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SANTA CRUZ

MORE THAN A NATION: TOWARD A NEW DOCUMENTARY POETICS

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in LITERATURE
with an emphasis in LATIN AMERICAN AND LATINO STUDIES and
CRITICAL RACE AND ETHNIC STUDIES

by

Whitney Celeste DeVos

June 2022

The Dissertation of Whitney DeVos is
approved:

Professor Rob Wilson, co-chair

Professor Susan Gillman, co-chair

Professor Norma Klahn

Professor Christopher S. Chen

Professor Juliana Spahr

Peter Biehl
Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

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ABSTRACT

More Than a Nation: Toward a New Documentary Poetics

Whitney DeVos

More Than a Nation: Toward a New Documentary Poetics identifies multiple contexts—Canada, the U.S., Central America, the Southern Cone, and the Caribbean—in which the term “documentary poetry” names a group of twentieth-century literary forms that use a combination of text, images, archival materials, and found discourse to examine historical events. Demonstrating how this type of writing works as a hemispheric nexus of shared aesthetic practices and political concerns even in vastly different cultural contexts, the dissertation considers how poets such as Ernesto Cardenal, Dorothy Livesay, and Aída Cartagena Portalatín translate and rework the language of state and local archives to pose radical critiques of the hegemonic nationalisms which together worked to construct various myths of racial democracy in the postwar period. Speculatively re-imagining narratives of nation-based citizenship to foreground alternative modes of collectivity, these poets shift our categories for thinking the social, offering visions of new worlds ungoverned by colonial violence and white supremacy—even as their individual texts reify, at times, the coloniality of power. The final chapter considers special issues on “Documentary” published by the U.S. literary magazines *Chain*, edited by Juliana Spahr and Jena Osman, and *XCP: Cross Cultural Poetics*, edited by Mark Nowak, to chart the late twentieth-century consolidation of “documentary poetry” as an emergent subgenre. The first in-depth study to consider documentary poetry as a phenomenon coeval in

English and Spanish language literatures, *More Than a Nation* goes beyond existing definitional accounts of this emergent genre to understand documentary poetry as an inter-American network of texts employing archival materials, state documents, and print culture—the stuff of “imagined communities”—in the interest of theorizing social belonging beyond the nation-state.

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DEDICATION

to

CLAUDIA

in memoriam

ERNESTO CARDENAL (1925-2020)

Introduction

This dissertation is, among many things, an attempt to respond to a specific question. Toward the end of my qualifying exam, one of my committee members made an observation. “You’ve talked a lot about form today,” Juliana Spahr said. Then asked: “But what about content?” What, in other words, brought together the disparate texts I was interested in, beyond that they might be grouped—as I had grouped them—under the nebulous rubric of “documentary poetry”? I can’t remember exactly how I answered, only that I did not know exactly how to answer. If, as I had been taught, “FORM IS NEVER MORE THAN AN EXTENSION OF CONTENT,”¹ what was the content particular to documentary form? Put differently: in Rukeyser’s famous axiom “poetry can extend the document” (*Collected* 604), was poetry form and document content? Or was it the other way around? I kept thinking about Juliana’s question. I gave various conference papers about various poets at various conferences held at various institutions. About two and a half years ago, after a roundtable on the publication of Harris Feinsod’s *The Poetry of the Americas: From Good Neighbors to Counter Cultures* (2016), I scrapped most of the writing I had and started the whole thing over. Not exactly from scratch. In re-reading and re-writing, in extending the project’s geographic scope to Nicaragua, Canada, and the Dominican Republic and ultimately limiting its temporal one, I returned to the same question over and over again. What follows is an account of how this inquiry, and how I came to understand documentary poetry as an inter-American poetic genre that uses

archival materials, state documents, and print culture to contest dominant understandings of “imagined communities” around the western hemisphere.

Most of critical discussions of documentary poetry, as Jill Magi has pointed out, begin and end with a related question: “What is it?” The sheer diversity of texts which have been labeled “documentary” by poets and scholars alike would seem to beg for a definition based on shared characteristics. Even so, several of the most influential contemporary descriptions of documentary poetry have simply signaled the flexibility of a type of writing that “(1) contains quotations from or reproductions of documents or statements not produced by the poet and (2) relates historical narratives, whether macro or micro, human or natural” (Harrington, “Docupoetry and Archival Desire”). In the fourth edition of *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (2012), Adelaide Morris described documentary poetry as: “less a systematic theory or doctrine of a kind of poetry than an array of strategies and techniques that position a poem to participate in discourses of reportage for political and ethical purposes” (372), echoing Mark Nowak’s 2010 sketch of documentary poetics as: “not so much a movement as a modality within poetry whose range I see along a continuum from the first person auto-ethnographic mode of inscription to a more objective third person documentarian tendency (with practitioners located at points all across that continuum)” (“Documentary Poetics”). The idea of a formal “continuum” or an “array of strategies and techniques” again raises the question of content, which might delineate “quotations from or reproductions of documents or statements not produced by the poet” or “historical narratives” or “discourses of reportage.” The

slippage between “quotations” and “discourses of reportage,” on the one hand, and “historical narratives” on the other, presents an issue: does “content” here refer to the appropriated content of source materials, or to the overall subject matter or point of the documentary poem itself? Both?

The extent to which content is or is not put to use “for political and ethical purposes” has dominated recent relevant debates about documentary poetry, though the debates are not usually framed in these terms. Instead, the issue becomes whether works of conceptual poetry which engage documents should also be considered works of documentary poetry. Whether Nowak’s writings about the rural working class can be considered in good faith alongside Kenneth Goldsmith’s 2015 performance *The Body of Michael Brown* is a point of particular contention among contemporary scholars. In many ways, this is another way of asking “What is it?” by means of comparison. The following year, Joseph Harrington distinguished between the two in terms that make clear his preference: “Unlike conceptual poetry,” he contends, “documentary poetry makes use of sources rather than simply reproducing them: it combines, paraphrases, and contextualizes them” (“Politics of Docupoetry” 81).² In a direct challenge to Harrington, Michael Leong argues “separating ‘making use of’ and ‘reproducing’ conflates formal technique with poetry’s potential cultural functions. In other words, Harrington fails to acknowledge the selection and re-presentation of source material as transformative activities of praxis and poiesis. Re-producing is always already recontextualization” (29). Leong’s 2020 monograph *Contested Records*, the first on documentary poetry and the most extensive

contribution to this debate to date, attempts to reconcile the two strains, aiming to cut “across internecine squabbles regarding what counts as either conceptual or documentary” on the basis of the assumption that “both share the same ontological ground” (10-11) in so far as each “begins not with the blank page but with a prior document (or documents), with already externalized and authored inscriptions” (20).

A “repeated definitional concern—a kind of nominal wheel spinning” (Magi 249) which, as of late, has been articulated primarily through these “internecine squabbles” about conceptualism, I have come to find, can be productively reoriented by taking a diachronic approach that connects the *content* of documentary poetry to the *context of its emergence*. That is, by exchanging the question of “What is documentary poetry?” for “Under what circumstances has the term ‘documentary poetry’ been applied to a particular kind of writing?” and “Considering the specific moments and varied contexts in which the term appears, what commonalities—and divergences—can we find regarding the content of relevant works?” In this way, we may identify synchronic points along Nowak’s continuum and, analyzing them in concert, begin to develop an inductive account of documentary poetry that goes beyond existing formal and generic delimitations.

This dissertation details the literary and cultural histories of three distinct “points of emergence” whereby lineages of documentary poetry came into being outside of a U.S. context. Case studies in Nicaragua, Canada, and the Dominican Republic reveal that this type of writing is deeply imbricated in the question of the nation: constructing it, contesting its construction, and reimagining what communal

belonging might look like beyond normative understandings of exclusion-based citizenship. *More Than a Nation: Toward a New Documentary Poetics* examines how writers have used documentary poetry to revise dominant narratives of nationalism and social belonging, redefining what it means to be a citizen of an increasingly globalized polis. I make three central claims related to periodization, field-specificity/scope, and political historicization, respectively. First, documentary poetry did not vanish after WWII, as existing accounts contend; rather, it continued to appear in distinct iterations throughout the twentieth century. Second, documentary poetry is an instantiation of *inter-American poetics* (Feinsod 11),³ coeval in English and Spanish literatures. Even so, the specific text networks in which documentary poets are embedded extend beyond the hemisphere to Asia, Africa, Europe, the Pacific Islands and elsewhere, making a case for reading documentary poetry as world literature. Finally, documentary poetry emerged in response to historically-specific discourses of nationalism. Around and beyond the hemisphere, poets employ documentary poetry to interrogate the violent colonial foundations of the nation-building project—and of liberal democracy—by posing radical critiques of the exclusionary nationalisms that worked to construct various myths of racial democracy in the postwar and Cold War periods. At the same time, their texts imagine forms of collective belonging which either expand or are outright antagonistic to normative conceptions of citizenship, rethinking how language holds communities and societies together. Some poets, such as Ernesto Cardenal, actively engaged documentary poetry as part of a radical praxis of revolutionary statecraft.

The first literary history of this emergent subfield to study non-U.S. contexts in detail, my dissertation reads documentary poetry as a networked phenomenon with recurring innovations in aesthetic and politico-historiographic expression across the postwar Americas. Documentary poetry emerges, reframed as (1) perhaps the most enduring, if understudied, legacy of modernism and the global avant-garde, and (2) an insurgent literary-political practice emerging in disparate anglophone and hispanophone literary traditions throughout the latter half of the 20th century. The outcome rewrites the periodization of modern and contemporary poetic production. More broadly, this study contributes to the fields of comparative poetics, hemispheric American studies, and critical race and ethnic studies by offering an inter-American account of poetry's relationship to nationalism(s) and myths of racial democracy, from the establishment of the Office of Inter-American Affairs to 9/11. With comparative research linking Dominican and Caribbean studies, Canadian Literature ("CanLit") and cultural studies, Central American and Latin American studies, African and Africana studies, and Global South studies with history, media studies, visual studies, and political theory, the project operates in both transnational and transdisciplinary frames.

An inter-American orientation reshapes the accepted genealogy of the term "documentary poetry," which appears in English language scholarship as early as 1940. In an article published in the *Sewanee Review*, Edwin Honig reads Archibald MacLeish's 1933 Pulitzer-winning *Conquistador* as "symptomatic" of a "new sensibility" ("a morass") that "has attempted to place the means of its salvation in a

consciously social program, with more or less affinity for the current ideals of a socialist society” (385). Circumscribed by “primarily technical, impressionistic, and eclectic concerns,” this aesthetic of “documentary poetry,” Honig claims unflatteringly, “can only be subjectively critical” (395). By 1946, the phrase “documentary poetry” seems to be in wide enough circulation to be a meaningful mode of distinction among literary critics writing about diverse period and archives. For example, the *American Slavic and East European Review*, asserts of Hungarian poet Árpád Tóth that “his is not a documentary poetry or a clever disguise of vanity; it is poetry of self-imposed limitations... celestial in its longings, earthly in its consciousness” (47). In 1951, “‘documentary’ poetry” was used in a letter by Vivienne Koch to Karl Shapiro to describe Alfred Kazin’s *A Walker in the City* (1951) (qtd. in Filreis 71, 348). Describing documentary as “a promising innovation in that it inaugurates the public marriage of the real and the imaginative, the collective and the private” (213), Charles E. Glicksberg offered one of the earliest constellations of poets writing in the documentary mode, including poets with a wide range of political affiliations, from T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound to Muriel Rukeyser and Kenneth Fearing.⁴

One of Glicksberg’s more interesting claims is his assertion that: “It is not without significance that the New World should have been the laboratory and breeding ground for the experimental development of the documentary method in poetry” (215). Though his article is limited almost exclusively to U.S. authors, Glicksberg’s observation is apt, considering the hemispheric literary production that

was taking place at the time, particularly in response to MacLeish's writings on Mexico: the following year, Canadian poet Dorothy Livesay would begin *Call My People Home: A Documentary Poem for Radio*, the subtitle of which reference's MacLeish by means of a slightly modified version of his subtitle for *Air Raid: A Verse Play for Radio* (1938); Nicaraguan poet Ernesto Cardenal had just completed "Proclama del conquistador," a response to *Conquistador* that inaugurated the poet's experiments with historiographic texts in general and colonial discourse in particular. The poem set the stage for a style of writing Cardenal would come to call "exteriorismo," citing a different poem, "Raleigh," as his first example of the aesthetic. Written during the poet's time at Columbia between 1947-49, "Raleigh" was composed at precisely the same time as *Call My People Home*. One of the central premises of this dissertation is that the intertextual vectors such as those linking MacLeish, Cardenal, and Livesay form a nexus of texts published around the Americas that gave rise to the style of writing soon to be known as "documentary poetry."

The work of Livesay and Cardenal in particular would, in fact, later occasion separate claims to the invention of the term "documentary poetry." In the 1972 introduction to Cardenal's *Zero Hour and Other Documentary Poems*, translator Robert Pring-Mill takes credit for coining the term to characterize Cardenal's style in *Hora O* (written 1954-1956) as well as the poet's post-1970 work.⁵ Three years earlier, however, Livesay had given a paper entitled "The Documentary Poem: A Canadian Genre," offering her own *Call My People Home* as an example of the genre,

the term for which she asserts she herself had coined.⁶ Decades later, embedded within entirely separate literary circles including the Latin American Boom and Black Internationalism, the afrodominican poet Aída Cartagena Portalatín would invent the “poema-documento” [poem-document] *YANIA TIERRA*, later described in an introduction to the English translation by M.J. Fenwick as a “documentary poem about the history of the Dominican Republic” (12). Fenwick doesn’t claim to have invented the term; instead, it appears that in 1995, the phrase “documentary poetry”—also used as a subtitle on the first of two title pages to *YANIA TIERRA*—was meant to function as self-evident. Over a decade later, Magi discussed this aspect of the term explicitly, remarking that “The 2007 Wesleyan anthology *American Poets in the 21st Century: The New Poetics* uses the terms ‘documentary poetics’ and ‘documentary poetry’ without explanation. They appear naturalized terms...” (249). Confirming this perception of widening circulation, in the mid-to late 1990s “documentary” began to reappear as a common heuristic within literary studies.

This renewed interest in documentary poetry may be related to the appearance of Cardenal’s *Zero Hour and Other Documentary Poems*. More likely, however, is the steady recuperation of Rukeyser starting in the early 1990s, particularly following the publication of *Out of Silence: Selected Poems* in 1992. By 1999, a number of academics, had published studies on her poetry, many of which were indebted to Cary Nelson’s 1989 *Repression and Recovery*.⁷ As editor of Oxford’s 2000 *Anthology of American Poetry*, Nelson included a full reprint of *The Book of the Dead*, which to Leong, “anchored an awareness of a countertradition of modernist citation, of mixing

memory and desire, that was more amenable to a progressive social politics than the canonical poetics of Eliot and Pound” (6). In short, documentary poetry. Susan Briante’s seminal 2014 “Defacing the Monument: Muriel Rukeyser’s innovations in docupoetics” went further to argue that *The Book of the Dead* founds a tradition (“docupoetics”), both part of and outlasting high modernism.

Today, Rukeyser is generally considered to be the genre’s exemplar poet,⁸ though poets working in a more conceptual vein claim Charles Reznikoff as an additional forebear. Philip Metres goes so far as to construct the two as “a sort of Founding Father and Mother of documentary poetry” (“Tenth Anniversary”).⁹ Yet MacLeish’s intertextual engagement with Bernal Díaz del Castillo’s *La Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* in *Conquistador* (1932) not only serves as the occasion, in 1940, for Honig to make what is likely the earliest reference in English-language scholarship to “documentary poetry”; it anticipates Rukeyser’s seminal *The Book of the Dead* (in *U.S. 1*, 1938) by six years and Reznikoff’s earliest instantiation of *Testimony* (1934) by two. My aim here, however, is not to use MacLeish to usurp Rukeyser or Reznikoff as the figureheads of documentary poetry. (Here, it is useful to remember poetic engagements with historical documents were near ubiquitous following the publication of Stephen St. Vincent Benét’s 1928 *John Brown’s Body*, a book Rukeyser cited as inspiration; this phenomenon was by no means limited to poetry. One only has to think of Dos Passos’s *U.S.A Trilogy* or Sherwood Anderson’s *Winesburg, Ohio*.¹⁰)

Rather, my point is that Livesay’s and Cardenal’s intertextual responses to

MacLeish during the postwar period, and Cartagena Portalatín's Cold War invention of the "poema-documento," help us rethink conventional periodizations of documentary poetry that understand the genre to disappear after 1930s until the end of the twentieth century.¹¹ In tracing the afterlives of texts other than *The Book of the Dead* and *Testimony* during this supposed lull in production, we find this type of writing around and beyond the hemisphere throughout the post- and Cold War periods: north in Livesay and Ondaatje's Canada, south in Raúl Zurita and Carmen Berenguer in Chile, as far east as Aída Cartagena Portalatín's Dominican Republic, and as far west as Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's South Korea. "Towards a new documentary poetics," the subtitle of this dissertation, marks an attempt to rethink documentary poetry as a phenomenon of the "long" twentieth century which arose as an "inter-American" and, at times, inter-continental genre of world literature.

To return to the question of content, then: what is it that brings these texts together? In recent years, a growing number of individual texts of contemporary documentary poetry have framed themselves as self-consciously intervening in national narratives surrounding race and processes of racialization: Claudia Rankine's *Citizen: An American Lyric* is the most obvious example.¹² Appropriating—and generating—archives as a means of addressing distinct myths of racial democracy has been common practice for documentary poets from the genre's inception. Rukeyser's *Book of the Dead*, for example, includes testimonial material drawn from state archives, challenging the status-quo ideology that legislative "checks and balances" operate on behalf of a colorblind institution in which all citizens are treated as equal

in the eyes of the law. Reznikoff's *Testimony* is a collection of aggregated testimonies presented as a bleak portrait of a nation sustained by racial and gender-based violence, both quotidian and extreme. MacLeish's *Conquistador* draws on Díaz to make connections between colonial violence against indigenous peoples of Mexico and anti-black violence in the United States, suggestively linking Spanish colonization and the Jim Crow South as corrupt enterprises. These texts together illustrate how focusing on content related to race, nation, and empire allows us to read works of documentary poetry, canonical and non-canonical, in relation to one another, as a networked cluster.

