276-77)? Here, Antonio's question proves less an inquiry than it is an insistence. He explicitly gestures to Ferdinand's death; implicitly, however, he is pointing to a future moment in Sebastian's life wherein assume the throne as the next King of Naples. Seduced by Antonio's colluding charm, Sebastian reiterates his belief that Ferdinand has died—only this time, he speaks to Antonio with much self-assurance: "He's gone." Once more confirming Sebastian's willingness to contribute to Alonso's death, Antonio pointedly asks his co-conspirator, "Do you understand what I'm saying?" Sebastian, with terse assurance, replies: "I think I do," and, in doing so, implicitly commits himself to Antonio's dubious scheme (2.1.306-307).

Sebastian's "newfound" aspirations for future royal dominion over Naples is not, however, the first time in the larger plot of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in which one character endeavors to usurp the authority of another. There is the initial, central case of Antonio's efforts against his older brother, Prospero—the reason that Prospero (and Miranda) now live in political exile on the island. Twelve years before the opening events of the play,

Antonio usurps Prospero's authority as the rightful Duke of Milan. Having become infatuated with his study of "the liberal arts," Prospero chooses to neglect his governing duties. Dedicating himself exclusively to "secret studies" within the reclusive abode of his library, Prospero entrusts Antonio to rule over Milan for the time being (1.2.91, 95). Over time, however, Antonio exploits his limited powers. He carries out a coup against his older brother, therein robbing Prospero of his social status and political power as the (rightful) Duke of Milan. In Act 1, Scene 2 of *The Tempest*, Prospero for the first time relates to the naïve Miranda the real reason for their present insular displacement and exile. Prospero thus recounts to his daughter the course of her uncle's conspiratorial plot, and how Antonio:

new created/ The creatures [read: members of the royal court] that were mine, I say-or changed 'me,/ Or else new formed 'me-having both the key/ Of officer and office, set all hearts i' th' state/ To what tune pleased his ear, that now he was/ The ivy which had hid my princely [tree] trunk,/ And sucked my verdure out on 't. (1.2.99-105)

Despite-or rather, in spite of-his success in expelling Prospero away from his dukedom and the territory of Milan, 12 years later Antonio is no less cunning. Like an invasive species of ivy plant, Antonio's envy and guile prove transformative, voraciously so. His instinctive drive towards the continual accumulation of authority and power, it seems, knows no limits or bounds.

Having conspired against his brother in the past, Antonio now devises to "reenact" the same treachery (if not more) through Sebastian and their shared plot to murder Alonso. Within the plot of Shakespeare's play, then, it is Antonio's past that proves prologue to Sebastian's (imaginable) future. My central claim here proposes that it is the "coloniality of power" that "produces"—or, rather, reproduces—the lasting colonial logic of war and conquest that characterizes the structure of the story in Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (and its

characters) and the architecture or superstructure of the history of the U.S. National Archives Building (and its contents).

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### 1.6 National Archives, Global Anxieties

In this section of the chapter, I want to suggest that in it is in its national archives that the modern nation-state finds a viable means by which to materially evidence and symbolically display a collective *national* identity. However, in the absence of a national archive and a corresponding, collective national-historical imaginary, the nation-state struggles to construct a *global*, imperial profile. In this manner, the national-domestic archive is requisite for the realization of the global, imperial aims of any given modern nation-state. Therefore, given the United States' participation in World War I and II (out of which it emerges an economic and military leader on the global stage), the task of constructing a domestic-national archives administration and building(s) develops into a global-imperial imperative.

In all of its political ubiquity as the hegemonic order of the state, imperialism bear down on all facets of the nation-state—manifesting itself as much in local, national institutions and contexts like the National Archives, just as it converges across disparate areas of economic, social, cultural, and political influence around the globe. In their overview of the definitive features of American imperialism at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century up, Robert J. C. Young writes points out that:

The high point of general jingoistic imperialism, from 1898 to the First World War, was the period in which the United States shifted its policy from the acquisition and assimilation of contiguous territory through a militarized form of settler expansion, to one of direct acquisition and control of colonies overseas on the European model. Its success in the Spanish American War in 1898, enabled it to take over almost all of Spain's remaining colonies, notably the Philippines, Cuba, Puerto Rico... The USA then found itself in a position of repressing resistance, in Puerto Rico and by Huk guerillas in

the Philippines, to American ruled by military force. All the same, as J. A. Hobson already observed in 1902, ‘Cuba and the Philippines, and Hawaii were but the *hors d’oeuvre* to whet [*sic*] an appetite for ampler banquet’” (42)

Subsequent to the events of the Spanish American War in 1898, the (continental) United States undergoes a radical political transformation. This change culminates in the country's emergence onto the geopolitical world stage taking the form of what Lanny Thompson describes as an "imperial archipelago" (2010). Here, the acquisition of a chain of Atlantic and Pacific insular, overseas territories (i.e., the Philippines, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, and the Virgin Islands) serves as the material and ideological basis upon which the U.S. would both express and expand its new aspirations. Returning later to further talk of imperial aspirations, we first turn to the matter of national anxieties.

From its early inception, the National Archives Building in downtown Washington, D.C. had long since been proposed as the future and final resting place for the Charters of Freedom, which encompass three of the nation's most historic documents, including: The Declaration of Independence (1776), Constitution of the United States (1789), as well as Bill of Rights (1791). On the other hand, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States had safely resided in the Library of Congress since 1924. On the other hand, however, the Bill of Rights had been located inside of the National Archives Building since 1938, the year they were transferred to the central dwelling the nation's records along with other federal documents. On Saturday, December 13, 1952, an armored personnel carrier transported the Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the United States from the Library of Congress to the National Archives Building at 700 Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest. The reason for such ceremonial fanfare and pompous?

The time had finally come for the country to begin the process enshrining its Charters of Freedom at the National Archives Building!

For a detailed account of the grandeur of the military procession and martial display that represented the main-stage event of the day's ceremony, we turn to *Pieces of History*, the official blog of the National Archives of the United States. In the case of the ceremony and procession on December 13, the Declaration of Independence and Constitution of the United States were not the only national forces on public display that day; for so too were, it seems, all five branches of the United States military. Jessie Kratz, historian for the National Archives and managing editor of the Pieces of History blog, chronicles the day's events going down Pennsylvania Avenue up to the northern entrance of the National Archives Building. In their armored transportation of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States from the halls of Congress to the doors of National Archives Building, the U.S. military played a large-scale role that was nothing short of spectacular. Citing Kratz's post for Pieces of History on December 12, 2014, titled 'Carting the Charters' and its detailed description of the military process, there the historian for the National Archives explains:

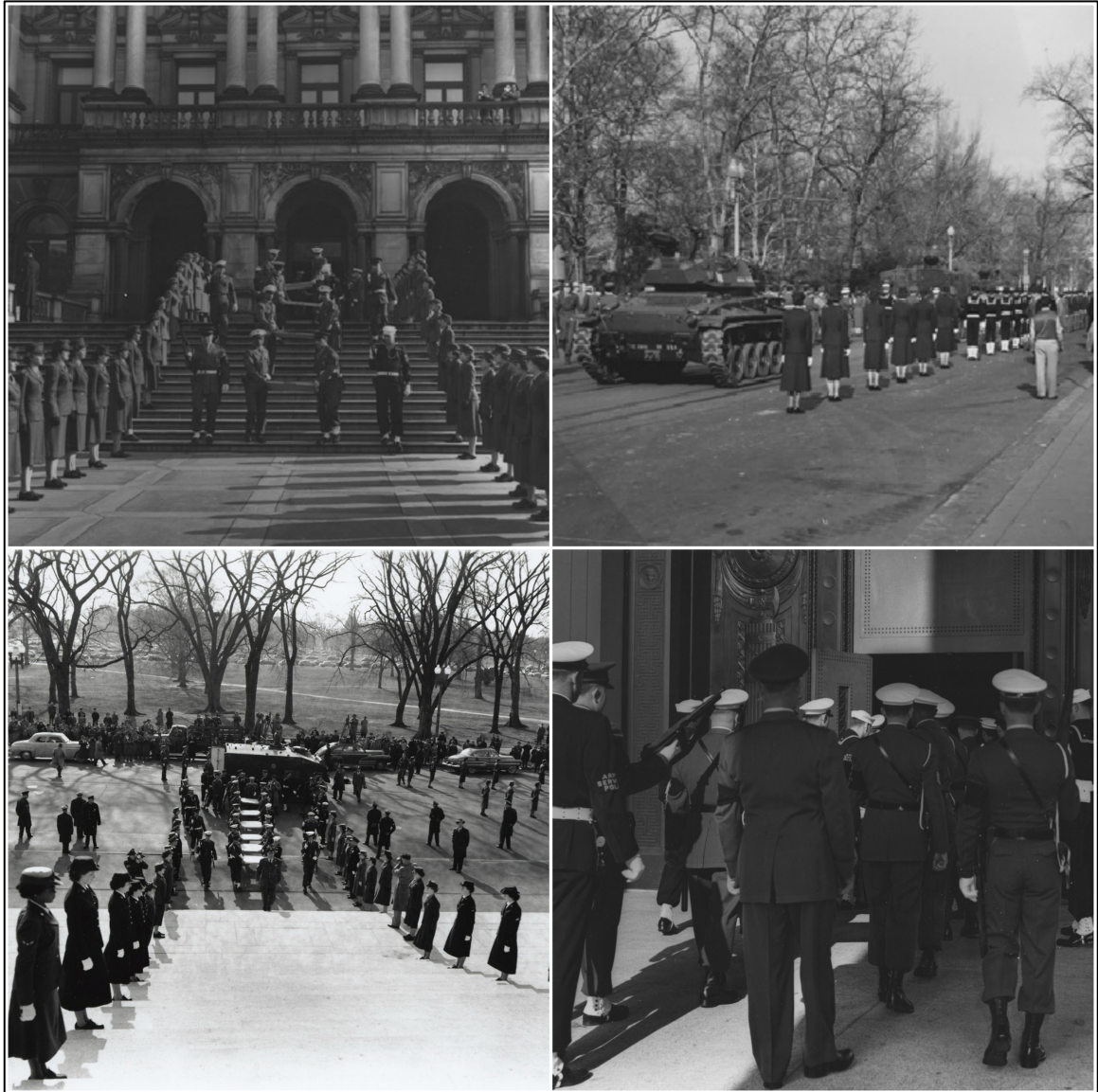
The transfer ceremony was a *spectacle*. It began with the commanding General of the Air Force Headquarters Command formally receiving the Declaration and Constitution at the Library of Congress at 11 a.m. Twelve members of the Armed Forces Special Police then carried the six sheets of parchment in their sealed cases through a cordon of 88 servicewomen and placed the boxes on a mattress in an armored Marine Corps personnel carrier. A color guard, ceremonial troops, two Army bands, two light tanks, four servicemen armed with submachine guns, and a motorcycle brigade then escorted the armored vehicle down Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues to the National Archives Building. Along the parade route were Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Marine, and Air Force personnel and the general public who came out to watch the procession. At 11:35 am, the General and 12 policemen carried the documents up to the Constitution Avenue stairs

into the Rotunda and formally delivered them into the custody of the Archivist of the United States. (“Carting the Charters”) Two days later, on Monday, December 15—that is, the national Bill of Rights Day—a second day of commemoration in the nation’s capital would take place.<sup>15</sup>

On that day, an additional ceremony at the National Archives Building had been scheduled in honor of the new Shrine of The Charters of Freedom and anticipated enshrining ceremony inside of the National Archives Building. The Declaration of Independence, Constitution of Independence, and Bill of Rights were, at last, to unite in the main exhibition room of the National Archives Building apply named the Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom. A long-anticipated dream of national is realized that day in U.S. American history. At approximately 10:30 AM on the morning of December 15, Harry S. Truman delivered his presidential speech revealing the newly enshrined Charters of Freedom to the U.S. American public and, as this section of the chapter demonstrates, the global community more broadly. Central to the chapter’s analysis of the crossing of archival power and the colonality of power, on the one hand, and the concrete *building*

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<sup>15</sup> President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Presidential Proclamation 2524 on November 27, 1941, therein instituting Bill of Rights Day. December 15, 1952, marked the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the national holiday.



(Top to bottom, left to right) **Figure 1.6** Photograph of Charters of Freedom leaving Library of Congress, **Figure 1.7** Photograph of procession making ready to move down Pennsylvania Avenue towards National Archives Building, **Figure 1.8** Photograph of Charters of Freedom arriving at National Archives, **Figure 1.9** Photograph of Charters of Freedom entering National Archives, December 13, 1952, Washington, D.C. (Records of the National Archives)

(growth) and *buildings* (edifices) of 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S. American imperialism, on the other hand, at the National Archives Building is the claim that the militarized optics of the Saturday's procession and Truman's hyperbolic comments to the national/global public that subsequent Monday demonstrates the political theater of U.S. American imperialism in the era of global Cold War politics. In this manner, the space of the National Archives Building



emerges as a national stage over which the U.S. American government rehearses and projects its global-imperial aspirations anxieties, respectively: we come to recognize the U.S. National Archives as a domestic archive<sup>16</sup> whose arrangement is shaped no less by imperialism *abroad* than it is by nationalism at *home*.

Explicitly describing the enshrining ceremony as “a symbolic act,” President Truman opens his speech to the national public in attendance (and the international public in absentia) by expressing his delight that, “the Bill of Rights is at last to be exhibited side by side with the Constitution,” while also acknowledging his belief that the Bill of Rights represents, “the most important part of the Constitution of the United States—the *only* document in the world that protects the citizen against his Government” (“Address At”; my emphasis). The tone of Truman’s comments reflects the President’s desire for his comments and the National Archives alike to project a stern sense of nationalism and U.S. American exceptionalism. The remarkable abilities of the Bill of Rights, herein the “only” document of the world over capable of protecting the individual citizen from “his Government,” is used to evidence the alleged superiority of U.S. American democracy—and conversely, the purported inferiority of Soviet communism.

Truman directly refers to the national—and global—threat of communism when he suggests that:

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<sup>16</sup> I return to the matter of the domestic archives in the fourth chapter of the dissertation, where I consider the (transnational) domestic archives of the Caribbean diaspora specifically. While this opening chapter exposing the crossing of archival power and the colonality of power apropos colonial/imperial gestures at the (national) domestic archive of the modern nation-state—the history of the U.S. National Archives here representing my case example; the closing chapter traces an alternative crossing of archival power and the colonality of power revealing a decolonial and transnational expressions of the modern archive as curated by working-class members of the diasporic communities of the Caribbean archipelago.



**Figure 1.10** Photograph of President Truman delivering principal address at unveiling ceremony, Rotunda Charters of Freedom, National Archives, Washington, D.C., December 15, 1952. (Records of the National Archives)

Today, the ideals which these three documents express are having a struggle for survival throughout the world... the threat of totalitarianism and communism. That threat still menaces freedom... All freedom-loving nations, not the United States alone, are facing a stern challenge from the Communist tyranny. ("Address At")

In the case of the National Archives and Truman's comments, then, we find an example of how in the Cold War the United States actively conscripts *all* sectors of nation's government—not just the Department of the State or the Department of Defense, for example—in its efforts to compete against the U.S.S.R. and the curb the global spread of communism. The irony and sheer hypocrisy of Truman's critique of what he elsewhere in his speech goes on to describe as the, "Invasion and conquest by Communist armies... and

Communist ideas of right and wrong," is not lost when we widen the scope of analysis to account for other key historical developments about the sphere of U.S. domestic and foreign politics in 1952 ("Address At").

Returning to the enshrining of 1952, there Truman also describes a possible communist military occupation of the continental United States as, "a horror beyond our capacity to imagine;" worse yet is the possibility of ideological conquest by communism, which Truman compares to, "a moral disaster worse than any physical catastrophe" ("Address At"). Here, Truman turns to hyperbolic language to magnify and intensify the national (and global) threat that he perceives communism as representing. This bombastic political rhetoric subsequently works to legitimize or neutralize the U.S. government's forms of physical occupation, military intervention, and ideological conquests around the globe. To the degree that the physical and ideological threats posed by communism are "beyond our capacity to imagine" and "worse" still, respectively, the U.S. government and military's efforts to avert such "disaster" must also abide by no limitations or restraints. North America's response to communism, Truman suggest, must remain unbridled and inexhaustible—correspondingly so!

If Truman's argument suggests that the *ideals* which the Charters of Freedom represent are under attack, his claim also contends, it seems, that the very *documents* and *sites* of these ideals are under siege as well. Truman's claim that, "Today, the ideals which these documents [the Charters of Freedom] express are having to struggle for survival throughout the world" thus functions as a rhetorical smokescreen for the advancement of U.S. imperialism; even if it comes at the cost of the freedoms, liberties, or rights of other nations or peoples. In other words, Truman's remarks propose that a threat to the

democratic “ideal” of American freedom marks an equivocal threat to the (geopolitical) *place* of the National Archives and the nation-state, the same. Again, we see the degree to which the U.S. American imperialism and the circumstances of the Cold War converge in the reconstruction of the U.S. National Archives from an institution with a specific, domestic jurisdiction to one with objectives and responsibilities of truly global proportions.

Truman’s anticommunist sentiments work, I argue, to transform the U.S. National Archives from a domestic institution responsible for preserving the country’s federal records and national history exclusively to a national institution of global proportions charged with the responsibility of preserving democracy abroad while advancing the foreign political interests of the U.S. American government and military as well. At one point in his speech, Truman states that the Constitution, “sets forth our idea of government... our idea of man... [and establishes] a system under which man can be free and set up a framework to protect and expand that freedom” (“Address At”).<sup>17</sup> Truman’s

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<sup>17</sup> March 10, 1952, marked Fulgencio Batista’s military coup against then Cuban President Carlos Prío Socarras. A bloodless overthrow, the coup d’etat led to Batista’s second Cuban presidency (1952-1959). Favored by U.S. American-based corporations, President Batista would go on to lead an eight-year Cuban dictatorship politically and financially backed the U.S. government.

Furthermore, the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) (an agency of the United States government established in 1946 after World War II for the purpose advancing atomic science and technology under peacetime) scheduled on April 22, 1952 an atomic bomb test over the Yucca Flat of the Nevada Test Site (NTS)—the 25th test of its kind in U.S. American history. This experiment was unique, however, in that it coincided with the first live coast-to-coast television broadcast of an atomic bomb test. Writing for the *Las Vegas Sun*, Hugh Baillie reports how U.S. American nuclear physicist and member of the Manhattan Project Dr. Alvin Graves describes the burst created by that particular atomic bomb test as the, “highest in history as far as U.S. scientists know... ‘definitely more powerful than the Alamogordo, Nagasaki and Bikini bombs” (Baillie 1942, lasvegassun.com). The Constitution of Puerto Rico, which had been ratified on March 3, 1952, was formally proclaimed into effect on July 25, 1952. Coincidentally, July 25, now known as Constitution Day in Puerto Rico, also commemorates the original invasion of the United States military in Puerto Rico on July 25, 1898. Four months later marked another “first” in the history of thermonuclear American history. The United States held the world’s first liquid thermonuclear explosive (hydrogen bomb) test on November 1, 1952. Codenamed shot “Mike” of Operation Ivy, the hydrogen bomb was detonated over the Pacific Ocean, subsequently vaporizing the Elugelab (“Flora”) Island in the Enewetak atoll of the Micronesia Marshall Islands archipelago. These four demonstrations or instantiations of American imperialism *within* and *beyond* the continental U.S. were largely inspired by Cold War tensions and ideological competition between the United States and the U.S.S.R. The fear of communism would in return “inspire” the territorial and economic expansion of the American empire.

words thus affirm the imperialist role and responsibilities of the National Archives (and the historical documents preserved therein). Here, the National Archives and the Charters of Freedom are both identified as architectural and ideological foundations, respectively, charged with supporting not only the *preservation* but also the formal *expansion* of “freedom”—in this context a euphemism, I argue, for the economic, military, and cultural “framework” of U.S. American imperialism and the Cold War politics.

All the more, Truman’s use of figurative language further advances his efforts to naturalize the relationship between the National Archives, the Charters of Freedom, and U.S. political and military intervention abroad when he suggested that, “The Constitution is a *living* force—it is a *growing* force... the true faith... and a power that can *move* the world” (my emphasis, n.p.). The ceremonial events pertaining to the enshrining of the Charters of Freedom in 1952 (the procession down Pennsylvania Avenue and the President’s speech in the Rotunda alike) reflect, I here argue, the degree to which the events of the Cold War *revolutionize* and, therein, *militarize* the espoused purposed or mission of the U.S. National Archives. In this manner, the President’s rhetoric enlisted the National Archives as a “living,” “growing,” and “move[ing]” instrument or weapon and, therefore, emblematic of what Nelson Maldonado-Torres in conversation with the work of Enrique Dussel describes as the modern/colonial “paradigm of war”:

a way of conceiving humanity, knowledge, and social relations that privilege conflict or *polemos*... characterized in terms of the privilege of conflict or the celebration of the reduction of the singularity of individual entities and subjects to the generality of the concept, to Being, to ethnos, or to a totality in philosophical reflections. (“Against War” 3).

A phenomenological-historical ordering conceiving "humanity, knowledge, and social relations" exclusively through modern/colonial frameworks of reduction, generalization, and totality in the service of conflict, the paradigm of war is suggestive of the coloniality of power.

In the history of the space and place of the National Archives Building, then, we find the existence of a reciprocal relationship between the records or *proof* of the nation's past, on the one hand, and the *promise* of nation's future, on the other hand. As a political institution, the U.S. National Archives encapsulates a dialectical relationship between the material *objects* that remain for documenting the nation's past and the visionary *objectives* imagined for shaping the nation's future. "The Heritage of the Past/ Is the Seed that Brings Forth the/ Harvest of Future," thus reads the opening page of the official program of the Enshrining of the Charters of Freedom ceremony in the Main Exhibition Hall of National Archives Building on December 15.

Placing Truman's 1952 speech at the National Archives Building in conversation with Hoover's statements at the ceremonial laying of the cornerstone of the National Archives Building in 1933, one recognizes a continual crossing of archival power and the coloniality of power at the National Archives Building. Characteristic of the colonial/imperial logic occluded *below* the *surface* meaning of the Future's inscription, Hoover's statement in 1933 functions, I content, as a prologue or preface Truman's remarks in 1952. As Hoover opens his presentation gesturing to the nation's anticipated future, one where, "The building which is rising here will house the name and record of every patriot who bore arms for our country in the Revolutionary War, as well as those of all later wars"

(“Address At”) Truman conversely concludes his speech by gesturing to the nation’s triumphant past:

So I confidently predict that what we are doing today is placing before the eyes of many generations to come to the symbols of a living faith. And, like the sight of the flag "in the dawn's early light," the sight of these symbols will lift up their hearts, so they will go out of this building helped and strengthened and inspired. (“Address At”)

Regardless of the conflicting temporalities within which these two presidents envision the nation-state in connection with the National Archives Building, the national-archival imaginaries that they each conjure represent visions of conflict and battle. Both harness archival power to reproduce the coloniality of power, therein rehearsing a colonial/imperial paradigm of war.

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### **1.7 Conclusion: Approaching the (Trans)National Archive**

Theodore R. Schellenberg suggests that there exist two reasons for which an archive comes into being and without which a collection of historical records cannot bear formal status as an “archive.” “To be archives,” Schellenberg explains, “records must have been produced or accumulated to accomplish a specific purpose and must have values for purposes other than those for which they were produced or accumulated;” he differentiates these two orders of archival value as, “the primary values to originating agency and the secondary values to other agencies and to non-government users” (16). Here, we see the degree to which the distinct values or orders of an archive correspond to the different needs of disparate entities or institutions: the archival needs of the government versus those of the public, to give but the most obvious of examples. In this way, the modern archive comes to represent a dynamic, multivalent institution, both in terms of the meaning of its contents and the reasoning for its continual existent.

I concur with Schellenberg's primary claim that for a set of historical documents to formally represent an "archive" they must embody distinct principals: primary and secondary values, respectively. There is a need, however, for us to further interrogate the premise of Schellenberg's second claim, which suggests that the primary and secondary values of an archive correspond to the needs of discrete individuals or organizations, respectively. The example of the history of the U.S. National Archives alone demonstrates that it is possible for an archive to express a primary and secondary value, even though it is addressing the needs of the *same* archival constituency. Stated otherwise: though an archive's distinct values or orders of being may relay back to one agency, it is quite possible for the one archive to possess unique, primary and secondary values. Considering the relatively late emergence of, along with the various historical *acts* (The Public Buildings Act of 1926, the Archives Act of 1934, etc.) and *actions* (the laying of the cornerstone but also the reunification/enshrining of the Charters of Freedom) responsible for, the formation of a National Archives in the United States; we see how the U.S. National Archives has over time served different primary and secondary values, despite its continual service to the same entities: the military and government of the United States.

The years between 1934, when the National Archives was formally established by U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and 1952, the year in which the Charters of Freedom are enshrined at the National Archives, the primary and secondary values of the U.S. National Archives experience a change or shift. A domestic institution in both name and original design, the U.S. National Archives would eventually bear an additional set of global valences. Such change would run parallel to and, in that sense, coincide with the



emergence of U.S. imperialism at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its subsequent expansion after the events of World War II in the era Cold War global geopolitics.

In this chapter, I have worked to critically analyze the nationally-inscribed effects that transnational, political epiphenomena subsequently cast back onto the imperial state and the architectural, memorial, and ceremonial features of its federal institutions. Here, I have headed Ann L. Stoler's provocation that, "Scholars need to move from archive-as-source to archive-as-subject... archives not as sites of knowledge retrieval, but of knowledge production, as monuments of states as well as sites of state ethnography ("Colonial Archives" 87). Doing so, I featured the implications of 20<sup>th</sup> century U.S. American imperialism and the Cold War for the physical features (statues and inscriptions) and figurative gestures (commemorations, processions, and ceremonies) of the National Archives Building Washington, D.C., and vice versa. This, in turn, has driven my efforts to read the National Archive as a representatively global institution when placed under the influence of U.S. American imperialism and Cold War politics; therein demonstrating the necessity of a transnational theorization of the *domestic* archive: *federal* and *familial* alike. We return to the matter of domestic archives elsewhere in the dissertation.

## Chapter 2

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### “And Always Puerto Ricans”: Reading the Literary Archive of (White) Gay Male Desire in Andrew Holleran’s *Dancer from the Dance* (1978)

It was a journey between islands, after all: from Manhattan, to Long Island, to Fire Island...

— *Andrew Holleran*

The development of both the gay and Puerto Rican communities in New York City are not simply parallel developments. These developments are intersecting phenomena...

— *Manolo Guzmán*

The power to exclude is a fundamental aspect of the archive... Not every story is told.

— *Rodney G. S. Carter*

#### 2.1 Holleran’s *Dancer*

In chapter one, I addressed the crossing of archival power and the coloniality of power in connection to the history of the U.S. National Archives Building in Washington, D.C. Having thereupon analyzed the subject of archival *institutions*, in this chapter I turn to the matter of archival *imaginaries* instead. Paralleling the first chapter, however, chapter two examines the crossing of archival power and the coloniality of power, only that here my main concern is for the archival purview of the discursive enactment of bourgeois white gay male desire in Andrew Holleran’s early writing.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Andrew Holleran is the pseudonym of gay male writer Eric Garber. Born in 1944, he studied American history and literature at Harvard College. After college, Holleran enrolled in law school, which he ultimately dropped out of to fully dedicate himself to the craft of writing. Holleran would go on to attend the University of Iowa Writer’s Workshop and even completed a tour in the U.S. Army after that, which took him to West Germany. After the Army, Holleran settled in Philadelphia for several years where he returned

Holleran's first novel *Dancer from the Dance* (1978) is lauded as, "the classic coming-of-age gay novel," "one of the most important works of gay literature," and even, "The best gay novel written by anyone of our generation" (Cover copy). Moreover, David Lewis makes the case that, "it's [not] an exaggeration to say that [*Dancer*] has probably influenced every generation of gay male writers since its publication," adding that:

Gay writers today owe a huge debt to writers like Holleran and to his publishers. In a world where outspoken gay men were being vilified, fired, sometimes assassinated but most often ignored and forgotten, it took courage to disregard fears of being marked or pigeonholed and to write a book that unapologetically celebrates camp, gay New York City. This is probably one reason why many readers treat *Dancer from the Dance* like it's as much a *historical document* as a novel. (my emphasis)

However, despite *Dancer's* central position in the canon of contemporary gay (male) literature written in English and its secondary value as a historical document, to date literary and queer studies scholars have not treated Holleran's early work in much detail.<sup>19</sup> This chapter thus marks a significant opportunity to advance our understanding of Andrew Holleran's work and, doing so, offers essential insight into the discursive enactment of bourgeois white gay male desire in queer literary and cultural production in the United States emerging out of the gay liberation movement following the Stonewall riots of

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to his studies and his writing before ultimately moving to New York City. A novelist, essayist, and short story writer, Holleran is a leading writer of post-Stonewall gay literature; in the early 1980s, he was a member of the NYC gay writer's group the Violet Quill, which included the likes of Edmund White and Felice Picano, amongst other prominent U.S. American gay male writers of the time. *Dancer from the Dance* (1978) is Holleran's first novel, followed by *Nights in Aruba* (1983). Since then, Holleran's literary publications have included: the novels *The Beauty of Men* (1996) and *Grief* (2006); a collection of short stories titled *In September, The Light Changes, stories* (1999); essays in *Ground Zero* (1988), which were reissued along with previously-unpublished material as *Chronicles of a Plague, Revisited: AIDS and Its Aftermath* (2008); as well as pieces in *M2M: New Literary Fiction* and *The Gay & Lesbian Review Worldwide*, and *Granta*. Previously an Adjunct Professorial Lecturer in the Department of Literature at American University, today Holleran continues to live in Washington, D.C.

<sup>19</sup> For more on the scant though growing body of literary criticism featuring Andrew Holleran's *Dancer from the Dance*, see Dennis (1982), Chapter 6 "'Other' Masculinities" in Nilsson (2000), Distelberg (2000), Chapter Three "A Story on the West Side of the Birth of a Nation" in Guzmán (2006), Schopp (2016), Trušnik (2016), and Pruitt (2016).

1969.<sup>2021</sup>

A satirical account of “the extremes of the gay scene—romanticism and cynicism” alike, Holleran’s *Dancer* functions as a fictionalized testimony of gay (night)life in 1970s New York City (NYC) as narrated from the perspective of a young and unidentified white gay male writer (Ortleb 55). Here, the gay narrator’s account of the relatively-recent gay past centers the extravagant lives of the closeted lawyer Anthony Malone, the campy socialite and drag queen Andrew Sutherland, and the story of these two principle gay male characters’ endless search for love—what the novel’s narrator eventually describes as, “a career with its own stages, rewards, and failures... a vocation as concrete as a calling in the Church, worth giving a lifetime to” (Holleran 131). Over the course of the novel, readers follow the voice of the anonymous gay male writer as he reveals Malone and Sutherland’s respective origins, their fateful meeting in New York City, and the two men’s extravagant, decade-long friendship set across the insular, queer cartographies of Manhattan, Long Island, Fire Island, amongst other urban archipelagic landscapes. Using the story of Malone and Sutherland’s friendship and their penchant for alcohol, recreational drugs, disco music, dance, and the physical embrace of other gay men especially, the narrator in *Dancer* provides a representational account of gay 1970’s NYC privileging the

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<sup>20</sup> For more on the history of the Stonewall riots of 1969 and the North American gay liberation movement of the 1970s, see Duberman (1994), Power (1996), Carter (2010), Bausum (2016), Downs (2016), and Fieseler (2018). On the publication, circulation and public reception of mainstream gay literature in the 1970s, see Distelberg (2000).

<sup>21</sup> This chapter analyzes the figure of the gay Puerto Rican man as he is depicted in literature published by white, North American gay male writers—Andrew Holleran’s *Dancer*, specifically. Literary representations of gay Puerto Ricans as authored by Latinx and Puerto Rican writers proper is a relevant concern that the exceeds the scope of the chapter’s analysis, however. Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes provides a detailed overview of English- and Spanish-language literary portrayals of queer Ricans by diasporic Puerto Ricans published between the 1960s and early 2000s (2009; xxiii). For more on the late-twentieth century representations of (heterosexual and/or queer) Puerto Ricans in North American literature, culture, and politics more broadly, see Rodríguez-Sedo de Laguna (1987), Aliotta (1991), Negrón-Muntaner and Grosfoguel (1997), Sanchez Gonzalez (2001), Negrón-Muntaner (2004), Martínez-San Miguel (2014).

perspective, voices, and lived experience of the novel's white middle-class gay male characters exclusively. Consequently, one issue that emerges from Holleran's *Dancer* and its representation of gay NYC in the 1970s is the degree to which the novel diminishes the real presence and historical contributions of the city's gay men (and women) of color. To that end, I argue that reading Andrew Holleran's *Dancer* one discovers a partial, which is to say an incomplete and biased, literary archive of the history of 1970s North American gay male sociality and sexuality.