My venture is that such an argument holds whether texts are published within or beyond U.S. borders. It has long been acknowledged that U.S. documentary poetry emerged as part of the proliferation of documentary aesthetics in the 1930s, funded in large part by the Federal Writer's Project: itself a culturally nationalist project to create a unique "self-portrait of America," that is, the United States.¹³ If certain formal aspects of documentary poetry can be explained by the specifics of U.S. domestic policy, turning toward the contemporaneous hemispheric emphasis within U.S. foreign policy likewise offers a way of understanding documentary poetry's emphasis on race-based content: "It was in the context of a series of diplomatic efforts by the Roosevelt administration under the banner of Pan-Americanism, aimed at uniting the hemisphere in defense of 'democracy,' that long-standing narratives about racial harmony in Latin America would become the basic currency of a new inter-American politics of race and democracy – of 'racial democracy'" (Alberto and

Hoffnung-Garskof 276). Mestizaje-based ideologies of racial harmony in Latin America associated with a variety of nationalist registers, from racial fraternity in Brazil to “la raza cósmica” in Mexico, were being renegotiated vis a vis the United States, whose imperial presence was then fueling a surge of populist and contestatory nationalism across the region. In an effort to quell anti-U.S. sentiment and “organize the hemisphere into a new set of alliances on the principle of Pan-Americanism and in the name of democracy,” the Roosevelt administration “sought to promote a vision of a hemisphere united in its rejection of ‘fallacious claims of class or racial superiority’” (Alberto and Hoffnung-Garskof 277). The corresponding narratives, or “social myths” of racelessness which emerged were the outcome of “intense if uneven political negotiation from above and below... a kind of ‘restraining wall’ that could, at certain moments, delimit what was acceptable in national discourse about race and citizenship” (Alberto and Hoffnung-Garskof 291).

Interestingly, much of the recent scholarship in this area has focused on quotidian meanings of racial democracy, examining “more diffuse popular understandings through sources produced when the state interacts with everyday life, such as in courtroom transcripts, police records, classrooms, or notarial copybooks” (Alberto and Hoffnung-Garskof 296), a task that documentary poets have been engaged in themselves for decades. That the appropriation of print culture, both institutional and popular, should be an integral part of reimagining the nation comes into sharper focus when we recall Benedict Anderson’s observation that the concept of the modern nation state relied upon the circulation of such texts and documents

among bureaucratic functionaries and the broader public. Moreover, that it was in the Americas—not in Europe—that “imagined communities” arose to mediate the increasingly complex race relations among peninsulares and creoles of European descent, both members of the colonial ruling class. Yet as Thomas C. Holt points out, “nations are not imagined at one moment, once and for all, but must be periodically *reimagined*, even reinvented, often at moments of crises, precipitated by the need to determine who belongs and who does not, who defines the character of the nation and its antithesis” (x). For Holt, nations in the Americas are “exemplary of these historical forces because they were explicitly settler societies and therefore necessarily and undeniably multiethnic” (x), each passing through “similar phases of development with similar demands on its self-constitution: colonial separation, slavery emancipation, and export driven growth that brought in new populations” (x). Examining the intersections of ideas of race and nation in the Americas, *More Than a Nation* details the numerous ways documentary poets have utilized found discourse to shape and contest national ideologies of racial inclusiveness, often in relation to specific, ongoing struggles for social justice. Documentary poets’ shared material practices and political concerns converge in an anticolonial impulse to challenge existing racial orders and, in so doing, work to expand the modern democratic project, even despite vastly distinct contexts.

Questions of scale are, of course, crucial to this project. Its title reflects documentary poets’ attempts to think social belonging beyond a nation-based framework, even as they write from a site-specific frame. The long and multi-faceted

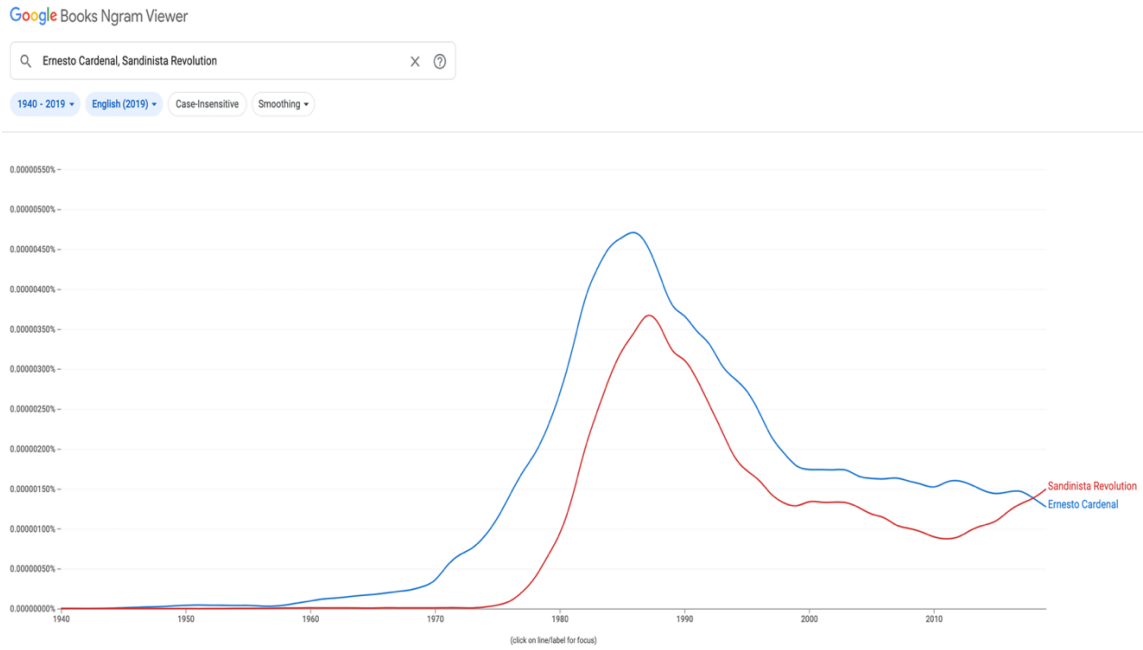


Fig. 1 Google Ngram (English): “Ernesto Cardenal” and “Sandinista Revolution”

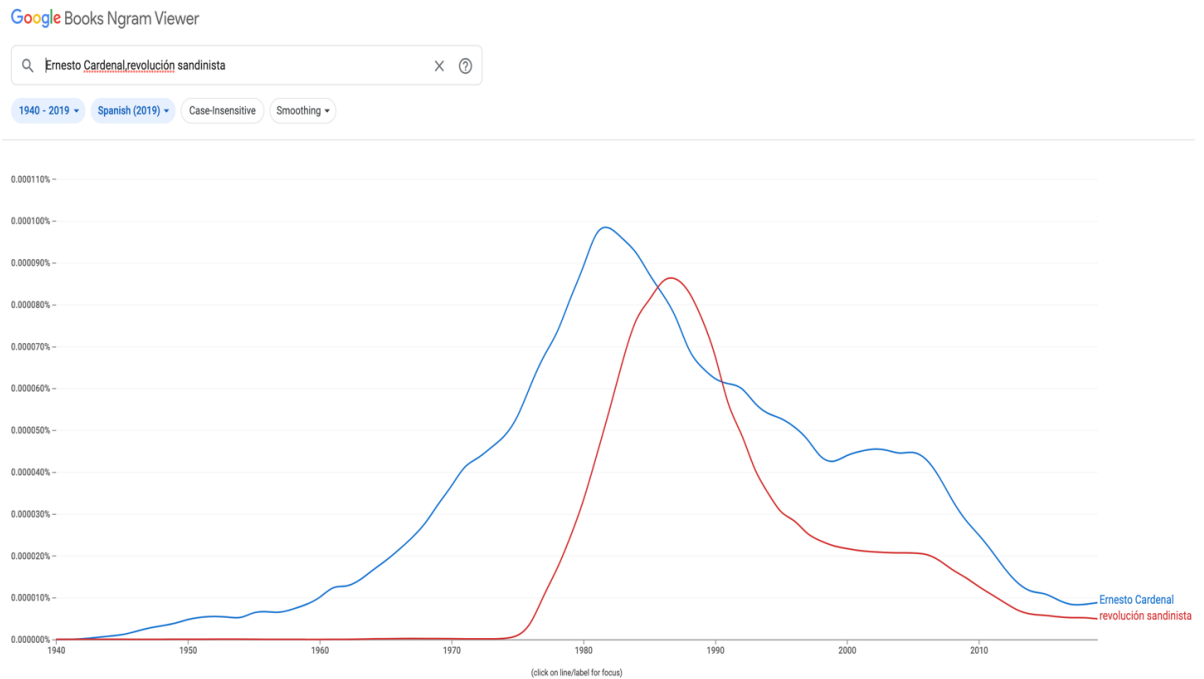


Fig. 2 Google Ngram (Spanish): “Ernesto Cardenal” and “revolución sandinista”

career of Cardenal is particularly illustrative here. Even as his work is grounded in Nicaraguan history, his source material is nearly always assembled to suggest extra- or intra-national forms of relation. His earliest documentary poems are marked by attention to *altepetl* [the local political entity of pre-Columbian Nahuatl-speaking societies, often translated into English as “city-state”] and the municipalities of León and Granada; the documentary poems for which he is best known adopt a regional vantage that emphasizes mutual struggle in Central America: *Hora 0* is written in defiance of the impacts of U.S. multinational corporations, mentioning San Salvador and Puerto Limón, while *El estrecho dudoso* relates U.S. intervention and contemporary political corruption to longer histories of colonial violence. Cardenal’s reception, however, continues to be limited by a national framework afforded to his international status as the poet of the Sandinista Revolution; interest in his poetic production peaks in 1981 in Spanish [Fig. 1] and 1986 in English [Fig. 2], more or less in accordance with the rise and fall of the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) as a meaningfully leftist party.

Yet for someone who declared in 1963, as Cardenal did, that “poets are the true Panamerican Union” (qtd. in Hardesty 118), the nation as a social formation came to encompass much more than Nicaragua. Or Nicaragua encompassed much more than a nation. The “Declaration of Three,” a joint 1982 statement made with U.S.-born Allen Ginsberg and Soviet Yevgeny Yevtushenko invited poets from around the world to come to Sandinista Nicaragua, which they described as “a big experimental workshop for new forms of get-together in which art plays a primordial

role” (Cardenal et. al 2). Cardenal’s magnum opus, *Canto cósmico*, connected capitalist modes of production with ecological devastation, while his final collection, *Canto a México* (2019), claimed the country and city where he wrote some of his earliest poems as his patria [homeland]. Each of these stages of his career mark an attempt to think alongside and yet beyond Nicaragua as a nation: from the municipal, to the regional, to the inter-American and transnational, to the planetary and cosmic: *Pluriverse* is the fitting title of his most recent collection published in English translation. A similar engagement with the national frame as a point of departure to think through multi-scalar conceptions of communality can be observed in the work of poets from Nowak to Zurita to Don Mee Choi, even as these poets tend to mostly be read and contextualized as “American,” “Chilean,” and “Korean,” respectively.

Recovering a series of local, national, and transnational dialogues, *More Than a Nation* draws upon “a quiet tradition of comparative scholarship that understands inter-American poetic formation across periods in non-causal and unlinked ways” (Feinsod 7).¹⁴ The myriad forms of citation and translation at work in texts of documentary poetry invite us to think “dialectically and translationally about the movements of texts across space, time, and language” in such a ways as to “map out a network of crosshatched, multidirectional influences rather than drawing one-way or even two-way lines of comparison” (Gillman and Gruesz 231). Cardenal’s documentary praxis begins with “Proclama del conquistador,” a poem that registers traces of several texts of distinct national origins: Bernal Díaz del Castillo’s *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*, MacLeish’s *Conquistador*, and

colonial writings from Nicaragua, including Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas's *Historia general de los hechos de los castellanos en las islas i terra firme del mar oceano*, not to mention Robert Browning's dramatic monologues, Rubén Darío's *Azul*, and Neruda's *Residencia en la tierra*. The historiographic aesthetic at work in "Proclama" would be further developed through the poet's co-translating, with his mentor José Coronel Urtecho, a series of poems written by U.S. authors for two separate anthologies. *Exteriorismo*, perfected in *Hora 0*, came to be one of the most influential literary styles in the Americas. In Peru, an entire literary movement was named after the poem, while Roberto Bolaño once wrote, "We were helped along, not to say spurred along, by the poetry of Ernesto Cardenal." North of the Rio Grande, Cardenal's influence extends from Allen Ginsberg, who called him "a major epic-historical poet," to the Trinidadian-born, Toronto-residing Dionne Brand who, early in her career, wrote a book-length response to Cardenal, the 1983 *Winter Epigrams and Epigrams to Ernesto Cardenal in Defense of Claudia*. Brand's "source text" was Cardenal's *Epigramas*, itself an appropriation of Poundian aesthetics based in Pound's readings of Latin translations of Greek epigrams by the French Renaissance Hellenist Florent Chrétien. In short, documentary poetry provides a paradigmatic example of the "hemispheric text network" for the way it functions as a circulating genre that transverses geopolitical borders, national literary traditions, and languages.

A handful of scholars have laid important groundwork for a networked reading of documentary poetry in the Americas in which the "nodes" respond to and aspire beyond the nation-building project. Under the organizing principle of

“contemporary investigative poetry,” Paul Naylor’s *Poetic Investigations: Singing the Holes in History* (1999) theorizes poetry as a form of politicized research that, by attending to historiographic and archival elisions, has a role to play in post 1960s struggles against imperialism as well as Reagan era attempts to roll back material and legislative gains made by people of color. Naylor’s inclusion of the Trinidadian M. NorbeSe Philip and Barbadian Kamau Brathwaite, moreover, points toward the Caribbean as an important vector of documentary poetry’s hemispheric reach. Turning toward Central and South America, Cristina Rivera Garza’s *Los muertos indóciles: necroescrituras y desapropiación* (2013) theorizes “la poesía documental” as a subtype of what Rivera Garza calls “necroescrituras,” a “Producto de un mundo en mortandad horrisona, dominado por Estados que han sustituido su ética de responsabilidad para con los ciudadanos por la lógica de la ganancia extrema” [Product of a world in horrific mortality, dominated by States that have replaced their ethics of responsibility towards citizens with the logic of extreme profit] incorporating “prácticas gramaticales y sintácticas, así como estrategias narrativas y usos tecnológicos, que ponen en cuestión el estado de las cosas y el estado de nuestros lenguajes” [grammatical and syntactic practices, as well as narrative strategies and technological uses, which question the state of things and the state of our languages] (33). While Rivera Garza notes a long tradition of “[poesía documental estadounidense]” [U.S. documentary poetry] dating back to Rukeyser and Reznikoff, as well as antecedents of poetry in Nicanor Parra and Zurita,¹⁵ her conception of necroescrituras refers especially to contemporary literary works that

attempt to “desarticular... la gramática del poder depredador del neoliberalismo exacerbado y sus mortales máquinas de guerra” [dismantle... the grammar of the predatory power of exacerbated neoliberalism and its deadly war machines] (19) amidst the surge in quotidian violence in Mexico following Felipe Calderón’s war on drugs (2006-), part of a longer history of 1990s neoliberalism and colonial violence more broadly. *Los muertos indóciles* finds precursors of contemporary Mexican documentary poetry, including María Rivera’s *Los muertos* (2010) and Hugo García Manríquez’s erasure poem *ANTI-HUMBOLDT: A Reading of the North American Free Trade Agreement* (2015), in Ondaatje’s *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* and Cha’s *DICTEE* (40).

Finally, Michael Dowdy’s recent work on “shakeout poetics” constellates U.S.-based poets “of specific subject positions” for the way they “raid official archives, re-citing their imperial and empirical taxonomies, and locating the rhetorical thrust of documentary techniques in the reappropriation of languages plundered by capital and the state” (156). Reclaiming language through defacement, Dowdy argues, “documentary poetry, apart from any interest in fact, is capable of decoding racial capitalism’s antihuman poetics by turning its language, via appropriation, against itself” (179). In going beyond the presentation and representation of history (“what critics see as documentary’s primary method”), Dowdy’s astute analyses of poets such as Nowak, Solmaz Sharif, Don Mee Choi, Robin Coste Lewis, and Craig Santos Perez invite us to consider the ways structural, state-sanctioned violence related to the nation building project presents repeatedly as emergent crises, often

through specific historical “events” which bely cultural narratives of racial democracy. Read alongside one another, these scholars indicate a way of conceiving documentary poetry as a multidirectional network in which poets in discrete contexts across the hemisphere marshal archival materials in non-linear ways in order to test narratives of national inclusion against the realities of state violence.

More Than a Nation is as interested in the history of documentary poetry as a form, or genre, as it is as history itself—and particularly, a history of the Americas—as a form or genre. Building upon the richness of its antecedents, *More Than a Nation* finds hermeneutic inspiration in recent efforts within transnational studies of comparative poetics that seek to offer a “tropological history” of political relations (Feinsod 7), that is, “to think about tropes and schemes geopolitically” (Hunter 6). Such a project demands that “we must actually historicize in several registers: from the perspective of the period under considerations; from within a critique of the enabling and disabling conditions of current culture; with awareness of the institutional history of our interpretive practices” (Nelson 1). Wary of ahistorical claims regarding the political power of literature—all the more pervasive in discussions of documentary poetry—I aim to account for a range of structural issues related to literary nationalism, including but not limited to “literature’s stubborn relationship to and reliance on the state, the impact of private foundations, of higher education, of a highly centralized multinational publishing industry and a localized, decentralized small press culture” (Spahr 5). At the same time, *More Than a Nation* moves beyond the national frame to trace “cross-national connections that knit poets

together in a complex pattern of institutional contexts and anti-institutional formations” (Feinsod 5). Circulation histories are crucial to these endeavors, which together seek to “interrogate the boundaries between traditions as contingent products of political power” (Hooker 13). Throughout this study, I contextualize the nexuses of source materials poets accessed and included in their works of documentary poetry, as well as how these cultural workers participated in the creation of local, national, and extranational editorial networks of their own. These nodes of communication, often in the form of literary journals, responded to and ruptured existing national literary and political paradigms, and—like their literary works—evinced transnational longings to conceive forms of communal belonging outside exclusionary, state-based ideologies of citizenship.

This thesis centers on three constellated literary histories centered on the documentary poetry of Cardenal, Livesay, and Cartagena Portalatín. In organizational logic, *More Than a Nation* employs Juliet Hooker’s hemispheric methodology of juxtaposition as “a historical-interpretive approach that seeks to situate the resonances and/or discontinuities between traditions of thought within the specific historical, intellectual, cultural, and socioeconomic contexts in which they emerged” (13):¹⁶ I stage three literary “traditions that are viewed as disparate... as proximate” in order to make evident the hemispheric—and, at times transatlantic—literary exchanges that shaped the emergence of documentary poetry within each national literature. Staples of the midcentury left who each had ties to UNESCO, Cardenal, Livesay, and Cartagena Portalatín, arrived at their documentary aesthetic in large part through

translating works outside the literary context in which they were educated. While much of each chapter is devoted to literary and cultural history, I close read two or more texts as a way to draw out the ways each poet addresses contemporary questions of racialization, migration, nation formation, and citizenship through their selection and deployment of source materials.

My study begins with the interest in history and archival research that is a key to the earliest poems of Nicaraguan writer, politician, and liberation theologian Ernesto Cardenal. Because “el Maestro” is celebrated the world over for his participation in armed revolutionary struggle on behalf of the Sandinista Revolution, an aspect of his career that is often eclipsed is the inherent conservatism of his political and literary beginnings. Cardenal’s family belonged to the Nicaraguan criollo elite and, while many of his inner circle (the “vanguardistas”) opposed the repressive regime of U.S.-supported dictator Antonio Somoza, the alternative they posed was a return to the colonial-era racial hierarchies with ladinos as the natural and appropriate ruling class (Henighan). Included within this circle was José Coronel Urtecho, Cardenal’s mentor (and uncle on his mother’s side), a specialist in the poetry of North America who first encountered the Anglo-American modernists while living in San Francisco with his mother from 1924-1927. Together in the 1950s, Cardenal and Urtecho would conceive of the aesthetic *exteriorismo*, an anthropofagic praxis that arose in tandem with Cardenal and Urtecho’s translations and anthologizations—not only of Anglo-modernists, but writers throughout the hemisphere.

Decades later, Robert Pring-Mill would theorize a politicized *exteriorismo* as

“documentary poetry” in the introduction to *Zero Hour and Other Documentary Poems* to describe the poet’s writings from 1960 onward. My chapter demonstrates the longer history of Cardenal’s engagement with archival materials, tracing his practice of citation from one of his first published poems, “Proclama del conquistador”(1947), to “Con Walker en Nicaragua” (1950), the prizewinning piece which immediately preceded *Hora 0* (1960), the documentary poem for which he is best known in the anglophone world. In “Proclama,” a dramatic monologue that plays on elements of a notorious colonial document known as the *requerimiento*, Conservative revisionist narratives of the conquest and mestizaje are both rehearsed and called into question. My discussion of “Walker” considers the historical roots of the Conservative ideologies at play in “Proclama,” demonstrating how Cardenal appropriates popular print culture in the U.S. to draw parallels between 19th century filibusters and Somoza as part of the vanguardista campaign against the dictator. Detailed analyses of these two poems thus show how Cardenal’s documentary work emerges in dialogue with nationalist visions of Nicaragua as a nation ruled by a criollo elite. At the same time, each poem contains within it the seeds not only of Sandinista nationalism, but hemispheric longings to transcend nation-based affiliation altogether, a prefiguration of Cardenal’s expansive, cosmic career.

Chapter two considers Canadian poet Dorothy Livesay in relation to what I call, in homage to her, a “Dorothy’s Livesay’s ‘Canadian Genre’: Cultural Nationalism, Postwar Liberalism & the Political Limits of Documentary Poetry.” Though relatively unknown outside of her home country, Livesay is a mainstay of

Canadian literature, due in large part to her theorization of the documentary poem as “A Canadian Genre.” In this chapter, I consider Livesay’s most famous documentary poem: *Call My People Home: A Documentary Poem for Radio*, itself a chapbook-length response to John Grierson’s troubling propaganda film *Of Japanese Descent: An Interim Report* (1945), originally performed as a radio play in 1948. Livesay’s composition process included forms of amateur ethnography, such as interviewing people who had been interned. However, her appropriation of a Nisei newspaper by a white settler’s poetic project that, in the words of Roy Miki “... becomes itself another kind of internment, a site of containment by which the white majority re-identified ‘Japanese Canadians’ within a mainly anglocentric political space” (“Asiancy,” 103), should remind us of Dionne Brand’s observation about cultural appropriation: “Assimilation... is how those in power translate oppositional claims” (167). *Call My People Home* serves as instructive for the ways in which documentary poetry can be the product of well-intentioned white feminist liberalism, while also reflecting the assimilationist structures upon which liberal democracy depends.

Next, I turn to “The Hammer and the Shield” (1965), subtitled “a found poem,” that applies a similar intertextual sensibility to found material related to UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld’s failed attempts to keep piece in Northern Rhodesia (modern day Zambia). Livesay was there in the early 1960s as an English teacher for UNESCO, and wrote several related pieces, some of which remained unpublished during her lifetime. This later, uncollected poem was “discovered” in 1997 by Dean Irvine, a doctoral student who had originally gone to examine

Livesay's unpublished poems and correspondence from the 1930s and 40s and was overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of extant, unpublished material.¹⁷ "[T]he most amazing find" of this bonanza, he said, was "The Hammer and the Shield: A Found Poem," which he deemed "a variant of the documentary poem" and a "return in the sixties to the documentary poems of the thirties and early fourties" (259). "The Hammer and the Shield" thus serves as an excellent test "against" the limitations of *Call My People Home*. Had Livesay's politics improved in the interim decades? How did her experience in Africa affect her confidence in liberal institutions?

The first extensive reading of this recently-published poem, this chapter considers closely how Livesay's treatment of Hammarskjöld complicates his Nobel Prize winning legacy and his reputation as one of the best UN secretaries-general of all time. Her arrangement of source material, which, alongside Hammarskjöld's journal included speeches and letters of Patrice Lumumba and portions of Julius K. Nyerere's 1964 Dag Hammarskjöld memorial lecture, suggestively calls into question the Swede's strategy of "quiet diplomacy" and his stubborn—and, at times, disastrous—stance on neutrality. In so doing, Livesay implicitly registers the limits of liberal internationalism and UN "peacekeeping" missions: above all, the one which led to Hammarskjöld's untimely death in a plane crash that has never been fully explained. At the same time, her transformation of radical discourse pertaining to the decolonization and self-determination of Africa into liberal platitudes remind us that documentary poetry is not an inherently liberatory project.

Chapter three examines the Dominican writer Aída Cartagena Portalatín,

whose poetic production is relatively unknown outside of Dominican and Caribbean literary studies. Much of this existing scholarship reads Cartagena Portalatín through an almost exclusively nation-based framework. Yet the poet's lifelong intellectual engagements with non-Dominican writers, both Latin American and Black (Antillean and African), demand an internationalist perspective. Cartagena Portalatín's understanding of national consciousness was profoundly influenced by her readings of Fanon and, not surprisingly, she was committed to the importance of an "internationalist dimension" within the context of her own struggles for national liberation. In dialogue as much with Fuertes and Cortázar as she was Césaire and Sanghor, Cartagena Portalatín's work loses many of its layers of meaning and resonance if left uncontextualized within larger, transnational nexuses of intellectual production, including the Latin American "Boom" and Afroantillian thought, each of which is discussed in detail.

In this chapter, I trace Cartagena Portalatín's documentary aesthetic as it emerged following Trujillo's assassination in 1961 and demonstrate how, until her death in 1994, her literary and ethnographic work strove to refute longstanding anti-black and anti-Indigenous conceptions of dominicanidad through the construction of a transnational, relational understanding of racialized struggle in diaspora. I begin with a brief examination of *Tierra Escrita* (1967), demonstrating how Cartagena Portalatín's career in anthropology increasingly began to reveal itself in her literary writings under the category of "testimonio," a self-designated genre which marshals comparative racial histories in the name of rethinking citizenship. The remainder of

the chapter focuses on *YANIA TIERRA: Poema-Documento* (1981), Cartagena Portalatín's poetic tracing of the history of Hispaniola and the island's ultimate division by colonial powers into the modern states of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Historicizing *YANIA*'s emergence during the democratic opening between Balaguer's third and fourth terms as president, I show how *YANIA* figures History as a palimpsest of racialized colonial violence beginning with Columbus's crash landing in present-day Haiti that repeats into the late twentieth century. At the same time, Cartagena Portalatín emphasizes how this repetitive cycle has been punctuated at various times by the resistance of the island's peoples to domination: the book juxtaposes examples of organized anti-imperial opposition, particularly on the part of women, from the Taíno cacique Anacaona in 1492 until 1981, the year the book was published.

In a move exemplary of Cartagena Portalatín's uncanny sense of return in colonial temporality, at times *YANIA* stretches even farther into the future by anticipating the 500 year anniversary of Columbus's arrival, to take place twelve years later. To figure history as a repeating structure means that, despite its at times depressing predictability, there is also much to be learned from the past—its failures as much as its successes. It is in such a spirit that Cartagena Portalatín invokes 19th century discourses which envisioned the Dominican Republic as a multiracial democracy—and even as part of a pan-Antillean confederation—as alternatives to Trujillan nationalism, which is constructed as a modern iteration of criollo rule. Returning to the period of independence and the range of possibilities it offered for

the region's self-determination, she suggests, may have something to teach us about how Dominicans might approach a globalized present still dominated by U.S. neocolonialism. *YANIA*, like all of Cartagena Portalatín's later works, foregrounds an anti-imperial consciousness in which women, Blacks, and Indigenous peoples are engaged in the communal building of a transracial coalition of those rendered second-class citizens—or worse, socially dead—throughout centuries of colonial oppression, racial capitalism, and foreign extractivism cloaked under the rhetoric of “liberal democracy.”

These three chapters of my study track documentary poetry, roughly, from the end of WWII to 1982. A fourth and final chapter briefly sketches relevant developments prior to 9/11, considering two special issues devoted to “documentary.” Juliana Spahr and Jena Osman's *Chain 2* (“Documentary”) appeared in 1995, a pivotal year. The year of the English publication of *Archive Fever* as well as Susan Howe's graduate seminar on documentary poetics, 1995 was also a tumultuous year in the realm of geopolitics. One year after the implementation of NAFTA and the Zapatista Uprising, the Mexican army invaded Zapatista land in February, disrupting peace talks between the EZLN and the Mexican state; the unrest presaged mobilizations surrounding the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle four years later. Mark Nowak's *XCP: Cross Cultural Poetics 6* (“Documentary”) was published in 2000, less than a year after the “Battle for Seattle.” Debates surrounding globalization, neoliberalism, and its discontents held steady into the new century, with some going so far as to argue that 9/11 represented a logical, if violent,

expression of anti-globalization that was communicated symbolically through the targeting of the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the U.S. Capitol. While many poets, scholars, and critics have noted the explosion of documentary texts in the U.S. following 9/11, it seems to me that a type of writing deeply concerned with the limitations of hegemonic nationalisms and exclusionary conceptions of citizenship should come to be “en vogue” following an event such as 9/11, and the subsequent U.S. invasion of Iraq, should come as no surprise and is in fact entirely consistent with the arguments I present here.

However, *Chain 2* and *XCP 6* suggest that the recent proliferation of documentary poetic writing has an even earlier start date. More precisely, they index a moment of renewed scholarly interest in a type of writing present throughout the Americas in the twentieth century. *Chain* and *XCP* each offer preliminary conceptions of contemporary documentary poetry that have not, to my knowledge, received sustained scholarly attention.¹⁸ A few key examples demonstrate how these issues on “Documentary” continue the project of the preceding chapters, addressing racist conceptions of citizenship and to re-imagine community on a variety of scales. The content gathered in *Chain* and *XCP* not only reflects those riotous five years that brought the twentieth century to a close, but illustrates the transhemispheric geopolitical concerns of these three editors, some of the most frequently cited figures associated with documentary poetry and—like Cardenal, Livesay, and Cartagena Portalatín—key members of the poetic left.

Ultimately, my aim is to develop a transnational, interdisciplinary approach to

literary study that can account for how documentary poetry serves as an intertextual, relational, and multidirectional mode of anti-colonial knowledge production.

Specifically, I consider how select extra poetic discourse is employed non-narratively as a means of revising the content of western liberal democracy, perhaps the most enduring metanarrative today. Equally important are documentary poets' specific iterations of collective third person poetic subjects, however partial or fragmentary, which move through appropriated historical material in ways that conceive of citizenship beyond a repressive colonial legal institution and envision mutual liberation as a pluralistic planetary project. The revisionist histories mobilized in documentary poetry are best understood for the ways they challenge normative conceptions of belonging, and national affiliation in particular, as much as this type of writing interrogates the "official record" and historiography as an academic practice. I suggest these two aspects are intricately linked: in reworking the language of state and local archives, documentary poets shift our categories for thinking the social by offering visions of new worlds ungoverned by white supremacy—even as their texts reify, at times, the colonially of power and the coloniality of citizenship.¹⁹

A final note on terminology: there are various descriptors common to conversations about this type of writing. The terms "documentary" and "investigative" are often used interchangeably, yet as Briante notes, the terms differ in connotation: investigative, associated more with journalism, "emphasizes the notion of inquiry and speculation, fundamental to the lyric, rather than a recording of some objective reality" implied by "documentary," associated more readily with film ("The New Political").

As Briante's comment suggests, poets who write in this vein often resist the term "documentary," offering their own alternatives that more precisely capture what it is they think their work is doing. Even Nowak, one of the poets most associated with "documentary poetry," has been particularly vocal about his preference for the term "social poetics."²⁰ In recent years, scholars have employed additional terms, such as "archival poetics," "research-based poetics," "archaeopoetics," "reportorial," "documental," and "shakeout poetics," as well as the truncated "docupoetics." Throughout this study, I will use the phrase "documentary poetry" for three reasons. First, practical ones: most of the existing scholarship uses the term "documentary poetry." The range of alternatives poets and scholars have posed have yet to achieve the staying power of "documentary." Secondly, for precision. The exact term used and theorized by Livesay was "documentary poetry," the same applied to the work of both Cardenal and Cartagena Portalatín by their English translators. Lastly, I wish to register the nationalistic connotations associated with documentary filmmaking and its origins, generally glossed over in literary discussions invoking the etymology of the term "documentary."

Chapter 1: Revisionist History, Vanguardista Nationalism

The Rhetoric of Conquest in the Early Documentary Poems of Ernesto Cardenal

Entre los hombres importantes de Nicaragua que yo he conocido, el doctor Cuadra Pasos era el único que entendía la historia como diálogo. Todos mis otros conocidos entendían la historia como guerra civil. Los primeros en enseñarlo eran los mismos historiadores y hasta los textos escolares no era otra cosa lo que difundían. Felizmente, el maestro de casi todos los intelectuales nicaragüenses de mi generación, fue el doctor Cuadra Pasos, y éste enseñaba con la palabra y el ejemplo no sólo a investigar e interpretar sino a vivir y revivir la historia como diálogo - y aún si se quiere como dialéctica, aunque lo suya, desde luego, no era marxista, sino más bien socrática y cristiana.

Among the important Nicaraguan men I have known, Dr. Cuadra Pasos was the only one who understood history as dialogue. All my other acquaintances understood history as civil war. The first to teach it were the historians themselves, and they spread this idea until scholarly texts consisted of nothing else. Fortunately, the teacher of almost all the Nicaraguan intellectuals of my generation was Dr. Cuadra Pasos, and he taught by word and example not only to investigate and interpret but to live and relive history as dialogue - and even if you like as a dialectic, although his, of course, was not a Marxist dialectic, but rather one both Socratic and Christian.

José Coronel Urtecho, *Reflexiones sobre la historia de Nicaragua* (vol. IIB)

Y es interesante observar —en el misterio de ese vaticinio— que la nueva historia indo-hispana de Nicaragua ... comienza, exactamente frente a esos dos volcanes, por un diálogo: la conversación entre el Cacique Nicaragua y el conquistador Gil González Dávila en 1531.

And it's interesting to observe —in the mystery of that prediction— that the new Indo-Hispanic history of Nicaragua ... begins, exactly in front of those two volcanoes, in a dialogue: the conversation between the Cacique Nicaragua and the conquistador Gil González Dávila in 1531.

Pablo Antonio Cuadra, “Los Hijos de Septiembre”

Para el escritor burgés nicaragüense, “la nueva historia indo-hispana... comienza por un diálogo: la conversación entre el cacique Nicaragua y el conquistador Gil González Dávila en 1531” [12, p. 20].

For the bourgeois Nicaraguan writer, “the new Indo-Hispanic history... begins with a dialogue the conversation between the cacique Nicaragua and the conquistador Gil González Dávila in 1531.”

Jaime Wheelock Román, *Raíces indígenas de la lucha anticolonialista en Nicaragua*

While in the process of finishing his master's thesis at UNAM, a young Ernesto Cardenal wrote "Proclama del conquistador" (1947), one of his first published poems. "Proclama" is a response to both colonial sources and Archibald MacLeish's *Conquistador* (1932), the latter of which employs the account given by Spanish soldier Bernal Díaz del Castillo in *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España* (1576). Winner of the 1933 Pulitzer Prize, *Conquistador* was completed following MacLeish's travels through Mexico, where he retraced Cortes' route from the Gulf Coast to the Valley of Tenochtitlan, modern day Mexico City.²¹ Fusing techniques in *Personae* (1926) (persona poem) and early *Cantos* (incorporation of historical texts) while reorienting Poundian historical thinking from Europe and Asia to the Americas, MacLeish's text is a first-person retelling of the conquest in Díaz's voice, based on incidents in *Historia verdadera* which the poet "altered and transposed and invented";²² the "Dedication"'s citation of Dante's Odysseus in *Canto XXVI* and the poem's terza rima form figure the westward journey to Tenochtitlan not only as a descent into the underworld, but into the Inferno. Cardenal's intertextual response to MacLeish's collection provides ample evidence that the poet was familiar with Anglo-modernism before making his famous trip to Columbia; this shouldn't be surprising, as Cardenal's mentor José Coronel Urtecho was an expert on U.S. poetry, having been introduced to it while living in California in the 1920s. More importantly, "Proclama" is either the poet's earliest documentary poem or a type of precursor.