*Dancer* represents a literary archive of 1970s NYC gay (night)life inasmuch as Andrew Holleran originally writes the novel with the explicit intention of, “portraying a past way of life so that it would not be lost” to history or time (Ortved 53). Emblematic of the author's archival impulse, *Dancer's* fictional, middle-class white gay male characters also express similar archival motivations and desires through their efforts to record and document the circumstances of their immediate reality for future, historical posterity. Centering both Holleran and his novel's principal characters' archival drives, this chapter sets out to answer several questions, including: How exactly do we characterize Holleran's literary archive of gay 1970's NYC? Against the real threat of historical erasure, the “past way of life” of whom all exactly does this fictionalized record(ing) of the gay past aim to protect—or not (53)? Moreover, what particular narratives—stories and histories alike—of gay sociality and sexuality do we lose *in* or *because of* Holleran and his characters' desires, erotic and archival inclinations alike? Overall, the chapter explores these questions, amongst others, alongside the technologies of (homo)sexuality, class, ethnicity, and race in Holleran's early work. In doing so, the chapter examines the degree to which literature and works of fiction like Holleran's *Dancer* serve as channels for the generation of archival

silences.

Professional archivist Rodney G. S. Carter aptly reminds us that:

The power of the archive is witnessed in the act of inclusion, but this is only one of its components. The power to exclude is a fundamental aspect of the archive. Inevitably, there are distortions, omissions, erasures, and silences in the archive. Not every story is told. (Carter 216)

Here, Carter reminds us that modern archives operate at the hand of a perpetual dialectic between the forces of historical *deposition* and *dispossession*—what Michel-Rolph Trouillot describes as “the cycle of silences” in the production of history (26). Therefore, we understand silences not so much as an exception but a constitutive element of the modern archive. Building on Carter’s and Trouillot’s insight, then, this chapter centers an extended close reading of the historical distortions, omissions, erasures, and silences that collectively come to represent “the perspective of its *reverso*, its underside, its occluded other” of Holleran’s literary archive of gay 1970’s NYC (Dussel xxii). That the archive, be it in its traditional-institutional or alternative-literary iterations,<sup>22</sup> constantly fails to provide a comprehensive record of the past is a base, though oft-overlooked, fact. Less clear, however, are *how* and *why* specific histories are included, while others are excluded from the official historical record. Therefore in critically engaging with the crossing of archival

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<sup>22</sup> Here, I am intentionally establishing a provisional dichotomy between institutional archives like the case of the U.S. National Archives Building in Washington, D.C. (chapter 1) and literary archives, the featured example of such alternative archives here being Holleran’s *Dancer from the Dance* (chapter 2). This dichotomy, although broad and reductive, works to highlight power differentials that exist between the institutional archives of the nation-state, on the one hand, and the archives of the nation-state’s most marginalized or subaltern communities, on the other (e.g., the LGBT community)—the members of which readily turn to alternative archival modes and mediums such as literature in order to supplement and, therein, challenge and rectify, even, their exclusion from the traditional (read: hegemonic) narratives of history sanctioned by the archival power gathered in the federal records of the nation-state, for example. That said, the indicated dichotomy between traditional (national) and alternative (queer) archives does not mean to suggest that literary archives inherently bear a critique of systems of oppression like the coloniality of power. Instead, my point in this chapter is to demonstrate the degree to which literary archives, for instance, are often as much agents of the coloniality of power as national archives or other related institutionalized instantiations of archival power.

power and the colonality of power in *Dancer from the Dance*, my aims are not solely to *reveal* but also to *resolve* the silences or omissions in Holleran's literary record of the relatively-recent gay past—however piecemeal and incomplete my efforts may prove in the end.

In doing so, the chapter addresses the troubling reality that those suffering under the subjugation of the archive's power to exclude are themselves oftentimes complicit, hypocritically so, with others forms of historical erasure to the degree that their complicity in the reproduction of archival silence mitigates their exclusion from the historical record, if only relatively so. Examining the archival priorities and erotic drives alike of historical actors such as Andrew Holleran and fictional characters like *Dancer's* narrator, Anthony Malone, and Andrew Sutherland, I work to reveal the reverberating nature of archival silence. Considering Holleran's *Dancer*, the reverberating nature of archival silence speaks to the ways in which middle-class, white gay men in the United States, for example, have historically worked both individually and collectively to explicitly resolve the matter of their systemic exclusion from the archive through the implicit exclusion of other, more-marginalized subsets of the LGBT community—namely racialized and working-class members of the larger queer community in the United States.<sup>23</sup> Of particular interest for the scope of this chapter, then, is the larger history of how certain members of the LGBT community, such as Andrew Holleran (and his fictional characters)—incited by the self-

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<sup>23</sup> In gay and lesbian/LGBT/queer literary and cultural studies, the (Euro-American) “whitewashing” of LGBT history, culture, and politics is a topic extensively treated by queer and of color feminists in the early 1980s to early-to-mid 1990s and queer of color critique scholars of the late 1990s to early 2000s. For more on this topic, see, amongst others: Moraga and Anzaldúa (1983); Lorde (1984); Anzaldúa (1987); Muñoz (1996, 1999, 2009); Frank and Patton (2000); Eng (2001, 2010); Lugones (2003); Manalansan (2003); María Rodríguez (2003, 2014); Ferguson (2004); Gopinath (2005); Patrick Johnson and Henderson (2005); Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz (2005); Alexander (2006); Cruz-Malavé (2007); La Fountain-Stokes (2009); Hames-García and Javier Martínez (2011); Decena (2011); Javier Martínez (2012); Allen (2012); Howard (2014); Sifuentes-Jáuregui (2015); and Patrick Johnson (2016).

recognition of their exclusion from the historical archive due to the hegemonic, social-and-political structures of homophobia and heteronormativity—find a “solution” to their omission from the historical record through the replication, rather than in the interruption, of the archive’s power to exclude.

Centering Andrew Holleran's archival priorities alongside those of his novel's middle-class white male gaze/gays, chapter two links the archipelago, the archive, and gay desire. To that end, I argue Holleran's and his fictional characters' respective archival impulses and insular-erotic desires alike are together indicative of a problematic crossing, on the one hand, of what Jacques Derrida describes as "archive fever" or one's burning drive to keep records of the past; and on the other, what Lawrence Durrell calls "islomania" or an overwhelming want of island spaces—and bodies, I here add. Here, Holleran and his white middle-class gay male characters' fears of historical erasure lead them to the production of a set of fictionalized archives whose purpose it is to circumvent the archives power to exclude. However, what I find the most interesting is the degree to which these literary archives of (white bourgeois) gay male desire—which Holleran's novel as a whole and the archival imaginary nestled within exemplify—invariably depend on the exclusion of the history of other more-marginalized subsets of the gay community: expressly, the history of the lived experiences of gay men of color, such as the community of working-class gay Puerto Rican men in 1970s NYC.

In their attempt to thwart the real fear of archival silence, Holleran and company, however, are themselves complicit in the exclusion of Puerto Rican men, amongst others, from both literature and history. Formally accounting for the skewed (over)representation of working-class gay Puerto Ricans featured throughout the entirety of Holleran's literary



archive of 1970s NYC, the chapter works in service of a counter his/story that gives voice to the presence of gay men of color and that explicitly acknowledges their contributions to the larger history of urban, North American gay culture and society. Manolo Guzmán astutely points out that:

The year 1969 not only marked the birth of gayness in New York City but also followed, all too closely, the end of the Great Puerto Rican Migration. The mass influx of Puerto Ricans to New York City, hundreds of thousands between the years of 1948 and 1968, is an enormously relevant factor in the emergence of an erotic ethos in New York City's gay community... The development of both the gay and Puerto Rican communities in New York City are not simply parallel developments. These developments are intersecting phenomena not only because they are the site of categories of identity that are not mutually exclusive but also because... Following the Stonewall Riots, Puerto Ricans and gays came to share an urban space, Manhattan, which was increasingly identified as gay space" (Guzmán 55)

Overall, my analysis in the chapter is not an attempt *rewrite* Holleran's literary archive of the social and sexual features of the urban North American history of gay liberation after 1969, so much as it is an effort to *redress* its failings.

The first half of the chapter presents a brief overview of the public reception of Holleran's *Dancer*, past and present, and formally introduces the novel's archival imaginary in and of itself. As a means by which to substantiate the scope of my analysis in the chapter, I clarify how Holleran's novel provides an opportunity to broaden existing analytical frameworks in the field of island studies, as well as standing conceptualizations of the archive that divorce history from literature. Understanding *Dancer* to represent a literary archive of gay (night)life in 1970s NYC, the second half of the chapter explores the role that different forms of ephemera play in advancing but also compromising the novel's historical merits. Overall, the chapter draws on an archipelagic framework of analysis to model a decolonial reading of both the gay literary archive and gay male desire

of 1970s NYC illustrated respectively through and in Holleran's *Dancer*.

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## 2.2 A Novel Archive

1978 marks the publication year of gay male writer Andrew Holleran's first novel *Dancer from the Dance*. In addition to Larry Kramer's *Faggots* (a novel also published in 1978), Holleran's *Dancer* is regarded as one of the first novels to usher in a new era of gay (white male) fiction following the Stonewall riots of 1969 and the early years of gay liberation in the U.S. in the 1970s. In "Out of the Closet, Onto the Bookshelf," acclaimed gay author Edmund White notes that:

The beginning of gay liberation in 1969 did not produce a new crop of fiction right away, but by 1978 the new gay novel was beginning to emerge. That was the year Larry Kramer's controversial *Faggots* and Andrew Holleran's romantic *Dancer from the Dance* were published. Both books documented the new gay culture that had been spawned by liberation, prosperity and societal tolerance.

As a novel both set and published in the social and political aftermath of the Stonewall riots of 1969 and yet before the first official medical reports of what would later be known as the HIV/AIDS epidemic of the 1980s and '90s, Holleran's *Dancer* marks a major turning point in the larger history of post-World War II gay literature and liberation in the United States. The novel offers a grandiose and comedic—though retrospectively ominous—representation of gay (night)life in New York City in the 1970s. In an interview with Lev Rafael, Holleran explains that "'Dancer was meant as an exposé, a satire'" (11). In hindsight, Holleran's debut novel represents both a boisterous anthem to and retrospective elegy for the generation of gay men in the urban centers of the United States who came of age in the 1970s under the radical, self-affirming auspice of Free Love, disco, experimental drug cultures, public cruising, and more—the very same generation of men who are most directly impacted by HIV/AIDS in the 1980s and beyond. Rehearsing the body of work

evaluating the literary and historical merits (and deficiencies) of Holleran's novel, one discovers three main waves of popular and academic reception concerning *Dancer*. These three waves of criticism span the late 1970s, the early to mid-1990s, and first two decades of the 2000s, respectively.

The initial wave of criticism responds enthusiastically to the original publication of Holleran's novel. Writing for *The New Republic* in 1978, Paul Robinson describes *Dancer* as "a post-liberation document" (33). Though formally a work of fiction, Robinson identifies historical significance in Holleran's novel. As a purported "document" realistically depicting, albeit fancifully, elements of the social and political afterlife of the Stonewall riots, *Dancer* incidentally reads as an example of historical fiction. More than a decade after Robinson and writing for *The New York Times*, the critically extolled gay writer Edmund White recapitulates the novel's historical value:

The beginning of gay liberation in 1969 did not produce a new crop of fiction right away, but by 1978 the new gay novel was beginning to emerge. That was the year Andrew Holleran's romantic "Dancer from the Dance" [was] published... document[ing] a new gay culture that had been spawned by liberation, prosperity and societal tolerance.

In this manner, critics have acknowledged the degree to which *Dancer* straddles the definite divide between the anecdotal and archival.

By the mid-1990s, however, numerous high-profile gay male writers critique the literary quality of Holleran's first novel, so much so that the acclaimed gay Jewish American author Lev Raphael publishes his defensive 1995 essay "Why Are They Bashing *Dancer from the Dance*?" Arguing against the controversial Bruce Bawer, academic David Leavitt, and fiction and nonfiction writer Ethan Mordenn's respective critiques of Holleran's novel, Raphael highlights how *Dancer* "has sold steadily ever since [1978], testimony to its power

and originality" (10). Raphael concludes his firm rebuttal to the three critics above by further underscoring *Dancer's* enduring value as a literary text, arguing that, then, seventeen years after its original publication, "More than any other, Holleran's novel sets a dazzling standard for contemporary gay literature" (12).

The 2000s mark a resurgence in *Dancer's* popularity amongst readers and critics alike. Like Lev Raphael in the mid-1990s, in 2007 Matthew Gallaway makes a case for the novel's lasting literary significance, writing in his article "On *Dancer from the Dance*, Almost Three Decades Out" that *Dancer* is in retrospect, "an *eternal* star in a rather bleak sky," of 1970s gay and lesbian fiction and that, "25 years should be enough to recognize the *transcendent* qualities of the work" (my emphasis). Moreover, in his 2015 post for *Medium.com* titled "*Dancer from the Dance*—Required Reading for Gays," David Lewis underscore's the novel's historical import, thus echoing Paul Robison's original claims about the novel in the late 1970s. Citing Lewis' online post at length, one learns that:

A novel like *Dancer from the Dance* was a big literary event for its readers. It mapped out gay New York. It *documented* real events in the city's gay landmarks.... Influenc[ing] every generation of gay male writers since its publication... as much a historical document as a novel... *Dancer from the Dance* shows us a decade when gay men were relearning how to look at themselves and the world they lived in. Seeing individuals in that setting resonates with a modern fiction reader's sense of history... shows us a *clear and distinct moments* in gay men's psychological history, and it does so with brio. It shows us a world where gay men had been liberated just enough to be able to find a city that would be their prison. A world where men who couldn't live openly had to learn to love that prison. (my emphasis)

Serendipitously, then, *Dancer* proves its "eternal" and "transcendent" timelessness as a piece of literature by way of its fictionalized documentation of "clear and distinct moments" in U.S. American history: the ephemeral decade of the 1970s found buried betwixt the origins of gay liberation in the U.S. and the events of the Stonewall riots of

1969, on the one hand, and 1981 and the dawn of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, on the other. Most recently, reports have been published announcing a forthcoming feature film adaptation of Holleran's novel (Probst). In Holleran's *Dancer*, then, we find a honorable attempt to create a literary record of the gay past, above all the queer (night)life in 1970s NYC.

In a 1978 interview with Andrew Holleran for "Christopher Street," Ortleb converses with Holleran about *archival* or documentary capacities of his debut novel. Here, Ortleb suggests to Holleran that "People are going to feel a great sense of relief when they read your book—that the period didn't vanish in the Everard fire or in the waters of the Pines. Your record of it bestows a kind of permanence;" to which Holleran responds by saying, "I think that's the only function of the writer (53). Holleran's comment, in turn, acknowledge the gay novelist's personal commitment as a writer to the project of *representing* and, therein, *documenting* the present historical moment for the hope of historical "permanence." A creative expression of Holleran's *gay archival impulse*, which is to say the author's historically-oriented understanding of his role as a (gay) writer, *Dancer* reads both as *story* and *history*—that is, both a queer account and an accounting of the queer. For historical erasure is a real fear too often shared by the members of oppressed communities and marginalized groups, of which gay men are here the featured example.

Moreover, the image of the gay writer as amateur historiographer is a trope that Andrew Holleran explicitly repeats throughout his novel. Preceding the beginning of Chapter 1 of Holleran's *Dancer from the Dance*, the novel opens with six letters written between two fictional gay men, the names of who are never given. All the same, these fictional letters progressively reveal telling details about the identity of these two secret

characters. In short, the two men are old friends who are now living apart in "The Deep South" (the rural outskirts of Atlanta, Georgia) and "The Lower East Side" (the New York City borough of Manhattan), respectively (9-11). The former of the two has since abandoned New York City for a new life in the Southern United States. There, he shares a home with his Cuban partner Ramon [*sic*], and together they care for Ramon's grandmother Señora Echivarria [*sic*], "an old Cuban lady who," readers learn, "does not claim to have come from a Wealthy, Aristocratic Family of Havana, like all those queens in New York City" (19).

In his first letter to the old friend still living in New York City (the same message that formally opens the novel), the gay man in Georgia explains why he has gone incognito:

I cannot tell you where I am because I want to make a clean break with my former life... I cannot go back. I would rather die like a beast in the fields, amigo, with my face to the moon and the empty sky and that stars, than go back; expire with the dew on my cheeks. (9)

Readers do not learn of the reason(s) why this gay character "break[s]" away from his former life in New York City. We only learn that he has grown vexed with "the hothouse, artificial, desperate life we led up there in Gotham," epitomized most of all in, "the real sadness of doomed queens," that is flamboyant, effeminate, and ill-fated gay men such as himself (20). Now living "on a small farm near a small town" outside of the city of Atlanta, the gay departee finds himself "at perfect peace with the universe" (19). Such is not the case for his still in comrade in New York City, however.

The second letter at the beginning of Holleran's novel takes the form of a written response penned by the gay man in the North addressed to the other gay man now living in the South. In that letter, the character still residing in New York City updates his far-flung friend on the current events in his life. He begins by mentioned an unanticipated cold spell

during an otherwise warm early spring in the city, reporting that, “EVeryone [*sic*] thought spring had come! And then it dropped thirty degrees in one afternoon, snowed the new morning” (12). Here, the steep change in weather symbolically parallels recent, abrupt changes in the character's personal and professional life. For example, the character in Manhattan mentions his budding psychological malaise and how this growing angst has begun to impede on his sex life, serendipitously so. He jocosely recounts for his friend how just last night as, “Bob Cjaneovic was sitting on my face,” he, the gay man living in the North, began to ponder the futility of life, for, “no matter what you do—it all ends in Death... everything truly is, as Ecclesiastes says, Vanity, Vanity, Vanity” (12). The character's affected, existential crisis, in turn, influences his decision to all of a sudden quit his job at New York City's oldest law firm to pursue, of all things, a career in sex work. “I've started to hook for a living. I'm very good,” he reassures his remote friend (12-13).

At the end of his first letter responding to his friend in the State of Georgia, the lawyer-now-turned-personal-escort reveals an additional development. After assuring the Southern transplant that “you’re missing nothing up here. Although everyone misses you,” the character ends his letter by diffidently writing: “I have one more thing to tell you, more shocking than my new career, no doubt, and it’s this: ...I’ve started writing a novel that I want you to read. A gay novel, darling. About all of us. Would you, could you, give it a read?” (14). Here, the gay man in the South writes his friend back, therein imploring the man in the North, “Please do send your novel on,” but not without also including three pointed suggestions for the literary style and contents of the proposed novel (14). Here, the man in Georgia begins by relying on behalf of his Cuban lover Ramon a message to the budding novelist, namely that, “no one has a very long attention span anymore, and that's

why the world is unhappy. (God knows it was true of *us*)” (14-15). The gay-urbanite-turned-farmer also urges his friend *not* write about gay life, if only because, “(a) people would puke over a novel about men who suck dick (not to mention the Other Things!), and (b) they would demand it be ultimately violent and/or tragic, and why give in to them?” (15).

The man writing to the North concludes his list of writing recommendations to his friend by commenting on the historical or archival capacities or, rather, the presumed lack thereof in literature. Here, the gay friend in the South considers the extent to which his metropolitan compatriot’s future novel might:

serve a historical purpose—if only because the young queens nowadays are utterly indistinguishable from straight boys... Someone should record the madness, the despair, of the old-time queens, the Great Queens whose stories, unlike Elizabeth of Austria(!) [*sic*], have never been told... the true loonies of this [gay] society, refusing to camouflage themselves for society’s sake. (15)

Nevertheless, the gay man writing from rural Georgia ultimately refutes his initial claim suggesting that literature in the form of his friend's novel might serve a historical role. Instead, he explicitly rejects the possible historical merits of literature, affirming instead that is it "nearly impossible" for a novel to represent a historical record of the past. All that piece of literature should do, he facetiously alleges, "is tell you what it was like touching Frank Romero's lips for the first time on a hot afternoon in August in the bathroom of Les' Café on the way to Fire Island. If you can do that, divine!" (15-16). From the comical perspective of the gay man living in the South, then, readers are encouraged to understand literature as a vehicle solely suitable for the transmission of stories—not histories. The argument seems to suggest that literature ought to be evocative but never evidentiary. Nevertheless, the gay writer commits to his original decision to write a historical novel



"About all of us" featuring, above all else, the his/story of "Sutherland—and Malone. Did you expect that?", he asks the friend in the south (14-20). The relationship between the opening letters and the subsequent chapters of Holleran's novel is thus made clear to the reader. The fictional gay writer featured in the extra letters that open and end *Dancer*, on the one hand, and the anonymous gay narrator directing the narrative in the eight chapters indexed between the six opening and four closing fictionalized letters, on the other hand, is, it appears, the same character.

Nevertheless, despite four decades of majority-positive reviews of *Dancer*'s literary and archival or historical merits, there is a "darker underside" instituting the success of Holleran's debut novel that few of the book's advocates and critics alike have formally addressed (Mignolo 1995a, 2000b, 2011c). The "epistemic violence" here in question speaks to the harm through discourse and language that is done onto the body politic of gay Puerto Rican men (amongst other groups of gay men of color) living in 1970s NYC, as a consequence of Holleran and his novel's middle-class white gay male characters' shared erotic desires and archival impulses alike (Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak" 24). Through an archipelagic reading of *Dancer*, I bring to surface the colonial, racialized structures of white gay male desire submerged beneath the novel's acclaimed literary and historic features. Therefore, this chapter deploys the figure of the archipelago as a unit of analysis, since my reading charts the structural, literal and figurative manifestations of the figure of the archipelago that I argue configure the novel's representation of white gay male desire.

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### 2.3 Towards the Articulation of a Literary (Urban) Island Studies

In their 2007 blog post "On *Dancer from the Dance*, Almost Three Decades Out,"

there Matthew Gallaway underscores the *urban* elements fundamental to the literary imaginary at the center of Holleran's *gay* novel. Gallaway thus writes:

Serious readers will agree that there is only one accurate qualifier to this novel, and it is "urban," for just as Malone... realizes that the love he seeks (and can never obtain) is the city itself, this is really the only useful lens through which to view the work, and is the one that—not coincidentally—allows us to circumvent the more tenuous question of whether it is "gay" or not (though obviously it is, in the best sense of the world).

Andrew Holleran sets his novel across various archipelagic settings, of which the urban archipelago of New York City (Manhattan, Long Island, Fire Island, etc.) represents the novel's central backdrop.

In the opening lines of the first chapter of the novel's middle section *Dancer*, the narrator (an anonymous gay man) informs readers of how he has taken it upon himself to travel "back to Fire Island to pick up [Malone's] things," for Malone has disappeared and is therefore informally declared dead in absentia by the other characters, the narrator included (Holleran 23). The narrator's trip out to Fire Island proves bizarre, however, if only because Malone, the narrator confesses, "was hardly even a friend—something much more, and much less perhaps" (23). Reflecting on his unusual decision to travel from his apartment in the Lower East Side of Manhattan to the far ends of Fire Island to gather Malone's once-cherished belongings, the ambivalent narrator acknowledges that:

It was a journey between islands, after all: from Manhattan, to Long Island, to Fire Island, and the last island of the three was nothing but a sandbar, as slim as a parenthesis, enclosing the Atlantic, the very last fringe of soil on which a man might put up his house, and leave behind him all—absolutely all—of that huge continent to the west. (23-24)

Here, the language that the narrator uses to describe his movement across the larger terrain of New York City underscores the archipelagic framework at the center of both setting and plot in Holleran's novel. In retrieving Malone's belongings, the narrator moves between

three of the various islands that collectively form the urban archipelago of New York City—literally going from Manhattan, to Long Island, to Fire Island, and back. In traversing these discrete islands spaces, the narrator abandons the continental instead of the insular. In *Dancer*, Fire Island, also known as “the Dangerous Island (dangerous because you could lose your heart, your reputation, your contact lenses)” marks a liminal zone bridging both the geological and ideological divides that partition the North American continent and the Atlantic Ocean (24). As “the very last fringe of soil on which a man might put up his house” but also where one might “leave behind him all—absolutely all,” Fire Island—the Dangerous Island—demarcates the ultimate frontier between stifling civilization, as represented by the continental terrain to the left, and emancipating barbarism, as suggested by the insular coastline and oceanic seaway to the right. In this manner, Fire Island functions as a plot device spatially orienting the story-world of Holleran’s text.

Nonetheless, Fire Island and the various other islands of New York City are not the only archipelagic settings grounding the novel’s narrative. Additional urban archipelagic settings also featured in Holleran’s novel and which I return to later in my analysis include the island country of the Dominion of Ceylon; the archipelagic capital city of Stockholm, Sweden; as well as the coral cay archipelago formally known as the U.S. Florida Keys. The central aim of this section of the chapter, then, is to explain my efforts to read Holleran’s *Dancer* as an example of contemporary (gay) urban islands literature. An analysis of the literary-urban-and-archipelagic features of Holleran’s first novel contributes to the growing area of island studies research by emphasizing the dearth of both literary and sexuality studies within the field of island studies today. Reading *Dancer* through an island

studies analytical framework, I aim to demonstrate the benefit that Humanities research methodologies inherently present for future developments within island studies scholarship.

In 2014 Adam Grydehøj, a significant figure in the contemporary field of island studies and founder of the *Urban Island Studies* academic journal, guest edits the ninth volume of the *Island Studies Journal* dedicated to the topic of island cities and urban archipelagos. In his introduction to that particular volume of the *Island Studies Journal*, Grydehøj reflects, “Indeed, it is perplexing that island studies had largely ignored what must—by measure of population, size, economic heft, and political influence—be the most significant type of island community of all: island cities” (183). All the more, in their 2015 introduction to the inaugural edition of the *Urban Island Studies* journal Grydehøj et al. reiterate the above-mentioned concerns, only that there the critique is directed at standing geological-and-geopolitical-oriented paradigms associated with the field of Geography exclusively. Citing that introduction to the first volume of *Urban Island Studies* at length, there the authors consider how “Much of the above social science research is strongly influenced by disciplinary traditions from geography. Indeed, this geographic orientation has sometimes resulted in the sidelining of approaches for literary studies and related disciplines” (4). Traditional academic disciplines and the field of Geography, in particular, have historically privileged the study of continental formations and phenomena. In return, such academic predilections for the continental have overshadowed and, indeed, undermined the study of insular objects and affairs.

The field of island studies today thus represents a formal response to the underrepresentation of scholarship specifically dedicated to the study of insularity or

insular matters more broadly. Nevertheless, the progressive field of island studies has not been without its shortcomings. In dedicating much of their scholarly attention to the study of rural island spaces, in particular, island studies scholars have, for example, largely failed to account unique features of island cities in and of themselves. In support of a more robust conceptualization and practice of island studies research, this chapter intentionally concerns itself with responding to Grydehøj's call for more *urban* island studies research. Nevertheless, my analysis of Holleran's *Dancer* stands apart from Grydehøj's visions for a future (urban) island studies. While Grydehøj's is calling for a future island studies where geographers, for example, are all the more mindful of the ways in which the island city represents a viable unit of analysis; my research here diverges to the degree that it approaches the figure of the island city from the standpoint of the Humanities and literary and cultural studies specifically, rather than from the intellectual horizons of the physical and social sciences.

I am not alone in such calls for the development of more Humanities-inclusive island studies research. In their critical review of island studies, for example, Lisa Fletcher explains how:

As it stands, 'island studies' scholarship is undermined by an untheorised [*sic*] distinction between the relative value of 'geography' and 'literature;' this opposition is, in part, sustained by the development of a series of interrelated hierarchical pairs (physical/cultural, reality/romance, actual/virtual, materiality/metaphor, image/word) in discussions of the physicality and culture of islands... In these terms, the commitment to 'real islands' which runs through island studies risks missing the key fact that human encounters with the physical space are always already mediated by our position in linguistic and cultural systems of representation. (18-19)

While scholars have acknowledged the disciplinary limitations in the growing field of island studies (and by extension urban island studies), they have neglected, however, to

seriously contend with the intersection of literature, culture, *and* islands and, thus, the interdependent role of islands *in* literature and culture.

In Fletcher's larger body of research, one finds apt examples or models of successful literarily- and culturally-oriented island studies research. For instance, in their joint article "The Genre of Islands: Popular Fiction and Performative Geographies" Lisa Fletcher and Ralph Crane provide a well-evidenced analysis of the degree to which "islands are everywhere in popular fiction" (637). Their extensive close reading of island settings in crime and romance fiction make a compelling case for the formal "inclusion of literary studies within island studies" (648). This vision of literary island studies brings Fletcher and Crane to consider the "performative geographies" that island spaces come to represent across many of the story-worlds in popular fiction, past, and present.

Fletcher and Crane acknowledge that "For countless heroes and heroines across the many and various romance sub-genres, falling in love and finding one's place in the world are twinned objectives" (645). In their taking up of sub-genre of romance fiction in particular, an erotically charged derivate of popular fiction, the authors' analysis addresses the question of the erotic. Nonetheless, Fletcher and Crane fail to provide critical analysis or specific study of sex or sexuality proper—two features fundamental to popular romance books as a literary genre (645). The two scholars are correct to suggest, that "Popular genres [of literature] are undeniably sources of *distraction* and *entertainment* for billions of readers. However, they are also systems of *meaning*, which have an immeasurable impact on our geographical awareness and imagination" (648; my emphasis). Missing from the analysis, however, is a formal consideration of the degree to which the forms of distraction and diversion that readers derive from the consumption of popular literary genres like

romance fiction is ever-always both an erotic and sexually charged experience of entertainment.

In other words, while Crane and Fletch convincingly unpack the “performative geographies” of islands settings in popular fiction, they do not consider the exact role that libidinal drives and sexual fantasies play in shaping how:

Both textually and paratextually, contemporary romance depicts small islands as safe havens from the dangers and difficulties of life in the twenty-first century, as natural paradises in which the tempo of everyday life is managed by the seasons and not by the artificial routines and exigencies of the “rat race,” and as contained worlds in which opportunities for genuine connectivity within one’s community are increased in inverse proportion to the reduced connectivity to the mainland and the wider world. (647)

I draw upon Grydehøj’s work on urban islands or island cities in conversation with Crane and Fletcher’s work on the “performative geographies” of islands settings depicted in popular fiction, to frame my critical analysis of Holleran’s debut novel. In *Dancer*, I find a means to critically intervene within the field of island studies, for my reading of Holleran’s work pushes us to consider the space of urban island geographies *in tandem with* the politics of queer insular imaginaries expressed in and through popular forms of literature. By doing so, my close reading of the archipelagic settings, archival impulses, and erotic desires featured in Holleran’s early writing thus widens the scope of literary (urban) island studies research, in so much as it brings the promising field of study to formally reckon with the element of human sexuality and non-normative or queer sexualities in particular.

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## 2.4 Queer(in)g the Archive

In *Archive Fever*, Jacques Derrida stipulates that “Nothing is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the word ‘archive’” (Derrida 90). Ambiguity, it seems, resides at

the center of our conceptualization of the archival. The obscurity that fundamentally defines the archive is, I argue, perhaps best reflected in the most elusive forms of historical documentation: ephemera. The Society of American Archivists (SAA) defines ephemera (ephemeron, singular) as, "Materials, usually printed documents, created for a specific, limited purpose, and generally designed to be discarded after use," with examples of ephemera including, amongst other, "advertisements, tickets, brochures, and receipts." Nevertheless, there is much debate amongst professional archivists regarding the specific characteristics that historical documents ought to possess to qualify (or not) as ephemera formally. As Chris E. Makepeace notes:

If one wants to use an alternative name for ephemera, then probably the most useful are either '*fugitive* material' or '*miscellaneous* material' as both descriptions imply that the material *does not fit into a particular category*, that there may be problems with acquisitions, storage, retrieval and that it may have relative short life and *many not be able to be dealt with in the formally accepted way*. (Makepeace 4-5; my emphasis)

A "fugitive" and "miscellaneous" form of historical documentation, ephemera represent elusive and unorthodox records of the past that defy the norms of more conventional methods of archival description and arrangement. Within the professional field of archival science, then, ephemera come to represent what we might best describe as a *queer*, which is to say the "Strange, odd, peculiar, [and] eccentric," form of historical documentation (OED).

Scholars in the field of queer studies have worked to articulate the integral linkages that exist between the unconventionality of ephemera as an archival object, on the one hand, and the peculiarity of queerness as a historical subject, on the other. Sensitive to the failure by standard methodologies of historical analysis and institutional archives to sufficiently account for the history of minority groups like queers and people of color, José



Esteban Muñoz alternatively makes a case for critically engaging with "ephemera as proof" of the history queerness ("Ephemera" 7). While the SAA and Makepeace respectively conceptualize ephemera as short forms of documentation, Muñoz instead links ephemera to transient gestures and occasions, above all "innuendo, gossip, fleeting moments, and performances" ("Ephemera" 6). For Muñoz, ephemera represent a means for scholars to *queer*, which is to say question and subsequently broaden, standing conceptualizations of what does (and does not) counts as evidence or as a proper source of historical "fact." It is through the methodological queering or contestation of accepted forms of historical analysis and archival management and administration proper, via a recognition of "alternative modes of textuality and narrativity like memory and performance" as legitimate forms of historical evidence, that we uncover and subsequently affirm a more comprehensive record of the history of queer life, culture, and society ("Ephemera" 10).

In Holleran's literary archive, ephemera too works to evidence the queer history of 1970s NYC. Within the pages of the author's *Dancer*, the real history of the 1970s NYC is documented, in part, by the novel's deliberate treatment of the ephemerality of gay (night)life in particular. In fact, many of the central scenes in the Holleran's *Dancer* feature realistic images of NYC nightlife in the 1970s, above all the settings and circumstances of the city's historic gay bars, nightclubs, house parties, and bathhouses—all of them "repositories" or source sites for what Muñoz understands as the "stuff" of queer evidence: "innuendo, gossip, fleeting moments, and performances" ("Ephemera" 6). It is inside of the Twelfth Floor discotheque, for example, that the narrator and, in turn, readers' first discover Andrew Sutherland and Anthony Malone. Of major significance here is how the "little club on the twelfth floor of a factory building in the West Thirty's" depicted

throughout the length of Holleran's novel is, in fact, based on a real 1970s dance club once located on West 28th Street in New York City call the Tenth Floor.<sup>24</sup> Another illustration of the ephemerality of gay (night)life in *Dancer* arises through the novel's allusions to the Everard Baths, which were themselves located across the street from Tenth Floor dance club. This famous gay bathhouse at 28 West 28th Street in Manhattan operated from the late 1880s up through 1986. Historical reality and the novel's archival imaginary cross, however, in the tragic memory of a deadly fire of 1977 at the Everard Baths. On May 25 of that year, the bathhouse caught on fire, killing a total of nine patrons. This catastrophe repeats itself within the story-world of Holleran's novel too, only that there, "word g[ets] back that twelve men had die[d] in the fire at the Everard Baths, and the rumor went around... that Malone had gone up in smoke, too" (Holleran 232-233). The historical reality of gay (night)life in 1970s NYC and the fictionalized elements of *Dancer's* story-world align not only in terms of analogous settings, i.e., The Tenth Floor discotheque and the Everard Baths, and parallel events, i.e., the deadly fire at the Everard Baths in 1977, that span the historic and the imaginary.

The two, the story-world and the real world alike, also intersect through the novel in terms of their shared soundscapes. As suggested by the book's title, music and dance play a pivotal role in the novel's storyline. The novel's explicit efforts to commemorate the music of the era, for example, come out through the whole of Holleran's novel. There, the author/narrator regularly references the real music of the 1960s and 1970s. In the preface

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<sup>24</sup> The Tenth Floor dance club was active from 1972-74. Owned by David Sokoloff, the discotechque, "was located on the tenth floor and was a private disco with 400 members [who] could bring two guests;" in terms of membership, the club's patrons largely consisted of, "a very glamorous, beautiful and chic white gay crowd... who frequented Fire Island as well as the Flamingo" (Disco-Disco.com).

to their 2015 interview with Holleran, music, art, and pop culture writer Ali Gitlow expounds upon the novel's musical memorialization, noting that:

Early '70s funk, soul and disco tracks are referenced throughout *Dancer*... Though *Dancer* is a work of fiction, what emerges is a sense of the extent to which underground gay parties built the foundation of all that is recognized as club culture today. In describing what it was like to go out dancing in queer spaces of the era, Holleran's language is breathtakingly evocative.

Music tracks referenced in *Dancer* include: Gerry Goffin and Carole King's "Will You Love Me Tomorrow" (1961); The O'Jays' "One Night Affair" (1969); Barrabas' "Woman" (1972); The Intruder's "I'll Always Love My Mama" (1973); Zulema's "Giving Up" (1973), itself a cover of Gladys Knight & the Pips' "Giving Up" (1964); The Temptations' "Law of the Land" (1974); Curtis Mayfield's "Make Me Believe in You" (1974); and Natalie Cole's "Needing You" (1975); amongst others. Significant here are the narrator's thoughts *after* Sutherland's and Malone's deaths by drug overdose and by fire and, respectively. Recalling the details of his original encounter with the two dead gay men that fateful night at the Twelfth Floor discotheque, the narrator concludes: "Any memory of those days is nothing but a string of songs" (Holleran 39). Sutherland and Malone live lone in the narrator's memory. However, do so to the extent that the songs of "those days" (in other words, the musical soundscapes whereby the narrator, Sutherland, and Malone first meet) remain part of the narrator's memory as well. Recognizing Holleran's and his narrator's explicit effort to document the acoustic environments and expression of 1970s NYC, I contend that the novel's musical bearings substantiate the *Dancer's* archival merits; in as much as music and, to that end, dance "rematerializes" the queer past *in* and *as* the present (Muñoz, "Cruising" 81). In other words, at the same time that the novel's musical references *evoke* ("call forth") the materiality of the gay past (i.e., the physical *space* of the

Twelfth/Tenth Floor discotheque and the fleeting *sounds* that once resonated therein), the novel's musical references also *invoke* ("call upon") *Dancer*'s archival capacities as an genuine literary record of the gay past in actuality.

Muñoz reminds us that, "for queers, the gesture and its aftermath, the *ephemeral trace*, matter more than many traditional modes of evidencing lives and politics" ("Cruising" 81; my emphasis). In the case of Holleran's *Dancer*, the novel's representation of the ephemeral bearings of the gay music and dance scene of 1970s NYC work to enact a safeguard against the real threat of historical erasure and archival silence typically suffered by the queer subjects and agents of history. Recognizing Holleran's literary archive for its "fugitive" and "miscellaneous," that is ephemeral, character in and of itself, alongside the novel's explicit efforts to document the ephemeral "proof" of gay night(life) in 1970s NYC in the form of buildings, music, and dance, one bears witness to the novel's certain historical merits (Makepeace 4-5; Muñoz, "Ephemera" 7). More than a conventional work of fiction, then, Holleran's *Dancer* expresses a critique of traditional conventions of both historiography and the historiographer proper—standing archival "truths" that deceptively partition fact from fiction and story from history, both at the detriment of society's oppressed and marginalized communities. Having addressed how *Dancer*, through its representation of queer ephemerality writ large, challenges standing conceptualizations of the archive divorcing history from literature, we now turn to analyze the enactment of queer desire and sexuality across the archipelagic story-world of Holleran's *Dancer*: a text where love "is intimately tied to geography," David Lewis reminds us.

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## 2.5 Queer(ing) Islomania

The eight chapters that encompass the majority of Holleran's novel (for a set of fictional letters open and close the novel) tell the story of *both* Sutherland and Malone friendship. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that of the two principal characters, the narrator in *Dancer from the Dance* commemorates Malone's life (and death) in much more detail than he does Sutherland's. As the narrator notes, "For if Malone was, in the end, only a face I saw in a discotheque one winter, he was somehow the figure on which everything rested. The central beautiful symbol" (Holleran 133).

Born in a small town in southern Indiana, Malone is the son of an Ohio businessman of German descent and a Chicago city girl with Irish roots. White, middle-class U.S. Americans living in "the golden age of the American corporation" and under "the flush of victory following World War II," Malone's parents move abroad to the Dominion of Ceylon (today the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka)<sup>25</sup> to work for an international engineering firm. As a result of this international move, Malone spends his childhood and early adolescence on the island country located south of the Indian subcontinent. On the island of Ceylon (itself an archipelago consisting of the main island and several islets), Malone "gradually over the years forgot those houses [in Indiana] that had not only attics, dry and magical but damp and vivid basements stored with preserves and tools and old toys; he forgot the snow and turning seasons, and became a habitué of the Equator, whose soul loves light and the pleasures of the senses" (60). Adopting the perspective and customs of the local, non-white, colonial inhabitants of the, then, British Commonwealth of Ceylon, Malone "goes native" as a child.

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<sup>25</sup> For more on the colonial and postcolonial history of Ceylon and Sri Lanka, respectively, see Mills (1964), Arasaratnam (1996), Wijemanne (1996), Holt (2011), and Wickramasinghe (2014).

However due to Malone's intellectual prowess ("everyone loved him for excelling") and his parents' middle-class expectations for their son's future ("Get a degree in law and finance... and you'll always be in demand"), Malone, the narrator informs us, was, "At the age of fifteen... shipped off to America like an island pineapple of special quality to be enrolled in a boarding school in Vermont" (63). The language that the narrator uses to describe Malone at the moment of his departure from Ceylon for high school in the continental U.S. reflects the extent to which Malone had in his childhood integrated or assimilated, perhaps, into the local, British colonial/post-colonial environment of Ceylon. Having arrived at the South Asian island state as the child of white, middle-class U.S. Americans, Malone leaves Ceylon a changed man—"like an island pineapple of special quality." The constant shift in home environments proves particularly challenging for Malone. Several years have passed, and still, Malone is no less haunted by the loss of insular childhood home. The regular physical movement between and across those above insular (and continental) spaces leaves Malone feeling psychologically unsettled. However, the reasons for Malone's *displaced* disposition are ultimately suggestive.

Throughout the entirety of his adolescence and young adulthood, Malone struggles to suppress, "some tremendous element in himself that took the form of prudish virginity... touching no one else... He simply suppressed it all, and studied harder, and dreamed of Ceylon" (63-64). Regularly moving between places and constantly feeling "impotent" and "doomed," Malone struggles to simultaneously manage a set of negative emotions: a deep discomfort with his budding sexuality and erotic desire for other men, on the one hand, and his lingering feelings of loss and "homesickness" as a result of the abrupt departure from Ceylon at the age of fifteen, on the other hand (66). In the recapitulation of his love

for the Ceylon of his childhood, Malone, I want to suggest, finds a viable coping mechanism by which to manage and repress his looming homosexuality.

Malone graduates from the boarding high school in Vermont and attends Yale University for his undergraduate studies. From there, he obtains a law degree and completes post-graduate work in shipping and banking law at the University of Stockholm. Not to be overlooked is the fact that, like Ceylon, Stockholm represents an archipelagic locale. The largest archipelago in Sweden, the Stockholm archipelago (of which the capital city of Stockholm is but a separate part) constitutes the second-largest archipelago in the Baltic Sea. After post-graduate studies at the University of Stockholm, Malone finds himself living in Vermont once again, then Connecticut and Washington D.C., respectively. Equally illuminating is a scene towards the end of the novel set on the island of Manhattan. There, Sutherland asks Malone if he imagines leaving New York City someday. Malone thus replies: "“Actually, I'd like to be an air traffic controller at a tiny airport in the Florida Keys... That would be heaven”" (146). From Ceylon, to Stockholm, New York City, and the Florida Keys even, the novel's recurrent or *repeating* insular settings come together to form what Antonio Benítez-Rojo declares a “meta-archipelago,” only that the literary meta-archipelago in question here represents a queer expression of Benítez-Rojo repeating island by cause of its focus on the insular and the homoerotic together (Benítez-Rojo 5). It is *in* and *through* this queer meta-archipelago encompassing Malone's life—past, present, and future alike—that readers, I argue, observe the full expression of the character's bourgeois desires as a white middle-class gay man.

In time, Malone makes his way to New York City, the setting of the majority of the novel. When Malone first leaves Washington, D.C. for New York City, he moves with the hope

of furthering his career as a lawyer, on the one hand, and exploring his repressed sexuality, on the other. Even now in New York City, however, Malone continues to miss his childhood Ceylon of yesteryears. Amid this perpetual process of mourning, Malone warily begins exploring and ultimately unabashedly embracing his (homo)sexual desires. While doing so, Malone develops a desire—lust even—for Puerto Rican men in particular. Malone's newfound passion for gay Puerto Ricans displaces the character's willingness to return to the happy years of his childhood on the island of Ceylon. Unable to relive or return to his childhood on the Pacific island commonwealth, Malone redirects his desire for that past island landscape in the direction of an alternative desire for island bodies—above all, the masses of working-class Puerto Rican. Malone ultimately embraces his same-sex attractions, however. In the process of doing so, he discovers a love of or lust, more accurately perhaps, for Puerto Rican men primarily. In this manner, one must understand Malone's affinity for particular island spaces (Ceylon, Stockholm, New York City, the Florida Keys) and his erotic same-sex desires as two, fundamentally interconnect drives.

A queering of both the novel form and the historical archive, Holleran's *Dancer* marks an expression of not only Makepeace's definition of ephemera as fugitive and miscellaneous archival materials (ephemera as the fleeting *document*) but also Muñoz's use of ephemera in service of naming the alternative modes of textuality and narratively like memory and performance that evidence queerness (ephemera as fleeting *gesture*). There is a third, old-fashioned form of ephemera that I also detect at work in Holleran's novel, however: ephemera as feverish malady or malaise. In his review of the etymology of the term ephemera, Alan Clinton notes the various meanings of the word across history,



including one that, "has gone out of normal use, refer[ing] to fevers which are temporary, or last one day" (14). In *Dancer*, the ephemeral "fever" or frenzy in question is erotic. For example, the narrator informs readers how:

Malone would go off to the Upper West Side with Rafael, or Jesus, or Luis, and lie in a room, a prisoner of a pair of eyes, a smooth chest, enveloping limbs. But *love* was like drinking water, Malone discovered. The more he made love the more he desired the replicas of his current lover he inevitably found on every corner. Malone was *love-sick*, he was *feverish*, and it glowed in his eyes so that other people only had to look at him to realize instantly he was theirs. (my emphasis, 107)

Malone, much like all of the novel's other middle-class white gay male characters, *burns* with love or lust, perhaps, for Puerto Rican men: the countless Rafael's, Jesus's, and Luis's of New York City. Love-sick, Malone's "illness" is lucent and apparent to all those around him—"it" shows in his eyes after all.

My claim is thus that as a character Malone embodies the expression of what one might best describe as a queer (re)articulation what Lawrence Durrell defines as "islomania," that is "a rare but by no means unknown affliction of the spirit" whose sufferers "find islands somehow irresistible" (15-16). Durrell's initial formulation of islomania extends to a consideration of the "sufferers" enchanting desire for island spaces or territories exclusively. Inspired Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's query in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, then, my literary-urban-archipelagic analysis of Holleran's novel asks: "What does it mean—what difference does it make—when a social or political relationship is sexualized" (5). My efforts to answer this question in connection with the *Dancer's* insular-erotic themes and content suggests that further work is required to widen the parameters of Durrell's critical term to account for overpowering expressions of desire for island spaces and island bodies combined. Gay or

queer islomania thus stands apart from Durrell's original abstraction in that my theory of an islands-oriented mania facilitates a crossing of not only geography and desire but (homo)sexuality as well. My efforts to queer Durrell's original theory of islomania speak to the chapter's broader invention in both urban and literary island studies, in that both intellectual endeavors (expressly, queer islomania and queer literary island studies) aim to feature the fundamental role that sexuality plays in how humans experience island topographies, both real and imagined.

In the story-world of Holleran's *Dancer*, the crossing of the urban archipelago and white bourgeois gay male desire through the formulation of queer islomania is not expressed through Malone alone, however. Readers also discover symptoms of queer islomania in the novel's other white middle-class gay male characters. Sutherland, for example, tells Malone that, "I exist only in New York, take me off this island and I evaporate. I'm like a sea plant that is beautiful beneath the sea, but taken from the ocean turns another color altogether... I'm a creature of the city. Transplant me and I'd die in your very hands" (Holleran 144). A human transplant rooted in the sea (and by proxy, land) of the "island" of Manhattan, Sutherland defines his existence as a (white) gay man exclusively about New York City's archipelagic profile. The insular geography of New York City thus represents both the literal and figurative grounds upon which Sutherland realizes his gay identity and, in return, his gay desires as well. Malone is not the only character to express an erotic infatuation with the New York City's emblematic island bodies, its Puerto Rican inhabitants specifically. Reflecting on his and Malone's shared sexual proclivities, the gay narrator writes how, "[Malone] loved these boys, as did I, to be among them was enough; he was in thrall to them, he was in the thrall of Puerto Ricans"

(188). What is more, we find evidence of queer islomania beyond the fictional domain of Dancer's story-world and its imaginary characters. There is the curious case of Andrew Holleran's connections to and public obsession with insularity more broadly, for example.

Returning to Charles Ortleb's interview with Andrew Hollering published in the popular-although-non-defunct gay NYC magazine *Christopher Street* in 1978, we find telling evidence of the author's queer islomania, as illustrated by Holleran's penchant for island spaces and (racialized) island bodies alike. In the middle of his 1978 interview with Andrew Holleran centered around the gay author's then-recently-published debut novel, Ortleb asks Holleran about Dancer's representation of Puerto Rican men. Here, Ortleb poses the question: "One of the interesting facts of your book is the way you capture the sensuous presence of Puerto Ricans in the gay community" (55; my emphasis). Citing Holleran's telling response at length, the gay writer replies to Ortleb's question by stating:

'I don't know how to say this without sound patronizing, but I can't say enough in their favor. I didn't understand the attraction when I first came to New York. I wonder whether I'm a victim of the classic homosexual neurosis, which E. M. Forster captured in his book about the uppercase Englishman attracted to the gardener. I was afraid I was giving them a bum rap in the book, so I wrote in a Puerto Rican doctor near the end. I didn't want to portray all Puerto Ricans as kids standing on street corners. There are a lot of them, but there are obviously Puerto Rican doctors and dentists as well. New York is a tropical city. We're living in the Caribbean. It's so striking. This is Rio, this is San Juan, this is Caracas. New York's greatest glory is that it keeps absorbing populations. It gives the city flavor. You just have to walk into Central Park and before you get to Bethesda Fountain you here those drums. In the sense of being animally alive, I will never forget a Sunday three summers ago when I didn't go out to [Fire] Island. I soon realized that summers are extremely romantic and voluptuous. It becomes much more exotic and wonderful than going out to Fire Island... I felt like I was in a jungle painted by Rousseau. The new lover was waiting for me. This was what Keats must have meant by pure life of the senses.' (55-56)

Critically analyzing the explicit and implement meaning carried in Holleran's response, I read the passage above as representing an authorial confirmation or, rather, rationalization

of islomania. Holleran acknowledges a self-described, neurotic attraction to island spaces and bodies. Here, the author's queer islomania expresses itself in the form of a class-conscious and racialized desire for both: the purportedly "tropical" and "jungle" island of Manhattan (a foil to barren and, thus, "unromantic" space of Fire Island) in the summertime, on the one hand; and the "flavorful" bodies of working-class gay Puerto Rican men migrating to, and residing in, the city year-round, on the other hand.

Holleran leads his response to Ortleb's interview question by addressing the element of socioeconomic class as it relates to his "attraction" to working-class Puerto Rican men. Here, he self-deprecatingly acknowledges that he does not know how to properly speak to—nor, perhaps, write about—his sexual desire for Latino men "without sound[ing] patronizing" or without the risk of "giving [Puerto Ricans] a bum rap in the book." To his credit, Holleran is aware of the power differentials that exist in terms of the privileged socioeconomic status that he inhabits, as compared to the one occupied by the real, working-class Puerto Rican "kids" that his novel's fictionalized Latino characters are all based upon. A multitude of gay Puerto Rican men appears across the entirety of Holleran's novel, all of them representing working-class characters. There is but one exception, however, to this homogenous and, therefore, stereotypical representation of gay Puerto Rican men in 1970s NYC. There is the exceptional case of the gay Puerto Rican doctor prudently and, in a certain degree, strategically "written in" by Holleran at the end of his novel. I later return to the symbolic implications of the body—and voice—of the gay Puerto Rican doctor that appears at the end of the novel. For now, however, we continue with our analysis of the language of Holleran's response to Ortleb's question about Dancer's "sensuous" representation of Puerto Ricans.

In the second half of his response to Ortleb's question, Holleran also attempts to speak to the matter of race and ethnicity as it relates to his queer islomania. He ultimately fails in his effort to do so, however. Here, the body of the idealized gay Puerto Rican man is present(ed) (Holleran makes a note of the "drums" in Central Park), yet his race and ethnicity are muted and displaced in the form of spectacle and backdrop. The image of the island of Manhattan (there is mention of Central Park) symbolize the site/sight of the City's gay, working-class Puerto Rican inhabitants: a rhetorical foil to the socioculturally homogeneous population of white gay men whose elite class standing affords them access in the summer to the physically and fiscally exclusive space of Fire Island. When Holleran speaks of New York City's "tropical" and "Caribbean" atmosphere in the summer, he is in fact figuratively gesturing to the seemingly "tropical" disposition of the city's diasporic community of Caribbean (read: Puerto Rican) immigrants absorbed into New York's landscape; therein giving an exotic, romantic-voluptuous "flavor" to the City's public character—and author's private sexual fantasies and desires as well.

Moreover, it is with his forlorn desire for, and moments of immediate physical contact with, the city's gay Puerto Rican men that Holleran expresses feeling "animally alive." Amidst the company of Puerto Rican men ("I will never forget a Sunday three summers ago when I didn't go out to [Fire] Island"), the island of Manhattan becomes less concrete and all the more jungle, in that facilitating Holleran's experience of a "pure life of the senses." Through Holleran's joint romanticisation of New York City's real island spaces and bodies, one understands queer islomania as the compulsive desire on the part of white middle-class gay men like Holleran, for example, to draw out the most socially prohibited features of their non-normative (homo)sexual fantasies: sex with the proverbial Other here

represented by the classed and radicalized body of working-class gay Puerto Rican men. Of concern, however, is the degree to which this archipelagic picturing of interclass and interracial/interethnic (homo)sexuality depends on the underscoring of class differences along with elision of the politics of race and ethnicity. Displaced as a backdrop, the gay Puerto Rican body politic is rendered a blank canvas onto which Holleran and his fictional middle-class white gay male characters project their erotic desires.

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## 2.6 “And Always Puerto Ricans”

Sexually inhibited yet desperately yearning for physical and emotional intimacy with other men, once in NYC Malone comes across an unexpected opportunity at same-sex intimacy. As the narrator informs the reader:

He [Malone] was more than ever certain that he had a vague romantic destiny... No one came to his aid—till late one night... when a messenger boy came in with a batch of Telexes from his boss in London... He [Malone] could hide nothing. The messenger boy, a young Puerto Rican from the Bronx in maroon pants and tennis sneakers, put the Telexes down on the desk and then let his hand fall on Malone's back. The hand drew a circle on his back, and then strayed around his chest and stomach; and Malone turned to look at him. They kissed. It was the kiss of life. He left a wild gladness in his heart. Someone entered the outer office, the boy left, and Malone sat there with an expression on his face such as the Blessed Virgin wears in paintings of the Annunciation. (77)

In the scene above the Puerto Rican man comes to represent an object of white gay male sexual desire. So much so that the brief sexual encounter leaves Malone in a state of divine bliss "with an expression on his face such as the Blessed Virgin wears in paintings of the Annunciation." Here the "messenger boy, a young Puerto Rican from the Bronx in maroon pants and tennis sneakers" the subliminal means by which Malone realizes his identity as a gay. Though this scene does not represent Malone's first sexual experience with another man in all of *Dancer*, it is his first sexual encounter in the novel with a working-class man

of color. In other words, of major importance to the story of the novel is the fact that it is only *after* his brief sexual interaction with the abovementioned blue-collar Puerto Rican man that Malone then begins to fully embrace his (homo)sexuality. There are two Malone's in the novel, then. There is the sexually repressed Malone that readers encounter *before* the scene above, and then there is also the sexually liberated Malone that emerges *following* his sexual encounter with the Puerto Rican messenger boy—"pre-Puerto Rican" and "post-Puerto Rican" Malone, respectively.

The very next day following this encounter with the Puerto Rican man, Malone resigns from his job as a lawyer at the Coudert Brothers law firm to pursue "the one thing that had eluded him utterly till now: love" (77). Then after, Malone continues to discover the "love" he so desperately yearns for in other Puerto Rican men. As the narrator notes, "For love, he [Malone] felt as he watched the Puerto Rican boys unloading soda pop from the Gem Spa on his new corner, love was all in life that mattered; without it, there was no point in having lived at all" (78). That said, Malone is not alone in his lust for sexual encounters with working-class Puerto Rican men. This blind desire for blue-collar Puerto Rican body is one shared by the other gay male characters in the book, Sutherland and the narrator included. For example, in one of Malone and Sutherland's many sex-clad conversations, Sutherland melodramatically informs Malone that he is excitedly expecting the arrival of the building exterminator:

The exterminator?" said Malone. "Yes," [Sutherland] said. "He exterminates the roaches with his insecticide, then exterminates *me* by tugging at his crotch to adjust his scrotum. He is the most *divine* Puerto Rican you've ever seen. The most beautiful Puerto Rican in New York—and God assigned him to *this* building... Now that's an accolade!... Don't you love these winter nights... and the possibility of so much dick. (105)

In the case of the anonymous narrator, they acknowledge that “He [Malone] loved these boys, as did I, to be among them was enough; he was in thrall to them, he was in the thrall of Puerto Ricans” (188).

In the novel, then, the pinnacle object of white, middle class, gay male desire is the working-class Puerto Rican man. This desire for another who is marked both racially and socioeconomically is all-consuming for the novel’s white middle class gay male characters, so much so that the novel's narrator describes this desire for working-class Puerto Rican men as inevitable and doomed. The narrator acknowledges how he, “came to New York for love, too, like Malone,” but that as a result of this became:

trapped, like a fly in amber, in love with the sordid streets, the rooftops, the Puerto Rican boys, the little park at midnight where I could always find boys hungry as was I, their faces gloomy with lust, as they stood beneath the trees wanting to be picked up. (131)

In describing their desire for Puerto Rican men as either timeless (Sutherland), as a divine experience (Malone), or as entrapping event (the central narrator), the middle-class white gay male characters “rationalize” or excuse their racialized desire for the ethnically and socioeconomically marked other than the Puerto Rican man thus represents within the story-world of Holleran's novel. In doing so, these white, middle-class, gay male characters actively work to disavow or, if not, excuse the racist and classist implications of their archipelagic desire for the island bodies of gay, working-class Puerto Rican men living in NYC.

The racist undertones of the novel's white male characters' fetishized attraction to the figure of the gay Puerto Rican man are most reflected most in one of Sutherland's comments to Malone in which the white gay male socialite and crossdresser proclaim:



Each year you love someone new: Orientals in 1967, Italians in 1968, blacks in 1969, and bearded blonds in 1970; and always Puerto Ricans, the angels, who take the form of messenger boys, waiting to cross the street across the pavement from you in their jeans and sneakers, their old leather jackets, on a cold winter day. You remember the eyes, as beautiful as bare trees against the sky: naked, away. Years pass loving such eyes. (131)

In the story-world of the novel, then, same-sex desire is jointly periodized and racialized. Much like a fleeting fashion statement or the turning of the seasons, here love is imaged as inherently transitional. White gay male desire is compartmentalized into discreet periods of time. In return, each one of these temporal units of desire is dedicated to the "love" of a particular racial, ethnic, or social group, be it the so-called "Orientals in 1967, Italians in 1968, blacks in 1969, and bearded blonds in 1970." However, the one exception to this racist, periodized model of white gay male sexual appetite and devotion is the Puerto Rican body. According to Sutherland, (white) gay men "always" desire Puerto Rican men. More troubling, however, the degree to which this white "love" of the Puerto Rican body is not only racist but classist as well.

The male Puerto Rican body that functions as the idealized object of desire by the novel's white gay characters is a racialized body that is also always marked by class, for the Puerto Rican body that Malone, Sutherland, and the novel's other gay, white, middle-class gay characters desire is not one devoid of a class standing. It is because they "take the form of messenger boys" that Sutherland and company desire these so-called "angels" represented by novel's nondescript Puerto Rican men (131). Sutherland's instructions to Malone dictate that the enduring object of (white, middle class) gay male desire in New York City in the 1970s (and beyond) be that of the male Puerto Rican body—one perpetually marked not only at the level of race and ethnicity but at the level of class as well. In this manner, the male Puerto Rican body is exoticized through an act of erotic, racial and class

compartmentalization and, thus, perpetually othered by the gaze of white, middle class, gay men in New York City. In return, the individual sense of humanity is stripped from the body of the gay Puerto Rican man. Dismembered and rearticulated anew as a pair of floating eyes devoid of voice or agency ("You remember the eyes"), the male Puerto Rican is rendered "bare" and "naked" and, thus, accessible to the consumptive gaze, desire, and intentions of other white, middle class, gay men in New York City like Holleran and his fictional characters alike.

The citation mentioned above of Sutherland's racist comments to Malone drives me to argue that the ever-always silent, working-class Puerto Rican characters in the novel with whom Malone fulfills his sexual desires represent a metonym for Puerto Rico. The Oxford English Dictionary defines metonymy as the "action of substituting for a word or phrase denoting an object, action, institution, etc., a word or phrase denoting a property or something associated with [the original work or phrase in question]." Within the context of Holleran's novel, the figure of gay Puerto Rican man represents a metonymic proxy for the archipelagic commonwealth of Puerto Rico. By this I mean to argue that, given Malone's islomania for island spaces and bodies alike, a case can be made for recognizing Malone's desire for gay Puerto Rican men as representing a more profound longing for the island(s) of Puerto Rico—or rather the archipelagic features and terrain that that insular commonwealth possesses. Unable to physically return to the island state of Ceylon of his yesteryears, Malone instead symbolically escapes to the Puerto Rican archipelago via his clandestine sexual encounters with gay working-class Puerto Rican men.

Reflecting on the fact that the working-class gay Puerto Rican men in *Dancer* not addressed by their names, we begin to see how these silent beauties inadvertently represent

metonyms on a secondary lever. J. M. Greenwood reminds us that a "Metonymy is derived from two Greek words meaning *a change in name*. It is a figure of speech in which a thing is called, not by its name, but by the name of something intimately associated with it" (222). The working-class gay Puerto Rican characters in Holleran's novel are not, with few exceptions, addressed by their names; rather, they named by something intimately associated them: their eyes. Lest we forget Sutherland's comments to Malone regarding the Puerto Rican men of New York City: "You remember the eyes, as beautiful as bare trees against the sky: naked, away. Years pass loving such eyes" (Holleran 131); or the narrator's description of a particular scene in the novel wherein:

a host of nameless, cocoa-colored boys one sees all around Manhattan, delivering messages, playing handball in empty lots—those Hispanic angels, eyes and bone structures no plastic surgeon could create: All of them stopped to kiss Malone or share their dope with the other people in the room" (165).

Throughout the narrators' account of Malone's sexual maturity, while living in New York City under Sutherland's patronage, one continually reads of "those dark eyes" that Malone was "in love himself with... as did I," the anonymous narrator (187-188). Worth underscoring is the fact that in *Dancer* the gaze of the white, middle-class, gay men such as Malone is only ever actualized in the physical presence (or mental image) of the gay Puerto Rican man who is marked *both* in term of race/ethnicity and class. Noteworthy then is the one moment in the entirety of the Holleran's novel wherein a Puerto Rican character speaks and yet whom Malone does not lust after. In chapter eight of the novel, readers follow Malone's thoughts as he psychologically processes the news of a suicide recently committed in Manhattan by a young, gay white man by the name of Bob, a man that the narrator describes as:

That twenty-three-year-old beauty who had his whole life before him; that boy from Idaho—who had slashed his wrists, and then his throat, and then hurled himself nine floors from the top of his apartment building to the steaming pavement below on this hottest of all hot afternoons just four hours ago in the city.” (220)

At this moment in the text, Malone's eyes cross path with those of a Puerto Rican doctor. Here, of major significance is the fact that the Puerto Rican doctor's professional occupation and participation in the leisurely sport of water-skiing symbolically mark him as a member of the middle rather than working class. As the narrator informs the reader, "another boat went by. It bore four water-skiers going out for a final run, and one of them, a handsome Puerto Rican doctor, called to Malone. 'Did you hear about Bob? It broke my heart!' And Malone only nodded, and then shook his head" (220). Remarkably enough, here Malone expresses no overt desire for the doctor, a character who, at best, represents a failed afterthought. Rather than pursue the attention of this Puerto Rican man (as he had done in the case of all the other Puerto Rican men that he encounters elsewhere in the novel), Malone pays little if any attention to this Puerto Rican man. Instead, Malone remains silent, choosing to passively communicate by first nodding and then shaking his head to relay the message back to the doctor that he, Malone, had not known Bob—nothing more and nothing less. Racialized a clear member of the upper-middle class yet, the Puerto Rican doctor comes to represent a partial or failed object of desire for Malone. Rather than reaching out in hopes of gaining the attention of the Puerto Rican doctor, Malone closes himself off. He turns inwards and expresses a melancholic desire for the recently deceased, albeit completely unfamiliar, Bob: "If only I had loved that one," Malone regretfully tells himself (220). In short, in the absence of a full object of desire (i.e., the Puerto Rican male body that is *both* racialized and working class), Malone's desire quickly shifts, turning

instead to the fantasy of alternative, impossible, and necrophilic even formulations of white, middle class gay male desire.

Luis Aponte-Paés elucidates how, “Generally, Latino queers are absent from gay media” (371). Remarkably, this not the case in Holleran’s *Dancer*, where a myriad of male, same-gender-loving Puerto Rican characters appear throughout the entirety of the author’s literary archive of 1970s NYC. Despite *Dancer*’s overrepresentation of gay Puerto Rican men, however, the text fails to provide readers any substantial insight into the lived experiences of NYC’s gay Puerto Rican community. In short, any three-dimensional portrayals of the history of Puerto Ricans and queer Puerto Rican culture, in particular, remains terribly absent from the archival imaginary of Holleran’s *Dancer*—this despite the author’s expressed belief that the “only function of the [gay] writer” is to deploy literature in service of an enduring record of the queer past for future posterity (Ortleb 53). Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes reminds us that queer Rican culture represents both:

a daily lived practice as much as the production of objects for consumption or collection. It is an attitude, a pose, a shared understanding, and also a vastly understudied field. It is a space that shows the intersection of Puerto Ricans, migration, and queer genders and sexualities" (xxii)

Within the context of Holleran’s novel, the countless images of working-class gay Puerto Rican characters do little to advance the reader’s understanding of the real, lived experience of NYC’s working-class (gay) Puerto Ricans in the 1970s; the nuanced complexity of queer Rican culture, past and present, exceeds the scope of the novel’s archival imaginary completely. Instead, the novel’s cadre of working-class gay Puerto Rican characters furthers the reader’s understanding of the historic demeanor and desires of the urban island city’s white middle-class gay men alone.