Either way, in its foregrounding of both historical discourse and the

colonization of the Americas, “Proclama” anticipates the work collected in *Zero Hour and Other Documentary Poems* (1980) by almost ten years. While that text’s titular poem, *Hora 0* (1960), is generally considered to be the poet’s exemplary documentary poem, “Proclama” indicates that Cardenal engaged with historical source texts throughout the decade prior to its composition (1954-56). This chapter traces the author’s intertextual and historical proclivities from one of his earliest published works to the poem which immediately preceded *Hora 0*, “Con Walker en Nicaragua” (1950), often referred to as “documentary” for the way it appropriates portions of the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Situating these two poems within their contexts of emergence demonstrates that Cardenal’s documentary work emerges in dialogue with nationalist vanguardismo visions of Nicaragua as a nation ruled by a criollo elite, of which Cardenal’s family was a part. In “Proclama,” a dramatic monologue which also contains several elements of the colonial discursive genre of the requerimiento, Conservative revisionist narratives of the conquest and mestizaje are both rehearsed and called into question. My analysis of “Walker” explores the 19th century roots of the Conservative cultural narratives at play in “Proclama.” A detailed consideration of popular print culture in the U.S., as well as the ways Cardenal appropriates it amidst Somoza’s consolidation of power, unpacks the poem’s clandestine nationalist function—and a longing to transcend hegemonic conceptions of nationality altogether. In offering original readings of Cardenal’s earliest documentary poems, I demonstrate how they arise out of and intervene in discourses of Nicaraguan nationalism, even as they demonstrate a longing to transcend the nation state as the

primary organizing principle of community.²³

Challenging dominant critical narratives which understand Pound's work as the key to understanding Cardenal's poetics, I offer an alternate narrative of his method of composition after 1950, which at times employs Anglo-modernist techniques but is by no means limited to them. A brief discussion of "Raleigh," written while Cardenal was studying at Columbia during the height of the Bollingen affair (1947-49), illustrates the poet's practice of incorporating and modifying primary sources, cutting and embellishing material in order to reframe the original narrative. The aesthetic at work in the poems "Raleigh" and more obviously in "Walker," I demonstrate as an anthropofagic praxis that arose in tandem with Cardenal and Urtecho's translations and anthologizations—not only of Anglo-modernists, but writers throughout the hemisphere: Cardenal and Urtecho theorized this *neovanguardista* aesthetic as *exteriorismo*.

Of particular interest is what is included, altered, emphasized, deemphasized, or conspicuously left out in the procedures which, in aggregate, amount to Cardenal's documentary aesthetic. In many cases the nuanced intertextual relationship between poem and source texts cannot be understood without careful attention to the specifics of Liberal and Conservative politics in Nicaragua in early to mid-century. Recent scholarship by Juliet Hooker and Michel Gobat and their work on mestizaje racialization and 19th century Nicaraguan politics, respectively, help to illuminate these aspects of Cardenal's work. As there has yet to be a rigorous conversation about race and Cardenal among literary scholars—historians have been considering this

topic since the 1990s—this chapter makes a point to begin one.²⁴

“Proclama” (1947) & the Requerimiento

As the rhetorical genre (“proclamation”) in its title suggests, “Proclama del conquistador” foregrounds the language of a conquistador. That is, colonial discourse and, accordingly, the discourse of power. A dramatic monologue in which a conquistador recalls his exploits and proposes an alliance before an unnamed cacique [Nahua chieftain], “Proclama” is a poem about how conquest is initiated through language. Specifically, it examines the linguistic procedures used historically to justify and enact the oppression of indigenous peoples. The poem has particular, if unrecognized, significance within the context of documentary poetry: “Proclama” marks the first time in Cardenal works directly with archival colonial sources, a practice carried forward to his better-known documentary poems, most notably *El estrecho dudoso*. Yet “Proclama” is generally classified as juvenilia, even by Cardenal himself (*Vida Perdida* 138), who has excluded the poem, along with the volume in which it appeared (*Carmen y otros poemas*), from his poetic canon “porque los poemas no son buenos” [because the poems aren’t any good] (*Vida Perdida* 141). The few scholars who take “Proclama” seriously note Cardenal’s poem as an intertextual response to MacLeish’s text; in contrast to MacLeish’s choice to focalize his poem through a fictionalized Bernal, however, Cardenal’s speaker, an unnamed conquistador, is portrayed in scholarship as a decision to either deemphasize the historic personage of Bernal in favor of a more symbolic archetype (White, Borgeson) or to instead portray a separate historical figure altogether: Francisco Hernández de

Córdoba (Henighan).

More precisely, Cardenal's device conflates two specific contexts of intercultural exchange in the conquest of the Americas, in Mexico and Nicaragua. That the multiple sources informing the speaker's message are disguised and largely indistinguishable suggests a certain amount of interchangeability between their subjects and authors. Though much of "Proclama" is suggestive, if not outright citation, of Díaz's retelling of Cortés' journey toward Tenochtitlan, the direct mention of "el archipiélago lánguido de las Solentinames" [the languid archipelago of the Solentinames] (125) near the poem's conclusion steers readers away from the intertextual referent of (Díaz's) Cortés, who never made it as far as present-day Nicaragua. This moment is suggestive instead of Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo's *Sumario de la historia de las Indias* (1526), which relates Gil González Dávila's arrival at Cocibolca [Lake Nicaragua] in 1522; in Cardenal's memoirs, *Vida Perdida*, we learn that from a young age he developed "una pasión... : la historia de Nicaragua" [a passion: the history of Nicaragua], one nurtured by his mentor, the Mexican Padre Felipe Pardinas Illanes. Pardinas often brought 16th century cronistas to class for the students to read, including the letter from Gil to the Spanish king about the "discovery" of Lake Nicaragua (33-34). The relevant cacique in these documents would be not Moctezuma but Macuilmiquitzli, [Nicaragua] then cacique of the cacicazgo [territory] of the Pipil-Nicarao, the Nahuatl-speaking people who controlled the southwestern lake region when the Spanish arrived. Cardenal's character of the conquistador, who conflates details of the lives of men like Cortés

and González Dávila, draws attention to the discourse of power rather than any particular, localized historical figure or event. Similarly, the repeated mention of a “Gran Lago” throughout “Proclama” plays on two separate colonial encounters in distinct contact zones: González’s arrival at Cuauhcapolca and Cortés’s at Lake Texcoco in Tenochtitlan. Using inexact yet distinctly Latin American markers, Cardenal invokes various colonial symbols and events, without citing the relevant sources or granting relevant actors any kind of specificity.

The conflation of events and images suggests that a hemispheric interest in the logic, justification, and tropes of the conquest of the Americas superseded specific historical figures, dates, nations, peoples, or facts. The Spanish conquest and colonization, as historian Enrique Florescano argues, altered the “recording, selecting, and explaining [of] past events” by imposing upon the Americas and its peoples “a new protagonist of historical action and narration: the conquistador” armed with “a new historical discourse” (65). With the publication of texts like Díaz’s and Fernández de Oviedo’s, Florescano contends, “language follows and completes the military process of the conquest, for it names, baptizes, and confers a new significance to nature, humans, and native cultures” (66). Appropriating and flattening various texts by Díaz, Oviedo, Cortés, de las Casas, and others and the contexts they reference, Cardenal disaggregates of the specifics of conquest, resisting, to a certain extent, the violent and systematizing discourse of colonization, even as his poem constructs a voice whose main rhetorical act is to dispossession. In this way, “Proclama” is a staged performance of and an invitation to analyze the “new

historical discourse” employed by conquistadors in the name of the Spanish crown.

Cardenal’s title marks a reorientation from MacLeish’s emphasis on man or character (*Conquistador*) to his language (“Proclama del conquistador”), emphasizing what historian Matthew Restall has referred to as the “procedures” of conquest; that is, predictable and prescribed discursive and institutional practices that had Iberian roots predating the conquest of the Americas and were consolidated during the Caribbean phase of colonization (1492-1521). Cardenal’s poem invokes certain colonial procedures undertaken by means of discourse—specifically, legal documents—on behalf of the Spanish empire. The poem’s lofty tone and elevated diction have served as reasons critics tend to dismiss “Proclama” as derivative of both Darío and Neruda, especially because Cardenal would reject such qualities in his turn towards *exteriorismo* a few years later.²⁵ Yet when placed within the context of discursive practices of the Spanish conquest, the conquistador’s rhetorical style can be read for the ways it underscores the discursive artifice by which acts of violent dispossession were obscured, and sanctioned, by conquering states, and the legalese which legitimated—and carried out—colonial procedures.

Evolving throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, certain set imperial protocols allowed the Spanish “to justify their actions and give them a legalistic veneer by citing and following approved precedents” (Restall 19) by means of operational routines ranging from “the use of legalistic measures to lend a veneer of respectability to an expedition” (Restall 19) to “the capture of native rulers, who would be subsequently ransomed, released, and confirmed as puppets or executed”

(Restall 154). Cardenal's speaker, who deploys a language both lyric and functionary, at times quasi-legalistic, in order to ultimately confirm the cacique as a "puppet" by means of the alliance, engages both of these procedures. In the barest rhetorical terms, "Proclama" is an "offer"—political, economic, juridical, religious—made to a cacique by a conquistador, the refusal of which carries the threat of violence:

Porque no obstante el metal indómito de nuestras armas,
venimos a hablar de paz bajo tu techo este atardecer,
y traemos una constitución perfecta para tu pueblo
y proyectos de riquezas que tu patria brincará de júbilo,
y una Divinidad magnífica y profunda como las noche que tu amas,
(123)

Because despite the untamed metal of our weapons,
we come to talk peace beneath your roof, this sunset,
and we bring a perfect constitution for your people,
and projects for wealth that will make your country leap up in jubilee,
and a Divinity magnificent and deep, like the nights you love,

Here, "Proclama" resembles a notorious document in colonial legal discourse, the *requerimiento*,²⁶ a legal document manufactured by the crown to justify their ventures in the New World, both to other European powers and factions within Spain itself. As the Spanish claim to the Americas and the labor of its indigenous people became increasingly disputed, notably by Spanish priests who opposed the violent oppression wrought upon the colonies by their ruling state, King Ferdinand had jurists craft the *requerimiento* in order to address a glaring legal vulnerability to the Crown's colonial ambitions: by 1511, "jurists and theologians could still not find a justification in natural law for the Spaniards' establishing settlements in recently discovered territories, let alone for taking possession of land and enslaving the original inhabitants" (Laird 2). The resulting document, codified in 1512, consisted of two

parts: a justification for the absolute power of the Spanish, and an ultimatum demanding obedience on the part of the interlocutor and the group he presided over; this included, of course, the right to control, exploit, and profit from his territory and the native populations occupying it.²⁷

Attempting to persuade the silent auditor, a Nahua cacique, of his people's subservient place within a greater imperial project, "Proclama," likewise, begins with the conquistador justifying the absolute power of his monarch. His argument is made in explicitly racial terms:

Hablo de una raza que fue colocada en la tierra igual que una corona
y cuyas hermosas leyes, solemnemente promulgadas,
reciben los pueblos lejanos con clarines de júbilo.
Hablo de una raza violenta como una tempestad en el norte,
con un monarca altanero rodeado de gente que lo ama, (122)

I speak of a race placed atop the earth like a crown,
and whose beautiful laws, solemnly promulgated,
the remote pueblos receive with bugles of jubilation.
I speak of a race violent as a northern storm,
with a haughty monarch surrounded by people who love him,

Extending to an entire "race" the position of the monarchy at the top of the order ("placed atop the earth like a crown"), the usage of the passive voice emphasizes the superior position of a race without a particular agent having "placed" it at the top of the established hierarchy; rather, employing the classic tautology the Spanish theologians and jurists used to justify conquest, that they conquered other peoples because they were superior, and they were superior because they conquered other peoples, the conquistador implies this is the natural order of things:

Sabes que las razas de hombres son más que las estrellas,
y hay provincias mayores, y otras menores rodeándolas,

y otras escoltan éstas, como la luna sigue a la tierra; (121)

You know there are more races of men than stars,
and there are major provinces, and other minor ones surround them,
and still others escort these, as the moon follows the earth;

That certain races “escort” others in the same manner that the “moon follows earth” equates racial order with the laws of the universe, a classic move in *requerimiento* rhetoric. As such, Cardenal’s lines reflect what Sylvia Wynter’s theorization of race as a symbolic construct or “stereotyped image” based on the Aristotelian concept of natural slaves as the “basis for new metaphysical notions of order” following Columbus’s voyage to the Americas. The post-1512 attempts of the Spanish state to justify, legally as well as philosophically, the subjugation of sovereign peoples became codified in the *requerimiento*. The aim was to eventually “displace the theological mode of legitimation that had granted sovereignty to Spain on the condition that it carry out the work of evangelizing the peoples of the New World and of converting them to Christianity” (Wynter 34) using the concept of “natural slaves” in Aristotle’s *Poetics*.

According to this manufactured rationale, “the ‘Indios’ had been as intended by natural law to be ‘natural slaves,’ as the Spaniards had been also intended to be natural masters” (Wynter 35). Not only is the possibility of the cacique’s resistance rendered altogether absent in Cardenal’s poem, conquered peoples welcome legislative change associated with their own loss of autonomy as “beautiful laws” celebrated “with bugles of jubilation.” Those who do not belong to the “*raza colocada*” take their subordinate place as natural satellites: docile, obedient animals

who, under the rule of an unnamed monarch, constitute “los reinos que acuden a como ganados a la hora del crepúsculo” [realms which go to him like cattle at twilight] (122). The language does not deviate all that much from historical examples of the *requerimiento*. Below is an example used by Gil González Dávila after receiving permission to conquer Nicaragua; when González Dávila arrived, using various indigenous interpreters he sent a message to the local cacique:

... que el gran rei de los christianos enviaba por aquellas tierras a dezir a todos los caciques señores dellas que supiesen todos que en el cielo más arriba del sol ay vn señor que izo todas las cosas i los ombres... que estén en su pueblo él y sus indios y que no haya miedo que yo le diré otras cosas muy grandes. (Archivo General de Indias qtd. in Wheelock Román 15)

... that the grand king of the Christians sent to these lands to tell all the lord caciques so that they know that in the sky higher than the sun there is a lord that made all things and man... that they are in his pueblo him and his indians and not to be afraid and that I will tell them more very grand things.

There are numerous ways Cardenal’s conquistador echoes González Dávila, from hyperbole that borders on the ridiculous, and the appeal made to heavenly bodies to explain “natural order” (“major provinces... escort [minor ones]... like the moon follows the earth”; “in the sky higher than the sun there is a lord”), to the plethora of language (“We come replete with words”; “I will tell them more very grand things”), to duplicitous reassurance (“despite the untamed mental of our weapons”; “not to be afraid”). The high lyricization of Cardenal’s version, which emphasizes both civic and economic change—as well as the introduction of a new god, present in both passages—serves to make more ominous the underlying rhetorical message: capitulation is required. Here we have part two of the *requerimiento*: ultimatum.

Historically, the *requerimiento* was read aloud to indigenous peoples, providing them with “due notification” of their obligation to surrender before being attacked or enslaved. That the document was often read in Spanish or Latin to non-speakers as if it could be received as a meaningful gesture of official state communication, one in which the recipient was disingenuously asked to “talk peace” while commanded to surrender to “untamed metal,” has granted the document a reputation among historians for being “ridiculous” and “absurd.” Andrew Laird has laid out the complex rhetorical maneuver of the *requerimiento* as follows: “For all that the right to reply of those addressed was limited to a compliant yes (if they were to avoid brutal reprisals), the document’s wording nonetheless projected those addressees as interlocutors: though by no means intended to foster dialogue, its rhetorics imply that initiation of such dialogue was hypothetically possible” (2-3). Read as *requerimiento*, the poem becomes a reenactment of the colonial procedure and perlocutionary act by which dispossession was carried out under real historical circumstances. Paja Faudree puts it succinctly: “The *Requerimiento*... appears, formally, to be quintessentially performative: the very act of uttering the text was intended to fundamentally alter the social relations between Spanish and natives” (186).

Ultimately, “the real interlocutor for the text of the *Requerimiento* is the performer himself (not its fictive audience)” (Gómez Rivas 4). For Camilo Gómez Rivas, the *requerimiento* is “a reminder of who is in charge, of how power is supposed to be enacted, transmitted, and legitimated, of how ownership is made

lawful... The point is to promote the self-assurance and confidence of those doing the adapting and conquering” (15-16). The only way to understand conquest as a dialogue is as a dialogue begun as an internal one between conquistadors and the Spanish crown, as José Rabasa argues in *Inventing America* (1993). Cardenal’s “Proclama,” which suggests but does not engage in any meaningful form of dialogue, aesthetically distills a dominant political discourse in Nicaragua in the early 20th century that framed the origin of history in the Americas as a “dialogue” between conquistador and cacique to legitimate their position as the ruling class. The epigraphs opening this chapter illustrate how pervasively the trope of dialogue structured cultural narratives of the conquest among a Nicaraguan literary circle known as the vanguardistas, of which Cardenal was one of the youngest members.

“Proclama” as Dramatic Monologue: Vanguardismo & Mestizo Nationalism

This group of right-wing avant-garde poets included Cardenal’s mentor, José Coronel Urtecho, an uncle on his mother’s side, and Pedro Antonio Cuadra, a cousin on his father’s side. “Politically,” write Beverley and Zimmerman, “they defined themselves variously as nationalist, antiliberal, Catholic, ultrareactionary, futurist, pro-Sandinista, and fascist” (60); inspired by Vasconcelos’s writings on “la raza cósmica” in the 1920s, vanguardistas constructed a revisionist cultural narrative of the conquest steeped in the conservative nationalist ideology of Carlos Cuadra Pasos, Cuadra’s father and a prominent Conservative intellectual, one marked by idealizations of Spanish imperial rule as the origins of a mestizo nation. In portraying

the conquest as “a dialogue: the conversation between the Cacique Nicaragua / and the conqueror Gil González Dávila in 1531” (Cuadra, “Los Hijos de Septiembre”), the vanguardistas downplayed the physical and sexual violence of colonization, as well as indigenous resistance to Spanish domination. This version of the conquest, in which native peoples were patronizingly “elevated” through contact with “pure” Spaniard colonizers and their cultural artifacts, both reflected and justified the criollo vanguardistas’ view of themselves as the legitimate ruling class within Nicaragua’s racial aristocracy.

In his writings, with which a young Cardenal would have been familiar, Cuadra Pasos portrayed colonial contact in Nicaragua as a harmonious process of fusion whereby the Spanish were constituted as active, masculine protagonists and indigenous peoples feminized as passive beneficiaries of their rule and bloodline. Cuadra Pasos had particular praise for the conquistadors, whom he felt were the active, enriching source of the mestizo race and the most manly among all Spanish arrivants: of the three categories of actors involved in the conquest of the Americas — priests, statesmen and conquistadors— only the latter “penetrated jungles, killed caciques, fought against Indian men, and impregnated Indian women” (qtd. in Hooker 22; her translation). Cuadra Pasos outlines the chronological destruction of indigenous social and political relations at the hands of conquistador: after nature has been “penetrated” (a constant motif in “Proclama”) follows the disposal of the rival political and patriarchal system, allowing for the literal penetration and insemination of the passive female “other,” a vessel to produce the future mestizaje citizenry.