Writing in 1973, Joseph P. Fitzpatrick details the challenging, low socioeconomic status of the majority of NYC's Puerto Rican community at the time. In "The Puerto Ricans of New York City," Fitzpatrick notes, for example, how:

Occupationally and educationally, the Puerto Ricans are the poorest segment of the New York City population. In comparison with Blacks and the non-Puerto Rican community, they are heavily concentrated in the low occupational levels, and their median family income is considerably lower than that of the Blacks... Containing probably a million [Puerto Ricans] in 1970, [New York City] constitutes the largest Puerto Rican city in the world, about one-third larger than the city of San Juan; its population is about 40 percent of the size of the entire population of Puerto Rico. It is a population mainly of poor working people, the backbone of the labor force for hotels, restaurants, hospitals, the garment industry, small factories, and shops, without whom the economy of [New York City] would collapse (102)

The danger of Holleran's skewed overrepresentation of the city's gay Puerto Rican community is thus that inhibits the possibility of readers fully grasping the degree to which, "Latinos have latinized New York City's landscapes" and the struggles Puerto Ricans, in particular, endured in the middle of these historical developments (Aponte-Paés 53). Holleran's depiction of gay 1970s NYC romanticizes the real bodies and sensibilities of the city's gay Puerto Ricans. Here, Puerto Ricans are not presented as individual human beings in the full, so much as they are both objectified as "a pair of eyes, a smooth chest, enveloping limbs" and fetishized as "cocoa-colored boys one sees all around Manhattan... Hispanic angels, eyes and bone structures no plastic surgeon could create" (Holleran 106-107, 165). This stereotyped image of gay Puerto Rican men, in turn, has the effect of impeding the real economic, social, and political strife that historically characterized the daily lived experiences of many of the city's Puerto Rican residents in the 1970s. Buried *below* Holleran's celebratory, literary archive of North American (white middle-class) gay social and political liberation in 1970s lies an antithetical narrative of queer Latino urban

history, particularly the marginalized history of gay Puerto Ricans in New York City—an account and set of historical subjects that Holleran exploits in the interest of character and plot development.

Though the Puerto Rican body functions as the object of desire *sine qua non* within the shifting, queer-insular setting (i.e., Manhattan, Fire Island, and back) of Holleran's *Dancer from the Dance*, the idealized position within which the sexually desired—yet racialized and socioeconomically marked—other is placed in is no way a liberating or empowering representation of the historical figure of the gay working-class Puerto Rican man of 1970's New York City. In *Dancer from the Dance*, the figure of the idealized gay Puerto Rican man fails to embody a full, three-dimensional image or portrayal of queer humanity. In the rare occasion that the Puerto Rican character demonstrates any sense of complexity by speaking (as in the case of the Puerto Rican doctor), he is looked over and rendered undesirable by the novel's middle-class white, gay male characters. The overall image of the Puerto Rican man that Holleran presents in his novel is one that inadvertently flattens and, thus, trivializes the complex history of queer men color in general but the history of gay Puerto Rican men in New York City in the 1970s in particular.

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## 2.7 Conclusion: The Overrepresentation of (Gay) Man

Sylvia Wynter opens her landmark essay “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom” by posing the following argument, namely that:

the struggle of our new millennium will be one between the ongoing imperative of securing the well-being of our present ethnoclass (i.e., Western bourgeois) conception of the human, Man, which overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself, and that of securing the wellbeing, and therefore the full cognitive and behavioral autonomy of the human species itself/ourselves. (260)

Wynter's concern here is for the "overrepresentation," which is to say the predominance and hegemony of Man. Here, we understand Man as a lexical shorthand for white, bourgeois, and heterosexual *men*. The issue at hand, then, is the degree to which the perspectives, visions, and values of (white, bourgeois, and heterosexual) men—Man—now dominate all facets of humanity and, doing so, monopolize and exhaust our understanding of what it means to be human. Within this global social order chiefly centralized around the social, political, economic, and sexual interests of (white, bourgeois, and heterosexual) Man, women and men of color, for example, are by default relegated to what Franz Fanon first called "a zone of nonbeing" and what Lewis Gordon later qualifies as "a zone neither of appearance or disappearance" (7; "Through the Hellish Zone of Nonbeing" 10).

In the case of Holleran's *Dancer* and its literary archive of 1970s NYC gay (night)life, readers are presented with a clear example of the overrepresentation of Man. I want to qualify this claim, however, since within the context of Holleran's novel, Man appears in an alternative, expressly-queer iteration. Though the Man (or, instead, men) at the center of Holleran's novel is, in fact, white *and* middle-class, he is *not* heterosexual. Instead, the image of the human and humanity sustained by Holleran's historical fiction represents a *queer(ing)* of Man.

*Dancer's* overrepresentation of (white, bourgeois and gay) Man is predicated, however, on the occlusion of another historical subject: the classed and racialized Other here symbolized most clearly by the figure of the ubiquitous—yet muted—working-class gay Puerto Rican man of 1970s NYC. Reading Holleran's novel, then, we bear witness to the fundamentally *accommodating* nature of the coloniality of being/power/truth/freedom in connection with the global ascendance of Man. Here, Man is no longer solely white,



middle-class, and heterosexual; he is also white, middle-class, and *gay*. *Dancer*, I here want to argue, marks not only a literary archive of white, gay, middle-class desire. It also marks a literary record(ing) of the historical evolution and expansion of the category of Man to include the bodies, interests, and imaginaries of white, middle-class, gay men as well. In Holleran and his fictional characters, we see the complicity of gay men and their queer desires in the advancement of the coloniality of power. We thus come to recognize the degree to which (white, middle-class and gay) Man exemplify both victims and agents of the coloniality of power.

Ramón Grosfoguel and Chloé S. Georas remind us that:

In the United States, this ‘coloniality of power’ is constitutive of the symbolic and structural racial/ethnic hierarchies. Euro-American elites have historically deployed their symbolic capital, that is, the power of social prestige, to classify, racialized, exclude, and subordinate colonial subjects. (156)

What is worth emphasizing here is how Grosfoguel’s and Georas’s conclusions apply no less to our understanding of the history of the country’s gay Euro-American elites, than it does to the history of that relatively-marginalized subgroup’s privileged, heterosexual counterparts. As M. Jacqui Alexander so aptly reminds us:

gay capital mobilizes the same identity and operates through a similar set of assumptions as does heterosexual capital. These systems not only mutually construct each other but also compete for a marker that each is anxious to usurp. Both are engaged in nativizing and colonizing moves, which I had assumes earlier were generated by processes of heterosexualization alone. (71)

In conclusion, then, I want to suggest that *Dancer*’s problematic treatment of gay Puerto Rican men at the benefit of the Holleran’s and his white middle-class gay male characters’ erotic and archival desires alike speaks to a queer crossing of archival power, on the one hand, and the coloniality of power, on the other. Reading Holleran’s novel and the literary

archive of 1970's NYC that it aspires to embody, we see the real potential for archival silences to materialize not only because of Man's *neglect of* but also despite Man's expressed *desire for* the human Other. In our efforts to unsettle the coloniality of being/power/truth/freedom, let us then not also forget to unsettle the coloniality of our desires: those erotic and archival passions alike.

# Chapter 3

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## Mold(in)g the Archive

We cannot exclude in advance any of the actors who participate in the production of history or any of the sites where that production may occur.

— *Michel-Rolph Trouillot*

One troubling characteristic of molds is that they can colonize almost any environment...

— *Ezekiel Kalipeni*

The sign hangs there, and hangs there more than a decade later, with its unfulfilled promise of repair.

— *Jamaica Kincaid*

### 3.1 Archival Matter(s)

Michel-Rolph Trouillot aptly reminds us that, "historical actors are also narrators, and vice versa" (22). As both active participants and narrators of the past, historical actors exercise archival power not only by impacting the sequence of historical events *in vivo* as those developments unfold but also by influencing how the minutia of those historical proceedings are then portrayed and remembered. In this manner, historical actors represent dynamic agents of the past in that they affect both the original *process(es)* and the ensuing *narrative(s)* of history. To effectively trace both the flow and interruptions of archival power, it, therefore, is imperative that we acknowledge and explore the dual role that the historical actor plays in both *directing* and *explaining* the events of the past. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that the being of the historical actor in and of itself *precedes* the promise of archival power. By this I mean to suggest that our ability to bear witness to the full workings of archival power depends on *who* or *what* those of us in the contemporary

moment are, from the outset, *able* or, more specifically, *willing* to recognize as a historical agent.

To neglect or, worse yet, exclude the contributions (both constructive and destructive) of certain historical actors from our understanding of the past is to allow for an incomplete account of the ordering of the past—what Trouillot cautions as “an unthinkable history.” Against the threat of certain histories and historical actors becoming “unthinkable,” we must not, as Trouillot reminds us, “exclude in advance any of the actors who participate in the production of history or any of the sites where that production may occur” (25). When analyzing archival power, then, we must not only question the narratives of the past that historical actors produce *of* and *for* themselves (and indeed others); we also must remain cognizant of the historical narratives into which we conscript certain historical actors and, conversely, the historical actors that we exclude from certain narratives about the past.

Considering the full scope of Trouillot's analysis of archival power and his poignant call for critical historiography that considers the role of *all* historical actors in their many diverse forms, it is not clear why Trouillot limits his consideration of archival power and the production of history to *human* actors exclusively. Trouillot summarizes that in terms of historical actors capable of influencing the production of history:

Next, to professional historians we discover artisans of different kinds, unpaid or unrecognized field laborers who augment, deflect, or reorganize the work of professionals as politicians, students, fiction writers, filmmakers, and participating members of the public. (25)

How, then, might we expand Trouillot's consideration of the production of history and archival power more broadly in the service of a more comprehensive and, by its very nature, less anthropocentric understanding of the networks of historical production and

destruction alike? As a critical response to the *humanist* priorities of the “archival turn” in the Humanities, this chapter ponders the *matter*, that is both the *concern* and *corporality*, of the archive—as much about, as separated from, human historical actors. Recognizing the role that non-human actors or agents<sup>26</sup> too play in the production of history, the chapter places archive theory in the Humanities in conversation with the literature on professional archives management and preservation in Library and Information Sciences.

This dual care for archival theory and practice draws me to center the figure of archival mold and its *real* and *symbolic* properties together in service of a heuristic for explaining the imperiled conditions of many of the Caribbean’s colonial archives in the era of postcoloniality. A matter ubiquitous to all archival spaces and holdings, the biological menace of mold proves especially demanding on the present physical integrity and future longevity of archival records and repositories located across the tropical regions in the world such as the insular and coastal Caribbean. Analyzing the materiality of such tropical archives, I explore both the political and ecological *environment* of the modern archive

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<sup>26</sup> Trouillot draws a distinction between historical actors, agents, and subjects. “History, as a social process,” he contends, “involves people in three distinct capacities: 1) agents, or occupants of structural positions 2) as actors in constant interface with a context; and 3) as subjects, that is, as voices aware of their vocalicity” (23). Here, the term “historical agents” speaks to the generic levels of social stratification that human beings inhabit: workers; slaves; mothers; etc. In general, the structural positions that historical agents occupy transcend historical parameters: we can talk about the existence of mothers as historical agents in the 19th century, just as we can talk about their presence as historical agents in the 21st century, for example. By contrast, the study of historical actors depends on an understanding of a historical agent’s capacities within a specific historical context. For example, as historical actors’ mothers in the 21st century experience their motherhood in ways distinct from mothers in the 19th century. Different from historical actors and agents, historical subjects represent active participants in “defin[ing] the very terms under which some situations can be described” (23). As a historical subject, then, a mother in the 19th century might explain her actions as that of a “suffragette”; while a mother in the 21st century might, instead, define similar allegiances those aligned with “feminism.” As historical subjects, both women express actively participate in defining their place *in* and influence *over* their immediate historical environments (23). My analysis considers archival mold as both a historical agent and a historical actor; I do not conceptualize archival mold as a historical subject, however. In other words, I am to study the role and capacities of archival mold both *within* and *across* specific historical contexts (time and space) about the Caribbean archipelago in the era of postcoloniality. On the other hand, in its inability to “define the very terms under which some situations can be described” archival mold does not, I argue, inhabit the position of the historical subject (23).

from “below.” Critically engaging with the physical conditions and environmental contentions of archival spaces and holdings in the Anglophone Caribbean in particular, my analysis in this chapter traces the relationship between, on the one hand, what I in chapter one identify as the *modern/colonial archive* and, on the other hand, what I in this chapter wish to call the *archives of modernity*. At the center of this analysis, we find the figure of archival mold.

Rojas et al. draw attention to the fact that “fungi are the most important microbial agents of deterioration of industrial paper stored in archives” (169). Bankole echoes Rojas et al., noting that, “Paper has been the main medium for recording human knowledge worldwide, and its degradation or deterioration has been one of the most unappreciated serious issues for library and archival materials” (415). The conditions and longevity of paper materials are compromised by the unchecked growth and spread of mold inside of archives, a reality all too familiar to historians, archivists, and scientists alike within the Caribbean and beyond. Like Bankole and Rojas et al., this chapter recognizes the presence of the mold inside archives as an active agent of perpetual archival deterioration. As a ubiquitous, bio-archival agent, mold actively challenges the physical integrity of our print (and digital) records of the past.

As an organic and animated menace to the archive, archival mold represents a non-anthropocentric historical actor or agent possessing archival power in that the explicit influence of mold, much like that of human historical actors or agents, “precedes the narrative proper [of history], contributes to its creation and to its interpretation” (Trouillot 29). Tracing the relationship between archival power and archival silences alike, Trouillot contends that:

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

I propose, however, that silences enter the process of historical production at an additional, fifth juncture, expressly: the moments of fact *unmaking*, by which I mean to suggest the physical deterioration of historical sources due to the presence of non-human historical actors such as archival mold. Trouillot aptly reminds us that “power begins at the source” (29). Conceding, then, that power commences *with* and *within* the historical source, our capacity to speak truth to (archival) power is, I argue, predicated on our ability to engage with the materiality of the historical reference through a consideration of the moments and measures of fact *unmaking* within in the halls and shelves of the historical archive.

Given Trouillot's appreciation for the historical document's fundamental role in the production of history yet his failure to consider the politics of the archive beyond the influence of human actors alone, all the more ironic are the anthropologist's conclusion that, "The heavier the burden of the concrete, the more likely is it to be bypassed by theory" (22). Here, the concrete stands in contrast to the theoretical, since theory traffics in the production of universal truths. In foregrounding particularity and idiosyncrasy, the concrete leads us, instead, to more nuanced and, therefore, provisional explanations of reality that are more local in scope than they are universally applicable. In other words, the more that specificity is required to make sense of the past, the more likely it is for the theory to "bypass," which is to say mispresent through generalization, the historical events in questions.

The need is thus for a *substantial* theorization of the archive, power, and the

production of history. This substantial theorization of the archival affirms the *matter*, which is to say both the meaning and materiality, of the *concrete*; as made clear here by the distressing physical and environmental conditions of the colonial records and contemporary archival repositories in the Caribbean. Of particular importance to a substantial understanding of archival power, then, is the interplay between the production of historical narratives, on the one hand, and the destruction of historical sources, on the other. Be that as it may, it is important to remember that moments of fact unmaking that are driven by nonhuman historical agents do not altogether exclude the influence of human actors. Reorganizing the critical role that non-human historical agents like mold play in the production of archival power, and arriving, therefore, at a substantial consideration of the archive's concrete materiality, we neither over- or understate the role that nonhuman and human actors respectively play in the production of history. Rather, the goal is to arrive at a deeper understanding of the instrumentalization of archival power occurring at *all* scales of the production of history: the concrete influence that both human (e.g., professional historians, artisans, laborers, politicians, students, fiction writers, filmmakers, etc.) and non-human (i.e., archival mold) historical actors and agents wield, either individually or jointly, during moments of fact making and unmaking, together.

I open my analysis of archival mold with a formal review of the biology of mold. Doing so, I survey the body of academic research concentrating on the difficulty of managing archival mold in contemporary archival contexts located across the tropics, specifically. Following this overview of the concrete—which is to say real, physical, and environmental—details pertinent to our understanding of archival mold in archives in the tropics, I introduce the conceptual bearings of the figure of mold as a symbol for indexing



the history of colonialism and its legacies through the agency of the coloniality of power. Here, I place the figure of archival mold in conversation with Carolyn Steedman's related metaphor of archival dust. Contrasting Steedman's emblematic use of the image of archival dust, I offer the figure of the archival mold as an alternative, archival metaphor. Doing so, I demonstrate the promise that the figure of mold holds in symbolizing the crossing of archival power and the coloniality of power in the former European colonies in the tropics of the New World. My use of archival mold as a symbol for the larger history of the modern archive originating in eighteenth-century Europe recognizes the colonial-archival antecedents in the New World as fundamental to our understanding of the emergence of a modern archive in the Global North—first Europe and then later North America. Moreover, I also argue that a full comprehension of the origins of the modern archive in eighteenth-century Europe (and nineteenth-century North America) requires a joint consideration of the global history and legacies of European colonization, starting with(in) the Caribbean archipelago.

With the real space of the Caribbean land and seascape in mind, then, the third part of the chapter reviews the history of environmental-biological metaphors linked to Caribbean literature and culture. Doing so, I trace a genealogy of natural metaphors symbolizing distinct elements of history, culture, and politics in the Caribbean—an intellectual body of work that I am building on in my theory of archival mold. My review of the natural metaphors associated with Caribbean literature, in turn, inspires my close reading of contemporary Caribbean literature in the fourth section of the chapter. There, a practice of close reading applied to Caribbean literature and criticism works in the service of my materialist theory of the archives of modernity/coloniality.

I mine Tiphonie Yanique's "The Bridge Stories" published in her collection of short stories *How to Escape a Leper Colony* (2010) and Jamaica Kincaid's work of creative nonfiction *A Small Place* (1988) for literary examples of what I describe as *naturalized* social disasters. More specifically, in the case of the collapsing, trans-Caribbean bridge and the condemned library of Antigua featured in the work of Yanique's short story and Kincaid's book, respectively, we find narratives wherein natural phenomena are used by those in power to justify or excuse man-made forms of social inequality that hinder the lived experience of the Caribbean's local inhabitants: therein reinforcing forms of inequality precipitated by colonialism and the ideological shadow that it continues to cast after national independence. This insight drawn from the analysis of Caribbean literature supports my efforts to better reveal the social roots of purportedly "natural" archival phenomena, namely: the growth and spread of archival mold, resulting in the material decomposition of the historical records housed inside archives in the Caribbean tropics.

My ultimate aim in the chapter, then, is to demonstrate that, much like the collapsing bridge in "The Bridge Story" or the library closed for repairs in *A Small Place*, the moldered conditions of the colonial holdings of the contemporary Caribbean's archival repositories also make evident the naturalization of social disaster. A proper analysis of the crossing of archival power and the colonality of power in the contemporary Caribbean, then, requires that we explore the intersection of environmental and social forces *together* in service of a critique of the modern archive in the Caribbean that reveals the fallacy of dichotomies that divide both natural from social forms of disaster and colonialism from the postcolonial.<sup>27</sup> My study of the archival mold thus provides material evidence and

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<sup>27</sup> One of my aims in the dissertation is to call for a new, critical archival studies that considers the archive's materiality and immateriality *together*. My mutual concern for the modern archive's physical and

theoretical support for the use of fiction and literature as a viable entry point for addressing the immanent climatological peril threatening the future existence of the chronicles and communities of Caribbean archipelago today.

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### 3.2 Of Mold and Methodology

The modern scientific classification system accounts for six kingdoms of life, which include animals, plants, protists, eubacteria, archaeobacteria, and fungi. Regarding the latter of these six kingdoms, researchers have estimated the existence of 5.1 million fungal species around the world (Blackwell). The term mold (US) or mould (UK, NZ, AU, ZA, IN, CA) accounts for a broad and taxonomically diverse number of fungal species appearing under the three phyla of the kingdom Fungi. This vast number of fungal species are generally sub-classified into three distinct phyla (not to be confused as groups): Zygomycota (e.g. bread molds), Basidiomycota (e.g. mushrooms, toadstools, rust), and Ascomycota (e.g. yeasts, truffles, morels) (Raven et al.). Molds are distinguished by their

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metaphysical properties alike depends, however, on a balance in the treatment of archival theory, on the one hand, and archival practice (records management), on the other. This chapter of the dissertation enlists the real and symbolic features of archival mold in furtherance of what I call a *substantial* theory of the archive, power, and the production of history in reach of the real, colonial archives of the contemporary Caribbean context. Here, I use *substantial* to signal my care for both the *concrete* (physical, material) and *consequential* (pertinent, demanding) conditions of the Caribbean's colonial record groups and repositories today; this full regard, in turn, characterizes my study of archival power and the coloniality of power *in* and *through* the figure of archival mold. That said, my analysis in this chapter is not intended to represent a comprehensive evaluation of archival mold or its material exigencies and metaphysical significations. While the chapter does survey real, environmental factors related to the germination of archival mold in tropical archives specifically; here, my analysis primarily attends to an analysis of the symbolic and metaphorical implications of archival mold as a heuristic for explaining the imperiled conditions of many of the Caribbean's colonial archives in the era of postcoloniality. Future work in my study of archival mold will be sure to further address the materiality of the archive and archival mold specifically. Through a practice of what Puri (2013) calls "literary fieldwork," in the future I hope to supplement my primarily-immaterial analysis of archival mold in this chapter with real-world examples of archival preservation and degradation concentrating on the insular and continental borders of the Caribbean archipelago. Ideally, I hope like to feature four case studies of archival mold in the contemporary Caribbean: one example each from the Spanish, English, French, and the Dutch Caribbean. Two case studies that I might turn to, for example, are that of A) the repatriation of more than 100 meters of colonial records from the Netherlands to Surinam in 2010 after the completion of the coastal Caribbean country's new National Archives building; and B) the imperiled conditions today of colonial records and archival repositories in Puerto Rico following the disastrous events of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in the fall of 2017.

cellular structure, while some fungi (namely yeasts) represents single-celled microorganisms, molds grow in the form of multicellular filaments called hyphae.

Mold, which is to say single-cellular fungi, distinguish themselves from the animal and plant kingdoms due to their cellular structures and methods of nutritional intake. Unlike animal cells, mold and plant cells alike possess a cell wall. Unlike plant cells, however, molds are not able to photosynthesize. The fact that molds are incapable of performing the light-dependent processes of photosynthesis is a reason why mold often grows in the dark and damp spaces, such as the dark corridors of archives buildings in the Caribbean. Alternately, molds fulfill their nutritional needs by ingesting organic matter, be it dead or alive. In doing so, molds use natural enzymes to break down organic matter. These natural enzymes grant mold access to micronutrients necessary for cell growth and reproduction, such as carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, sulfur, potassium, and magnesium (Wahab et al.)

An estimated 25 percent of Earth's biomass is made up of the living organisms taxonomically organized under the scientific kingdom fungi: molds as well also mushrooms, sac fungi, yeasts, rusts, and smuts, etc. (Kalipeni). Opportunistic multicellular microorganisms, molds are ubiquitous, as they exist in the air, soil, and water alike. Generally speaking, we can categorize molds into two main sub-groups based on their location of origin: molds growing *within* and those growing *outside* of buildings—*indoor* and *outdoor* molds, respectively. The particular location of mold growth largely dictates the kinds of food sources available for mold to meet its micro nutritional requirements. Outdoors, molds play a key role in decomposing organic materials. In this manner, the

mold that grows outdoors aids in the biological recycling of nutrients, therefore ensuring the continuation of the natural cycle of life and death.

Indoor molds, however, regularly represent a destructive force, if only from the perspective of human beings. There, the components and contents of human architecture and habitation come to serve as choice food sources for the nutritional needs of indoor mold. Indoor molds usually grow on wood products, ceiling tiles, cardboard, wallpaper, carpets, drywall, fabric, plants, foods and decaying food waste, insulation, and other organic materials (Federal Emergency Management Agency [FEMA]). All the same, the destructive implications of mold growth exceed the question of human architectural integrity. Just as relevant if not more important, perhaps, is the threat that mold frequently poses to the quality of human and animal life in general. The long list of common ailments associated with human and animal exposure to indoor mold include headaches, hives, nasal irritation, dizziness, fatigue, dermatitis, diarrhea, nausea, and impaired or altered immune function (Kalipeni).

Specific environmental settings and climatological conditions are required for mold to successfully grow, reproduce, and spread indoors. The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration notes that "Molds grow in areas with high temperature, high relative humidity, and low air circulation" ("Dealing With Mold"). A temperature below 50°F inhibits the germination of mold spores, while anything above 122°F will quickly dehydrate and kill fungi. Ideal conditions for mold germination require that temperatures measure between 50-95°F (ideally 59-86°F) (Wahab et al.). Considering mold's affinity for moist and damp spaces, relative humidity must stand at or over 65-70% for fungal germination to be possible (Chicora Foundation, Inc.).

An extensive body of literature exists on the topic of the microbial deterioration of paper products. Scholars in the field of library sciences have drawn from that literature to address the immediate causes and long-term solutions for addressing the common fungal decomposition of library materials in tropical climates. Less, however, has been written on the biological and circumstantial factors of mold-based decay within the particular context of archival institutions in tropical zones. That said, the select number of articles on the growth of archival mold in tropical climates have been site and nation-specific in their scope of analysis. Such articles have addressed the question of the archival mold through individual case studies. Missing from the literature is any formal analysis of temperature, humidity, and archival mold growth rates as they might be comparatively examined *between* and *across* tropical zones and the archival institutions located therein.

My concern for the ever-precarious material conditions of the archives of modernity/coloniality that is the colonial/postcolonial archives in the Caribbean documenting the history of European colonization (and its legacies), responds to this lacuna in the research. Such comparative research of archival institutions throughout the Caribbean thus calls for an archipelagic framework of analysis. Needed, then, is a study of the history, current conditions, and probable futures of the archives of modernity/coloniality located across the insular and continental Caribbean today. The success of this research depends, however, on a comparative analysis of the imperial policies of archival management and administration shared across the context of the colonial and contemporary Caribbean as a whole but also their uneven application at the local between the Spanish, French, English and Dutch Caribbean territories, respectively. An archipelagic study of the material conditions of the archives of modernity/coloniality

in the Caribbean today advances, I here content, a parts-to-whole conceptualization of the archival mold as well. It is useful, then, to interrogate the definition of mold.

The encyclopedic entry for “mold” in *World of Microbiology and Immunology* opens by noting, “Mold is the general term given to a coating or discoloration found on the surface of certain materials; it is produced by the growth of a fungus. Mold also refers to the causative organism itself” (Lerner and Lerner 394). By and of itself, mold represents a natural, which is to say biological, a manifestation of duplicity in both the structural and figurative sense of the term. Doubled meaning, mold signifies *symptom* (“a coating or discoloration found on the surface of certain materials”) and *diagnosis* (“a fungus... the causative organism itself”). Double-dealing, however, mold symbolizes a manifestation of *life* (“the growth of fungus”) just as much as it represents an agent of *death* (“discoloration”). Such figurative crossings of the dynamism of life and death and, in turn, the confluence of past, present, and future temporalities is not exclusive to our understanding of mold alone.

It is possible to trace parallel, polyvalent meaning in the word “archive” as well. Jacques Derrida acknowledges the archive’s symbolic trans-temporality when he writes that, “As much as and more than a thing of the past, before such a thing, the archive should *call into question* the coming of the future” (34). Thus, akin to the biological figure of mold symbolizing a confluence of the forces of life and death, as a social institution of memory the archive exhibits the crossing of time in that it points to the past now departed, just as it gestures towards the future yet to come. “Archive” and “mold” thus correspond in their shared, symbolic contestations of linear, teleological conceptualizations of time (and space).

Moreover, "mold" and "archive" speak to one another in that they each represent the symbolic conjugation of the part and whole together. Archivist Kathleen D. Roe notes how, "in common parlance the term *archives* frequently encompass both the records or organizations and people, as well as referring to the actual type of organization that retains permanently valuable records" (1-2). In "The Power of the Archive and its Limits", historian Achille Mbembe's comments echo Roe's formal definition for "archives" when he suggests that "There cannot therefore be a definition of 'archives' that does not encompass both the building itself and the documents stored there" (19). In this manner, the archive represents a synecdoche, wherein a term for a part of something ("the documents stored") refers to the whole of something ("the archive building itself") or vice versa. All the same, this too can be said of a mold; there, the whole of something ("a coating or discoloration") invokes a part of that something ("a fungus") and vice versa. Of particular significance to my analysis here is the degree to which the synecdochal relationship between part and whole represented by the institution of the archive and the entity of mold alike suggest the manifestation of power—equally destructive and constructive, real and imagined.

As a metaphor, the figure of the island often represents a synecdoche of sorts as well. References to particular islands are often in fact a reference to an archipelago. Drawing a few examples from the contemporary Caribbean, popular imaginaries of the island territories of "Puerto Rico" and "Cuba" in the case of the Hispanic Caribbean or "Jamaica" and "Anguilla" in the case of the Anglo Caribbean represent these Caribbean territories as individual, autonomous islands when in fact that each represent a constellation or grouping of islands, respectively. The Republic of Cuba alone consists of over 4,000



islands and cays.<sup>28</sup> 143 and 28 islands, cays, islets, and atolls compose the archipelagoes of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico and Jamaica, respectively. Together, Sombrero, Scrub, Seal and Dog Islands, as well as the Prickly Pear Cays, form the Anguilla archipelago.<sup>29</sup> Considering these four cases alone, we see the workings of a synecdochal chain of signification at play between the part and whole/whole and part, on the one hand; and island and archipelago, on the other.

In the encyclopedic entry for synecdoche published in *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, the editors foreground the literary term's Greek etymology: "act of taking together" but also "understanding one thing with another" (Martinez 1261). Here, I wish to critically analyze the material and metaphorical properties of the "archipelago," "mold," and "archive" by *taking* or *understanding* their constitutive parts: individual islands, fungal microorganisms, and historical documents *together* in the form of archipelago, mold, and archive. Though they represent real entities in their own right, as symbols all three (the archipelago, the archive, and mold) serve as apt metaphors for theorizing a scaled methodology of historical-material analysis driven by a synecdochal critique; which is to say a critical analysis that holds *together* the productive tensions that emerge between the scale of the whole and that of the part, and vice versa. Such a scaled methodology governed by the drive to *take together* and thus *understand one with another* both the whole and individual part drives my concern for and consideration of the space of the Caribbean and the place and politics of contemporary archival institutions.

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<sup>28</sup> The National Office of Statistics of the Republic of Cuba describes the archipelago of Cuba as a composite of four island groups, including the central island of Cuba; to the North, the Colorados and the Sabana-Camagüey (Jardines del Rey) archipelagos, respectively; and to the South, the Jardines de la Reina and Los Canarreos archipelagoes (Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas de Cuba). The Sabana-Camagüey alone consists of 2,517 insular territories (Menéndez, Leda, et al.).

<sup>29</sup> For a comprehensive list of Caribbean islands, see Wikipedia ("List of Caribbean islands"): [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Caribbean\\_islands](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Caribbean_islands).

### 3.3 Theorizing Archival Mold

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My consideration of mold in terms of its biological features prompts my analysis of mold in terms of its symbolic capacities as well. I here wish to argue that the literal pervasiveness of mold inside the real spaces of modern archives located throughout the Global North and Global South symbolically mirrors the omnipresence of the coloniality of power throughout all facets of Western modernity. A link between the biological and symbolic aspects of archival mold in and of themselves and the coloniality of power furthermore is the fact that molds are inherently invasive and ubiquitous. “One troubling characteristic of molds,” the *Encyclopedia of Cancer and Society* describes, “is that [molds] can *colonize* almost *any environment* as long as *organic nutrients*, such as dust or soil particles, and water are present on that surface” (Kalipeni 911; my emphasis). On account of the degree to which it manifest “in all domains—political, economic, and not the least of all cultural,” coloniality, like mold, has come to invade all settings and scenarios of human relation (Quijano and Wallerstein 550). Therefore, a consideration of the ubiquity (existing in *any environment*) and extractive capabilities (consuming *organic nutrients*) of mold facilitates a symbolic refiguring of the history of European colonization and its legacies in the name of the coloniality of power. Stated otherwise, archival mold represents a formative trope for conceptualizing the influence of the coloniality of power in respect to the local, material conditions of archival institutions in the Caribbean today.

Quijano defines the coloniality of power as, “the most general form of domination in the world today, once colonialism as an explicit political order was destroyed. It doesn’t exhaust, obviously, the conditions nor the modes of exploitation and domination between peoples. But it hasn’t ceased to be, for 500 years, their main framework” (“Coloniality and

Modernity/Rationality” 170). As a global system of hierarchical power relations, the coloniality of power represents the main structural and epistemological frameworks still in existence today as a result of the European colonization of the Americas, therein beginning with the Spanish crown at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Today, the coloniality of power is especially active in its influence over popular and hegemonic modes of knowledge production and dissemination. It is for this reason that Quijano finds a formidable response, if not answer, to the coloniality of power in, the struggle "to liberate the production of knowledge, reflection, and communication from the pitfalls of the European rationality/modernity" ("Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality" 177). As both historical philosophy and political practice, decolonization works in the service of releasing our modes of knowledge production from hierarchical constraints of standing Eurocentric frameworks dictating rationality/modernity. In this manner, the history of the modern archive parallels that of the coloniality of power, for the archive is as much a passive repository as it is an active source and site of knowledge production. Here, then, mold can come to represent a biological trope for the ubiquitous influence and impact of the coloniality of power over contemporary institutions of knowledge production—the modern archive chiefly. The image of the archival mold thus serves to better elucidate the connections that exist between the coloniality of power, on the one hand, and the modern archive, on the other.

Building on the work of Anibal Quijano, Walter Mignolo argues that, “Coloniality... is constitutive of modernity—there is no modernity without coloniality” (“The Darker Side of Western Modernity” 2). Another element equally constitutive of Western modernity is that of the modern archive. Placing the figure of the modern archive

in relation to Mignolo's claims about the hermetic relationship between modernity and coloniality, the claim then is as follows: The modern archive, like coloniality, is constitutive of modernity—there is no modernity without the modern archive, amongst other modern ideas, structures, and artifacts); just as there is no modernity without coloniality. The modern archive and the coloniality of power are thus extensions of one another. The figure of archival mold, moreover, proves an apt material metaphor for encapsulating the links that exist between the modern archive and modernity/coloniality at large. Here, archival mold functions as a symbol for the ubiquitous, long lasting, and ultimately detrimental influence of coloniality over western modernity vis-à-vis its formal institutions of knowledge production—the modern archive in itself representing the institutional repository *sine qua non* of knowledge production within Western modernity.

Returning to Mignolo's claims in *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, there he describes "modernity" as "a complex narrative whose point of origination was Europe; a narrative that builds Western civilization by celebrating its achievement while hiding at the same time *its darker side*, 'coloniality'" (14; my emphasis). If coloniality represents the darker side of modernity, then archival mold represents the darker side of the modern archive. One and the other, coloniality and archival mold represent causal factors for what Gayatri Spivak, here building on the work of Michel Foucault, categorizes as "epistemic violence," which is to say the infliction of harm through the use of discourse and through the institutional marginalization of minority voices within Western modernity more broadly ("Can the Subaltern Speak" 82). The key difference here is that while the concept of the coloniality of power enables a formative *macroscopic*, which is to say global and systemic, critique of epistemic violence, the figure of archival molds draws us to consider

the workings of epistemic violence at a *microscopic*, that is local and material, framework of analysis as well.

The critical analysis of epistemic violence and the *global* history of Western modernity by way of formal consideration of the material conditions of the *local* scene is a methodology or mode of critique all too familiar to the field of Caribbean studies. People living in and writing about the Caribbean have long since turned to the endemic ecology (i.e., the regional flora, fauna, and landscape) of the Caribbean archipelago as a means by which to theorize, critique, and redirect the history—and future—of Western modernity from "below."

That said, to formally demonstrate the utility of mold as a materialist trope for tracing the history of the modern archive about that of the archives of modernity, it is necessary that I review the utility of other tropes use by historians and literary and cultural studies scholars to symbolize archival power. In *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*, Carolyn Steedman questions the cultural and historical materiality of what Jacques Derrida figuratively calls the *mal d'archive* or "archive fever." Reviewing the origins of modern history writing in nineteenth century Europe, Steedman proposes the ubiquitous presence of dust insides of modern archival institutions as the possible source of archive fever. Here, Steedman uses the image of archival dust to speak to both the literal and metaphorical registers of the meaning of the image of archive fever—what she calls "Archive Fever Proper" (9). For it is through the act of inhaling the debris or dust of decomposing historical documents housed within the space of the modern archive that historians figuratively appease their feverish desire to consume the past. At the same time, the inhalation of this ubiquitous, archival dust invariably exposes historians to potentially fever-or-illness-

inducing microbiological agents such as allergens and bacteria. Citing Steedman's text at length, she writes:

The English translation of *Mal d'archive* makes Archive Fever an aspect of origins fever; the fever... is one that might actually be constructed in the dust of an archive. And this actual fever (Archive Fever Proper) will turn out to be only one more item in the litany of complaints that historians have drawn up, in the deeply uncomfortable quest for original sources that the new practice of 'scientific' history inaugurated, in the middle of the nineteenth century, and which is till the dominant idea of practice among modern, professional, Western historians. (9-10)

Here, the figure of dust functions both as a descriptive and an analytic of the modern archive and the processes of history construction associated with it. The breakdown of the past is reflected in the gradual accumulation of archival dust resulting from the inevitable disintegration of historical records. At the same time, the inhalation of that very same dust represents a productive framework for conceptualizing the affective structures of intimacies produced in and through the archive via the arduous work of locating, interpreting, and critically analyzing primary source materials. In short, Steedman's critical musings on the presence of dust in the archive pushes readers to recognize and reckon with the material as well as symbolic features of the modern archive simultaneously.

Of limitation here is the degree to which Steedman's theorization of the modern archive, through its deployment of the literal and symbolic registers of archival dust, centers and thus privileges the role of the historian over that of the contents of the archive. Here, dust, or rather, the risk of its inhalation by a historian rummaging through the archive, speaks to an anthropological or anthropocentric conceptualization of the archive. In other words, featured here are the potentially detrimental effects on the historian's wellbeing as caused by "Archive Fever Proper." Overlooked, however, is the degree to which the interior *space* of the archive also compromises the future well-being of the historical

document in and of itself. As a means by which to feature both the perils of the historian that enters (and exists) as well as the historical document that permanently remains behind in the archive, this chapter proposes an alternative theorization of the modern archive that turns to the figure of archival mold as opposed to archival dust as a means by which to critically interrogate the relationship between archives, the production of history, and power.

In short, I find the figure of dust a rather *dry*, which is to say barebones analytic of the archive. I argue that the figure of archival mold provides a more dynamic framework for understanding the real and symbolic conditions of the archive. In turn to the image of mold, my consideration of the archive shifts from Steedman's consideration of nineteenth-century Europe exclusively towards a consideration of the interplay between Europe and the Americas—most of all in the Caribbean—preceding the nineteenth century. It is through the figure of archival mold that I here formally draw a distinction, but also elucidate the links between, what others scholars have termed the modern archive and what I am here calling the archives of modernity.

Steedman concerns herself with the history of the modern archive in nineteenth-century Europe and the legacy of that historical development as they relate to the contemporary methods of professional historical research, evidence collection, and preservation. My concern here, however, chronologically precedes (and exceeds) the scope of Steedman's analysis in that the archive at the center of my analysis is not the modern archive of nineteenth-century Europe but, rather, the colonial archives of European empire that precede the emergence of the modern archival institution. My point here is not to contradict or supersede Steedman's theorization of the archive via the figure of dust, so

much as it is to widen the scope of her theorization of the archive through my deployment of the image of archival mold. In other words, at stake here is the history of colonial archives and their connection to modern archival institutions—if only because what ultimately become the national archives of Europe today house the historical documents of what once were once the colonial archives of European imperialism.

The archives in question here are those left behind in the Caribbean by past European colonial powers. Centering the colonial/postcolonial archives of the Caribbean, I propose an alternative theorization of the modern archive that is rooted in an appreciation for the symbolic capacities of archival mold rooted in mold's biological-material properties. Not only does the figure of archival mold push us to consider the realities of archival preservation (or, rather, the challenge thereof) in the Caribbean today; as literary trope, archival mold also speaks to the colonality of power as it manifests in the *natural* and *unnatural* deterioration of historical records and repositories in the contemporary Caribbean—what I am here collectively calling the archives of modernity. It is in the physical, biological characteristics of mold that we mine the symbolic potential of mold as a literary trope for theorizing the relationship between the colonality of power and archives of modernity.

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### 3.4 Caribbean Literature and Ecology

Ecologists perform quantitative analyses of regional, habitat-specific and broader geological interactions between animal and plant life on earth. Central to ecology, then, is the field's emphasis on understanding at the level of systems the forms of interaction, interdependence, and exchange that naturally develop between biotic (i.e. plants and animals) and abiotic factors (i.e. soil, water, and meteorological factors, etc.). "The most



basic assumption of ecology,” the *SAGE Glossary of Social and Behavior Sciences* informs us, “is that all organisms (vegetation, animals, humans, etc.) are interdependent and that they interact with nonliving things” (Sullivan 166). Ecologists recognize the procedural, which is to say the co-constructive, nature of all systems of life. In this manner, ecology proffers a systemic conceptualization of life on Earth premised on notions of correspondence, coordination, and exchange.

Those within the field of Caribbean literary and cultural studies at large have turned to ecocriticism, that is the study of literature and the environment from an interdisciplinary point of view, as a particularly fruitful means for understanding the exact means by which natural science itself influences how we ultimately understand, image, and experience life in the Caribbean today; and, in turn, how our symbolic representations of the Caribbean influence how we explain, conceptualize, and connect with the nature in the region.<sup>30</sup>

That said, there exists a long tradition of writers and thinkers in and of the Caribbean who turn to a review of the natural-ecological and symbolic features of the Caribbean landscape as a means by which to formally describe, represent, and theorize history, culture, and society *within* and *in relation* to the insular and continental Caribbean. Turning to various aquatic, terrestrial, and biological metaphors or tropes of the Caribbean landscape, then, Caribbean writers utilize elements of the natural ecology in service of social critique of the region’s history of *macroscopic*, that is systemic, divisions and inequalities. Here, we arrive at images of the natural landscape marked more so by historical rupture and political discontinuity than social steadiness and economic stability.

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<sup>30</sup> For relevant ecocritical analyses of Caribbean literary and cultural production, see *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture* edited by DeLoughrey et al. (2005), *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* edited by DeLoughrey and Handley (2011), and Postmentier (2017).

Many have turned to the figure of the ocean in their efforts to carry the literal and symbolic space and place of the Caribbean. The Caribbean Sea functions as a central plot device for many canonical texts of world literature featuring island spaces, including the journal of Christopher Columbus' first journey to the Americas (1492), William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611), Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), and Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), amongst others. In all three texts, the Caribbean Sea is portrayed as an antithetical, geopolitical division from the continent of Europe. Jumping to the second half of the twentieth century, Derek Walcott uses his poetry to describes the Caribbean as a place where the "The Sea is History" (1980). Here, the sea stands for the history of the Atlantic or Middle Passage of the transatlantic slave trade: a history of race and racialization characterized by familial disruption, geographical discontinuance, and even ontological undoing. Four years later in the critical essay "History of the Voice" (1984), Kamau Brathwaite also invokes the image of the ocean in the Caribbean as a means by which to acknowledge the historical and ecological differentness of the West Indies. Invoking the image of the sea through the related figure of the hurricane, Brathwaite finds in English pentameter—itsself a rhetorical emblem of the global hegemony of the Anglo-Saxon literary tradition and canon in English—"a certain kind of experience, which is not the experience of the hurricane," in that, "The hurricane [of the Caribbean] does not roar in pentameters" (8-9).

Writing from within the continental U.S. at the end of the 1980's, Cuban exile Antonio Benítez-Rojo too centralizes the figure of the sea and marine ecologies in his efforts to comprehensively categorize the insular and continental Caribbean, which he ultimately describes as an "island bridge" forming an archipelago and consisting of:

unstable condensations, turbulences, whirlpools, clumps of bubbles, frayed seaweed, sunken galleons, crashing breakers, flying fish, seagull squawks, downpours, nighttime phosphorescences, eddies and pools, uncertain voyages of signification; in short, a field of observation quite in tune with the objectives of Chaos. (2)

In addition to the captious signifier that water and the Caribbean Sea, in particular, have represented in Caribbean literature, specific elements of the terrestrial landscapes of the region have provided writers with yet another repertoire of ecological images to mine in support of their respective critical, literary interventions in Caribbean history, culture, and politics.

As most evidently expressed in the case of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), the image of the deserted island has served to represent the Caribbean in particular (and the New World at large) as paradise or Edenic foil to the industrialized sectors of eighteenth-century Europe (and later North America). As a counter-image to the colonial mythologizing of the natural, insular landscape as paradise stands the figure of the Caribbean island rendered as colonial plantation (and the subsequent natural ruins therein due to European colonization) (Phillips Casteel 484). Such postcolonial renderings in literature of the ecology of the terrestrial Caribbean as a means by which to critically reflect on the historical and affective weight of European colonization and its legacies are also reflected, for example, in Aimé Césaire's *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* (1939). In that epic poem, Césaire opens with a detailed description of the Caribbean landscape in all of its sublime disarray:

At the end of daybreak, on this very fragile earth thickness/ exceeded in a humiliating way but its grandiose future—the vol-/ canoes will explode, the naked water will bear away the ripe sun/ strains and nothing will be left but a tepid bubbling pecked at by/ sea birds—the beach of dreams and the insane awakening. (2)

Later, while eliciting a gloomy and foreboding impression of the contemporary conditions of the local Caribbean landscape in its ecological totality—land, sea, sky, flora and fauna together, the poem's narrative voice speaks of how they themselves and other local inhabitants of the island (i.e. Martinique): "sing of venomous flowers flaring in the fury-filled prairies; the/ skies of love cut with blood clots; the epileptic mornings;/ the white blaze of abyssal sands, the sinking of flotsam in nights/ electrified with feline smells," amongst other features of the Caribbean geography and ecology (22). Here, the dismal and foreboding rendering of the contemporary Caribbean landscape allows for a critical reflection of the residual impressions and haunting afterlife of European colonization and African slavery in the region, equally in terms of human, plant, and animal life.

Others have turned to images of flora and fauna endemic to the Caribbean archipelago as an ecocritical means for representing the long history (and enduring legacies) of colonialism in the region. In doing so, various writers and critics have deployed the image of sugar cane, to give but one major example. Here we might think of David Dabydeen's poem "The Canecutter's Song" published in his first collection of poems *Slave Song* (1984). In the case of that particular poem, Dabydeen complements his poetic rendering of the historical figure, physical labor, and imagined voice of the Afro- and Indo-Caribbean canecutter by paring the poem with an archival image titled "A Piece of Sugar Cane": a black and white line drawing from 1873 picturing the decaying center of a stalk of sugarcane which has been invaded by parasitic worms. More broadly, the image of raw sugarcane stalks and fields symbolize the material history and byproducts of European colonialism in the Caribbean, an area of signification that Junot Díaz also features in his novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2008). In conjunction with the floral image

of sugarcane, Díaz's novel also invokes the faunal image of the mongoose, an animal that was historically transplanted during the latter half of the 1800s from the Indian subcontinent to the Caribbean by plantation owners wishing to use the mongoose as a means by which to protect agriculture from the real threat of vermin.

Elements of the natural Caribbean landscape prove especially pertinent to the work of Martinican writer, poet, and philosopher Édouard Glissant. In "Translating Caribbean Landscape," Elizabeth A. Wilson reviews the fundamental role that the natural landscape plays in Glissant's postmodern theorization of the history and afterlife of African slavery, which many of the cultural facets of Caribbean society today reflect. Wilson argues that in Glissant's work, "we see landscape as poetics, landscape as history, landscape as ideology, landscape as 'a signifying chain of relationships,'" and that Glissant, herein building upon while also critiquing the pastoral traditions of canonical European literature, "highlights the fact that for the Caribbean person/writer the landscape and our histories are correlated (Wilson 16-17). Glissant's decolonial application of images of the local Caribbean landscape and ecology is most explicit in his use of the image of the rhizome, which stands in direct opposition to that of the traditional root.<sup>31</sup> Here, the rhizome functions as an ecological metaphor for encapsulating what Glissant describes as "a poetics of relation" best reflected in the Caribbean through its local forms of cultural and linguistic creolization.

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<sup>31</sup> Édouard Glissant's notion of the rhizome marks a Caribbean "translation" or, rather, creolization of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's conception of the rhizome, which the latter two French philosophers formally articulate in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980). For an analysis of both the philosophical continuities and divergences that exist between the Deleuzian-Guattarian and the Glissantian rhizome, respectively, see Hantel (2012).

There are, however, certain limitations to the ecological metaphors that Glissant's wields in service of theorizing history, culture, and politics in colonial and contemporary (Francophone) Caribbean culture and society. Richard L. W. Clarke convincingly argues that "even Glissant's work is not immune to its own shortcomings. There is, for example, an ironic surplus of signification where the very concept of the rhizome is concerned" (23). Citing at length Clarke's analysis of Glissant's figurative use of the rhizome, he writes:

by contrast to the vertical and predatory connotations of the root, the rhizome signifies transversality, that is, it suggests the necessity and the inevitability of reaching out to the other and of seeking accommodation. The rhizome is no less predatory than any form of root system. It spreads itself out horizontally and, as such, does not mix with other species. It is not for nothing that a favourite [*sic*] trope deployed by biologist to connote this movement is one imperial hegemony: they often speak of rhizomatic plants like ferns as systemically 'colonising [*sic*] their habitat. (23-24)

Clarke's astute critique of the scientific limitations of the ecological framework upon which Glissant grafts his postmodern theorization of the Caribbean at large underscores the sheer difficulty that comes with any attempt to theorize Western modernity from below by way of the ecological. Despite (or perhaps even because of) the challenge posed by a bottom-up analysis of Western modernity, my inclination here is to move further *towards*—rather than *away from*—such ecological considerations of the local.

Be it the image of the Caribbean Sea, the desert island, the plantation, the fields of sugarcane, parasitic worms, the mongoose, or the rhizome even, each of these ecological tropes organically, both in the "biological" and "felicitous" sense of the term, symbolize local life in the colonial and contemporary Caribbean. Complex symbols of the Caribbean's varied natural, social, and political landscapes, the abovementioned tropes are each characterized by virtues and limitations, respectively. The tension that invariably emerges amid each ecological trope's representational merits, on the one hand, and schematic

limitations, on the other, proves especially productive, inasmuch as the contradictions complicate our understanding of ecology in the Caribbean, therein circumventing the impulse to romanticize or idealize the Caribbean's natural ecologies and social environments.

Interestingly enough, the feature that these various aquatic, terrestrial, and biological metaphors or tropes of the Caribbean landscape and society share is that they each represent *macroscopic* ecological renderings of the Caribbean. Missing from this extensive body of geological and biological metaphors is any consideration of alternative, *microscopic* tropes or metaphors for representing the Caribbean. The image of mold, however, grants us an example of an ecological metaphor for representing the Caribbean at the level of the *hyper-local*—what I am here calling the *microscopic*. The microscopic, in turn, facilitates a productive consideration of local and global conditions, which is to say the part and the whole respectively, as one. It is for this reason that I am interested in exploring the figure of archival mold as an apt, though in no way complete or comprehensive, metaphor for symbolically representing the history of European colonization and its material-archival legacies in the form of the colonality of power as it pertains to knowledge production *in* and *through* the modern archive.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> My call for a *microscopic* “reading” of archival mold as both a metaphor and a model for the natural but also social degradation of the Caribbean’s material history is inspired, in part, by Russell Roberts and Stephens (2017)’s call for an archipelagic framework of analysis that (re)thinks insular histories, texts, and contexts through the interminable perspective of the “anti-explorer” and the fractal geometry of “the coastline” (19-29). Like Russell Roberts and Stephens, my analysis works towards understanding what is both “unknowable and unscalable in the Real”: the ubiquity of mold, much like that of the colonality of power, for example, linked with the precarious material conditions of the colonial archives of the contemporary Caribbean (29).

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### 3.5 (Un)Natural Disasters

The figure of an archival mold is beneficial to our understanding of the links between colonialism and empire, on the one hand, and popular understandings of space, nature, and natural phenomena across the Caribbean region, on the other. Archival mold, as an archipelagic analytic, facilitates the analysis of colonial and postcolonial power relations in the Caribbean through a framework that simultaneously accounts for macro- and microscopic variables of influence. This multi-scaled and ecologically oriented analysis of history, culture, and politics in the Caribbean today proves most beneficial in its ability to better elucidate the direct and indirect influence of social, man-made forces over moments of so-called natural disaster. Revealed is the degree to which disaster in the Caribbean is often less a reflection of natural, geological-ecological processes than they are the result of man-made forms of inequality and hierarchical power relations. Here we can turn to Caribbean literature to better elucidate the socially constructed underpinnings driving supposedly "natural" ecological disasters in the Caribbean.

For example, a dual micro-and-macroscopic close reading of Tiphonie Yanique's four-part "The Bridge Stories: A Short Collection" works to formally reveal the *unnatural* or manufactured quality of natural disasters in the Caribbean today. In "The Bridge Stories" readers encounter a creative representation of the Caribbean as a place that is "more than just beaches and margaritas" ("Crossing the Bridge"). In the first section of "The Bridge Stories," readers are introduced to a bridge maker and his bridge, "Huge and stretching, from Guyana—the place in the world most south—of Miami—the place in the world most north" ("The Bridge Stories" 15). Of significance is the critical work the short story performs through its effort to map the Caribbean anew. Here, Guyana and Miami,



continental territories in South and North America, respectively, serve as the described outer limits of the Caribbean's insular geography. In suggesting that Guyana and Miami represent the southern and northern borders of the Caribbean, the text at hand attests to the region's vast and complex spatiality. In doing so, the short story destabilizes hegemonic conceptualizations of the Caribbean landscape that work to "insularize" or circumscribe the Caribbean's geological and geopolitical reach to the space of the Caribbean Sea exclusively. In "The Bridge Stories" readers are thus brought to interrogate the alleged borders of the Caribbean archipelago. In return, this fictionalized remapping reveals for readers the degree to which the insular borders of the Caribbean as commonly represented in maps are less a reflection of any natural geographical fact than they are an impression of the ideological commitments and aspirations of those working on mapping the Caribbean as such in the first place. In short, Yanique's short story works to reveal for readers the degree to which social (as opposed to natural) forces influence not only geography but ecology in the Caribbean as well.

Given that it is financed by the U.S. government, the trans-Caribbean bridge featured in Yanique's short story is to be understood as a metaphor for the long history of U.S. imperialism in the Caribbean. The character of the Island tells readers, "So he [the bridge maker] built a real bridge.<sup>33</sup> Paid by the Yankees—not to honor his memory, but really for their own convenience" (15). As a "convenience" of the government and citizens

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<sup>33</sup> The characters in Tiphonie Yanique's "The Bridge Stories: A Short College" are not representations of individual persons or beings so much as they are each emblematic of broader social groups or classes in contemporary Caribbean history and society. In the author's writing, the characters' emblematic function is indexed by nonstandard capitalizations of name and generic character descriptions. The list of symbolic characters include: the Miniature Bridge Maker; the Yankees; an Island; a Catholic Lady in a big hat; the Fisherman; someone's grandfather in a corner rum shop; and a seventeen-year-old schoolgirl in patent leather shoes. The atypical capitalization of character names thus appears in my writing as they do in the original text.

of the (continental) United States, the trans-Caribbean bridge represents an imperial structure both in intention and design with serious ecological consequences for the short story's local Caribbean characters. In the tale of the fisherman, readers are informed of the fact that "no one has been fishing on the north side for two years. You know, because of building the bridge and all... Their piece of the ocean taken away by the bridge that supposed to help everybody—connect all the islands" (23). Built on the promise that it would "help everyone" by physically, economically and even efficiently "connect[ing] all the islands" of the Caribbean, the construction of the bridge by the U.S. government ends up doing more harm than good in the Caribbean story-world of the text. A site of physical construction, the bridge marks a source for permanent ecological destruction in the region as well. Having polluted the Caribbean's maritime ecosystems, the construction of the bridge more or less brings an end to local fishing practices. In the absence of a viable local fishing industry, the cultural traditions, as well as nutritional and economic wellbeing, of the story's Caribbean characters are permanently impacted for the worse. The bridge causes serious setbacks to the region, disrupting the Caribbean locals' intimate relationship with the sea. In this manner, the bridge proves itself to be not only geographically (for it lays itself over all of the Caribbean) but ecologically and economically totalizing as well.

The case of the bridge in Yanique's short story illustrates the links between empire and ecology in the Caribbean landscape past, present, and future. More specifically, "The Bridge Stories" mirror for readers the large extent to which changes to the ecology (i.e., the transformation of the local marine ecosystems) are rarely *natural* occurrences exclusively but, rather, usually *unnatural* or manufactured—in this case, the structural byproduct of U.S. imperial policies. Such insight to the ecological implications of U.S.

imperialism in the Caribbean is only made possible through the relational analysis of the part to the whole and vice versa, which is to say both the relatively microscopic (i.e. the disappearances of local fisheries) and macroscopic (i.e. the literal and symbolic structures furthering U.S. imperialism in the Caribbean) variables of influence.

Moreover, a structural analysis of natural forces of the material disaster of archival mold drives us to consider the role that the detrimental economic legacies of European colonialism play in the biological deterioration of archival materials across the Caribbean today. It is possible for us to transfer the imperial-ecological insights that are afforded to us by Yanique's "The Bridge Stories" back onto our larger consideration of the material conditions of archives in the Caribbean. More specifically, what would it mean for us to think of archival mold or the ever-growing presence of mold in the archives of the Caribbean not as a *natural* phenomenon exclusively but as a social phenomenon as well? My facetious description of archival mold as *unnatural* intends to suspend in productive tension what I find to be the joint natural-biological and unnatural-sociological causes of archival mold growth in the Caribbean. Of central concern here, then, is the following: To what extent is archival mold less an exclusively natural, innate, and thus unavoidable ecological phenomenon of impending archival and material decomposition; and to what extent might the literal presence of mold growth in the archives of the Caribbean represent an unnatural, which is to say politically manufactured and socially mediated, phenomenon of intentional archival destruction?

It is worth noting that Trouillot poses a similar question in *Silencing the Past*. There, he explores the extent to which our individual and collective memories of the past (read: History with a capital H) are never *objective* or *given*; instead; they represent a

socially mediated (re)construction of the events foregone in narrative form. For example, in his consideration of the evolution of the historical narrative between the moment of the historical event proper and its afterlife, Trouillot draws a distinction between history (1) and history (2): "what happened" versus "that which is said to have happened" in the past, respectively (Trouillot 13). In highlighting the degree to which surviving accounts of events past are always negotiated and designed, Trouillot renders History (or, rather, the narratives of the past that we presume to be historical *fact*) as "unnatural" or simply fabricated. Like Trouillot, I too am invested in revealing the socially constructed and mediated foundations of what we accept as or conclude to be "true," "fact," or "given" about history in the colonial and contemporary Caribbean context. While Trouillot, pushes us to consider how power operates in the making and recording of history from the perspective of human historical actors; my analysis considers the interplay of not only sociological but also geological and biological elements in the making and recording of history: colonialism and decolonization, tropical climates, and indoor mold growth, respectively. Further exploring the coloniality of power about the making and recording of history in the postcolonial Anglophone Caribbean and taking the socio-, geo- and biological in mind together, I now turn to an analysis of the subversive representation of natural disasters in the work of Caribbean diasporic writer Jamaica Kincaid.

In *A Small Place* (1988), Antiguan-American writer Jamaica Kincaid offers readers a literary exposition surveying the colonial history and contemporary legacies of British colonization on the Caribbean island state of Antigua. In service of my analysis of the socially constructed underpinnings driving natural environmental and ecological disasters in the Caribbean (the central example in the chapter is that of archival mold), I read

Kincaid's *A Small Place* as a text working to subvert a set of presumed social and political dichotomies produced in connection to the history and legacies of European colonialism in the Caribbean. Two of the main dichotomies that the contents of Kincaid's book help us to dismantle include the supposed divide between reader and text, on the one hand, and the assumed distinction between colonialism and postcolonialism, on the other. In subverting these standing dichotomies and divisions, Kincaid's text prepares us to better reflect on how natural, which is to say environmental and ecological, destruction in the region is oftentimes used in the service of excusing, justifying, or obfuscating forms of social disasters that are, instead, a reflection of the coloniality power to the extent that they are human-made forms of catastrophe.

As a text written in the second person, the narrative voice in *A Small Place* works to dissolve the divide that is presumed to exist between the reader and the art object (i.e., the literary text). The first dichotomy that Kincaid contends in their book is, I argue, the divide between (Euro-American) reader and the Caribbean literary text. "If you go to Antigua as a tourist," the text thus opens, "this is what you will see" (Kincaid 3). This division that Kincaid mediates between herself as, the Caribbean writer, and her imagined Euro-North-American reader are paralleled by a corresponding division established within the story-world of the text itself: the split that is understood as existing between the Euro-American tourist and the local island space of Antigua. Here, the repeated use of the second person singular or plural pronoun "you" discursively casts the reader as a character within the events of the plot of the story. In doing so, the narrative voice of Kincaid's text actively integrates the imagined reader into the story world of the literary text. Accordingly, the language of the text works to imbed the reader-now-turned-tourist within the nefarious

history (and legacy) of European conquest in the Americas, which Kincaid here critiques through elucidation. The interpolating tone of Kincaid's narrative voice, in itself, extended through the recurrent and assertive "you," thus annuls any sense of distance, naïveté, or presumed innocence that might exist on the part of the imagined reader with regards to the colonial/postcolonial subject matter at hand. Reading Kincaid's text, then, one comes to concurrently inhabit both the position of the imagined reader and that of the fictionalized tourist vacationing in Antigua. In this manner, Kincaid's text speaks *to* the naïve, (neo)colonial impressions and conceited sensibilities of (white) North American and European tourists vacationing on the small island, just as it also speaks *for* the postcolonial lived experience of the local inhabitants of Antigua today.

An additional dichotomy that *A Small Place* helps us to critique is that of the supposed divide between colonialism and postcolonialism. Kincaid's telling account of the island's natural landscape and human infrastructure reveals a fundamental continuity between life *under* and life *after* British colonialism on the island of Antigua. Using the case of the Library of Antigua, amongst other real-world examples, Kincaid exposes for the imagined readers/imaginary tourist the degree to which it is not possible to explain the stifled features of life in Antigua today without also considering the island's earlier history as a formal British colony. As the narrative voice sarcastically points out:

Antigua used to have a splendid library, but in The Earthquake... the library building was damaged. This was in 1974, and soon after that a sign was placed on the front of the building saying, THIS BUILDING WAS DAMAGED IN THE EATHERQUAKE of 1974. REPAIRES ARE PENDING. The sign hangs there, and hangs there more than a decade later, with its unfulfilled promise of repair... The library is one of those splendid old buildings from colonial times, and the sign telling of the repairs is a splendid old sign from colonial times. Not very long after The Earthquake Antigua got its independence from Britain, making Antigua a state in its own right, and Antiguan are so proud of this that each year, to mark the

day, they go to church and thank God, a British God, for this. But you should not think of the confusion that must lie in all that and you must not think of the damaged library... you needn't let that slightly funny feeling you have from time to time about exploitation, oppression, domination develop into full-fledged unease, discomfort; you could ruin your holiday. (8-10; emphasis in original)

The earthquake that Kincaid refers to in the citation above takes place on Tuesday, October 8, 1974, therein negatively impacting Antigua and many of the other Leeward Islands of the Lesser Antilles. Of the various Caribbean islands to suffer the brunt of "The Earthquake," the then British colony of Antigua would experience the greatest amount of destruction to its local infrastructure. For example, many of the original, colonial buildings on Antigua were severally damaged by the earthquake. "The library building," Kincaid informs us, "was damaged" too. Four decades would pass, however, before the "PENDING" repairs to the Library of Antigua would be completed. September 2014 marked the formal culmination of the library's reconstruction—that is, forty years following the events of the earthquake in 1974 and thirty-three years after the island became an independent state within the British Commonwealth of Nations on November 1, 1981.

In the case of the Library of Antigua and the real details of its delayed repair, one arrives at several conclusions about the history and legacies of European colonialism in the Caribbean. First and foremost, the contents of Kincaid's *A Small Place* confirm sociologists Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein's claims regarding the perpetuity of coloniality after colonialism, namely that, "even when formal colonial status would end, coloniality would not" (550). The example of the condemned library in *A Small Place* reveals how the historical events that take place at the time of formal European colonialism continue to shape and define politics and society on the island of Antigua even after it

obtains formal independence from British colonial rule. I want to argue then that the Library of Antigua in its perpetual state of disrepair, as much before and no less subsequent to Antiguan independence in 1981, represents an apt *structural* metaphor for the degree to which local island life in the present moment is defined or, better yet, detained by the events of the colonial past—perpetually so.