Vanguardismo “portrayed Nicaragua as a preeminently indo-Hispanic country in which Spanish paternity was determinant,” writes Hooker. “By representing mestizaje as a heterosexual sexual romance between active Spanish fathers and passive indigenous mothers, vanguardismo sutured over politically divisive racial heterogeneities and justified the exclusive hold on political power of the self-identified heirs of the original masters” (15-16).

Nowhere is this trope of Spanish virility and indigenous passivity more unambiguous than in “Proclama”’s final scene, when the conquistador’s intentions to take the cacique’s territory are made explicit as he speaks of an alliance, which appears to have taken place without the cacique ever speaking. Here, the conquistador’s address switches rather jarringly from what is presumably an audience of his troops to one of the local women, and then back again:

consumaremos una gran alianza con ellas esta noche,
y yo diré que conquisto este pueblo sensual porque lo amo.
Porque deseo tu cuerpo que se dobla, hija, como la rendición de las
ciudades,

... Y tomaré posesión de esta tierra jovial y disoluta,
a la hora en que cante la luminosa oropéndola del alba,
si antes al último sueño no lo estrangula la selva,
si antes al último cuerpo no lo disipa la muerte. (126)

tonight we will consummate a great alliance with them,
and I shall say I conquer this sensual town because I love it.
Because I want your body that bends over, daughter, as cities
surrender...

... And I will take possession of this land, joyous and dissolute,
by the time the luminous oropendola sings of dawn,
if the last dream is not first strangled by the jungle,
if the last body is not first squandered by death.

Cardenal figures conquest as territorial possession of an unnamed town (“this sensual town”) in an unnamed land (“joyous and dissolute”) by means of sexual possessing an unnamed man’s unnamed woman (“daughter”), allowing for an interpretation of the poem in which the conquistador can be understood as an archetypal figure representative of colonialism in general.²⁸ The attention to penetration of indigenous women, here, and the jungle elsewhere in the poem, is suggestive of Cuadra Pasos’s veneration of the conquistador as the manly historical agent of progress and change. Critiquing precisely this sort of language for the way it obscured the violence of conquest and indigenous resistance, Wheelock Roman would argue that “frequently indigenous America is portrayed as overcome by the desire to throw herself, crazy with love, on the courageous and proud conquerer,” a move which was part of the construction of “an ideology that justified the appropriation of land, labor, and as a result power” (qtd. in Hooker 29, 28; her translation), purposefully obfuscating the numerous examples of anti-colonial struggle that indigenous communities waged against the Spanish.

For Wynter, the jettisoning of the concept of natural slaves, distinct from civil slaves which could be bought and sold, was the conjuncture at which “the triadic model of what has been called the racial caste hierarchy of Latin America based on the ideal of *mestizaje*... was first laid down” (35), that is a society that distinguished between “free men and women, ‘nature’s children:’ and civil slaves, was now legitimated on an essentially postreligious premise, that of *the nonhomogeneity of the human species*” (36). Similarly, the plan to unite the pueblos under the king’s

greater imperial realm, according to the rhetoric in Cardenal's poem, is sanctioned (if not conferred upon) the conquistador by no less than the earth itself, personified and feminized in a state of heterosexual longing to be overcome: "La tierra ha abierto al rey su mapa en la forma de una mano, / con la misma silenciosa mendicidad con que la amada ofrece" (122) [In the shape of a hand has opened its map to the king, / with the same silent begging one's beloved offers].

"Proclama" is easily read, then, as a portrayal of a mythic originary moment of mestizaje. As a master's student at UNAM in the 1940s, Cardenal was at the epicenter of a nation in the process of being profoundly shaped by Vasconcelan thought. The growing rhetorical power of mestizaje was utterly transforming Latin American education and culture at precisely the time Cardenal was at work on "Proclama." Only two decades prior, at the behest of then-rector José Vasconcelos, UNAM had not only added Latin America to the school's logo but adopted as its motto *Por mi raza hablará el espíritu*. "Raza" is, of course, an abbreviation for "raza cósmica," the enormously influential concept further developed in Vasconcelos's 1925 essay of the same name. Though as a concept of racial mixing the idea of mestizaje had existed for over 500 years, it was Vasconcelos who first theorized it in terms of citizenship. Vasconcelos's mythic construction of an ethnically homogenous society, of mestizaje as the process of racial mixing that would eventually create a "fifth race" comprised of all other races, red (indigenous), white (Europeans), black (Africans) and yellow (Asians), resonated so strongly throughout Latin America it altered language. In Nicaragua, the meaning and usage of the term "mestizo"

changed: before the 1930s, “mestizo” referred to children of ladinos (whites) and native peoples, but by 1950 had become a descriptor for all Nicaraguan society, including ladinos (Gould 18).

This linguistic alteration was, of course, a direct consequence of Cuadra Pasos’s reactionary political ideology and the dissemination of it through vanguardista cultural production. In the early 20th century, the criollo vanguardistas found themselves increasingly challenged by the encroachment of Western notions of secular politics and growing power of the Liberal Party; the opposition’s power would become further consolidated in 1933 when, with the help of the U.S. Marines who occupied Nicaragua at the time, Anastasio “Tacho” Somoza García became head of the National Guard and, later, President of a decades-long dictatorship (1937-1947; 1950-56). Advocating for a nostalgic turn backwards toward the supposed stability of the colonial period was the Conservative response during a period in which hierarchies in place since the conquest began to erode in part due to increased U.S. influence. Hooker explains: “The vanguardists, like Cuadra Pasos, developed a conservative critique of liberalism and democracy. They believed that 19th-century liberalism had broken the harmonious patriarchal era by implanting romantic notions of equality and democracy unworkable in Nicaragua, as the continuous civil wars of the post-independence era demonstrated” (24). Since the vanguardistas controlled the nation’s cultural institutions, including major academic literary presses and prestigious universities, they played such a “hegemonic role in the intellectual life of the country” (Arellano qtd in Hooker) that Leonel Delgado Aburto has described the

vanguardistas as “the ruling intellectual group” during the construction the nation. While Beverley and Zimmerman suggest the “new national mythology” of the vanguardistas was conceived of as expressing “a positive Hispanic and Catholic appropriation of indigenous and popular Nicaraguan culture” (63), the trope of fusion legitimated authoritarian mestizo rule through the erasure of blacks and Indians as citizens (Hooker 18). In so far as the conquistador’s rhetoric reinscribes vanguardista notions of colonial contact, the poem participates in their Catholic, Conservative nation-building project in which traditional patriarchal hierarchies are preserved.

At the same time, in its focalization of a singular, quasi-monomaniacal speaker contemplating violent action, “Proclama” is also a classic, Browningsque dramatic monologue that thematizes history, the historical subject, and power relations. At once expressing a particular subjectivity and subject position and presenting that same lyric content as an object of rhetorical analysis, the dramatic monologue is a genre particularly suited for examining the machinations of power and language. The speaker is often revealed to be a construction of the societal scripts he has internalized, even and especially when those discourses form the object of the speaker’s own critique and the occasion for his monologue. Isobel Armstrong’s concept of the dramatic monologue as a “double poem” allows us to also consider an ironic reading of “Proclama” in which we are meant to be critical of the conquistador’s rhetoric. Hints of this possibility can be found in moments such as the aforementioned lines where the conquistador describes his own society in less-than-flattering terms: “Hablo de una raza violenta como una tempestad en el norte, / con un

monarca altanero rodeado de gente que lo ama,” [I speak of a race violent as a northern storm, / with a haughty monarch surrounded by people who love him,] (2). In aggregate, these moves construct the conquistador’s rhetorical authority, while simultaneously calling the process of that construction into question.

Cardenal belonged to a generation distinct from the vanguardistas, known as the Generación del 40, which initiated the posvanguardista period in Nicaragua by means of reworking the inheritance of the historical avant-grades in a post-WWII context. While the break from vanguardismo was not a radical one, at least not immediately, Cardenal and his peers, Ernesto Mejía Sánchez (1923-1985) and Carlos Martínez Rivas (1924-1998) were in the process of differentiating themselves from the poetry of decades prior. One of the strongest pieces of evidence that “Proclama” is beginning to diverge from the mestizaje nationalism of vanguardismo is the poem’s hint at indigenous struggle. Read as dramatic monologue, a form which precludes the auditor’s response, “Proclama” represents a dramatic figuration of indigenous silence—at least in the form of the cacique auditor. Near the end, however, Cardenal invokes the Solentiname islands as “el archipiélago lánguido de las Solentinames como una mujer que se niega” [the languid archipelago of the Solentinames, like a woman who refuses] (125). The “languid” aspect of this gendered figuration of indigenous land recalls colonial visual depictions of the “New World” as a “recumbent figure, now discovered and raised from her torpor... about to be hailed, possessed, and claimed as América” such as in Galle’s engraving of Vespucci discovering America (Montrose 4). Yet the “woman... refuses.”

Vanguardismo's revisionist narrative, which had figured conquest as a benign process of racial mixing, became increasingly fanciful in the postwar period. Urtecho, for example, nostalgically venerated the colonial era for ushering in a period of more than two centuries of peace. His erroneous claims in *Reflexiones sobre la historia de Nicaragua* (1962), that indigenous submission was a relatively peaceful nonviolently in Nicaragua due to rapid absorption of Christianity and its teachings, were resoundingly debunked by the numerous historical examples of violent resistance wages by native peoples against the Spanish in Wheelock Román's landmark study *Raíces Indígenas De La Lucha Anticolonialista En Nicaragua* (1972). A major challenge to Conservative narratives surrounding the conquest and mestizaje, Wheelock Roman began to articulate a different nationalist ideology which "emphasized the violent nature of the colonial enterprise, and the importance of indigenous ancestry to contemporary mestizo identity" (Hooker 26): Sandinismo, which in the 1970s would become the hegemonic nationalist narrative of mestizaje, "[I]nstead of focusing on the conquistador... highlighted the Indian's heroic resistance to colonization as the true foundation of [Nicaraguan] identity" (Hooker 26). Cardenal's poem, which makes the conquistador's violence explicit as a "northern storm" and leaves room, however small, for the possibility of refusal, retains elements of vanguardismo even as it anticipates Sandinista versions of mestizaje.

The imagined post-coital appearance of the oropendola prefigures, too, Cardenal's use of distinctly Nicaraguan birds as heralds of nationalist identification in

the pro-FSLN anthem *Canto nacional* (1973), even as the likely variety (Montezuma) is also endemic to Mexico, Honduras, Costa Rica, and Panamá and can thus serve as a metonymy for the Central American region more broadly. Cardenal's figuring of mestizaje in "Proclama" relies upon the conflation of colonial encounters that took place in present-day Mexico and Nicaragua, locales which might be read more contiguously as belonging to part of the greater Náhuatl-speaking prehispanic world, or the geographical range of *oropendola*, subspecies of which breed from Mexico to Argentina. Even as the mestizaje of "Proclama" is certainly reflective of vanguardista ideology, the poem's use of dramatic irony questions the legitimacy of vanguardista mestizo nationalism. By the end, the poetic voice seems to be as entrapped and entangled by the meeting with the indigenous "other" as the conquistador is by his own internalized rhetoric. The imagined encounter between the conquistador and the "daughter," while unquestionably exploitative and imbricated in the innumerable problems of mestizo discourse, can also be read as the erotic beginnings of a continent reinvented and resignified.²⁹ In this the poem exceeds the nation of Nicaragua, suggestive of what Martí referred in "Nuestra América" to as "our mestizo America": that is, a marker of *lo americano*, a utopian theme that would reverberate throughout Cardenal's career.

"Raleigh" (1949)

The year "Proclama" was published, Cardenal began his famous stay at Columbia University. The two-year stay would have a lasting influence. It was there

he met Thomas Merton, who would later become a spiritual and literary mentor when Cardenal joined his Gethsemani Monastery in Kentucky in 1957. And it was there, as a student of Lionel Trilling,³⁰ the young Cardenal focused his readings on Whitman and the Anglo-Modernists, in particular Eliot, Williams, and the altogether-unavoidable Pound.³¹ His arrival in 1947 and departure in 1949 bookended New Directions's publication of *The Pisan Cantos*, and the subsequent Bolligen controversy, in 1948. In the spring of 1949, Cardenal wrote "Raleigh," a short poem he has identified as "el primer poema que tomo en cuenta de mi producción, es decir, que ya reconozco como mío o de mi estilo propio" (qtd. in Alonzo 188) [the first poem of mine I consider to be of any importance, which is to say, which I recognize as my own or as written in my own style].

"Raleigh" condenses its infamous source text, Raleigh's *The Discovery of Guiana* (written 1596; published 1898), into a four-page poem. Stripping Walter Raleigh's discourse of its notorious literary flourishes (often to make room for Cardenal's own), "Raleigh" is an exercise in working with the Anglo-modernist technique of incorporating found language into a poetic text. Using direct quotation, Cardenal's poem reworks and shortens *The Discoverie*. While the effects of his intertextual engagement with Raleigh remain politically ambiguous, they do emphasize several recurrent thematics: the acknowledgement of indigenous presence, including the Orinco; the difficulty of the journey to El Dorado that Raleigh has to abandon supposedly within 15 miles of arriving; and, above all, the lushness and beauty of the American landscape. I provide below the poem's opening:

The empire of Guiana is directly east from Peru towards the sea, and lieth under the equinoctial line; and it hath more abundance of gold than any part of Peru, and as many or more great cities than ever Peru had when it flourished most. It is governed by the same laws, and the emperor and people observe the same religion, and the same form and policies in government as were used in Peru, not differing in any part. And I have been assured by such of the Spaniards as have seen Manoa, the imperial city of Guiana, which the Spaniards call El Dorado, that for the greatness, for the riches, and for the excellent seat, it far exceedeth any of the world, at least of so much of the world as is known to the Spanish nation. It is founded upon a lake of salt water of 200 leagues long, like unto Mare Caspium.

Source Text

Al este del Perú, hacia el mar, en la línea del Equinoccio]
sobre un lago blanco, salado, doscientas leguas de largo]
está Manoa,
Manoa, mansión del sol, espejo de la luna

Original Spanish

Due east from Peru, towards the sea, by the Equinoctial Line]
upon a white lake of salt water 200 leagues long]
lies Manoa,
Manoa, mansion of the sun, mirror of the moon,]

English translation by Jonathan Cohen

In the opening line, Cardenal uses “hacia” (towards) where “yace” (lieth) would have better preserved the tone and diction of Raleigh’s original. This exemplifies Cardenal’s procedure: to quote almost directly, while stripping Raleigh’s original of its datedness and rhetorical excessiveness in exchange for plainer, more contemporary language marked by proper names (“la línea del Equinoccio) and quantitative references (“doscientas leguas de largo”). Cardenal accentuates these prosaic excerpts with flourishes reminiscent of Darío and Neruda, such as “mansion of the sun, mirror of the moon.” Other times, the operation is pure condensation:

On both sides of this river we passed the most beautiful country that ever mine eyes beheld; and whereas all that we had seen before was nothing but woods, prickles, bushes, and thorns, here we beheld plains of twenty miles in length, the grass short and green, and in divers parts groves of trees by themselves, as if they had been by all the art and labour in the world so made of purpose; and still as we rowed, the deer came down feeding by the water's side as if they had been used to a keeper's call.

I never saw a more beautiful country, nor more lively prospects; hills so raised here and there over the valleys; the river winding into divers branches; the plains adjoining without bush or stubble, all fair green grass; the ground of hard sand, easy to march on, either for horse or foot; the deer crossing in every path; the birds towards the evening singing on every tree with a thousand several tunes; cranes and herons of white, crimson, and carnation, perching in the river's side; the air fresh with a gentle easterly wind; and every stone that we stooped to take up promised either gold or silver by his complexion.

Source Text (2 separate passages)

Y yo no vi nunca una tierra mejor:
los verdes valles vacíos,
los pájaros cantando contra la tarde en cada árbol,
los ciervos que venían mansos al agua como al silbo de un amo
y el aire fresco del este
y el brillo de las piedras de oro bajo el sol.

original Spanish

I never saw a more beautiful country:
the virgin green valleys,
the birds towards the evening singing on every tree,]
the stags that came tamely to the water as to a master's whistle]
and the fresh air from the east
and the glisten of gold stones in the sunlight.

English translation by Jonathan Cohen

“Raleigh” continues the project of “Proclama” by experimenting with extant colonial texts, and specific genres of colonial discourse, in poetic form. Raleigh’s notorious account of his “discovery” of what the Spanish called “El Dorado,” in addition to being an elaborate extended apology to Queen Elizabeth, is essentially the English version of a *probanza de mérito* used “both to justify the recently concluded expedition and to promote further interest, support, and investment that in 1596 Raleigh published *The Discoverie of Guiana*” (Louis 10). Unable to elevate his social standing at home, Raleigh sought to do so abroad. His attempt, and his alleged account of it, can be read a document in which colonial procedures established by the Spanish begin to spread as individuals, from other nations but of similar means and social positions as the conquistadors, adopted them: “Raleigh’s writings reveal him to be preoccupied with the prospect of enormous personal wealth and power, for which the unprecedented successes of Cortes and Pizarro now provided models” (Louis 10). Indeed, “casting abroad onely this tale of the Mine as a lure to get aduenturers and followers” while “hauing in his eye the *Mexico* Fleete, the sacking and spoyle of Townes planted with Spanish,” or emulating and seeking to proliferate colonial procedures for questions of personal interest and, importantly, without the sanction of the court, was part of the reason Raleigh was ultimately executed.

Yet the precise relation between “Raleigh” and *The Discoverie*, or the *probanza* more generally, remains unclear. For this reason, the poem has proved a difficult one amidst the dominant approach of English language criticism of Cardenal that reads his oeuvre, and Latin American poetry more generally, chiefly for its

radical politics. A generous reading, such as Gibbons's, proceeds as follows: "Although his alertness and wonder make him sympathetic, this Raleigh's vision of the New World as a limitless source of wealth is forerunner to the economic exploitation of the land and people" (649). By contrast, White has critiqued "Raleigh" for its "fragmentary, superficial" emulation of the "travelogue," "a link between the overwrought abundance of 'Proclama del conquistador' and the streamlined, documentary style of 'Con Walker en Nicaragua'" (107).³² Yet the poem impressed editors at the prominent Buenos Aires-based revista *Sur* so much they requested to publish it, and it was none less than Octavio Paz who had facilitated the sending of "Raleigh" in the first place. Upon returning to Nicaragua in July 1950, Cardenal enjoyed a growing reputation throughout the Spanish-speaking world, celebrated for his ability to show what Cuadra famously described as "una visión de América desde un ojo foráneo" [a vision of {Latin} America from a foreign perspective]. Importantly, "Raleigh" introduced certain techniques that had not been used before in Spanish-language poetry which today are easily recognized as markers of documentary poetry: notably, textual collage and the inclusion of reality-based referents.

Exteriorismo as Hemispheric Documentary Poetry

Having also published his master's thesis in Madrid,³³ Cardenal returned to his former mentor as a colleague. Together again, this time as co-translators, Cardenal and Urtecho served as important hemispheric conduits for literature, brought together

by their commitment to the wider circulation of Nicaraguan and U.S. poets. They supported this work by founding a poetry press, El Hilo Azul [the Blue Thread] in 1951. *Lincoln de los poetas*, the press's first publication, demonstrates Cardenal's continuing interest in poetry as a historical form. A series of co-translations of poems involving Abraham Lincoln, *Lincoln de los poetas* brought into Spanish a sample of the historical verse popular in the U.S. at the time—though today much of it is overlooked, if not forgotten altogether, in U.S. literary history: the selection Whitman, Carl Sandburg, and Stephen Vincent Benét, all of whom had also appeared in Urtecho's recent anthology of U.S. poets, *Panorama y antología de la poesía norteamericana* (1949).

Benét's career is worth discussing briefly, as it was marked by contemporaneous efforts towards revisionist history that in many ways resembled the vanguardistas. Though Benét famously claimed to have been writing "poetry not history," his most enduring work, *John Brown's Body*, is a revisionist, positivist, reunionist history of the American Civil War that sought to present both sides as equally courageous, and the war as an unavoidable developmental stage in the United States's progression as a democratic Union of States.³⁴ Benét's framing of the Civil War as a violent but necessary encounter that led to the birth of the modern nation mirrors, too, the vanguardist revisionist account of conquest, mestizaje, and the birth of culture in Nicaragua. Benét, privately an anti-abolitionist, offered a conciliatory narrative that struck a chord with the reading public and cultural elite alike. Knopf's bestselling book for over a decade, *John Brown's Body* won the 1932 Pulitzer Prize

and sold millions of copies. A year later, Benét assumed his decade-long judgeship of the Yale Series of Younger Poets Competition (1933-1942), where he Benét, like the vanguardistas, had the opportunity to shape culture from within the nation's most prestigious institutions. It was Benét who started the careers of several writers whose work was marked by documentary impulses: the first poetry volumes of James Agee (1933), Muriel Rukeyser (1934), Norman Rosten (1940), and Margaret Walker (1941) were all selected as Yale Youngers and published with Yale University Press. His work inspired a generation of writers of diverse political learnings, from Rukeyser (*John Brown's Body*) and Robert Hayden (*Middle Passage*) to Margaret Mitchell, though it is neglected today in literary scholarship.³⁵

Appearing at the transition between silent film and the sound era, *John Brown's Body* indexes a cultural moment when discussions of poetry and film began to intertwine. Early reviews referred to the poem as “a kind of cinema epic” (Harriet Monroe), notable for “motion picture flashes” (Allen Tate), helping to inaugurate the strain of literary criticism to which this dissertation belongs. Cardenal used similarly cinematic language in his thesis on avant-garde poetry in Nicaragua: “Cortés’s frequent usage of “imágenes superpuestas para producir un efecto múltiple y complejo” [images overlaid to produce an effect both complex and manifold] Cardenal refers to as a “‘montaje’ de sensaciones” [montage of sensations] (25).

Decades later, Urtecho compared Cardenal's poetry to documentary in his 1966 introduction to Cardenal's *El estrecho dudoso*, the book-length poem Urtecho described as having “la rápida técnica alucinante de una película documental” [the

rapid, hallucinatory technique of a documentary film]. That Cardenal's work has become known as "documentary" in the English-speaking world is due in large part to Robert Pring-Mill's essay "The Redemption of Reality Through Documentary Poetry": the critic uses and employs a long catalogue of visual language the dialectical process of "collisional" montage, which generates fresh meaning out of the meanings of adjacent shots" (ix).³⁶ This technique that "[i]n place of metaphor... relies chiefly on the juxtaposition of details, and in Cardenal's case, on montage" (Valdez 1987: 66) arose out of Cardenal and Urtecho co-translating during the 1950s.

In his memoirs, Cardenal explains how finding language to articulate their aesthetic preferences during their selection processes led them to conceive of a new kind of experimental poetry.³⁷ He writes, "Traduciendo con Coronel Urtecho esta poesía fue que surgió entre nosotros el término "Exteriorismo," con el que queríamos designar la tendencia predominante en ella, y que era la que más nos gustaba." [Translating this poetry with Coronel Urtecho the origin of the term "Exteriorismo," with which hoped to designate the predominant trend in the poetry we were translating, and which we preferred over others.] (Cardenal and Urtecho, *Antología* 2007 XIII). Advocating poetic language stripped of abstraction, interiority, subjectivism, symbolism, and idealism—hallmarks of Latin American modernismo—in favor of objectivist, material, and concrete language, exteriorismo was initially defined against "interiorist poetry": abstract and symbolic poetry heavily reliant on metaphor, much of it associated with vanguardismo, which treats "impalpable realities, such as absence, dream, mist, desire, solitude, throb, oblivion, sleepless

dust... ” (*Poesía cubana* 13); two examples of relevant “interiorista” works are Neruda’s *Residencia en la tierra* and most of Octavio Paz’s poetry (Valdés 64). Rejecting the highly Castilian and European diction and syntax which had dominated Latin American poetry for decades, Cardenal and Urtecho differentiated their work from those poets who directly referenced European models, and they did so as a result of their own mediations between English and Spanish.³⁸

Urtecho’s *Panorama y antología de la poesía norteamericana*, which Cardenal and Urtecho would later expand, provides a panorama of the type of work that interested both poets in the 1950s and early 60s. In his contextualization of Benét’s work, Urtecho emphasizes Benét’s “realism poético popular” and the way his work contributed to the possibility of “una nueva época que restablezca la popularidad de la poesía entre las masas” (90). Of Benét’s many other works of poetry, only two others were mentioned. One was *A Book of Americans*, which sketches the lives of famous men and women from Christopher Columbus to Woodrow Wilson; Urtecho calls it “una galería de sencillos e ingenios retratos de hombres ilustres de la Unión” [a gallery of simple and ingenious portraits of the Union’s illustrious men] (90). But what interested him most was “la última manera realista de Benet [sic] —enraizada en la tradición de Whitman” [Benet’s latest realist style of writing—rooted in the Whitmanian tradition] of *Burning City* (1936), which Urtecho praised for its “ponderosa aliento de protesta social y política frente a las injusticias y peligros de nuestro tiempo” [powerful courage of social and political protest in opposition to the injustices and dangers of our time] (90-91). *Burning City*

included moments such as this invented dialogue of an angel in “Nightmare, with Angels,” a poem that moves cinematically through the Western world, including Tenochtitlan, juxtaposing images:

“You will not be saved by General Motors or the pre-fabricated
house
You will not be saved by dialectic materialism or the Lambeth
Conference
You will not be saved by Vitamin D or the expanding universe.
In fact, you will not be saved.” (75)

While the semantic thrust of these lines, in which redemption is found neither in religion nor Marxism, is anathema to the portion of Cardenal’s literary-theological career devoted to their reconciliation, the juxtaposition of contemporary markers (General Motors, Lambeth Conference) is easily within the realm of exteriorista stylistics, though out of context. In the introduction to *Poesía nicaragüense* (1973), Cardenal describes exteriorismo as follows:

Exteriorismo es cuando el poeta nos habla de un tractor Caterpillar D4; de la caoba llevada por el lago y el río con un remolcador llamado Fálcon o de un viejo motor de aeroplano encontrado por los campesinos en las montañas de las Segovias y que una vez el guerrillero había derribado; o de un india atacada en el mercado, con el estómago vado, lleno de hambre; o triste atardecer en un puertecito, con los jejenes, y la humedad, y el calor, el retrato del General Somoza en una sucia oficina, y se siente una opresión en el corazón y pareciera que todo Centroamerica esta encharcada... (10).

Exteriorismo is when the poet speaks to us of a Caterpillar D-4 tractor; or of a mahogany tree pushed through the lake or the river by a tug boat called “Falcon”; or of an old airplane motor found by the campesinos in the mountains of the Segovias and which sometime had been shot down by the guerrillas; or of a young Indian girl attacked in the market with her stomach empty, full of hunger; or a sad afternoon in a little port, with the gnats and the humidity and the heat, and the portrait of General Somoza in a dirty office,

and you feel an oppression in your heart, and it seems that all of Central America is stagnated... (English translation qtd. in *Golden UFOs* xiii)

As Cardenal's quote gathers rhetorical momentum, he transitions from emphasizing a formal approach anyone could use ("when a poet speaks to us of a Caterpillar D-4 tractor") to the situated content that makes exteriorismo specific to Latin America ("General Somoza... Central America is stagnated"). "Nightmare, with Angels" is not an exteriorista poem for two main reasons: first, it does not relate experience specific to Latin America; and second, it is a surrealist, nightmarish vision that includes, but is ultimately at a substantial remove from, reality-based referents. Nevertheless, Benét's strophe anticipates, by decades, language in Cardenal's *Hora 0* (written 1954-56) and Neruda's "Standard Oil Co.," "Anaconda Copper Mining Co.," and "La United Fruit Co." from *Canto general* (1950). Neruda, too, was on Urtecho's and Cardenal's minds as they theorized exteriorismo over the course of several decades: Cardenal describes exteriorista poetry as the antithesis of "impure," invoking Neruda's "Sobre Una Poesía Sin Pureza" [Toward an Impure Poetry] (1935) and, possibly, Robert Penn Warren's "Pure and Impure Poetry" (1943). Exteriorismo, then, points toward a countless number of possible hemispheric antecedents, in both English and Spanish language literatures.

English language criticism, however, overstates the influence of Anglo-modernist figureheads by constructing exteriorismo as the paradigmatic example of Pound's epiphanic and enduring influence on Cardenal as a result of his time at Columbia.³⁹ According to this narrative, Cardenal invents exteriorismo with Pound chiefly in mind; his and Urtecho's "Varios No," their 1961 translation of Pound's "A

Retrospect” becomes a “retrospective manifesto” of exteriorismo.⁴⁰ Yet exteriorismo developed in relation to an entire anthology of North American verse and two separate but contiguous Latin American literary movements; as Henighan puts it, “Pound’s influence, although absorbed by Cardenal from the late 1940s onward, did not shape his work in obvious ways for almost a decade” (61). While it is true Urtecho and Cardenal championed the Anglo-modernists—their co-translations of Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams into Spanish appeared in 1979 and 1985, respectively—their anthology selections ranged from Langston Hughes to Denise Levertov. Hemispheric literary figures who assumed readers outside of Latin America would be equally interested in their Spanish translations, the two published frequently in *El Corno Emplumado/The Plumed Horn*, the bilingual quarterly revista founded in 1962 by Serio Mondragón and Margaret Randall which “championed the extrapolitical, transnational power of poets” (Hardesty) and had a worldwide circulation of 3,000 copies. So while Pound is undoubtedly a key figure in understanding Cardenal’s poetry, Cardenal’s and Urtecho’s thinking around the subject of exteriorismo is much more complex and cosmopolitan than a one-way path of influence due to a single Anglo-modernist figure.

An anecdote drawn from Cardenal’s memoirs (reprinted in the 2015 edition of *Poesía norteamericana*) serves as particularly illustrative here. Cardenal relates showing Octavio Paz a few of his poems and, in one of them, Paz suggests he cut the reference to “Colegio Francés” because “la poesía no debía ser demasiado concreta” [poetry should not be that concrete].⁴¹ Cardenal’s subsequent conversation with

Urtecho, as Porrúa has commented, “es la respuesta perfecta desde el denominado exteriorismo” [provides the perfect exteriorista response] (245):

... me dijo que había que decirle a Octavio Paz que hay unas islas del Pacífico donde el principal encanto de la poesía era precisamente el que está llena de cosas concretas, como el caso de un poeta hawaiano que comparaba los ojos de su amada con las chaquiras que se vendían en la tienda tal, del chino tal, en la calle tal. (*Vida Perdida* 388)

... he told me that someone ought to tell Octavio Paz that there are some Pacific islands where the main charm poetry has is precisely to be full of concrete things, such as the case of a Hawaiian poet who compared the eyes of his beloved with the beads that were sold in this or that store, from this or that Chinese vendor, on such and such street.

In drawing a connection between Cardenal’s mention of “Colegio francés” and the “such and such street” of an unnamed poem by an unnamed Hawaiian poet, Urtecho here links the “concrete” impulse behind Cardenal’s work and, implicitly, exteriorismo, to an indigenous Ameridian literary tradition. Exteriorismo provided a retort to poetry’s supposed abstract universality—what leads Paz to assert that “poetry should not be that concrete”—not only through embracing of Anglo-modernist tenets but through autochthonous Ameridian technique and, importantly, diction. For Cardenal and Urtecho, relating to North American literary production was not limited to Pound, or even Anglo-modernism as the dominant critical narratives of Cardenal’s poems published in the U.S. suggest. Crucial to the project of exteriorismo was a turn to American literatures and languages throughout the hemisphere.

Through its emphasis on linguistic concretism, exteriorismo “sitúa una lengua, sitúa la escritura en una nueva relación con la oralidad, con los diccionarios propios

(sobre el sonido de las “canéforas” o los “acantos” darianos, aparecerá un nuevo sonido, el de los “jalacates, jilinjoches, / papayas, mameyes”) y habilita, de algún modo, un clivaje nacional o continental.” [situates a language, it places writing in a new relationship with orality, with its own dictionaries (over the sound of the Darío-esque “kanephoros” or “acanthus,” a new sound appears, that of the “jalacates, jilinjoches, / papayas, mameyes”) and enables, in some way, a national or continental cleavage (in the geological sense of one thing being easily divided from another)] (246). Porrúa illustrates how the European foreignness of the Nicaraguan Darío’s Greco-Roman diction pool is exchanged in Cardenal’s for words autochthonous to Mesoamerica, in both Náhuatl and Taíno.

This cannibalistic operation mirrors exteriorismo’s relation to Pound, from whom the rhetorical strategy of recovering and appropriating the past as a form of cultural and political critique is itself appropriated. Livon-Grosman writes, “Ese gesto es original y recuerda la teoría antropofágica del poeta Oswald de Andrade según la cual Latinoamérica dévora y procesa la cultura extranjera para lograr un producto que siempre es distintivamente latinoamericano. La novedad es que en la mirada de Urtecho y Cardenal los Estados Unidos es extranjero y a la vez parte de las Américas” [The gesture is an original one and recalls the anthropophagic theory of the poet Oswald de Andrade, according to which Latin America devours and processes foreign culture to achieve a product that is always distinctively Latin American. The novelty here is that, in the eyes of Urtecho and Cardenal, the United States is foreign and at the same time part of the Americas] (205). An antropofagic turn towards American

literatures, broadly conceived, meant not only going “in fear of abstractions” and championing “direct treatment of the thing,” but devising a whole new frame for a type of context- and content-dependent writing that privileges juxtaposition while relying upon particularity and situatedness.

Their expansive, indigenizing vision of “North American literature” is exemplified in their 1963 reissue of *Panorama* as the five-hundred-page *Antología de la poesía norteamericana*. It begins with thirty-six Native American poems and songs, translated by Cardenal, and ends with the Beats. In the prologue, Cardenal explains that the translations included were selected to draw out aesthetic affinities between Anglo- and Latin America:

[O]tro criteria por selección en esta antología: y es que hemos querido mostrar en ella principalmente la más genuina y representativa corriente de la poesía norteamericana, los poemas más americanos for así decirlo, y aquellos que a nosotros los americanos de la otra América más nos pueden interesar. Es sobre por eso que trabajamos unos veinte años haciendo las traducciones. Con ellas queríamos contribuir a esa tarea de los dos americanos, “el descubrimiento común de un continente,” como dijo el poeta Archibald MacLeish. (12)

Another criteria for selection: we wanted mainly to show the most genuine and representative currents in North American poetry, the most *American* poems so to speak, and those that we Americans of the other América would be most interested in. This is why we worked for some twenty years preparing the translations. With those, we wanted to contribute to that task which belongs to both groups of Americans, “the common discovery of a continent,” as the poet Archibald MacLeish once said.

Cardenal is referring to *The American Story* (1944), a set of ten scripts for presentations MacLeish gave on the radio which explore the interrelated hemispheric histories of the Americas, beginning with colonization. Employing a documentary

aesthetic of their own, MacLeish's individual pieces take selections from primary historical documents and place them within a conversational script meant for a popular audience: as one reviewer put it, "whole documents are not used; instead cuttings are made for their narrative value" (Cooke 336), though all the sources appear cited in the book's index. In aggregate, MacLeish's radio scripts work to resignify the continent(s) as nations contiguous not only geographically but connected by the common "task" Cardenal references. As MacLeish explains, "The common history of America is the history which leads in any American country from the discovery of a new world of land and rivers and forests to the discovery of a new world of freedom and human hope" (181). If the shared history binding American nations is one of conquest, the shared "task" is to meet the transnational challenge of mutual liberation: "freedom and human hope." Cardenal and Urtecho take up this task in *Antología de la poesía norteamericana*, a contribution of cultural translation the import of which cannot be overstated; today, this anthology continues to reverberate throughout the Spanish-speaking world in various editions reprinted in numerous Latin American nations.⁴²

"The True Panamerican Union": Exteriorismo After the Sandinista Revolution

Cardenal did, at times, emphasize exteriorismo as a distinctly Nicaraguan aesthetic predilection, especially in the years leading up to the Sandinista Revolution.⁴³ In the introduction to *Poesía nicaragüense* (1973), he framed exteriorismo within explicitly nationalist terms: "También en esta antología se ha

procurado hacer resaltar la principal tendencia de la poesía nicaragüense que es la exteriorista. ‘Exteriorismo’ es una palabra creada en Nicaragua para designar el tipo de poesía que nosotros preferimos” [This anthology also highlights the main tendency of Nicaraguan poetry, which is exteriorista. ‘Exteriorismo’ is a word created in Nicaragua to designate the type of poetry we prefer] (9).⁴⁴ But Cardenal’s nationalism, while ardent in support of the FSLN, continually exceeded Nicaragua’s borders. He claimed Cuba as another nation where exteriorista poetry was “liked best,” suggesting that it was a revolutionary spirit—rather than any one nation or ethnicity—that drew one towards the aesthetic.⁴⁵ A capacious style capable of maintaining linguistic and cultural specificity amidst anti-imperial struggle, poesía exteriorista was, for Cardenal, “la única poesía que puede expresar la realidad latinoamericana, y llegar al pueblo, y ser revolucionaria” [the only kind of poetry that can express the Latin American reality, and reach the people, and be revolutionary] (10). Though Cardenal claimed “no es un *ismo* ni una escuela literaria” [it is not an *ism* or literary school] (*Poesía nicaragüense* 9), exteriorismo would often be treated as such, eventually coming to be a pejorative descriptive of his famous poetry workshops. After the Revolution, exteriorismo did function as a literal school of poetry in which “Varios No” was a major guiding precept⁴⁶ for proletarian attendees who were told to imagine a new nation in poetry.