Gayatri Spivak stipulates that "postcoloniality is a failure of decolonization" ("Teaching for the Times" 178; emphasis in original).<sup>34</sup> Spivak's claim pushes us to understand postcoloniality, that is the *quality* or *condition of* being postcolonial, as a result of decolonization's failure or failings and, by default, colonialism's success(ion). In return, the prefix *post-* at the beginning of the term "postcolonial" comes to signify not so much the period of *life after* ("later" or "subsequent to") colonialism as the *afterlife* ("eternity" or "immortality") of colonialism in and of itself. We thus understand the *postcolonial* as a sociohistorical period marked by *new* expressions of colonialism and, in this way, colonialism *anew*. Kincaid's account of the broken Library of Antigua captures the sentiment of Spivak's claims about postcoloniality, since the sign posted out front of the condemned library building represent a literal representation of post coloniality as colonial *postscript*, from the Latin *postscribere* meaning "write after." As the narrator reminds us, "The library is one of those splendid old buildings *from colonial times*, and the sign telling of the repairs is a splendid old sign *from colonial times*" (Kincaid 8; my emphasis). The example of the Library of Antigua thus elucidates the fundamental irony of postcoloniality,

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<sup>34</sup> As a suffix, *-ity* signifies "condition or quality of being" (<https://www.etymonline.com/word/-ity>). Postcoloniality can thus be defined as the state, condition, or quality of being postcolonial.



namely the degree to which the formal and informal influence alike of (British) colonialism remains present and active even after the formal moment of independence.

All the more, the story of “The Earthquake” at the center of Kincaid’s literary text and the history of Antigua’s national library alike illustrate how natural phenomena are oftentimes utilized as an “explanation” (read: justification and legitimization) for ongoing forms of social—which is to say, man-made and thereupon unnecessary—forms of economic and political neglect in particular postcolonial contexts. Returning, then, to the block quotation above, the sign outside of the then-defunct Library of Antigua informs visitors that, “THIS BUILDING WAS DAMAGED IN THE EATHERQUAKE of 1974. REPAIRES ARE PENDING.” Of note here is the way in which the earthquake is rendered the sole or primary reason for the library’s continual disrepair. The first sentence describes a matter of circumstance: “THIS BUILDING WAS DAMAGED IN THE EATHERQUAKE of 1974”. The latter asserts itself, however, as a matter of fact in and of itself: “REPAIRES ARE PENDING”. In other words, the first sentence on the sign introduces both cause (“THE EATHERQUAKE”) *and* effect (“THIS BUILDING WAS DAMAGED”); the second sentence on the sign is less explicative—intentionally so.

There, the visitor/reader learns of ongoing development (“REPAIRS ARE PENDING”), where no attribution is explicitly given to clarify the matter of these open-ended circumstances. Missing—or omitted, rather—is the reason for the indeterminate status of the purportedly forthcoming repairs. Owing to the absence of a formal explanation for, or reason behind, the tentative repairs to the library, the “PENDING” status of the library’s reconstruction is ultimately rendered an *inexplicable*—and, in this way, *natural(ized)*—phenomena. Through the language of the sign, then, a false equivalency is established

between a natural phenomenon (the destructiveness of the earthquake) and a social phenomenon (the indeterminacy of the repairs). Thus, the phrase “REPAIRS ARE PENDING” comes to suggest that the repairs to the library are *intrinsically* delayed. In other words, the language on the sign works to occlude the colonial (and later postcolonial) government’s volition in their formal disregard for the educational needs and opportunities of the island’s local inhabitants—a decision that results in negative, long-term effects on Antiguan society.

Much is in danger of being lost with the closing of the library. For example, readers learn how:

The place where the library is now, above the dry-goods store, in the old run-down concrete building, is too small to hold all the books from the old building, and so most of the books, instead of being on their nice shelves, resting comfortably, waiting to acquaint me with you in all your greatness, are in cardboard boxes in a room, gathering *mildew*, or dust, or ruin. (43; my emphasis)

Important to my reading of this key passing is an understanding of the relationship that exists between mold and mildew. The two, we learn:

are both fungi, but mildew is not as invasive or troublesome as other types of mold... It’s flat and powdery and it’s an easier fungus to clean because it lives only on the surface of a material (such as bathroom tile). Mildew can cause similar allergic reactions to that of mold, but because it’s easier to eliminate, it’s less of a threat... The warning signs of a mold invasion are often hard to spot, which is why it can sneak up on a homeowner. (“Mold vs. Mildew”)

Here, mildew proves the lesser of two evils. Its growth is limited to the surface of organic materials, making it easier to identify and eliminate. Mold is evidence of a more pernicious fungal contamination, however. Unfortunately, however, it is much harder to locate and treat the presence of mold than it is to detect and eradicate the spread of mildew. Despite their inappropriate storage conditions, the library books are in relative care, insofar as they

presently are not threatened by the peril of mold but, instead, mildew: *surface* trouble. The more nefarious problem at hand is *deeper*, hard to spot—sneaky, even. I thus want to propose that it is a misnomer to understand the books and their hazardous storage conditions as the central issue at hand given the library's disrepair. The *underlying* concern is much more profound, however.

By cause of the library building's ruination, the real, leading issue here is less the steady destruction of the books. Rather, the ultimate concern is the progressive breakdown of local civil society in postcolonial Antigua owing to the shortcomings of the island state's under-resourced institutions of public education (the condemned library included). Here, the wreckage of the library's displaced collection of books proves analogous to the successive breakdown of the social fabric of the local community. "The young librarians cannot find," Kincaid notes, "the things they want, and I don't know whether it is because of the chaos of storing for a long period of time the contents of a public library in cardboard boxes, or because of the bad post-colonial education the young librarians have received" (43). In parentheses, the author then adds that "In Antigua today, most young people seem almost illiterate... unlike my generation, how stupid they seemed, how unable they were to answer in a straightforward way, and in their native tongue of English, simple questions about themselves" (43-44).

The closing of the library due to the impact of the earthquake represents a direct consequence of a natural disaster. The sub-par post-colonial education in Antigua after national independence and the youth's ignorance (both of which Kincaid connects back to the library's four decades of disrepair) are not, however, a result of natural disaster. Rather, they are a consequence of "metaphysical catastrophe," which creates, as Nelson

Maldonado-Torres argues, "discourse and institutions that locate the colonized in a precarious place of existence... [like] recolonization through education" ("Outline of Ten Theses" 15); or rather, recolonization through *under*-education, as exemplified by the position of the underqualified educators and naïve youth living on the island of Antigua after the events of national independence and the earthquake of 1974.

Such incompetence is, thus, not a reflection of the innate (in)capacities of the island's inhabitants but, rather, a reflection of the willing (in)effectiveness of the Antiguan colonial/postcolonial government and the country's social, political, and economic leaders. I thus wish to argue that the example of Library of Antigua and its ongoing disrepair reveals the *naturalization* of structural forms of underdevelopment and inequality that come to largely characterize the lived experience of individuals and communities presently inhabiting the spaces of former European colonies, portions of the globe today collectively described as the "Third World" and the "Global South." A means by which to structurally displace liability and, thus, culpability on the part of those in power, the *naturalization* of underdevelopment and inequality speaks to the opportunistic convergence of natural and social forces alike at the service of the coloniality of power, which we are reminded, "manifest[s] itself in all domains—political, economic, and not the least of all cultural" (Quijano and Wallerstein 550). To understand the full impact of the coloniality of power, then, it is necessary for us to analyze the relationship between natural and social phenomena—above all the degree to which social forms of disaster (metaphysical catastrophe, for example) is often excused under the assertion of natural calamity.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Similar arguments are made by Klein (2007) and Loewenstein (2015) under the rubric of "disaster capitalism," which the two scholars understand as the practice by a state or political regime of exploiting major disasters to institute liberal economic policies that the public would likely not accept under normal circumstances. These shrewdly instituted economic policies have the effect of leaving victims worse off than

Thinking about the colonial archive in the contemporary Caribbean better understanding of the colonality of the modern archive becomes possible when we pause to address the fact that the ubiquitously destructive presence of archival mold in the tropical archives of the Caribbean is as much a reflection of natural, bio-archival processes as it is indicative of structural forms of social disaster including underdevelopment, financial disinvestment, educational inequality.

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### 3.6 Conclusion: Mold on the Rise

The natural and social forms of disaster portrayed in both Tiphonie Yanique's "The Bridge Stories" and Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* are unfortunately in no way a matter of fiction exclusively. Global warming is on the rise, and in the case of the Caribbean, the weight or burden of climate change will invariably fall heavy upon those tasked with the responsibility of assessing, cataloging, managing, and maintaining the historical records *of* and *across* the region. Today, "[t]he 'warm and humid tropical climate provide conducive conditions for,'" Bankole notes, "the proliferations of biological agents especially moulds [*sic*], thus making the problem to be more important in the tropics than in temperate regions" (424). Shortly, the people of the Caribbean can expect to experience even more difficulty insuring the long-term security of archival materials and collections against the damaging impact of mold and other climatological factors. Despite the scientific reality of climate change, countries of the Global North (i.e., China, the United States, Russia, etc.) continue to neglect their responsibility for the already-evident impacts of global warming. Even though countries of the Global South such as those of the Caribbean are contributing

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they were before disaster struck. Klein and Loewenstein direct their analysis to the study of disaster capitalism as it relates to the history of the mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, exclusively. What I am trying to call for in my analysis, however, is for a study of 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup>-century disaster *with* and *through* a consideration of past (and in some cases continuing) histories of colonialism and empire.

the least to the growing annual production rates of carbon dioxide emissions worldwide, they are the ones expected to most suffer from the consequences of rising sea levels and more severe weather patterns.

In the wake of more extreme weather conditions, we can expect higher annual temperatures for those living in the world's tropical climates such as the Caribbean. Christiane Baryla speaks to the dire reality of archival preservation in tropical climates in the age of global warming, underscoring how:

At the global level, climate change has accelerated; many studies have shown that one of its striking aftermaths is that extreme climates are being accentuated. Dryness, hurricanes and tropical rains, natural disasters (earthquake, tsunami, mudslides, landslides) keep increasing regularly. In terms of tropical climate, this phenomenon also means, in everyday life, more humidity, more heat in an often tricky regional economic context, mainly due to still-higher energy costs. (4)

Higher temperatures in the Caribbean will result in significant increases in humidity; with the rise of moisture, we can expect further growth and spread of mold within archival institutions in the Caribbean. In short, we begin to see the degree to which the question of the past (the archival records and institutions of the Caribbean) and the question of the future (climate change in the Caribbean) is the same.

While for some the past is prologue, the looming reality of global climate change and the dim future for the archives of the Caribbean show the degree to which the expected increase in the destruction of archival collections in the region is only the beginning. The archive or collective memory of the legacies of European colonialism and empire in the Caribbean today is fraught with gaps, openings, holes, and silences. The promise a (more) complete archive of the history of slavery in the region, for example, is at best an encouraging ideal for true justice and at worse a misleading fantasy. And while there is

much that we might productively speculate or theorize about what the contents of the historical archives in the Caribbean were, were not, might be, or could have been, we risk overlooking the physical status of archives and their physical holdings as they exist today.

As fraught and as incomplete as they may be, the archives of European colonization in the Caribbean today and their continued preservation is fundamental for the future communities in and from the Caribbean archipelago. Writing about the displaced archives of the U.S. Virgin Islands, for example, Jeannette Bastian reminds us that:

Without recourse to records, the community can neither counter other interpretations nor consolidate its own; without ownership of its history, it continues to be history's victim... A community without its records is a community under siege, defending itself, its identity, and its version of history without a firm foundation on which to stand" ("Owning Memory" 48, 87)

As such, it is all the more important for us to advocate against climate change in hopes of ensuring the future preservation of archival materials in tropical climates like that of the Caribbean. In our efforts to forestall climate change and global warming in the interest of historical preservation, we must not, however, overlook the colonial roots of these contemporary environmental and archival problems. Nor must we institute policies that prioritize the material well-being of the endangered historical records at the detriment of the interests, needs, and the greater good of the communities connected to the historical documents in question. At stake here, then, is not only the collective past but also the possible futures of communities living in the insular and continental Caribbean. The undertaking of preserving the Caribbean's local, colonial records and the responsibility of the region's local communities must, therefore, be understood as interrelated projects, if not the same. In short, the success of the former depends on the progress of the latter, and vice versa.

Trouillot concludes the final chapter of *Silencing the Past* reminding readers that, "History does not belong only to its narrators, professional or amateur. While some of us debate what history is or was, other take it in their own hands" (153). Not clear yet is how exactly those living in the Caribbean might successfully take into their hands the future of the region's historical records. Regional archivists and activists alike have begun turning to digitization as a means to conserve for future perpetuity the region's deteriorating historical records. As effective as they may be, proper digitization methods for long-term archival preservation proves rather costly both in terms of manual labor and technological upkeep—a premium that few of the local archival repositories in the Caribbean are at present able to afford.

Such dire conditions facing the future well-being of historical records stored in the Caribbean suggest the need for an alternative, decolonial practice of archives management and administration. Missing from archive theory and practice in the Global North today is an understanding of the history of the modern archive that formally reconciles with the history of European colonization and its legacies in the form of the colonality of power. In other words, at the center of a proposed decolonial practice of archives management and administration is the awareness that a full comprehension of the importance of the modern archive in eighteenth century Europe (and nineteenth and twentieth-century North America) requires a joint consideration of the history and legacies of European colonization in the so-called New World, starting with the Caribbean. Within such a decolonial framework, the future of the modern archives of France, Great Britain, Spain, the Netherlands, and even the U.S. are seen as fundamentally tied to that of the modern archives in the Caribbean. The relationship between the two would thus be recognized as



bilateral. In consequence, the material breakdown of the archives of modernity of the Global South would consequentially represent a failure on the part of the modern archives of the Global North, and vice versa.

## Chapter 4

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Of Cassette Tape “Letters” and Basement Refrigerators: Housing the Transnational Archives of the Caribbean Diaspora in Simone Schwarz-Bart’s *Your Handsome Captain* (1987) and Junot Díaz’s *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2008)

...the meaning of “archive,” its only meaning, comes to it from the Greek *arkheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded.

— Jacques Derrida

We attain to dwelling, so it seems, only by means of building. The latter, building, has the former, dwelling, as its goal. Still, not every building is a dwelling.

— Martin Heidegger

...the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind.

— Gaston Bachelard

### 4.1 The Homely Origins of the Archive

Today, the word archive bears two main registers of signification, meaning both a set of historical *records* and the *repository* for said documents, the same. However, a review of the term's etymology complicates our contemporary definition of the word archive. In *Archive Fever*, his deconstructionist exegesis on the forgotten history, present standing, and future place of the modern archive, Jacques Derrida reminds us of the archive's *homely* origins, writing:

But even more, and *even earlier*, “archive” refers to the *arkhe* in the *nomological* sense... the meaning of “archive,” its only meaning, comes to it from the Greek *arkheion*: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the *archons*, those who commanded.

The citizens who thus held and signified political power were considered to possess the right to make or to represent the law. On account of their publicly recognized authority, it is at their home, in that *place* which is their house (private house, family house, or employee's house), that official documents are filed. (2; emphasis in original)

Engaging with the historical semantics of the term, Derrida traces the original meaning of the word archive to the context of Ancient Greece. Within the historical context of Classical antiquity, the archive refers to the personal residence of those who commanded (the archons)—a space of dwelling, or “home,” to the juridical documents of ancient Greek society as well. As the rightful guardians of these particular records, the archons, Derrida adds, “possesse[d] the right to make or to represent the law... recall the law and call on or impose the law” (2). In the context of Ancient Greece, then, the archive represented not two but rather *four* distinct registers of meaning; there, the archive simultaneously represented: *evidence* (“the official documents”); *edict* (“the right to make or to represent the law”); *explanation* (“the power to interpret the archive”); but above all *edifice* (“a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrates, the archons”).

The intimate connection between power and the state established using the archive within the context of Ancient Greece is a relationship that to this day continues to exist, for the historical archive still plays a major role in both the creation and preservation of statal forms of power. For example, in “The Power of the Archive and Its Limits,” Achille Mbembe reiterates the archive's enduring affiliation to *both* the figure of the state and the question of power more broadly, acknowledging that, “The term ‘archives’ first refers to a building, a symbol of a public institution, which is one of the organs of a constituted state” (19). Even as the proverbial *place* of the archive has shifted, that is from the political center of the Greek *polis* or city-state to the political heart of what now is known as the Western

nation-state, the archive continues to carry a semblance of its original purpose as the literal and figurative home of the state's legal arbitrators and records, respectively. In this way, the figurative language used to describe the archive today frequently has the chance effect of invoking the archive's "domestic" semantic past.

The specific image of the house or home, for example, regularly serves as a choice metaphor for describing our formal collections of historical documentation. Archivist Jeannette A. Bastian makes a note of the enduring aura of the archive's domiciliary origins, identifying that:

The image of a house of memory to which the archivist holds the key is a familiar and persistent metaphor in the archival world. We think of these houses as repositories, spaces, and containers that hold the records, manuscripts, and memorabilia of our collective pasts. ("In a 'House of Memory'" 9)

Within the lexicon of the contemporary moment, our metaphorical conception of the space of the archive often approximates an image of a house of memory, inside of which we give refuge to the material vestiges that grant legitimacy to our narratives of the past. No longer are the archons the rightful guardians of these "houses of memory," however. Today, that responsibility befalls the archivists we professionally train to manage and maintain the physical (and digital) records of our individual and collective histories. The task of interpreting the historical record is now, in turn, seen as the duty of the professional historian and the amateur chronicler alike. In this trans-historical rearrangement of the archive oscillating from the Ancient Greek city-state to the modern nation-state, not only from the archon's home to the house of memory, but also from the archons to our archivist, historian, and the national public combined, we have witnessed positive change by virtue of the continual democratization of the archive. Be that as it may, for many of the

individuals and social groups who have yet to feel *at home* in the archive, for as the chapter goes on to demonstrate, the house of memory that we formally recognize as the historical archive frequently bears the resemblance of a gated “community” closed off to visitors, newcomers, and outsiders.

The greater aim of the fourth and final chapter of the dissertation is thus to draw upon some of the archival imaginaries we find in contemporary Caribbean literature for insight onto a more *hospitable* conceptualization of the modern archive. Widening the scope of the previous chapter’s analysis of the moldered interior of the colonial archives of the contemporary Caribbean, here I turn to an to address the marginalized histories of the Caribbean diaspora and their transnational archival practices. Linking the insular to the archival, and vice versa, while exposing the literal and conceptual archipelagos at work in contemporary Caribbean literature, this chapter centers a comparative analysis of literary representations of the domestic archives and transnational archival practices of the Caribbean diaspora. Here, the imaginary archives in question include: Wilnor Baptiste’s trans-Caribbean collection of cassette tape letters exchanged between him and his wife, Marie-Ange, in Simone Schwartz-Bart’s play *Ton beau capitaine* ‘Your Handsome Captain’ (1989); and the refrigerated archive of the late Oscar de León’s papers and belongings housed within the basement of Yuniór de Las Casas’s home in Junot Díaz’s novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007). The representational characters and story lines that one encounters in these two texts bear witness to both the archival dreams conceived and historical dilemmas faced by the transnational communities of the Caribbean diaspora.

Through my close reading of Schwarz-Bart's and Díaz's literary portrayals of the domestic archival practices of the Caribbean diaspora, I engage with philosophical treatises on the space of the home by Martin Heidegger, Gaston Bachelard, and Otto Friedrich Bollnow, amongst others, in order to think the archive as a both a domiciliary *symbol* and *site* of memory together. Through an archipelagic framework of analysis that explores the domestic and archival story-worlds of Schwarz-Bart's play and Díaz's novel, alongside theories of the home proposed by twentieth-century Continental philosophers, my analysis accounts for the transnational archival crossings and connections that fundamentally question and contest the national and continental paradigms ruling over our popular conceptualizations of the archive today. Inasmuch as the lived experiences of Caribbean diaspora proves incongruous to the fixed geopolitical boundaries of the modern nation-state and its intra-national archival systems and institutions, my analysis provides a theoretical framework of the archive from *below* based upon the transnational, domestic-archival practices by which the Caribbean's immigrant, working-class communities realize a rooted sensibility of dwelling, being, and home. Therefore, the larger aim of my analysis of the transnational, domestic archives of the Caribbean diaspora is to demonstrate how archipelagic frameworks of analysis arising out of island studies, in conjunction with decolonial archival imaginaries envisioned by diasporic Caribbean writers, empower us to think beyond the national and continental frameworks that have largely come to define the "archival turn" in the Humanities today.

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#### **4.2 *Habito Ergo Sum***

Writing in 1951 in response to what he names the "*proper plight of dwelling*" or housing shortage in post-war Germany, Martin Heidegger reflects on human beings and

their relationship to the architectural structures that they inhabit. Heidegger's main concern here, then, is that of the phenomenology of dwelling, arguing that, "We attain to dwelling, so it seems, only by means of building. The latter, building, has the former, dwelling, as its goal" (347). His deceptively simple claim is that humans experience dwelling *by* building and *in* buildings. In other words, his central argument is that it is respectively *with* and *in* the architectural spaces that humans construct (build) and inhabit (dwell) that they come to experience a full sense of being. "Still," Heidegger cautions readers, "not every building is a dwelling" (347). By this Heidegger means to underscore that the mere process of constructing a house does not ensure the creation of a proper *place* of dwelling. Moreover, the simple act of humans inhabiting the domestic spaces that they come to build and live within does not, in and of itself, reflect a full *practice* of dwelling. Humans, the case is made, desire or, rather, fundamentally necessitate a sense of dwelling, if only because, as Heidegger declares, "To be human means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell" (349).

Heidegger aims to demonstrate to readers the degree to which building, dwelling, and being correspond to one another. He draws a distinction between building, on the one hand, and dwelling on the other. Nonetheless, in "Building Dwelling Thinking" he sets out to analyze these two processes, building, and dwelling, *together*, because in doing so his argument arrives at the topic of being as well. Revealing the philosophical links that exist between building, dwelling, and being, while tracing the etymology of the German verb for building, *bauen*, Heidegger asserts that:

The Old High German word for building, *bauen*, means to dwell. This signifies to remain, to stay in place. The proper meaning of the verb *bauen*, namely, to dwell, has been lost to us... *Bauen* originally means to dwell. Where the word *bauen* still speaks in its original sense it also says *how far*

the essence of dwelling reaches. That is, *bauen*, *baun*, *bhu*, *beo* are our word *bin* in the versions: *ich bin*, I am, *du bist*, you are, the imperative form *bis*, be. What then does *ich bin* mean? The old word *bauen*, to which the *bin* belongs, answers: *ich bin*, *du bist* mean I dwell, you dwell. The way in which you are and I am, the manner in which we humans *are* on the earth, is *baun*, dwelling. It means to dwell. (348-349)

In summary: To *build* is to *dwell*. This suggests that our ability to *build* (itself an innate need resulting from our natural inhabitation of earth) is what defines human beings. Therefore, what substantiates our sense of *being* human is, in and of itself, the need to build. Through the act of *building*, then, we make it possible for us to fully inhabit, which is say that to *dwell* upon, the earth. Therefore, the practice of *dwelling* on earth (itself achieved by humans through the act of building and inhabiting space alone) serves as how we come to fully realize our ontological sense of *being* as humans on earth.

Jumping briefly to René Descartes' famous postulate in his seventeenth-century philosophical and autobiographical treatise *Discourse on the Method*, in which the French philosopher features the memorable Latin philosophical proposition *cogito ergo sum* or the French *je pense, donc je suis* 'I think, therefore I am', one might go so far as to suggest Heidegger's theory of dwelling is here inadvertently proposing an alternative philosophical proof. Where Descartes proclaims "I think, therefore I am," a Heideggerian recasting of the same proof might, instead, read: *edifico ergo sum*—which is to say "I *build*, therefore I am" or perhaps even *habito ergo sum*, in other words "I *dwell*, therefore I am." What I ultimately wish to underscore or draw out from Heidegger's theory of dwelling is the German philosopher's broader claim that human beings are all dwellers, ontologically so. Stated otherwise, his philosophical claim asserts that the human individual is but nothing when without (a sense of) dwelling. Here, then, dwelling marks a—if not *the*—fundamental precondition for individuals wishing to actualize their collective identity as human beings,



on the one hand, but also their sense or awareness of *being* human in and of itself, on the other hand. All and all, Heidegger's essay works to answer the *what* and *how* of a dwelling. However, one key question that remains unanswered by Heidegger's theory of dwelling is that of *where* exactly humans dwell. Needed, then, is a contextualized conceptualization of dwelling as attuned to the particularities of the field or site of being, as it is to one's sense of being in and of itself.

Writing six years after the original publication of Heidegger's "Dwelling Being Thinking," the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard provides a possible answer to this question. In *The Poetics of Space*, he works to offer his readers a phenomenology the spatial images, above all the image the space of the home. Deploying a methodology that, "tak[es] the house as a *tool for analysis* of the human soul," Bachelard makes the claim that, "our house is our corner of the world," but also that, "the house is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind" (6). The house at the center of Bachelard's *Poetics* is thus a house in practice and theory alike, equally a space that wo/man inhabits (read: populates) and a space that inhabits (read: possesses) wo/man. To get at the phenomenological center of the home is, thus, to enter the space of the human soul—the psychological and affective interiority of *being*.

Synthesizing Heidegger and Bachelard's respective theories of space, we come to several conclusions. Not only is the space of the home the central space of our being as *is*, which is to say that the home is not simply the primary physical space of our inhabitation or dwelling on earth as human beings. The home is also the central space *housing* our imagination and therefore the promise of what *might* or *could be*. Stated otherwise, it is from within the space of the home we build *for* ourselves that we, in turn, find the space to

build or imagine *ourselves* in and of itself. Henceforward the proverb: home is where the heart is. In this chapter, I want to deploy Heidegger and Bachelard's joint theories of dwelling, being, and the home in service of my close reading of the archival form and function of the diasporic homes featured in *Your Handsome Captain* and *The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, respectively.

My use of the work of Heidegger and Bachelard alike reflects less an *application* and more a *reincorporation* of theory. In other words, the task at hand is not only of my using Heidegger and Bachelard to supplement my reading of Schwarz-Bart's play or Díaz's novel. It is equally an effort to use Caribbean literature to enlarge these standing theories of the home originating in the Global North. My reading of the two featured Caribbean texts can thus be described as a reading that travels *upwards from "below."* We thus turn briefly to the universal (read: Eurocentric) assumptions at the center of Bachelard and Heidegger's respective works. We could entertain, perhaps, the Eurocentric frameworks of analysis delimiting the scope of the two philosopher's theories of dwelling, being, and the home by pausing to acknowledge that Heidegger and Bachelard are themselves historical subjects writing to a particular (European) audience at a specific time and place (i.e., post-war Germany and France, respectively). Even so, the universalizing bravado of their claims is quite alarming and damning, also.

The building at the center of Heidegger's theory of dwelling (and being) is a European home first and foremost. Towards the end of "Building Dwelling Thinking," Heidegger writes:

The essence of building is letting dwell. Building accomplishes its essential process in the raising of locales by the joining of their spaces. *Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then we can build.* Let us think for a while of

a farmhouse in the Black Forest, which was built some two hundred years ago by the dwelling of peasants. (361)

The home that Heidegger turns to here as his telling example of dwelling is that of a peasant farmhouse erected in the Black Forest of eighteenth-century Germany, a time period that coincides with several significant developments in the nationalist history of Germany, including the end of the German Confederation with the 1848 Revolution, the first (failed) attempts to establish a unified German state, and the subsequent creation of the North German Confederation under Prussian leadership in 1867.<sup>36</sup> This idealized farmhouse represents the space of the *home* and dwelling in general, but by proxy it also functions, I wish to argue, as a proto-nationalist symbol for the German *homeland* and the modern German nation-state. In short, the home at the center of a Heideggerian notion of dwelling is Eurocentric by design but, above all, a German nationalist construction.

In the second-to-last paragraph of “Building Dwelling Thinking,” Heidegger explains, for example:

We are attempting to trace in thought the essence of dwelling. The next step on this path would be the questions: What is the state of dwelling in our present age? On all sides we hear talk about the housing shortage, and with good reason. Nor is there just talk; there’s action too. (362)

The collective “we” here is circumscribed to a German public writ large still struggling to rebuild the German state after the end of the events of World War II in 1945. To Heidegger’s credit, he ultimately is transparent about the intended audience of his essay and the fundamentally provincial bearings of his claims therein. Such is not the case in for Bachelard in his work, however.

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<sup>36</sup> For more on the 19<sup>th</sup> century history of German unification, see: Theodore S. Hamerow’s *Social Foundations of German Unification, 1858-1871, Volume I: Ideas and Institutions* (1969) and *Social Foundations of German Unification, 1858-1871, Volume II: Struggles and Accomplishments* (1972); Breuilly (2008), Showalter (2015).

The critical introduction to the 1994 edition of *The Poetics of Space* written by the historian John R. Stilgoe reflects on the utility of Bachelard's work, arguing that "[Bachelard's] analysis is truly *cross-cultural*, for it focuses on physical items known and cherished *the world over*, structures and objects that comprise a *universal* vocabulary of space" (Bachelard ix). There is no question about the broad applicability of Bachelard's claims in *Poetics*. There perhaps is room for debate, however, as to the cross-cultural implications of Bachelard's theory of the space of the home. *Poetics* does not engage with *the world over*, if only because the idea of a *universal* vocabulary of space that Stilgoe purports Bachelard as presenting is, at best, a naive claim and, at worst, a Eurocentric overstatement.<sup>37</sup> The Europe-centered scope of Bachelard's philosophy on the space of the home is best reflected in the aptly-titled second chapter of the philosopher's *Poetics*: "The House and the Universe." There, Bachelard writes:

The absence of struggle is often the case of the winter houses in literature. The dialectics of the house and the universe is too simple, and snow, especially, reduces the exterior world to nothing rather too easily. It gives a single color to the entire universe which, with the one word, snow, is both expressed and nullified for those who have found shelter. (40)

The house at the center of much of Bachelard's analysis, I argue, is a *European* home exclusively. Another way of expressing this claim is to suggest that the house of the Caribbean archipelago (or any of the earth's many other equatorial territories for that matter) is not the one being *housed* within the walls of Bachelard's theory. We can think of Bachelard's use of the word "snow" as an extended metaphor for Europe and the Eurocentrism that haunts Western philosophy to this day. Moreover, we can understand Bachelard's use of the phrase "the exterior world" as representing all the parts of world

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<sup>37</sup> I am here alluding to my analysis at the end of chapter 2 of the dissertation, where I engage with Sylvia Wynter's work on the overrepresentation of Man.

*exterior to Europe*, such as the Caribbean. In turn, we re-read the select citation above as follows: “The dialectics of the house and the universe is too simple, and *Europe*, especially, reduces the *Caribbean* to nothing rather too easily. *Europe* gives a single color to the entire universe which... is both expressed and nullified for those who have found shelter.” Nevertheless, it can be said that the space(s) of the Global South, herein represented by the Caribbean archipelago, *does* appear in Bachelard's text after all—through the radical negation of such by Bachelard and the like.<sup>38</sup> What, then, is the phenomenology of space and the home *exterior* to continental Europe? We now turn to my reading of *Captain* and *Oscar Wao* and, in doing so, work towards a phenomenology of the Caribbean home and, by proxy, a distinctly diasporic understanding of dwelling, being, and archiving together.

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#### 4.3 Cassette Tape “Letters” and Basement Refrigerators

Simone Schwarz-Bart, French Caribbean novelist and playwright of Guadeloupean descent, is the author of four novels, including *Un Plat de Porc aux Bananes Vertes* (*A Plate of Pork With Green Bananas*; 1967), *La mulâtresse solitude* (*A Woman Named Solitude*; 1972),<sup>39</sup> *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* (*The Bridge of Beyond*; 1972), and *Ti Jean L'Horizon* (“Between Two Worlds”; 1979). She has also published a six-volume work of non-fiction titled *Hommage à la Femme Noire* (*In Praise of Women of Color*;

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<sup>38</sup> The representation of sectors of the Global South like the Caribbean as negation in European philosophy is a matter heavily treated by writers and scholars of decolonial thought and criticism. For more on this matter, please refer to: James (1938); Césaire (1950); Fanon (1952); Glissant (1990); Mignolo (1995, 2000, 2005, 2011); Dussel (2000); Henry (2000); Wynter (2003).

<sup>39</sup> Simone Schwarz-Bart writes her first two novels, *Un Plat de Porc aux Bananes Vertes* (1967) and *La mulâtresse solitude* (1972), in collaboration with her husband, André Schwarz-Bart, a renowned French novelist of Polish-Jewish descent and winner of the *Prix Goncourt* in 1959 for his novel *Le Dernier des justes* (*The Last of the Just*). For their lifelong career as writers, the *Carbet* journal jointly awarded André and Simone Schwarz-Bart the *Prix Carbet de la Caraïbe et du Tout-Monde* in 2008. The *Prix Carbet de la Caraïbe et du Tout-Monde* is an annual literary award for the best literary work published in French or French Creole in the Caribbean or the Americas more broadly and that promotes the history of creolization and advances creole writing.

1989). Given the themes of Créolité and the question of Black West Indian female subjectivity, identity, and voice explored throughout the entirety of her body of writing, Schwarz-Bart is often discussed alongside other celebrated Afro-Caribbean female writers from the French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe, writers such as Maryse Condé and Myriam Warner-Vieyra.<sup>40</sup> Though scholars have written extensively on Schwarz-Bart's contributions to the broader field of female and feminist Caribbean writing and thought, as confirmed by the popularity of her four novels and her nonfiction writing in *In Praise of Women of Color*,<sup>41</sup> less attention has been given to Schwarz-Bart's contributions to the realm of French Caribbean theater and performance. This chapter thus marks a critical response addressing this gap in the existent body of scholarship centering the work of Simone Schwarz-Bart.