And it is in the wake of the FSLN’s overthrow of Somoza and the Nicaraguan Revolution (1978-79) that Pring-Mill’s term “documentary poetry” finds wider circulation. Pring-Mill distinguishes *Zero Hour* from the earlier *Apocalypse and*

Other Poems (1977) in saying:

... all eight texts of *Zero Hour and Other Documentary Poems* set out to “document” reality (and so redeem it) in a more dialectically visual way: picturing things, peoples, and events in the light of a clear-cut sociopolitical commitment; selecting, shaping, and imposing interpretative patterns on the world, with liberal use of such filmic “editing” techniques as crosscutting, accelerated montage, or flash frames; and pursuing “the redemption of physical reality” by bringing us “back into communication” with its harshness and beauty. Poets and cameras can both affect what they record, but whereas a documentary camera’s presence conditions the “ongoing situation,” Cardenal’s recording of the present or the past is aimed at shaping the future—involving the reader in the poetic process in order to provoke him into full political commitment, thus fostering the translation of the poet’s more prophetic visions into sociopolitical fact. (ix-x)

For Pring-Mill, documentary poetry emphasizes juxtaposition as both technique and political praxis. Through the dialectical arrangement of images, Pring-Mill argues, reality is “redeemed” when the reader is “provoked” into “full political commitment.” This definition hardly differs from Cardenal’s own theorization of exteriorismo during the period, which had noticeably radicalized following the poet’s visits to Cuba in the early 1970s. As we saw in *Poesía nicaragüense*, published in Havana by la Casa de las Américas, exteriorismo arises from a feeling of “an oppression in your heart” and takes as its task “being revolutionary.” Influenced by Che Guevara’s concept of a “New Man,” post-Cuba Cardenal wrote poetry that required a new shape for a future, one in dialogue with the present and the past, but this shape, articulated in “the poet’s more prophetic visions” found its form in Marxism. (Indeed, Borgeson’s study of Cardenal is called *Hacia el nuevo hombre* [Toward the new man].)

Yet Pring-Mill is helpful in pointing to what gets left out of a documentary poem:

They are strictly “factual,” but facts can be double-edged, and their juxtapositions can also seem up further meanings. Cardenal’s reader cannot just sit back and “listen” to the words and rhythm: he has to visualize sequences of disparate images (each one a snatched glimpse of reality), noting their pairings and progressions, matching them both with each other and with what is left unsaid—and thereby sharing in the extraction of their fuller “meaning.” (x)

We noted the importance of the implicit silence of the cacique auditor in “Proclama,” as well as how Cardenal’s process in “Raleigh” amends the source document to shape a portrait of the English nobleman and his journey through the Latin American landscape. As we shall see in the next section, “what is left unsaid” in Cardenal’s selective editing of material drawn from the *San Francisco Chronicle* is even more important to one’s understanding of the poem and the history it indexes. “Con Walker in Nicaragua” (1950) relies upon the same “selecting, shaping, and imposing interpretative patters on the world” as *Hora 0*, albeit without using explicitly filmic language. The difference is that the “clear-cut sociopolitical commitment” in this exteriorista poem is situated within Cardenal’s Conservative milieu, rather than the FSLN, though the poem still imparts a clear stance against U.S.-led imperialism.

“Con Walker En Nicaragua” (1950): The Discourse of Filibusterism

Throughout the early 1950s, Cardenal continued writing history-based exteriorista works, recognizable as documentary poems for their anthropophagic

engagement with primary sources. “Drake en el mar del sur,” for example, is similar to “Raleigh” in that it takes found text a colonial document in order to create a short portrait of an Elizabethan Era explorer (*Apocalypse* 3-4);⁴⁷ like “Raleigh,” the poem’s portrayal of its subject is politically ambiguous. While sympathetically portrayed in Cardenal’s poem as a clever sort of cultured pirate, the real Drake and his privateering interfered so profoundly with Spanish colonial procedures that he earned the nickname “El Draque” and brought a new word in the Spanish language. Following Drake’s 1573 raid on the Spanish colonial hub of Nombre de Dios (modern Panamá) the word *filibustero*, deriving from the Dutch *vrijbuitter*, “privateer, pirate, robber,” was used to describe English attempts at stealing Spanish control. “Filibuster,” from the Spanish, entered English language in the 1850s, the historical period Cardenal would turn to next. “Los filibusteros” and “Con Walker en Nicaragua” mark a transition in Cardenal’s interest, from the colonial period in the 16th century to the period of industrial capitalist expansion of the 19th, as well as a geographical and cultural turn from the explorer-colonizers of Spain and England and the official state documents which underwrote their colonial procedures. In this new period, Cardenal explores the rhetoric of conquest jettisoned by industrial capitalists and territorial expansionists, as well as the print culture which aided, disseminated, and mythologized their colonial projects in the United States.

“Con Walker en Nicaragua” (1950), a documentary poem⁴⁸ using historical and popular accounts related to filibuster William Walker’s short-lived 1855-57 usurpation of power in Nicaragua, brought Cardenal national recognition from the

literary establishment as winner of the 1952 Premio Centenario de Managua. Representing the first unequivocal example of Cardenal's long documentary poem form, "Walker" showcases the themes of nation, sovereignty, and citizenship that would preoccupy the poet throughout the 1960s and 70s and for the remainder of his career. As Alberto Vaca has pointed out, "Walker" is the first long exteriorista poem centered on a foreign intervention of Nicaragua, a topic to which Cardenal repeatedly returns; and, as Henighan has remarked, it represents Cardenal's "first significant achievement in the field of the historical poem" (63). This poem is the first in a series of documentary poems,⁴⁹ including *Hora 0* (1960), *Estrecho dudoso* (1966), *Canto nacional*, "Luces" and *Vueltos a Victoria*, and "Room 5600" of *Canto Cómico*. In place of the European colonial documents utilized in "Proclama" and "Raleigh," Cardenal here subjects 19th century U.S. print culture to the anthropophagic operation of exteriorismo, arranging selections of a filibuster's "eye-witness account" to critique U.S. interventionism in Nicaragua. "Walker" begins Cardenal's decades-long examination of the hemispheric flows, material and cultural, in which the sovereignty of the young nation is constantly questioned by various forms of foreign intervention.

A filibuster who organized and led citizen-mercenaries in invasions south of the U.S. border, Walker attempted several times to annex Central American states: first, in the name of uplifting the poor and, later, with the aim of establishing slave-holding colonies,⁵⁰ particularly in the strategically-located Nicaragua.⁵¹ The architect of multiple failed invasions couched in the rhetoric of liberal democracy and free-

market capitalism, Walker found support among Liberals in Nicaragua and, together, his coalition was able to oust the sitting Conservative president. Walker briefly assumed the position in 1855 and was officially “elected” president the following year in a fixed election. A coalition of Central American armies, funded by Cornelius Vanderbilt whose canal-related interests Walker interfered with, removed the filibusterer from power in 1857. “The episode was nonetheless a watershed in U.S. relations with the world,” writes historian Michel Gobat, “It represented the first time U.S. citizens had seized control of a nation outside the continental United States and sought to create an overseas empire. Walker’s exploits electrified the nation with the expansionist spirit of Manifest Destiny” (2). Despite his loss, and his violation of the Neutrality Act of 1794 which made it illegal for a citizen to wage war against another country at peace with the U.S., Walker returned home as a “visionary conqueror.”

Largely forgotten in the U.S. today, Walker was a household name during the 19th through the early 20th century. His movements were closely tracked by local, regional, and national periodicals including *Harpers*. This was thanks in no small part to Walker’s primary propaganda arm, the bilingual weekly newspaper *El Nicaraguense*, which frequently made it back to the U.S. Its pages argued Walker held the support of local Nicaraguans and other Liberals in part because he was the “grey-eyed man” who according to a “traditional prophecy” would deliver native peoples from oppression (Gobat 57), using more or less the infamous legend invented by Cortés that the Mexica believed he was Quetzalcoatl. The U.S. media parroted such framings, quickly transforming Walker into the infamous “Grey-Eyed Man of

Destiny.” The popular press’s emphasis on “destiny” rhetorically linked Walker with Manifest Destiny and implicitly the colonial procedures of his expansionist nationalist project.

From these dispatches, at least two musicals dramatized his exploits in popular form: *Nicaragua: Or, General Walker’s Victories* (1856) and *The Siege of Granada: or, Walker and His Men* (1857). All of these texts contributed to the mythologization of Walker, whose enormous public popularity shielded him from the consequences of violating national and international neutrality laws: As Gobat points out, “Few U.S. papers shared the view of the *New York Tribune* —and of the international community— that ‘the true and responsible culprits... were the American people, for, without the support and encouragement given to [Walker’s] enterprise by the sentiment and feeling of a large part of the public, it never would have gone on’” (283). Following his dramatic 1860 death by firing squad in Honduras, writings related to Walker’s life, death, and his failed invasions became a new genre. The filibuster’s own pro-slavery memoir, *The War in Nicaragua* (1860), became a best-seller, and constructed the popular account of his invasion as a brave if vainglorious attempt to annex Nicaragua as a slave-holding state. Poems and stories embellishing Walker’s version of history circulated widely in the decades following his death, particularly in a post-1898 era marked by liberal New Imperialist foreign policy.⁵²

Cardenal’s principal source text is one such derivative work, a column in the *San Francisco Chronicle* titled “Filibustering with Walker: Reminiscences of Wilds

Days on the West Coast” by “Clinton Rollins of Baja California” (pseudonym of Henry Clinton Parkhurst), which ran fifteen installments between October 1909 and February 1910. Every Sunday, Parkhurst related a segment of the filibusters’ journey, beginning with their 1855 departure from California and ending with Walker’s execution [see Fig. 3]. These chronicles have gone unstudied by both historians and literary scholars in the United States. Writes Bolaños in 1976:

Ningún historiador norteamericano tomó en cuenta los artículos del Chronicle; nadie se molestó, tampoco, en incluirlos en ningún índice ni catálogo. Si su existencia se conoce hoy, débese únicamente al esfuerzo conjunto de dos cónsules centroamericanos en San Francisco -el costarricense don Guillermo Fígueroa y el nicaragüense don Arturo Ortega. Ambos cónsules siguieron con interés las crónicas de Rollins, y, viendo en ellas un valioso aporte para la historia de sus países, decidieron recopilarlas y colaboraron en traducirlas, para presentarlas después en español. (21)

No North American historian took the articles in the Chronicle into account; nobody bothered, either, to include them in any index or catalog. If their existence is known today, it is due solely to the joint effort of two Central American consuls in San Francisco: the Costa Rican Don Guillermo Fígueroa and the Nicaraguan Don Arturo Ortega. Both consuls followed Rollins’s chronicles with interest, and seeing in them a valuable contribution to the history of their countries, they decided to compile and translate the articles, in order to publish them later in Spanish.

Little has changed in the interim; even Harrison, who wrote an entire book on literary representations of Walker, analyzes Cardenal’s poem without referring to Parkhurst’s original. However, as Bolaños indicates, Parkhurst’s installments had a different afterlife in Spanish translation. They appeared in Managua in 1945,⁵³ and had an enormous effect on subsequent historical accounts in Central America, particularly because the installments reproach Walker for his faults as a military leader and lack of

moral character. Parkhurst's self-framing, as an eyewitness writing his recollections of conquest decades later with a somewhat-critical eye, in many ways parallels Díaz in *Historia verdadera*, MacLeish's source text for *Conquistador*.⁵⁴ In fact, Costa Rican historian Enrique Guier, whose *William Walker* (1971) includes over forty citations of "Rollins," went so far as to call him "el Bernal Díaz del Castillo de la expedición filibustera" [the Bernal Díaz del Castillo of the filibuster expedition] (qtd. in Bolaños 23).

Using Parkhurst's various installments in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Cardenal crafts the voice of his speaker, who opens the poem: "En una cabaña solitaria en la frontera / yo, Clinton Rollins, sin pretensión literaria, / me entrego en escribir mis memorias. ... // Las cosas que hace cincuenta años sucedieron..." [In a lonely cabin along the border / I, Clinton Robbins, attempting no literary style / have given in to writing down my memories. ... // Things that happened fifty years ago] (42 *With Walker*; my translation).⁵⁵ Despite "attempting no literary style," Rollins goes on to introduce himself and his filibuster company as characters catalogued in classic Whitmanian-Nerudian fashion while using an exteriorista style to emphasize the specifics of their origins, their different social classes, how they died, deserted, or survived by choosing to "get married and to live in peace in that land," intermarrying as settlers:

Mis compañeros en aquella expedición con William Walker:
Aquiles Kewen, el aristócrata, que cayó peleando en Rivas;
Chris Lily, el boxeador
degollado borracho una noche junto a una brillante laguna;
[sic] William Stocker (Bill), con su cara de pirata—y buen muchacho—
que se casó allá después y viví junto al lago de Managua

(y yo comí una vez en su casa)... (*With Walker* 44)

My companions on that expedition with William Walker:
Achilles Kewen, the aristocrat, who fell fighting at Rivas;
Chris Lilly, the boxer,
His throat cut while drunk one night beside a shining lagoon'
William Stoker (Bill), with his pirate's face—and a good man—
Who got married there afterwards and lived by Lake Managua
(and I ate once at his house)... (*With Walker* 45; Cohen's translation)

Moving between editions of the *Chronicle*, Cardenal takes certain lines outright, mixes and matches, adds figurative language, much like “Proclama.” “Con Walker en Nicaragua” continues the project of “Proclama” in that it uses only one perspective: the conquerer's, i.e. the filibuster Parkhurst's. As a localized historical (if fictionalized) subject, however, the “documentary” effect is altered when compared to Cardenal's earlier poem: rather than conflating people and events, Cardenal instead emphasizes the historical specificity of both. Still, as a U.S. citizen (“native of New England” with a “Pilgrim father pedigree”) writing from a border space (“the Cocopah mountains, well across the Mexican boundary”) who espoused Confederate views on race while demonstrating affection for “Spanish Americans” as a filibuster, Parkhurst's complicated positionality troubles both U.S. and hemispheric North/South binaries.

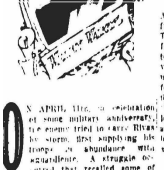
Cardenal frames the filibusters “Como conquistadores modernos,” who “emigraron a Nicaragua con la promesa de recibir tierras, y varios de ellos buscaron tesoros por cuenta propia y a toda costa. El propio narrador diría en su vejez: «Y habíamos venido a una tierra extraña en busca de oro»” [Like modern conquistadors

By CLINTON ROLLINS MEXICO CALIFORNIA

FILIBUSTERING with WALKER

Reminiscences of Wild Days on the Pacific Coast

THE EXECUTION OF WALKER



A man with 100 men sailed from New Orleans and landed near Tampico in Honduras. He set his camp in the mountains. He found his followers were not soldiers like the filibusters of the past. They had been picked up in the mountains in Southern California. They had been picked up in the mountains in Southern California. They had been picked up in the mountains in Southern California.

ON APRIL 10th, in celebration of some military anniversary, the men tried to give Walker a dinner. It was a very poor dinner. It was a very poor dinner. It was a very poor dinner. It was a very poor dinner. It was a very poor dinner.

It became known that an American vessel was in San Juan harbor. The vessel was in San Juan harbor. The vessel was in San Juan harbor. The vessel was in San Juan harbor. The vessel was in San Juan harbor.

NEGOTIATIONS OF FILIBUSTERS. Negotiations of filibusters. Negotiations of filibusters. Negotiations of filibusters. Negotiations of filibusters. Negotiations of filibusters.

BEFORE LEAVING TAMPAICO. Before leaving Tampaico. Before leaving Tampaico. Before leaving Tampaico. Before leaving Tampaico. Before leaving Tampaico.

HIS LAST NIGHT AT THE BARRIO. His last night at the Barrio. His last night at the Barrio. His last night at the Barrio. His last night at the Barrio.



WALKER WAS STOOD UP BY FORCE A PLATOON OF SOLDIERS LIKE A COMMON CRIMINAL, AND, WITHOUT ASKING, WAS SHOT.

in the tower. He was pushed into the building and into the door of a room and told to wait. It was not a prison place. It was not a prison place. It was not a prison place. It was not a prison place. It was not a prison place.

Three officers passed through the guards at the door, came up to him and without a word began searching his pockets and clothing. Pulling out papers, letters, cards, money, and other things. He was searched like a criminal. He was searched like a criminal. He was searched like a criminal.

He was pushed into a hammock and left. He was pushed into a hammock and left. He was pushed into a hammock and left. He was pushed into a hammock and left. He was pushed into a hammock and left.

He had been surrounded in a room. He had been surrounded in a room. He had been surrounded in a room. He had been surrounded in a room. He had been surrounded in a room.

Fig. 3. Parkhurst's final installment. The San Francisco Chronicle.

{who} migrated to Nicaragua, where they were promised land, and many of them looked for treasure on their own and at all costs. The narrator himself would say in his old age: ‘And we’d come to a strange land in search of gold’] (Vaca 56). Yet Cardenal’s association between conquistadors and filibusters is not just a clever figuration, but exemplary of trends in 19th century print culture more generally. The discovery of gold in the U.S. in 1848 revived many centuries-old tropes about questing for the precious metal, particularly in the popular press, where comparisons between 19th century filibusters and 16th century conquistadors were ubiquitous. The young nation of Nicaragua becoming *the* main overland transit point for gold rushers traveling from the eastern U.S. to California “led the U.S. public to see Nicaragua as the new El Dorado” (qtd. in Gobat 13).⁵⁶ Parkhurst, too, participated in this sort of rhetorical framing. Take, for example, this excerpt from his first installment, “The Sonora Expedition”:

Balboa, Cortes, and Pizarro became daily companions. I neglected my studies and lived in a dreamer’s heaven - in the bright El Dorado far away, where wealth was won without effort and men dwell in palaces and pass lives of content. Then the California fever seized me... While the minerals of the Golden State had scarcely been touched, and its greater resources had not been thought of, men were already looking about for new worlds to conquer... I met a recruiting officer for Walker’s Sonora expedition. To call myself a filibuster and go off somewhere, like Coronado, and fight for something or somebody I did not know precisely what, was the one thing desirable... We were to have lands that belonged to other people, and as soon as affairs got “settled” were to have gold galore and be planters down in the balmy and palmy State of Sonora in old Mexico.⁵⁷

Revealing of 19th century preoccupations surrounding work and labor, El Dorado is valued in Parkhurst not as Raleigh’s endless site of gold (California holds little

interest in Parkhurst's imagination), so much as for its status as a utopian place "where wealth was won without effort." The passage, perhaps inflected by Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward: 2000–1887* (1888) and William Morris's anti-Bellamy *News from Nowhere* (1890), is suggestive of the role literature plays in constructing the social imaginaries that govern everyday life. Parkhurst's text connects his consumption of 16th century conquest literature (Balboa, Cortes, and Pizarro) with joining Walker's expedition in pursuit of a 19th century "dreamer's heaven." Yet though literary predilections fuel this desire to become a filibuster, the desire is not even necessarily personal since Parkhurst emphasizes "men already looking for new worlds to conquer" as a kind of contemporary structure of feeling. Parkhurst provides an excellent example of how what Florescano's "new" discourse of conquest, and its protagonist of the conquistador (Balboa, Cortes, and Pizarro) gets recirculated so as to inspire "newer" instantiations of existing colonial procedures within a distinct historical and national context.