Schwarz-Bart sets her play *Your Handsome Captain* in the spring of 1985 on the French overseas territory of Guadeloupe.<sup>42</sup> The plot tells the story of a fraught, long-distance relationship between a Haitian man by the name of Wilnor Baptise and his wife, Marie-Ange. The narrative centers around Wilnor and Marie-Ange's efforts to preserve their marriage and remain emotionally connected—this despite the physical distance and financial barriers that separate the husband and the wife. Here, set design and the formal (dis)placement of characters on stage is effective in emphasizing the vast physical distance keeping the two lovers apart from one another in the story-world of the play. For example, as the play opens one discovers Haitian immigrant Wilnor living in exile on the island of

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<sup>40</sup> For more on the topic of Créolité literary movement in the Caribbean, see Bernabe et al. (1989), Glissant (1989, 1997), Lionnet and Shih (2011).

<sup>41</sup> A small but growing number of scholars have treated Simone Schwarz-Bart's play *Your Handsome Captain* in their research. Such examples include Larrier (1990); Kanhai-Brunton (1994); Miller (1998); Gyssels (2003); Weagel (2009); Conteh-Morgan and Thomas (2010); Kendall (2011); and Sahakian (2017).

<sup>42</sup> For more on the colonial and contemporary history of the French overseas territory of Guadeloupe, see Bonilla (2015).

Guadeloupe, where he labors as a migrant worker. Wilnor appears on stage for the entirety of the play accompanied by, “A radio/cassette recorder... on top of the soap box” by his side (Schwarz-Bart 345). In the story, Marie-Ange resides in Haiti, where she awaits her husband’s imagined return. It is for this reason that the character of Marie-Ange remains offstage at all times, as the play is formally set on the island of Guadeloupe exclusively. Wilnor’s wife never makes a physical appearance on stage. She does, however, “appear” at regular intervals throughout the length of the play in the form of a disembodied voice that plays out from Wilnor’s adjoining radio/cassette tape recorder.

During Wilnor’s residence in Guadeloupe, the two lovers communicate with one another by way of a trans-Caribbean exchange of private voice recordings captured on cassette tape. The archival medium in question here—the cassette tape “letter”—is not fixed or stationary but mobile, rather, regularly crossing the archipelagic terrain of the Caribbean Sea shared between “all our exiled ones around the world: Grenada, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico” (346). Significant to understanding the historical merits of Schwarz-Bart’s play is the degree to which the trans-Caribbean exchange of cassette tape letters, amongst other details, in *Captain* attest to real aspects of the historic reality of Haiti’s impoverished community of immigrant workers. The opening stage directions, for example, make explicit note of Wilnor’s gas lamp, machete, and a burlap sack. As popular symbols of Haiti’s peasant class, in the story-world of the play, these material objects index Wilnor’s modest means thus confirm Wilnor’s and Marie-Ange’s low social standing as working-class members of Haiti rural peasantry. As impoverished agricultural workers, it is likely that Wilnor and Marie-Ange both lack formal education. This lack of formal education hurts the two characters’ economic opportunities, as well as their means of travel

and communication between Haiti and Guadeloupe. Given the verisimilitude of the play's story, *Captain* accurately portrays how subsets of the Haitian diaspora communicated with one another across space and time in the 1970s. In this manner, Wilnor's collection of Marie-Ange's cassette tape "letters" speaks for a domestic archive in and of itself, yet in doing so, Wilnor's domestic archive of cassette tape "letters" also illustrates some of the real communicative practices once utilized by the members of the Haitian diaspora at the end of the twentieth century.

In her 2008 ethnography *Migration and Vodou*, cultural anthropologist Karen Richman conducts what they described as "bilateral ethnographic research" on the ways immigrant and working-class members of the Haitian diaspora living abroad in the U.S. in the late twentieth century have historically turned to analog and digital technologies to engage in innovative forms of communication between the continental U.S. and Haiti. Focusing on the Haitian diaspora's communicative use of audio and video tapes, in particular, Richman reflects on specific transnational modes of communication utilized by members of the Haitian diaspora in the interest of maintaining their connections (i.e., familial relationships and religious ties, specifically) to their home country and communities alike. Richman's research illustrates, for example, how members of a transnational community of migrant workers hailing from the village of Ti Rivyè, Haiti now living and working in southern Florida, have made use of modern audio and visual technology as a means by which to circumvent the physical and temporal boundaries circumscribing their ritual spaces and religious practices.



Reflecting on the Ti Rivyè migrants' exchange of audio tape recordings (what the anthropologist here calls "cassette-letters") between South Florida and Haiti in the late-1980s up through the early-2000s, Richman explains that:

Cassette tape correspondence is thus far more than a means of circumventing literacy. Nor is it a mere way of protecting ties that distance threatens to break. The tapes have an aesthetic all to their own. They are venues for extending an oral culture that prizes proverbs, figurative, indirect language... antiphony, and fluid shifting between speech and song, especially versus drawn from the sacred song repertoire. As a means of competitive, public, personal performance, then, the tapes differentiate distant kin as much as unite them. "Persons of words" exploit the medium to maintain an advanced or vocal reputations across the vast distance is separating communities. (218)

Through their careful use and exchange of cassette tapes between southern Florida, Haiti, and back, the members of the Haitian immigrant community in question bypass the real communicative limitations associated with their lack of formal education in reading and writing. As a medium of oral transnational communication, the "cassette letter" allows members of the Haitian diaspora living in southern Florida, for example, to communicate across long distances in the interest of maintaining personal ties to their country of origin. All the more, however, the "cassette letters" represent cultural objects in and of themselves, animated by the aesthetic conventions of the diaspora's oral culture (i.e., "proverbs, figurative, indirect language... antiphony, and fluid shifting between speech and song"). As a material expression of the oral culture of the Haitian diasporic, the "cassette letters," I here want to suggest, serve a secondary, archival function as well, in so much as they evidence the history of Haitian immigration to the continental United States. The "cassette letters" in question thus represent a medium for the first advancement and following documentation of the oral culture and real history of distinctly working-class, insular-

continental flows of immigration enclosed by the corresponding national borders of the individual Caribbean and North American nation-states.

The historical bearings of Richman's research on the oral-culture-affirming communicative practices of the Ti Rivyè immigrant community in southern Florida are exemplified by the historical setting (the year 1985) and fictionalized events at the center of Schwarz-Bart's *Captain*. In doing so, the play too offers a critical, albeit literary, examination of the real history of transnational Haitian immigration and the jointly cultural-and-archival objects developed owning these historical developments. Together, Richman's and Schwartz-Bart's diasporic ethnography and imaginary, respectively, attest to what Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel surveys as, "las nociones de desplazamiento y la migración... [relacionado con el] intercambio poblacional interno y externo que caracteriza la historia colonial y poscolonial del Caribe" 'the notions of displacement and migration... [related to the] internal and external population exchange that characterizes the colonial and postcolonial history of the Caribbean' ("Caribe Two Ways" 28; my trans). Schwarz-Bart's literary account of the cassette tape "letter" as a transnational medium of working-class diasporic communication differs from Richman's anthropological treatment of the same topic, however; the former regards the matter of horizontal ("South-South") *intra*-insular Caribbean flows of immigration, while the latter deals with related, albeit vertical ("South-North"), *extra*-insular Caribbean movements.<sup>43</sup> *Captain* thus represents a dramatic

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<sup>43</sup> My use of "South" and "North" alludes to a particular schema of geopolitical development related to globalization commonly known as the global North-South divide. As an analytic, the global North-South divide is a matter regularly addressed by economists, political scientists, and human geographers. Shalmali Guttal, Executive Director of the Focus on the Global South group, notes how, "The global North-South divide has been conceptualized in economic, political and developmental terms, where geographic locations of nations are identified with levels of industrialization, economic progress, science and technology, standards of living and political-economic power in the global arena" (2016). A subsuming objective of my comparative literary analysis of Schwarz-Bart's *Captain* and Díaz's *Oscar Wao*, then, is to better elucidate the critical insight that contemporary Caribbean literature brings to bear on our understanding of the direct

rendering of the matter of intra-insular Caribbean crossings converging upon Haiti, Guadeloupe, and the regular waves of immigration occurring between these two insular states. In this manner, the play challenges us to consider the *historical* indexicality of such *fictional* narratives of the contemporary Caribbean diaspora.

Aleida Assmann contends that "While historians have to adjust their research and questions to the extension and range of the archives, literary writers may take the liberty to fill in the gaps" (106). In the case of Schwarz's play, art does not only *imitate* life; it *archives* it as well—most of all, with a view from below that reveals the workings of, “transnationalism in the everyday social practices of working-class ‘transmigrants’ (the term here for diasporans), their negotiation of life in multiple locations and variegated systems of political and economic power” (Flores 24). Here, Wilnor’s private collection of cassette tape “letters” comes to embody, I argue, two distinct archives or bodies of evidence in one: on the one hand, a fictionalized, domestic archive consisting of “all the cassettes of all these years—all these years on cassette” located within the domiciliary interior of Wilnor’s “small one-room Creole shack,” in addition to the real history or record of the ongoing waves of immigration across the various national borders of Caribbean archipelago (and beyond) completed by what Marie-Ange names as “our exiled ones” or, in other words, the working-class migrants of the Haitian diaspora today living “around the world: Grenada, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico”—and Guadeloupe, in the case of

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relationship that exists between the colonial, postcolonial, and/or contemporary histories of transnational migration across the Americas, on the one hand, and the forms of economic and geopolitical development associated with globalization such as the global North/South divisions, on the other. That said, such critical analyses of globalization and its aftereffects through the methodologies of literary and discourse analysis are advocated by the work of many scholars working in the traditions of postcolonial and/or decolonial thought and criticism; please see: Martí (1891); Anzaldúa (1987); Mignolo (2002); Mignolo and Escobar (2009); Slater (2009); Martínez-San Miguel (2014); and Chapter 8 “Colonial/Imperial Differences: Classifying and Inventing Global Orders of Lands, Seas, and Living Organism” of Mignolo and Walsh (2018).

Wilnor's character (Schwarz-Bart 342-359). Given its "view" from below, then, the narrative in *Captain* is as much a story about Wilnor and Marie-Ange's long-distance relationship in and of itself, as it is a story of the cassette tape "letter" more broadly and its related history as an analog archival medium purposed by the illiterate and working-class members of the Haitian diaspora hoping to maintain their material and affective ties to the national homeland.

Literature—contemporary Caribbean theater and performance, in particular—thus proves an apt medium for (re)imagining the modern archive beyond the confines of the individual nation-state and its associated intra-national archival practices and institutions.<sup>44</sup> Equally or more important, perhaps, is the degree to which Caribbean literature and performance in the case of Schwarz-Bart's play bring us here to a *human(e)* representation of the diaspora and their archival practices. Richman's anthropological research, for example, addresses the Haitian diaspora at the collective or community level; *Captain*, however, stages the Haitian diaspora at the scale of the individual. In this manner, the dramatic/literary text *individualizes* and, therein, *humanizes* the real, archival dreams conceived, and dilemmas faced, by members of the Caribbean diaspora like Wilnor and his wife, Marie-Ange. In this manner, *Captain* aptly portrays not only *the* broader historical reality of private archival practices associated with working-class immigrant communities in general but an image of *one* such example as well: Wilnor's private archive of cassette tape "letters." Having reviewed the historical basis of Schwarz-Bart's play in terms of its

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<sup>44</sup> The cassette tape "letter" as a domestic archival medium of the working-class groups the Haitian diaspora appears in Haitian-American novelist Edwidge Danticat's debut novel *Breath, Eyes, Memory*. A question that exceeds the scope of this chapter, but that might serve as a basis for future research, is the role that the cassette tape "letter" plays as a trope throughout the cannon of late-twentieth century Haitian and Haitian diasporic literature. One might, for example, explore how the cassette tape "letter"—itself an analog archival medium—enriches (or complicates, perhaps) our understanding of diasporic archives in the digital age.

literary depiction of an actual, domestic archival medium (i.e., the cassette tape “letter”) historically associated with working-class communities of the Caribbean diaspora, we now turn to a consideration of the domestic archive featured in the final pages of *The Brief Wondrous life of Oscar Wao*.

The domestic archive at the center of Díaz’s novel explicitly gestures to real, trans-national cultural practices pertinent to our understanding of the history of Dominican migration between the insular Caribbean and the continental United States. Primarily narrated from the perspective of the troubled, Dominican “playboy” Yunior de Las Casas and set between northern and central New Jersey (1974-1995) and the Dominican Republic (1944-1995), *Oscar Wao* is the epic story of Oscar de León’s brief and wondrous life—and death—and the Cabral/de León family’s intergenerational struggles against the perpetual, menacing force of fukú: “a demon drawn into Creation through the nightmare door that was cracked open in the Antilles. Fukú americanus, or more colloquially, fukú—generally a curse or a doom of some kind; specifically, the Curse and the Doom of the New World” (Díaz 2008, 1).<sup>45</sup> What Yunior calls *Fukú americanus*, Stuart Hall would describe as the “the ‘New World’ presence” or *Présence Américaine* (235). Here, the two schemes prove to be one in the same, inasmuch as the myth of the fukú curse and the concept of a *Présence Américaine* represent complementarily, diasporic frameworks for naming the collective trauma of the colonial/postcolonial history of the New World—a history that Édouard Glissant summarizes as the “experience of the abyss,” and that Saidiya Hartman terms, “the afterlife of slavery” (Glissant 7; Hartman 6).

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<sup>45</sup> The narrative in *Oscar Wao* does not develop in a chronological fashion. Rather, the plot routinely shifts across space and time. That said, the majority of events in the novel take place in either: A) the Dominican Republic between 1944-1995; or B) northern and central New Jersey between 1974-1995.

I note all this to underscore how, as a literary text, *Oscar Wao* accomplishes much more than a mere, fictional account of the colonial/postcolonial history of the New World centering the fictional lives of the Cabral/de León family of characters. Equally impressive—and important—is the degree to which the novel, a work of fiction by definition, also advances a new analytic in the form of the fukú curse and *Fukú americanus* in contemplation of the colonial and contemporary history in the Americas. In the figure of the fukú curse, one sights an indication of, I here put forward, the novel's own historical merits, value and worth; for much like the scholarly, nonfiction writing of Hall, Glissant, and Hartman, in itself Díaz's novel likewise marks an apt source material for (re)writing the history of Western colonialism and its afterlife today. In this way, *Oscar Wao* simultaneously depicts a novel, which is to say a *fictional account*, treating the history of colonialism and colonality in the Americas, as well as a novel, which is to say *avant-garde*, treatment of the genre of historical writing in and of itself.<sup>46</sup>

While Díaz's novel features various subplots, the central story—itsself implied by the novel's title—is of Oscar's tumultuous life growing up in New Jersey and his untimely death in the sugarcane fields of the Dominican Republic. In the end, Oscar comes to represent one of the fukú curse's long list of New World victims. Part historical manuscript, part *bildungsroman*, and part apocalyptic science fiction, Díaz's novel represents a hybrid text bridging the literary divisions that traditionally oppose fiction and nonfiction and the geopolitical borders that today partition the United States from that of the Dominican Republic, and vice versa. Díaz's text showcases the lived experiences of the Afro-Dominican diaspora living in the United States alongside, or, rather, by way of the novel's

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<sup>46</sup> For more on the novel's critical engagement with the theory and practice of modern historiography, see Hanna (2010).

mythical imagining of an intergenerational crisis and trauma posed by the fukú curse— itself a symbolic, anthropomorphic embodiment of legacies of the history of Euro-American colonization and imperialism in the Americas through the expression of “the coloniality of power” (Quijano 2000).

Edward Said opens the critical essay “Traveling Theory” by underscoring that, “Like people and schools of criticism, ideas and theories travel—from person to person, from situation, from one period to another” (“Traveling Theory” 226). In like fashion, I want to emphasize the point that archives—much like the historical subjects and materials objects that they represent—travel as well. Here, the forms of diasporic movement or crossings represented through Oscar’s tragic death, as well as in key developments of the novel’s plot following Oscar’s untimely end, orient my consideration of the place of the trans-national archives of the Caribbean diaspora in Díaz’s novel. As in the case of Schwarz-Bart’s play, the trans-national archive imagined in Díaz’s novel represents a mobile and trans-national historical record maintained within the domestic sphere of the working-class Caribbean immigrant home specifically. Nevertheless, my concern in this chapter is not only for the migrant archive’s inherent trans-national mobility or its diasporic-domestic afterlife even—by which I mean the *homely* place(ment) that the trans-national archive comes to occupy for Yuniór and the novel’s other diasporic Dominican characters who he believes “will come looking for answers” sometime in the future (Díaz 330). Equally important is the prehistory of the archive, which is to say the events leading to its diasporic-domestic afterlife.

At the end of *Oscar Wao*, after three separate failed suicide attempts, yet before his final and fateful trip to the Dominican Republic, readers find Oscar in a state of

interpersonal turmoil. Here, Yunior informs readers of Oscar's odd dreams, nightmares wherein Oscar finds himself, "wandering around the evil planet Gordo, searching for parts for his crashed rocketship, but all he encountered were burned-out ruins, each seething with new debilitating forms of radiation" (268). Continuing his description of Oscar's nightmares, Yunior furthermore reveals how Oscar, herein talking to his older sister over the phone, hopelessly confesses to Lola that, "I don't know what's wrong with me... I think that word is crisis but every time I open my eyes all I see is meltdown" (268). Oscar's immediate crisis is that of his racialized and corpulent body's inability to embody or "perform" a normative form of (white) U.S. American citizenship or (heterosexual) Dominican hyper-masculinity, even. The crisis at hand is larger and more complicated than this, however, for Oscar's ultimate dilemma is that of the dim, ever-creeping shadow that the fukú curse—"The Darkness"—perpetually casts over his life and the lives of all his other family members as well (268).<sup>47</sup>

Against the debilitating force of the fukú curse, Oscar finds himself feeling, "resurgent... insuperable," and wishing to, "try something new" (272). He travels twice to the Dominican Republic, and it is during these trips that he begins his work to document and, in turn, resolve the trans-historic and inter-general crisis posed and trauma inflicted by the fukú curse. It is Oscar's trans-national movement between New Jersey and Santo Domingo that mark the genesis of Oscar's large collection of personal papers that Yunior hereafter stores within four empty refrigerators on the basement floor of his future house

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<sup>47</sup> Note that the mysterious illness in Junot Díaz's short story "Monstro" (2012) that turns the Haitian characters' skin darker in color is called The Darkness or La Negrura. At the 2016 meeting of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), Carolyn Ureña made the argument that the fuku curse of Díaz's *Oscar Wao* is later reimagined as La Negrura in the Dominican American author's short story "Monstro." We can thus perform an intertextual reading of *Oscar Wao* and "Monstro," as the two literary texts, it seems, share parallel story-worlds.



in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. I note this element of the novel's plot to stress the fundamentally trans-national quality of Díaz's novel as a whole and, in particular, the contents of Yuniór's (future) private archive.

Within the profession field of archives management and administration, the notion of provenance is used to name the “*individual*, family, or organization that created or received the items in a collection;” while functional provenance speaks to “[t]he origin of a group of materials as determined by the *activities* that produce the materials (the function), rather than organizational unit” from where the historical documents originate (Pearce-Moses 317-18; my emphasis). Within the context of Díaz's novel, then, we trace the provenance of the eventual contents of Yuniór's domestic archive back to Oscar, himself a transnational member of the Caribbean diaspora. The functional provenance of Oscar's personal papers and, in turn, Yuniór's domestic archive is also trans-national in scope, insomuch as the documents that this domestic archive stands to contain are themselves created in the course of Oscar's two, final trans-national excursions between the continental U.S. and the insular capital city of Santo Domingo.

Upon arriving at Peravia Province, which is located outside of the capital city of Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic (though, it should be noted, from within the domiciliary space of his grandmother's home specifically):

[Oscar] had gotten out all of La Inca's photographs... scribbling on the kitchen table... For seven days. Wrote on each and every one of them, wrote almost three hundred pages if his letters are to be believed. Almost had it too, he said to me one night on the phone, one of the few calls he made to us. What? I wanted to know. What? You'll see, was all he [Oscar] would say. (317-320)

Returning to the Caribbean—the, “Ground Zero of The New World,” and birthplace of, “Fukú americanos”—Oscar works furiously to record—to *archive*, I argue—the broader

impact that the fukú curse has had on him and the other members of the Cabral/de León family, past and present (1). My claim here, then, is that the archival and functional provenance of the final contents of Yúnior's domestic archive in *Oscar Wao* are trans-national to a second degree: Oscar (a trans-national *subject*) journeys to the Dominican Republic (a trans-national *activity*); and from there, he sets out to compose a trans-historical record or *archive* of the fukú curse's disastrous reign over the Americas (and his family in particular). I note all this to stress the intrinsically trans-national nature of the general plot of Díaz's novel and of Yúnior's domestic archive in particular—a migratory feature that I have shown is equally expressed through Wilnor's private archive of cassette tape "letters" as well.

It is paramount that we recognize the inherently transnational contours of these fictional accounts of the domestic archives of the Caribbean diaspora. The two domestic archives in question (i.e., the cassette tape "letters" and the full basement refrigerators) index the physical and psychic transnational, insular-continental crossings by diasporic Caribbean characters like Wilnor and Oscar—and the real, working-class Caribbean immigrants that they symbolize. These two portrays of the transnational, diasporic-domestic archive, in turn, expose and explain the archipelagic schemas at the center of the literary structure, setting, and plot of Schwarz-Bart's play and Díaz's novel. These archipelagic schemes, in turn, enable an *archipelagic* (read: *trans-national* and *inter-relational*) *reading* of the archival facets of the two featured literary texts. Moreover, it is through this archipelagic reading of the selected narratives presenting the domestic archival practices of the Caribbean diaspora that this fourth chapter arrives at a transnational theory of the modern archive that challenges the primacy of the continental and *intra-national*

themes and methodologies that, to date, have dominated the broader scope of “archival turn” in the Humanities.

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#### 4.4 Dwelling From “Below”

Reading *Captain* and *Oscar Wao* together, I want to argue that these Caribbean literary texts represent *unhomely* narratives.<sup>48</sup> By this I am suggesting that Schwarz-Bart’s play and Díaz’s novel are, at their center, narratives thematizing the perpetual struggle and at times impossibility, even, for members of the Caribbean diaspora to  *dwell*, to  *build*, and, to that end, to  *be* in the Heideggerian sense of these terms. Reviewing the plot of *Captain* and *Oscar Wao*, we find forceful examples of trans-national Caribbean migrants forever yearning for a dwelling of their one, be it in the form of a familial home or a national home—oftentimes both. The experience of diasporic dwelling characterized by the existential challenge of building *a home* and, thus, of being *at home* is one that the diasporic Caribbean characters in question actively work to resolve through their domestic archiving practices. As I later show, for these trans-national migrants it is the figure of the diasporic archive that they assemble and maintain that ultimately proves a formidable antithesis or, rather, antidote to the plight of the experience of diasporic dwelling. To further think through the matter of diasporic dwelling and the struggle of both building and being at home, in and of itself, we might consider Jeannette Bastian’s claim that, “Locating archives within particular and specific context connects them to the actual events that they reflect. Without context, without these relationships, records become useless pieces of paper or random collections of electronic bits” (“Locating Archives Within the Landscape” 51). We

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<sup>48</sup> Foot note... Ooh! Will making a note about Freud’s *unheimlich* (which make sense here?) We tend to see it translated as “uncanny” but actually it’s “unhomely.”

thus turn now to Schwarz-Bart's play and Díaz's novel and their symbolic representation of the archives of the Caribbean diaspora located within the domestic space of the Caribbean diasporic home.

In "Space and the Collective Memory," the French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs suggests that:

Our physical surroundings bear out and other's imprint. Our home—furniture and its arrangement, room décor—recall family and friends whom we see frequently within this framework. If we live alone, that region of space permanently surrounding us reflects not merely what distinguishes us from everyone else. Our tastes and desires evidenced in the choice and arrangement of these objects are explained in large measure by the bonds attaching us to various groups. (47)

Halbwachs' claims help to advance our understanding of the symbolic function of Wilnor's personal belongings. The stage directions in *Captain* give the reader a clear idea of the real contents and layout of the interior of Wilnor's home. There, the play's set notes describe the:

Interior of a small one-room Creole shack. There is a stool in front of a soap box, a mattress on the ground, a gas burner in a corner with some dishes and silverware, a bottle of rum, a pair of shoes. A suit hangs on the wall with a shirt and tie, and a small plastic-framed mirror. A radio/cassette recorder is on top of the soap box. The shutters are open and it is night. (Schwarz-Bart 343)

As a "Haitian farm worker, a tall, thin man about thirty years old," Wilnor Baptiste lives a humble life (343). Together, the absence of furniture (there is only mention of a stool and a soap box) and the mattress's placement on the ground speak to the impoverishment that characterizes Wilnor's lived experience as a Haitian migrant worker currently living in Guadeloupe. That said, the suit, shirt, tie, and small plastic-framed mirror attest, perhaps, to Wilnor's aspirational demeanor and positive self-image. As potential markers of status and the presumed opposite of what a farmer would typically wear to work, the suit, shirt,

and tie allude to the ambitious, middle-class man that Wilnor imagines himself as being or, rather, that he hopes to become through hard work and financial prudence. I would also suggest that the framed mirror symbolizes Wilnor's sense of dignity and self-respect as a man willing and able to look at himself and the challenging, diasporic circumstance of his reality with honesty and sincerity.

Recalling Bachelard's claims regarding the methodological value of approaching the image of the space of the home as a tool for analysis, we thus conclude that it is through and past these modest yet dignified objects adorning the domestic interior of Wilnor's small, one-room Creole shack that readers (and audiences) also gain access to Wilnor's soul. Here, the one-room Creole shack is not a home, so much as an interim place of residence. Wilnor is, after all, an immigrant from Haiti living and working in Guadeloupe temporarily (or so he hopes). The real home in which Wilnor desires to dwell is not so much *around* than it is both *within* and yet *beyond* him. His dream house, the place where he imagines himself as *dwelling* and *being at home* in, is elsewhere: in the indeterminate future, in Haiti, and above all with Marie-Ange by his side. In this sense, Wilnor currently finds himself *homeless*.

No, Wilnor does not lack housing living on the island Guadeloupe; he has his one-room shack to reside in after all. What he lacks, however, is a proper *dwelling*. It is only natural for Wilnor to desire a *dwelling* or *home* of his own because, as Heidegger reminds us, *being* human means both to *build* and to *dwell* together. However, as a trans-national, immigrant worker Wilnor's diasporic reality makes it impossible for him to feel *at home* while living abroad, however short or long his removal from (the) home/land may prove ultimately. The ontological essence of diasporic dwelling, we see, is defined by a profound

sense of not *building* or *dwelling*, and, therefore, of not *being* at home. This reality is not limited to Wilnor's lived experience in Schwarz-Bart's play, for the ongoing struggle to formally dwell equally defines the lived experiences of the main characters in Junot Díaz's *Oscar Wao*.

Reading Díaz's novel one bears witness to an assortment of characters, all of which are toiling to dwell. Here, characters regularly run away from their broken *homes* (all of them *haunted* by the fukú curse) in hopes of someday finally being able to *build* a home elsewhere. For starters, Oscar's mother, Hypatía Belicia Cabral (Beli) grows up an orphan, given that her father and mother (Abelard and Socorro) and her sisters (Jacquelyn and Astrid) are all killed by the wrath of the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo and the influence of the fukú curse. Here, the novel's central narrator, Yunió, understands the two, the capabilities of the fukú curse and Trujillo's power, as one and the same. In this sense, Belí lives a *homeless* childhood. Belí is destitute before La Inca, Abelard's cousin rescues her from her figurative homelessness and life as a child slave. Significant to understanding Belí's congenial yearning for a sense of home is the fact that "these savages" who purchase the infant child Belí not only physically abuse her to the point that they permanently disfigure the skin on her back, but they also, "proceeded to punish her further by locking her in a chicken coop at night!" (Díaz 257).<sup>49</sup> Craving a home, the child Belí is instead relegated to the dehumanizing space of a chicken coop.

The narrator describes the time following Belí's salvation from obscurity as "the Beautiful Days. When La Inca would recount for Belí her family's illustrious history while she pounded and wrung dough with bare hands (Your father! Your mother! Your sisters!

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<sup>49</sup> This now seems to me a reference to Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, where Sethe is whipped such that there is a scar on her back that resembles a tree.

*Your house!*” (78; my emphasis). Here, the symbolic figure of the house or, rather, the lack thereof resurfaces anew. Beli’s literal and figurative homelessness is further reflected by the fact that:

Our girl had it *made* [living with La Inca], and yet it did not feel so in her heart... Everything about her present life irked her; she wanted, with all her heart, something *else*. When this dissatisfaction entered her heart she could not recall, would later tell her daughter that it had been with her *all her life*, but who know if this is true? What exactly is was that she wanted was never clear either... what she wanted, more than anything, was what she’d always wanted throughout her Lost Childhood: to escape... But to where she wanted to escape *to* she could not tell you” (80; my emphasis)

Unable to formally articulate her deep-seated sense of familial displacement and dispossession, Beli grows up hankering for an escape elsewhere. I argue that the *where to* of Beli’s escapist fantasies is, in fact, a symptom of a more profound desire on her part for the experience of dwelling. In other words, what she ultimately desires is to (re)build the sense of *home* and of *being* at home that she is denied due the disastrous circumstances surrounding her birth (and her parents’ death). That Beli does not name the *elsewhere* which she wishes to *escape* to is, I also argue, indicative of the fact that Beli herself is well aware of the fact that the sense of dwelling that she desires is, and will only ever be a fantasy. Unable to undo the events of the past and bring her father, mother, and sisters—the Cabral *House* proper—back from the grave, she acquiesces, unconsciously perhaps, to the idea of a life of inadequate *housing* defined by a state of incomplete *being*—in short, of existence absent of *dwelling*.

Years later Beli is subjected to a violent, though ultimately unsuccessfully, assassination attempt ordered by the family of the dangerous character the novel names “the Gangster, a married Dominican man with whom the young-adult Beli finds herself in an affair. Beli becomes pregnant with the Gangster’s child, and it is for this reason that the

Gangster's family orders for Beli to be kidnapped and killed. The beating in the cane fields does not kill Beli, but it causes her to miscarry the baby that she is carrying. Yuniór explains Beli's life-altering assault by noting that, "There are still many, on and off the Island, who offer Beli's near-fatal beating as irrefutable proof that the *House* Cabral was indeed victim of a high-level fukú, the local version of House Atreus" (152; my emphasis). Here, Yuniór underscores the almost mythological proportions of Beli's suffering by attributing her misfortune to a familial bane in the form of the fukú curse. The House Cabral, readers are told, is under assault. Despite Beli's lifelong efforts to build a home for herself (and her future children, Lola and Oscar), she never manages to dwell—not in the Dominican Republic of her childhood and adolescence, nor in the Nueva York of her diasporic adulthood living in exile in the United States. Dwelling escapes Beli it seems. As readers soon learn, the inability to build or maintain a sense of dwelling is a characteristic shared by the House Cabral as a whole, beginning with Abelard and working its way up (or *down*, perhaps) to Beli, Lola, and Oscar even.

Before Beli is born, Trujillo has Abelard thrown in jail. During his imprisonment of fourteen years at Nigüa Prison, Beli's father (and Oscar's grandfather) loses all that he loves, including the fourteen-room house his father builds and that he, Abelard, inherits (the very same house where he, his wife, and two daughters once *dwelled* together), the titular: "Casa Hatuey, a rambling oft-expanded villa eclectic whose original stone core had been transformed into Abelard's study, a house bounded by groves of almonds and dwarf mangos," in addition to, "the modern Art Deco apartment in Santiago, where Abelard often spent his weekends attending the family businesses" (212-213). Moreover, he loses his wife, Socorro, to an automobile accident after Socorro, readers are informed, accidentally



“stepped in front of a speeding ammunition truck and was dragged nearly to the front of La Casa Amarillo before the driver realized something was wrong,” and Esteban the Gallo, the family’s favorite servant, who “was fatally stabbed outside a cabaret; the attackers were never found;” then there is the case of Abelard’s mistress, Lydia, who dies soon after Abelard’s arrest, “some say of grief, others of a cancer in her womanly parts. Her body was not found for months. After all, she lived alone,” as well as that of Abelard’s daughters:

In 1948, Jackie, the family's Golden Child, was found drowned in her godparents' pool. The pool that had been drained down to its last two feet of water... Her sister, Astrid... wasn't much luckier. In 1951, while praying in church in San Juan where she lived with her tíos, a stray bullet flew down the aisle and struck her in the back of the head, killing her instantly. No one knew where the bullet had come from. No one even recalled hearing a weapon discharge. (248-250)

In the end, Abelard outlives his loved ones, only to then die alone in jail. He dies, I argue, *homeless*, both literally and figuratively so.

Twenty to thirty years after the subsequent death of the original members of the House of Cabral and over one thousand and fifty miles north of the Dominican Republic in the U.S. State of New Jersey, readers follow Lola and Oscar as they transition from childhood to their adolescence. Much like their insular ancestors and their mother in New Jersey before them, Lola and Oscar also perpetually struggle to make sense of their migrant realities as Dominican Americans. Within the apocalyptic story-world of Díaz's *Oscar Wao*, Lola and Oscar fight to feel at home. Like their mother (and many other Cabral family members before her), these two diasporic Dominican characters are continually seeking a dwelling of their own and the fulfilling sense of being promised by such.

Reflecting on a foundational, traumatic experience in her early childhood and the tension that subsequently develops between her and mother after that, Lola confesses:

[Beli] was the kind of mother: who makes you doubt yourself, who would wipe you out if you let her. But I'm not going to pretend either. For a long time I let her say what she wanted about me, and what was worse, for a long time I believed her. I was a fea, I was worthless, I was an idiota. *From ages two to thirteen I believed her and because I believed her I was the perfect hija...* I stayed home and made sure Oscar was fed and that everything ran right while she was at work. I raised him and I raised me. I was the one. You're my hija, she said, that's what you're supposed to be doing. When that thing happened to me when I was eight and I finally told her what he had done, she told me to shut my mouth and stop crying, and I did exactly that, I shut my mouth and clenched my legs, and my mind, and within a year I couldn't have told you what that neighbor looked like, or even his name... I just lay in my room with stupid Bear-Bear and sang under my breath, *imagining where I would run away to* when I grew up... *All my favorite books from that period were about runaways. Watership Down, The Incredible Journey, My Side of the Mountain,* and when Bon Jovi's "Runaway" came out I imagined it was *me* they were singing about... (56-57; my emphasis)

Lola is forever traumatized by "that thing" that was the experience of being sexually abused by her neighbor. That said, she is even more crushed, I would argue, by her mother's silence on the matter and, worse yet, her mother's orders that Lola keep quiet, "shut [her] mouth and stop crying, and [her daughter, Lola,] did exactly that" (56). For let us not overlook the fact that it is only *after* her experience of sexual abuse that Lola stops believing her mother and, in turn, quits believing in herself as well. Having up to then "stayed home," Lola spends the rest of her childhood and adolescent life imagining, plotting, and on several occasions running away towards an indeterminate elsewhere—ever always searching for (but failing to find) her place in the world.

In high school, for example, Lola runs away to Wildwood, New Jersey to live with a boy named Aldo who lives with his father (Aldo Sr.) in what Lola describes as, "one of the cheapest little bungalows" by the beach (64). In this small house, Aldo and Lola sleep together:

in a room where [Aldo's] father kept the cat litter for his two cats and at night we would move it out into the hallway but he *always* woke up before us and put it back in the room—I told *you* to leave my crap alone. Which was funny when you think about it. But it *wasn't* funny then. (64; my emphasis)

In this crummy and ramshackle beach bungalow reminiscent of Wilnor's one-room creole shack in Schwarz-Bart's *Captain*, Lola attempts to find a home away from home yet fails. Note how here the father's two cats have more of claim to the space of the home than the female runaway character does or ever will, even. Lola thus goes from her mother's house in Paterson to Aldo's bungalow in Wildwood, but in the end, she comes to feel no more *at home* in the latter than she did at the former. Recognizing her defeat, Lola makes a phone call home to speak with Oscar and ask for his discretionary help.

Oscar is unable to keep his sister's whereabouts a secret from their mother, Beli. When Beli finally discovers Lola in Wildwood, she forcibly sends her troubled daughter off to the Dominican Republic. There, Lola is taken in by her great-aunt La Inca, both Beli's aunt and foster mother. Lola is exiled to the Caribbean specifically because Beli, readers are informed, "thought it would be harder for [Lola] to run away from an island where [she] knew no one, and in a way she was right" (70). We later return to Lola's stay in the Dominican Republic and what that fateful trip ultimately means for Lola and her struggle to experience dwelling. Here, I only wish to underscore that Lola's sense of disconnect from her immediate surrounding is a feeling that she continues to struggle with well into her adulthood. Her restless want of a(n other) place to call her own is reflected in the fact that she chooses to study abroad in Spain as part of her time as an undergraduate student at Rutgers University. Moreover, after college Lola leaves New Jersey to live in Japan for

some time. Be it in Paterson or Wildwood, New Jersey, in Spain, or Japan, even, Lola always struggles to feel *at home*.

As for Oscar, his agonizing inability to formally belong anywhere within the story-world of the novel is, I believe, what represents *the* central dilemma driving the plot of the story as a whole. Alluding to Oscar's perpetual outsider status, Yuniors poses the rhetorical question: "You really want to know what being an X-Man feels like? Just be a bookish boy of color in a contemporary U.S. ghetto" (2). Yuniors inquisitive analogy works to compare the genetic or mutant otherness of the X-Men comic book characters to Oscar's social and sexual alterity, itself a product of the intersection of Oscar's identity as a working-class and Afro-Dominican nerd. Here, the analogy works to frame Oscar's social otherness as equal to the X-Men's genetic otherness. In short, the comparison reconfigures Oscar's socially mediated experience of otherness as proof of an ontological lack on the part of Oscar, instead. This spiritual sense of otherness and lack shape the entirety of Oscar's life from childhood through college.

Like Lola, Oscar attends Rutgers University. "After graduation, Oscar moved back *home*. Left a virgin, returned one," and it is there and then that Oscar writes Lola (who by then had returned from Japan to live with Yuniors in NYC) a letter wherein he laments his perpetual inability to garner the (sexual) affection of another woman: "I'm the permanent *bachelor*," he sorrowfully concedes (263-267; my emphasis). Here, it is possible to connect Oscar status as a "permanent bachelor" to his dispossessed experience of diasporic dwelling. One of the word histories for the word "bachelor" derives from the Medieval Latin *baccalarius*, meaning "vassal farmer, adult serf without a *landholding*" (Online Etymology Dictionary; my emphasis). In describing himself as a permanent bachelor,

Oscar coincidentally gives a name to his status as a displaced, diasporic subject. Bereft of *home* and *homeland* alike, Oscar is pained by his lack of a h/sp-ouse: house and spouse alike.<sup>50</sup> In the end, we see that the source of Oscar's perpetual sense of diasporic displacement, on the one hand, and his ongoing masculine malaise, on the other, are interrelated.

Whether we consider the story of Wilnor's life as it is staged between Haiti and Guadeloupe or that of either Beli, Lola, Oscar, or Yuniór, even, set between New Jersey and the Dominican Republic, what we find are narratives of dwelling from "below" illustrating the displaced realities of the Caribbean's working-class immigrant communities and their individual efforts to attain a sense of dwelling in the diaspora. Here, the dream of diasporic dwelling is often thwarted, however, by literal and figurative forms of *homelessness* that are both trans-national and inter-generational in reach. For the displaced characters in question, they never feel truly *at home*, and to that end, they fundamentally struggle to  *dwell* in the Heideggerian sense of the word. The expressed concern here, then, is the degree to which traditional notions of "dwelling" (and the related concepts of "home" and "being") fail to formally account for the ontology of "errantry and exile" of diaspora (Glissant 11). The concept of diasporic dwelling, I argue, radically exceeds and complicates (for the better) the underlying intra-national and Eurocentric assumptions at the core of conventional understandings of dwelling and the phenomenology of the space of the home. The goal, then, is for us to displace these universalizing premises of "home" and, instead, work towards a decolonial (re)conceptualization of dwelling and being from "below" that

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<sup>50</sup> Because he holds a bachelor's degree from Rutgers University, Oscar here proves himself a "bachelor" in yet another sense of the term.

formally accounts for the historical *realities* and *imaginaries* alike of the world's trans-national, working-class immigrant communities.

To that end, I am not the first to turn to literature as a means by which to articulate a diasporic notion of dwelling. In *Dwelling Places: Postwar Black British Writing*, James Procter analyzes what they describe as, "the key black dwelling places of black British literature and culture across the postwar period. Basements and bedsits, streets and cafés, the suburbs and the city" (1). In his response to what he describes as the overrepresentation of themes like deterritorialization and transnationalism in diaspora studies, Procter's analysis centers key locations in black British literature that they believe to spatially anchor the formation and dissemination of black British culture after World War II. "Black British writing," Procter argues, "has not been satisfactorily 'placed' about the landscape and discourses within and alongside which it has been produced, disseminated and consumed" (4). While I agree with Procter's conclusion regarding "the limits of a dislocated diaspora politics," the theory of dwelling that I propose here, which I too derived from the critical analysis of diasporic literature specifically, differs from Procter's inquiry of such in two ways.

While Procter's work contends with post-war (1945 to the present) black British literature, including black British literature written by members of the Caribbean diaspora living in Great Britain, in this chapter, I am alternatively formulating a notion of diasporic dwelling using the post-war literature by diasporic Spanish *and* Francophone Caribbean together. In doing so, my comparative analysis of the domestic archives in of the Caribbean diaspora in Schwartz-Bart's *Captain* and Diaz's *Oscar Wao* supports an archipelagic view of diasporic dwelling that is thus trans-national in scope. Procter's theory of diasporic

dwelling is, on the contrary, distinctly *intra*-national in reach. Procter himself acknowledges the intra-national framework of their analysis, noting, for example, how their study of diasporic dwelling turns to “a range of territories across the *national* landscape from the rooms occupied by the early pioneer settlers in London to the landscapes of northern England and, finally, Scotland” (3; my emphasis). While Procter and I both work to identify and describe what we each see as key *locations* of dwelling in post-war written literature by diasporic writers, my research considers not only physical *area* but physical *objects* (i.e., Wilnor's cassette tape “letters” and Oscar's “body” of work) represented in diasporic literature that speak to the enactment of dwelling. Overall, then, I am proposing a theory of diasporic dwelling indicative of both *spatial* (the archipelago) and *object-oriented* (the archive) ontologies.

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#### 4.5 Archival Being

In 1963, Otto Friedrich Bollnow published *Human Space*. In that text, Bollnow builds on the work of both Heidegger and Bachelard to propose his phenomenological study of human space. Like the two aforementioned philosophers before him, in *Human Space* Bollnow primarily concerns himself with proposing a philosophy of the space of the human home. Bollnow reiterates Heidegger and Bachelard's claims that “to dwell means to be at home in a particular place, to be rooted in it and belong to it,” adding that:

Man can indeed change his dwelling-place (even if this in many cases may lead to psychological harm) and may find a new home after the loss of the old one. But even if the specific dwelling and home are changed, the fundamental importance of house and home are not affected, but rather the task of re-establishing the order of the dwelling and the security of the house in the new location becomes even more important. (131)

In this passage Bollnow pauses to consider a scenario in which a person might lose their original site of dwelling, reassuring the reader that a sense of dwelling can—and *must*—

ultimately be reestablished in the event of such. That said, while one's original site of dwelling may shift, an individual's fundamental need to dwell proves no less pertinent or necessary despite what or where one's place on earth may be. If anything, the attainment of dwelling proves all the more important after a shift or change in one's original dwelling-place. One thus wonders: How do the dispossessed come to dwell anew? In other words, what of one's sense of order and security in the chance that someone is ultimately unable to reestablish a firm place of dwelling or home? And what of those individuals who never felt secure or at home in the first place, how do they ultimately come to dwell? Bollnow's comments in conjunction with my questions above lead us in this final section of the chapter to further contemplate the matter of diasporic dwelling. The fundamental question at hand is as follows: To the degree that diaspora is largely defined by a continual sense of spatial displacement and social insecurity—a proverbial *homelessness* approximately—where or, rather, how exactly are diasporic subjects to dwell, given that dwelling is a fundamental component of life for all human beings despite where or how an individual may live?

Having in the previous section of this chapter expounded up the habitations of diasporic dwelling, that is the transitory place and demoralizing domestic circumstances, of characters representing members of the Caribbean diaspora in *Captain* and *Oscar Wao*, we now turn to an analysis of the diasporic habits or practices that our featured characters use to mediate the displacing challenges of their migratory lived experiences. In this final section of the chapter, I thus introduce and unpack the following claim: that within the story-worlds of the play and novel alike a proper sense of dwelling becomes possible for the migrant characters in questions because of the domestic, archival practices that they



come to embody. Here, then, the presence and power of the domestic archives of the Caribbean diaspora prove antithetical and antidotal, even, to the empirical malaise constitutive of the experience of diasporic dwelling. In short, the diasporic characters in *Captain* and *Oscar Wao* who come to find themselves *at home* do so not in the particular home spaces or *buildings* that they inhabit. Rather, it is through the experience of *archival being*, which Wilnor and Yunior, amongst other characters, bring about through the construction (and preservation) of domestic archives, that the fictional characters in question—and the immigrant communities that they represent—discover a means by which to practice dwelling.

Apart from Wilnor's modest belongings (e.g., the stool, soapbox, mattress, personal items, etc.), the other central object located inside of Wilnor's shack is that of the radio/cassette recorder located on top of Wilnor's soapbox. In his final cassette tape letter to Marie-Ange at the end of the play (herein the moment in the plot after Wilnor learns of Marie-Ange's infidelity following the arrival of her most recent cassette tape letter), the distraught Wilnor grants readers an image of the dream home at the end of his imagined diasporic return home to Haiti and Marie-Ange alike. Replying to Marie-Ange by way of the cassette tape letter that he then records, Wilnor speaks of:

certain dreams, bizarre beyond belief; dreams which carry me to stranger and more foreign lands, farther and farther away; and I'm afraid that one fine morning I'll no longer be able to find the way back. That's why I sleep over my little jar of money, which I bury under my feet. (*He gives a small laugh.*) Right under my feet, so they'll get the idea and know the road back when I'm dreaming in a faraway land. (*He gives a small laugh.*) You see, it amounted to quite a few bills in the end. Some were for a veranda that I wanted to have built at the back of the house when I got back, so that we could sit outside and enjoy the cool air when we would be quite old, thin as leaves, stretched out and consumed with joy. Others, maybe, might have been for the couple of goats that I'd envisioned in my head, along with the cow. Some were for enameled dishes. Some were for a white dress with

matching shoes; for a radio/cassette recorder that we would own so we wouldn't have to rent one and we could listen to all the cassettes of all of these years—all the years on cassette. (Schwarz-Bart 540-541)

In this excerpt from Wilnor's final monologue, readers see how Wilnor's dreams are nightmares and that these nightmares are, in and of themselves, a mirror reflection of the circumstance of Wilnor's present reality. In other words, the bizarre, beyond-belief dreams in which he has been carried away not a perverse imagining so much as they are a matter of fact. Having lived outside of Haiti and apart from Marie-Ange for several years now, Wilnor presently finds himself in a foreign land (Guadeloupe) that each day seems only father and farther away from Haiti and Marie-Ange. His ultimate fear, then, is not of being carried away. The pressures of earning money and financially providing for his wife have already exiled him to the island state Guadeloupe. The real concern here for Wilnor, then, is of never returning, for he fears waking up one day and not being able to find his way back (to the) home/land.

Wilonor understands that the possibility of a fateful return is dependent on his ability to accrue enough money, and it is for this reason that he speaks of sleeping by “my little jar of money, which I bury under my feet” (540). If he is to achieve his goal of providing a better quality of life both for himself and his wife back in Haiti, Wilnor understands that he must remain in Guadeloupe until he can save enough money. However, given Wilnor's class status as a peasant farmer and his presumably meager earnings agricultural worker, the dream home that Wilnor envisions *building* and sharing with his wife back home in Haiti proves itself an ambitious aim. Wilnor hopes to construct a veranda, raise livestock (goats and cattle), purchase new housewares, and items of clothing as well. Still, at the base or proverbial foundation of Wilnor's fateful and *homely* dream is the explicit image of the

radio/cassette recorder that he and Marie-Ange, “would own so we wouldn't have to rent one.” In that image, we find an implicit figuring of Wilnor's domestic archive (the collection of Marie-Ange's delivered cassette tape letters); which Wilnor has amassed over the years, if only for him to take along with him on his return to Haiti.

Wilnor's desire to own a radio/cassette recorder once back in Haiti so that he and his wife can “listen to all the cassettes of all of these years—all the years on cassette,” suggests a deeper desire on Wilnor's part however. On the surface, readers (and audiences) recognize Wilnor's desire to return home to Haiti and build a new home. More profoundly, however, what Wilnor ultimately desires is to share a future with Marie-Ange by his side. The desired veranda, livestock, housewares, and clothing of his future dream home are all ornamental. Rather, what Wilnor truly wants is to *dwell* with Marie-Ange by his side. The many cassettes that Wilnor alludes to by way of his mention of the radio/cassette recorder that he hopes to own someday are the many audio tapes that he has received from Marie-Ange over the years, which Wilnor has made it a point of saving in anticipation of his fateful return home. By returning home to Haiti and then “listen[ing] to all the cassettes of all of these years—all the years on cassette,” Wilnor hopes to symbolically recover the years without Marie-Ange by his side that he has since lost to diaspora. In other words, what this fantasy of listening to “all the years on cassette” really suggests is a desire on the part of Wilnor to aurally relive and, in doing so, recover and retain the lost years of the past, only now with Marie-Ange by his side.

Unable to formally *dwell* within the physical parameters of his one-room Creole shack, Wilnor turns his mind—and heart—elsewhere instead, namely to the construction of a domestic archive of Marie-Ange's cassette tape letters. Bollnow reminds us that,

“House-building in its most profound meaning is thus a world-creating world-sustaining activity, which is only possible with the use of sanctified rituals” (138). In the case of Schwarz-Bart’s play, then, the world-creating and world-sustains activities of house-building are here represented by Wilnor’s domestic archive. Wilnor taps into the visionary power and potential of his domestic archive to imagine and, thus, introspectively *build* and inhabit a sense of *home*. In short, he uses the domestic archive as a means to *dwell* psychically because a sense of physical dwelling proves impossible for Wilnor at the present moment. Key here is the fact that the cassette tapes of Wilnor’s domestic archive housed within the one-room shack on the island of Guadeloupe are the very same cassette tape letters that Wilnor imagines himself listening to anew in the future, only then with his wife by his side. As such, Wilnor’s domestic archive of cassette tapes functions as an affective, mnemonic bridge to the future home/land in which Wilnor hopes to someday *dwell* once again in the Heideggerian sense of the term.

Readers (and audiences) see how this domestic archive of cassette tape letters proves the formal means by which Wilnor overcomes the *unhomely* limitations of diasporic dwelling resulting from his present, trans-national migratory status. If Wilnor experiences a sense of dwelling in the play, it is only ever about his diasporic archive of cassette tape letters. It is through his diasporic archival practices, then, as opposed to his inhabitation of the physical space of his migrant home, that Wilnor attains dwelling. In short, the domestic archive of cassette tape letters and it alone are what legitimize Wilnor’s sense of *being* while living abroad in exile. The collection of cassette tape letters are his material and affective link back the homeland of the immediate present (Haiti) and his dream home (the house with Marie-Ange, the veranda, and the goats, etc.) of another undetermined point in

future. All the more, the domestic archive is also how characters in Junot Díaz's *Oscar Wao* overcome the limitations of diasporic dwelling to instead experience dwelling in the full, however brief or conditional that experience of dwelling may be.

I also wish to argue that of all the Caribbean diasporic characters in *Oscar Wao*, Yunior is the one character to most definitively manifest a lasting sense of *dwelling* and *being*. Within the final pages of the novel, Yunior informs readers how:

These days I live in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, teaching composition and creative writing at Middlesex Community College, and even own a *house* at the top of Elm Street, not far from the steel mill. Not one of those big ones that the bodega owners buy with their earnings, but not too shabby, either. Most of my colleagues think Perth Amboy is a dump, but I beg to differ. It's not exactly what I dreamed about as a kid, the teaching, the living in New Jersey, *but I make it work as best as I can*. I have a wife I adore and who adores me, a negrita from Salcedo whom I do not deserve, and sometimes we even make vague noises about having children. Every now and then I'm OK with the possibility. I don't run around after girls anymore. Not much, anyway. When I'm not teaching or coaching baseball or going to the gym or hanging out with wifey I'm at home, writing. These days I write a lot. From can't see in the morning to can't see at night. Learned that from Oscar. *I'm a new man, you see, a new man, a new man*. (Díaz 326; my emphasis)

At the end of the novel, readers encounter a reformed Yunior: "a new man." This new Yunior, for the first time in his life it seems, finally feels at home as much in his physical surroundings as in his own skin. Yunior, I argue, has here realized a true sense of dwelling. At the end of the novel, readers find that Yunior has since married and that he now lives with his wife (a woman he sardonically suggests he "does not deserve") in a house that he owns in Perth Amboy, New Jersey. Yunior's life as an adult is far from perfect, however. He tells readers that, "It's not exactly what I dreamed about as a kid." Nevertheless, Yunior expresses content in living a life that he now actively maintains "as best as [he] can" (326). One thus wonders, how exactly it is that Yunior, arguably once the novel's character most

disturbed and uprooted characters, comes to attain a sense of dwelling by the end the narrative of Díaz's novel?

We find an answer to this question within the subterranean cavity of Yuniór's home in Perth Amboy. Therefore, let us travel down toward an analysis of Yuniór's basement and the domestic archive that he shelters therein. Towards the end of Díaz's novel (that is, after Oscar's death in the sugarcane fields of the Dominican Republic at the hands of Ybón's violent lover, the capitán, and his henchmen, Gorilla Grodd and Solomon Grundy), the setting in the novel jumps. This shift transports the reader from the haunted space of the sugarcane fields in the Dominican Republic to the quiet interior of Yuniór's home in the city of Perth Amboy, New Jersey. Therein, the reader bears witness to a domestic archive in the form of four basement refrigerators, within which Yuniór has stored the late Oscar's old personal belongings including, "[Oscar's] books, his games, his manuscript, his comic books, his papers" (330).

In death, death denies Oscar the chance to complete his book-length account of the history of the fukú and, in doing so, bring an end to the elusive curse haunting the Cabral/De León House. Even so, Yuniór informs the reader that, "[Oscar] managed to send mail before he died. A couple of cards with some breezy platitudes on them... And then, almost eight months after he dies, a package arrived at the house in Paterson. Talk about Dominican Express" (333). The contents of this secondary package include:

Two manuscripts enclosed. One was more chapters of his never-to-be-completed opus, a four-book E. E. "Doc" Smith-esque space opera called Starscourage, and the other was a long letter to Lola, the last thing he wrote, apparently, before he was killed. In that letter he talked about his investigations and the new book he was writing, a book that he was sending under another cover. Told her to watch out for a second package. This contains everything I've written on this journey. Everything I think you will

need. You'll understand when you read my conclusions. (It's the cure to what ails us, he scribbled in the margins. The Cosmo DNA.) (333)

Ironically or, rather, expectedly (given the unrelenting power of the fukú curse), "the fucking thing [Oscar's second package]," Yuniór reveals, "never arrived!" (334).

The "cards with some breezy platitudes" and the two manuscripts (an incomplete "space opera" and a "long letter to Lola") that arrive at Yuniór's home represent examples of archival ephemera. The Society of American Archivists reminds us that ephemera are, "materials, usually printed documents, created for a specific, limited purpose, and generally designed to be discarded after use" (Pearce-Moses 149). Oscar himself suggests that the materials to first arrive at Yuniór's home are insignificant if only archivally speaking. They serve a specific, limited and immediate purpose: to formally announce the forthcoming arrival of other Oscar's book—the document of any historical significance supposedly. The materials of real archival value, Oscar informs Yuniór, are to be found in this "the new book [Oscar] was writing, a book that he was sending under another cover"—a book that Yuniór and Lola are explicitly instructed, "to watch out for." This almost-mystical book-length "cure to what ails us... The Cosmo DNA" does not arrive at Yuniór's home, however. As a reminder, Oscar is killed before he gets to complete the titular *magnum opus* in question. The proper historical object (Oscar's incomplete book manuscript) thus goes missing, never to be found and conferred with its appropriate archival status and safekeeping.

Still, Oscar's pieces of ephemera do serve a purpose, for they are here reconstituted in the form of a surrogate *body* of evidence, what Kristen Weld names a "paper cadaver." Oscar's cards and letters that do arrive at Yuniór's home after all come to represent, I wish to argue, an archival placeholder—an *alternat(iv)e* archive—that fills the historical gap

that remains open in the symbolic absence of Oscar's speculative book on the fukú curse; but also the unrealized potential personified by the literal absence of Oscar's physical body now that he has since died and has been buried. Given Oscar's death in the Dominican Republic, the refrigerated/archived body of Oscar's former possessions, papers, and ephemera housed inside of Yunior's basement functions as a proxy to or substitute for Oscar's physical body in all of its belated absence. Despite his tragic death, Oscar lives on—albeit through Yunior's efforts to amass and maintain a domestic archive of Oscar's body of work for future generations of the de Leon family to access and utilize in their efforts to, "put an end to it [the fukú curse]" (Díaz 331).

Therefore, despite the grim reality of Oscar's death, Díaz's novel concludes with Yunior's efforts to gesture to a promising future. Contemplating the uncertain future of the Cabral/de León family through the figure of Oscar's sister Lola's future daughter Isis (an imagined child that Yunior assumes he would have fathered, had it not been for his perpetual infidelity to Oscar's sister), Yunior writes:

One day when I'm least expecting, there will be a knock at the door... Soy Isis. Hija de Dolores de León... I'll take her down to the basement and open the four refrigerators where I store her tio's books, his games, his manuscript, his comics, his papers—refrigerators the best proof against fire, against earthquake, against almost anything... And maybe, just maybe, if she's smart and as brave as I'm expecting she'll be, she'll take all we've done and all we've learned and add her own insights and she'll put an end to it. That is what, on my best days, I hope. What I dream. (330-331)

The battle is not over, or so it seems. Though fukú's influence appears to have dissipated after Oscar's death, the future of the Cabral/De León family still lies in the balance of fate and chance. It is for this reason that Yunior concedes: "One day, though, the Circle will fail. As Circles always do" (330). Much like the ending to Schwarz-Bart's play, there is no clear sense of closure to be found at the end of Díaz's novel. The future of the Cabral/de



León House remains uncertain. Only time will tell if Lola and her progeny are finally able to bring an end to the fukú curse.

Be that as it may, Yuniór himself does discover a sense of peace through his realization of dwelling. Bollnow reminds us that:

in order for man to dwell in a fixed place on earth, it is not enough to settle fleetingly in some arbitrary place, but rather a special effort is demanded. Man must ground himself at this point, he must to some extent dig his claws into it, in order to assert himself against the onslaught of the world which may dislodge him again from this place. (Bollnow 123)

My argument here then is that Yuniór achieves dwelling primarily because of his construction of a domestic archive containing the belated Oscar's papers and belongs, for it is in and the through this archive of four basement refrigerators that Yuniór comes to assert himself "against the onslaught of the world."

It should be noted, however, that it takes Yuniór quite some time before he attains dwelling and is, therefore, able to feel *at home* in the world and in his skin alike. In the section of the novel titled "Dreams," Yuniór informs readers of his struggles with *being* after Oscar's death. He confesses:

Took ten years to this day, went through more lousy shit than you could imagine, was lost for a good long while—no Lola, no me, no nothing—until finally I woke up next to somebody I didn't give two shits about, my upper lip covered in coke-snot and coke-blood and I said, Ok, Wao, Ok. You win. (Díaz 325)

Following the events of Oscar's death, Yuniór's life spirals out of control. He loses himself in the process entirely: "I woke up next to somebody I didn't give two shits about." In the end, it is the living memory of Oscar's life or, perhaps, the haunting ghost of Oscar's death that sparks Yuniór's recovery: "Ok, Wao," Yuniór capitulates to reform, "Ok. You win." Here, Oscar's life, or rather Yuniór's memory of such, is what drives Yuniór into a state of

rehabilitation, and it is also, I argue, what keeps Yunior from relapsing back into his former life as a narcissistic and self-destructive man enslaved to his toxic masculinity. Oscar makes Yunior a better man, as much in life as in the aftermath of his untimely death. One thus begins to comprehend the full significance of the domestic archive at the literal bottom of Yunior's home.

Not only do the four basement refrigerators containing Oscar's former belongings function as an auspicious, archival talisman against the, perhaps, inevitable return of the fukú curse, but their continual presence also provide a formal safeguard against the return of Yunior's formal, lesser self, which was once responsible for routinely driving Yunior to debase himself and deny the needs of others. In looking after Oscar's belongings, Yunior looks after the memory of Oscar's brief and wondrous life (and death), and yet here, Yunior is also looking after himself and those around him (i.e., his wife, his friends, his students at Middlesex Community College, and the future members of the Cabral/De León House even). In short, the domestic archive of basement refrigerators is what reminds—and enables—Yunior to keep himself in the right and under control. In short, it is the experience of archival being, as facilitated by the presence of a domestic archive of four stockpiled basement refrigerators, that in the end enable Yunior to *dwell* at peace, equally in the past, present, and future.

“The house,” writes Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space*, “is one of the greatest powers of integration for the thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind” (Bachelard 1961, 6). Another way of articulating Bachelard’s claim here might be to say that *that which has the power to integrate the thoughts, memories, and dreams of mankind is*, in fact, the *home*. In these literary narratives, then, the human home—how our characters integrate

their "thoughts, memories and dreams," to dwell and discover their humanity—is not the national home, which is to say the nation-state. Nor is it their circumstantial house of residence: their diasporic homes. The main characters in *Captain* and *Oscar Wao* (along with the real subsets of the Caribbean diaspora that these characters symbolically represent), while lacking a solid home, nevertheless do experience dwelling. Through their domestic archival practices, these characters come to actualize their humanity. In other words, through the use of domestic archival practices, they develop the ability to ontologically *build* and *dwell* as human beings. In the absence of a national home, an alternative yet equally viable form of dwelling becomes possible through the construction and management of a domestic archive. Here, the characters in question *build* a proverbial *home* within which to center their lives and *dwell* therein through the domestic archives that they create for themselves, for their loved ones, and for the futures that they hope to share. In short, *diasporic dwelling* becomes possible through *archival being*.

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#### 4.6 Conclusion: The Domestic Archive as *Home*

Brent Hayes Edwards reminds us that, "contemporary diasporic practices cannot be reduced to epiphenomena of the nation-state or global capitalism" (302). In our efforts to address the local form and function of the trans-national archives of the Caribbean diaspora, our analysis may begin at the level of the intra-national, but it is paramount that we look past such frameworks and towards the realm of the trans-national as well. Moreover, any regard for the history of the national, modern archive of Western Europe and North America requires that one also pause to interrogate the global histories of Euro-American colonialism and empire. If diaspora, "exist in relation to power, whether national or international, whether primarily political or economic," then by extension it can also be

said that the archival practices of diaspora, "stem from the asymmetries of transnational power rather than from transnationalism per se" (Flores 18-19). Walter D. Mignolo proposes a theory of a "modern/colonial world system," one wherein the global history of European colonialism (and its legacies) represents the joint underside of modernity (Mignolo 1995, 2000, 2011). For Mignolo, then, one cannot speak of Western modernity in the absence of serious consideration for coloniality as well. As a cultural byproduct of Western modernity, the mnemonic institution that is the national, modern archive has at times represented an instrument in support of the advancement of Western imperialism and colonization. Coloniality, I thus argue, represents the underside of not only modernity but the modern, national archive as well.

Directing the conclusion of this chapter and dissertation alike, then, is my concern for the transnational communities and persons whose migratory and diasporic lived experiences invariably challenge the politics of the nation-state and, therefore, the nationalist logic of its modern, national archival institutions and contexts. In *Oscar Wao*, Yunior's four basement refrigerators preserving Oscar's ephemera collectively signify a domestic archive whose circuits of travel between the Dominican Republic and New Jersey parallel the real migratory routes undertaken, as well as the racialized and gendered forms of crisis experienced, by the members of the Dominican diaspora. In this manner, Junot Díaz's novel pushes readers to consider the transnational migratory routes and cultural practices of the Afro-Dominican diaspora living in the urban sectors of North America. In a parallel fashion, Simone Schwarz-Bart's *Captain* features a creolized archive of cassette tape "letters" that formally attests to the marginalized realities of the peasant, working-class

members of the Haitian diaspora living across the insular territories of the Caribbean archipelago.

In these two literary (con)texts, we find narratives and imaginaries that go beyond the hegemonic understanding of the modern archive as a fixed, intra-nationalist institution whose existence is tied to the task of defending the nation's citizen public's authority and power exclusively. Instead, we are presented with counter-narratives that showcase the localized-yet-mobile, trans-national archival realities of the subaltern, diasporic communities of the French and Hispanic Caribbean diaspora. Here, of major significance is how the literary texts in question each place or *house* their respective (re)imaginings of the modern archive within the domestic sphere of the Caribbean and Caribbean diasporic home, as opposed to within standard "house of memory" represented by the national archive. In doing so, Schwarz-Bart's play and Díaz's novel gives us a vision of diasporic dwelling, one wherein the notion of "home" that is fundamental to one's experience of "being" in full is made possible not by the diaspora's inhabitation of fixed, architectural buildings or sites, so much as through the flow of domestic archival practices repeatedly practiced across space and time. Here, the domestic archive is *home*, for it is through the act of domestic archiving that the working-class members of the Caribbean diaspora *build* a sense of home and embody a true sense *archival dwelling* and *being* alike.

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