While the vanguardistas use the conquistador as a justification of social control and the maintenance of the status quo, in the U.S. context the same symbol serves the production of a dominant ideology then in the process of consolidation: rugged individualism and the subjugation of land under the banner of Manifest Destiny. The American exceptionalism of filibusterism is occluded under Parkhurst's adventurer framing, however, which simultaneously disavows ("to fight for... I do not know precisely what") and acknowledges his part in the settler colonial project ("We were to have lands that belonged to other people... and be planters").

Cardenal's "Walker," however, never gives an explicit reason for Rollins's participation in Walker's company, though the poet's subsequent companion poem "Los Filibusteros" portrays filibusterers as "Reclutados for la necesidad y las ilusiones" [fellows enlisting out of necessity and illusions], manipulated into service by the forces of industrial capitalism: "'La Compañía del Tránsito' / como una barca de Caronte. / Vanderbilt and Morgan sabían adónde veníamos (casi todos murieron) / y les robaron en Nicaragua el dinero a los muertos" [The "Transit Company" would come / like Charon's boat. / Vanderbilt and Morgan knew where we were going / (almost all died) / And down in Nicaragua they stole money from the dead.] (*With Walker 72-73*; Cohen's translation). Before the poet came to this more explicit critique, which deemphasized Walker to underscore the socioeconomic forces at play in filibusterism, however, Cardenal's strategy was to drastically alter the source text of "Walker" in order to make Rollins much more sympathetic than he appears in his own "Filibustering with Walker," at least to a Nicaraguan audience.

Cardenal shapes Parkhurst's source material to give Rollins a narrative arc in which Rollins slowly loses interest in filibustering, having grown enamored with the land and involved with the people of Nicaragua. Cardenal alters Parkhurst's positionality, for example, when Cardenal has Rollins say "we fell in love with the women of that land" while Parkhurst's installment reads, "not a few of our party fell in love with the dark-eyed daughters of the land, who viewed Americans with undisguised admiration" ("Brink of Peril"). "The land" Cardenal's Rollins describes in enthusiastic detail with the same sense of wonder in "Raleigh," in a manner

sexualized and inviting as in “Proclama”:

¡La tierra donde pasaríamos tantas aventuras,
donde tantos de nosotros morirían de peste o peleando!
la selva con un silbido llamando, llamando,
con sus gruesas hojas carnosas, rotas, chorreando agua;
y como un constante quejido...
Y Nadia nos había hecho daño, y traíamos la guerra. (*With Walker* 48)

The land where we would go through so many adventures,
where so many of us would die by fever or fighting!
and the jungle with a whistle, calling, calling
with its thick leaves like flesh, rattan palms, rushing water;
and like a constant moan...
No one had done us any harm, and we brought war. (49; Cohen’s

translation)

However, as the last line suggests, Rollins’s retrospective gaze is imbued with a sense of regret absent in both “Raleigh” and “Proclama.” This intensifies as the realities of war set in:

Y habíamos venido a una tierra extraña en busca de oro
y allí estaba el humo negro por todas partes
y las calles llenas de mercancías y de muertos.
Sólo se oyeron disparos a distancia el resto del día
y los lamentos de los atacados por el cólera (*With Walker* 58)

And we’d come to a foreign land in search of gold
And there black smoke was everywhere
And streets filled with shop goods and corpses.
All that could be heard the rest of the day were shots
And the moans of those hit by cholera, (59; Cohen’s translation)

Cardenal, following Parkhurst, underscores the gruesome life of filibustering, including plague and the burning of bodies after the razing of Granada, while also emphasizing Walker’s separation from and lack of care for the rest of the company: “Arrojábamos los cadavers a los incendios / y el humo acre que despedían nos enrojecía los ojos... Y walker entretanto: / ¡tomando baños de mar en San Juan del

Sur!... Y vuelvo a ver aún ahora en mis pesadillas nocturnas esos días” (*With Walker* 58; 60) [We threw corpses into the fires / and the acrid smoke made our eyes red... And Walker meanwhile: / taking dips in the ocean at San Juan del Sur!” Rollins exclaims, “And I still relive those days in my dark nightmares] (59; 61; Cohen’s translation). As Rollins loses faith in Walker, the poem gradually loses faith in the imperial project. This framing diverges from the source text, in which up until the final installment, Parkhurst continues to refer to “the enemy,” actively engaged in the process of filibustering until he is offered “pleasant employment at San Juan del Sur” (“Execution”). Cardenal’s poem “redeems” Nicaraguan reality, not only through Central America’s eventual military victory, but by portraying a psychological victory over a U.S. imperial mindset whereby Parkhurst gives up the mission and leaves Walker’s company in disgust. Though Parkhurst critiques Walker as a leader, there is no evidence in the *Chronicle* to suggest he does not remain committed to Manifest Destiny or white supremacy.

Race and processes of radicalization are constant preoccupations in Parkhurst’s installments, an aspect that “Con Walker in Nicaragua” downplays. Of the “Spanish Americans” he met in Mexico, for example, Parkhurst writes, “Most of them were not of proud Aryan descent. Some of them had not a trace of our noble blood in their veins, but they were brave, sympathetic, generous” (“Realejo Argonauts”). In describing civil war in Central America, he uses tropes of scientific racism to explain conflict, the intensity of which he attributes to mestizaje: “The hot blood of the tropics the mad fury of Spanish and Indian traits comingled, gave

intensity to the contest” (“Brink of Peril”). In Cardenal’s poem, race is made mention of in only three instances; none are drawn from Parkhurst’s source text. In the first, blackness functions to provide local color: “la risa de las negras lavando la ropa / y canto caribe” [the laughter of the black women washing clothes / and a Caribbean song] (42-43; Cohen’s translation); in the second, Anglicized whiteness is weaponized and animalized through metaphor (“blond face”) and simile (“like a tiger’s”): “Vi por primera vez a Walker en San Francisco: / recuerdo como si lo vireo su rostro rubio como el de un tigre” [I saw Walker for the first time in San Francisco: / I remember him as if I were seeing his blond face like a tiger’s] (46-47; Cohen’s translation); the third envisions Nicaragua annexed as a slave-holding state:

Hornsby había estado en Nicaragua
y hablaba de...
... que se llenaría de...
... las verdes plantaciones con sus grandes casas blancas con terrazas;
y la esposa del plantador instruyendo a los hijos de los negros. (46)

Hornsby had been in Nicaragua
and he spoke of...
... how it would teem with...
... the green plantations with their great white houses with verandas;
and the planter’s wife instructing the children of the blacks. (47;
Cohen)

Cardenal gives us a paternalistic and idealized view of a potential Nicaraguan society organized by a racial hierarchy in which white U.S. plantation owners are in charge and blacks are the passives receptacles of their ideology, the status quo of the U.S. south superimposed onto Central America. It is not necessarily clear, though, that Cardenal is critiquing Hornsby’s vision for Nicaragua.⁵⁸ Many Conservatives

supported U.S. settlement, opposed mainly to Walker's violation of their national sovereignty rather than U.S. presence. What is indisputable is that freed and fugitive black people, who were active in the Liberal project and the struggle against Conservatism, do not appear as political actors in "Walker"; rather, true to vanguardista mestizaje, which rendered black and indigenous people invisible as citizens, "the blacks" in "Walker" appear as non-threatening background characters. Indigenous people do not appear at all. True to Pring-Mill's assertion that what is left out of Cardenal's documentary poems is of the utmost importance, Cardenal's sanitization of Parkhurst's racist discourse is crucial to the construction of Rollins as a sympathetic speaker with a compelling narrative arc.

At the end of the poem, Walker's execution, Cardenal once again diverges from Parkhurst. In his account in the Chronicle, Parkhurst projects himself onto Walker's consciousness during the condemned's final moments, forcing him to have moral reckoning:

A rough coffin lay on the ground. It occurred to him he had provided no coffin for Corral, for Mayorga, for Ugarte, for Mariano Salazar, for the filibusterers he shot at San Vicente Mission, for Dewey at San Juan, for the cattle herder near Rivas, or other persons he had executed. He should have done so. He had no time, though, to think. He was "stood up" before a platoon of raw Indian soldiers like a common offender, and, without ado, was shot, dumped into the coffin and carted off for burial. Exit William Walker of Tennessee. ("Execution")

This moment is particularly notable because while Parkhurst's literary flourish belies a desire for the executed to find some sense of redemption, though ultimately there can be none. Parkhurst focuses on Walker's execution of both filibusterers and

Nicaraguan citizens, while Cardenal's flat, exteriorista "of ninety-one men only twelve made it back" keeps Parkhurst's voice concentrated on his countrymen. Pring-Mill had argued that shaping source material with an eye towards both "redemption" and the future. In "Walker," redemption is found not in the flat and unchanging title character, but in Rollins, the filibuster who abandoned filibustering by choice, before Walker and his men were captured. The redemption is notably of a moral (or in White's terms "ethical") nature, not of a Christian nature, as Cardenal had not yet had his famous conversion. In this sense "Walker" is perhaps Cardenal's most historiographically "objective" documentary poem, because none of his characters are forcibly narrativized according to recognizable Christian tropes as is the case in both *Hora 0* and *El estrecho dudoso*.

Still, as it turns out, many of the Walker-related texts which surfaced after his death did not represent reliable eyewitness accounts, including Parkhurst's. Extensive archival research in Bolaños Geyer's definitive study *El filibustero Clinton Rollins* (1971) demonstrates that both Parkhurst falsely claimed to have been present "with Walker in Nicaragua," plagiarizing Walker's *The War in Nicaragua* to give their writings the illusion of authenticity. Nevertheless, such accounts were frequently taken as historically accurate. Cardenal, Vaca points out, inadvertently used Parkhurst's writings, presuming them to be authentic testimonials written by one of Walker's filibusters, just as Guier and other Central American historians had believed in decades prior. The Parkhurst installments are fictional renditions of Walker's own writings, personalized under the invented figure of "Rollins of Baja California," and

sensationalized to conform to publishing conventions in the early 20th century. However, this fact has gone unremarked upon in English language criticism of the poem, all of which treats Parkhurst's account as authentic. Interestingly enough, the "eyewitness account" in the exemplary exteriorista documentary poem "Con Walker en Nicaragua" turns out to have an anthropophagic relation to both Parkhurst's writings and appropriation of Walker's memoir, i.e. Walker himself. Though we often tend to think of the utilization of primary sources or documents as an appeal to historical 'fact', in this case Cardenal's usage of Parkhurst's installments suggest just how often what passes for fact is, indeed, fiction.

"Walker" as Documentary Poem: Revisionism & Hemispherism

Half a century after Walker's defeat and more than four decades after the end of the Civil War, Parkhurst's installments in the *Chronicle* present an unflattering portrait of the filibuster as a "cruel, crafty, and energetic" man, "unjudicious" with "no military abilities whatsoever" whose "conception of soldierly conduct was indifference to the suffering of others, including his friends" ("Sonora Expedition"). Though the text at times demonstrates a certain regret, the author does not engage in a meaningful critique of Manifest Destiny or U.S. values at the turn of the century. Rather, Parkhurst articulates staunchly racist and pro-slavery views. In an early installment, Parkhurst writes with respect to Walker, "His really strong point was an intense belief in the slave system and an intense desire to advance its welfare" ("Sonora Expedition"). This assessment of Walker's racial politics is largely false.

When Walker's U.S. support became almost entirely reduced to the antebellum south, Walker became fervently pro-slavery in his rhetoric, an about-face in a hitherto pro-democracy, pro-capitalist line; Walker's 1960 memoir, from which Parkhurst bases his installments, was meant to consolidate his support in the south—itsself on the eve of the Civil War—in a way that “not only erases his long-standing opposition to slavery's expansion but also exaggerates the role of slavery in his regime” (Gobat 4). In part because his death followed shortly after the publication of his memoir, where Walker is remembered today in the United States it is primarily for his proslavery position; yet, as Gobat has demonstrated, this political stance was more of a rhetorical position that came about late in Walker's career in a desperate attempt to play to his audience.

Walker's nascent liberal imperialist venture was originally supported by Nicaragua's Liberal Party, who had explicitly invited him to the country; he first arrived in June 1855. This movement initially attracted a surprisingly broad coalition of support, including U.S. suffragists and abolitionists, local Nicaraguans, and Latin American political radicals interested in upending the criollo aristocracy, a legacy of Spanish colonialism. It was due to this diverse group of supporters help that Walker was able to help the Liberal Party of León usurp Nicaragua's ruling Conservative Party of Granada in October 1855. Gobat reminds us:

All ventures except Walker's failed. His was thus the only filibuster expedition to mutate into a movement of settler colonists who sought to make the isthmus their permanent home. In the United States, Walker's conquest was celebrated as a testimony to Anglo-American racial superiority. Yet Walker's men managed to take power only because they had local support. (9)

Archival research shows that “The Walker episode underscores the understanding that Manifest Destiny was driven not solely by the U.S. belief in its innate superiority but also by a utopian impulse” (Gobat 8), one in which many of Walker’s non-U.S. supporters were radicals who had themselves participated in failed revolutions in their home countries, united by “their admiration for U.S. democracy, social reformism, and an inclusive vision of U.S. nationality. In their eyes, Walker’s empire was not to be a race-based policy where they—and Central Americans—would be dominated by U.S. natives but one where all men would have equal rights” (9).

Ultimately, Cardenal’s poem operates differently on distinct national audiences, depending on one’s knowledge of Walker and 19th century filibusterism. Today, in the U.S. the Walker episode is rarely discussed outside of academic circles in large part because it ultimately failed. For U.S. readers, “Con Walker en Nicaragua” will expose them to a largely forgotten history of U.S. imperialist expansion into Latin America during the 19th century, focalized through a sympathetic speaker who has lost faith in both Walker and his imperial project. But in Central America, Walker remains an archetype for U.S. imperialism; as recently as 2007, Costa Ricans denounced their President Oscar Arias as a filibustero for his support of the region’s recent free trade agreement (CAFTA-DR), which, after a narrow referendum vote, was eventually passed. For Nicaraguans, who continue to commemorate the defeat of Walker at the Battle of San Jacinto every year on 14 September, Cardenal’s poem in fact *erases histories of local struggle against the Conservative political establishment*—to which Cardenal and Urtecho’s families

belonged—that Walker’s project originally represented. As Gobat writes:

[F]ew Central Americans remember that some Nicaraguans once embraced Walker’s men as saviors who sought to uplift the local poor by promoting democracy, land reform, public health, education, public works, and so on. For generations, Central Americans have been taught to view Walker’s men as oppressors who brought, to cite the famous poet Rubén Darío, “only the barbarity of blue eyes, cruelty, and the rifle.” Walker’s men clearly wreaked havoc, as exemplified by their razing of Granada, one of the oldest cities in the hemisphere. But to reduce their enterprise to wanton violence would be to ignore the seductive nature of what we now call U.S. liberal imperialism. (3)

Here, Gobat quotes from Darío’s *El viaje a Nicaragua e Intermezzo tropical* from 1909, written the same year Parkhurst publishes his first of fifteen installments.

Reading them in tandem indicates just how early the Walker episode begin to converge in a common narrative that focuses on Walker as an (exceptionally cruel) individual, while the larger political project of liberalism the filibuster once espoused, once supported in the U.S. and Nicaragua, falls away. That Cardenal’s “Walker” continues the Liberal Darío’s project of emphasizing the cruelty of a single man and his destruction of Granada demonstrates how both Liberals and Conservatives were able to find a common enemy in Walker after his expulsion. Both sides helped to create the nationalist narrative to which Gobat refers, obscuring the complex forces in Nicaraguan politics that allowed Walker to come to power in the first place.

Cardenal’s brief mention of Walker “rodeado la de guarda cabana” [surrounded by Cuban bodyguards] (*With Walker* 54-55), is the lone hint of the local coalition Walker assembled. This moment is illustrative, argues Vaca:

La breve mención de una guardia cubana se debe al antiguo y fracasado

proyecto de anexar Cuba a los Estados Unidos. Este poema de 1950 manifiesta la comprensión amplia de Cardenal sobre la historia hispanoamericana, y la situación complicada de aquella época del siglo xix. Por una parte, la nación estadounidense tenía un antiguo interés por adquirir Cuba, y por otra, Cuba buscaba distintas maneras de lograr su independencia de España, incluso algunas mediante la anexión a los Estados Unidos. Cardenal recupera y elabora su propia historicidad y manifiesta el complejo proceso para la descolonización de las naciones americanas paralelo a la expansión territorial estadounidense. (57)

The brief mention of a Cuban guard is due to the old and unsuccessful project to annex Cuba to the United States. This 1950 poem expresses Cardenal's broad understanding of Spanish American history, and the complicated situation of that time in the 19th century. On the one hand, the United States had a long-standing interest in acquiring Cuba; and on the other, Cuba was considering a variety of ways independence from Spain might be achieved, including annexation to the United States. Cardenal recovers and elaborates his own historicity and makes manifest the complex decolonization process in American nations, which ran parallel to territorial expansion on behalf of the United States.

These Cuban guards are in fact the only sign of Walker's transnational, multi-racial Liberal coalition in "Con Walker en Nicaragua." As Vaca indicates, their appearance plays a disproportionately important role in so far as they indicate the breadth of Cardenal's historical knowledge with respect to 19th century hemispheric politics; at the same time, having this demonstration of Cardenal's grasp of the Walker episode is perhaps what makes the poem's historical elisions even more jarring.

That Henighan, one of Cardenal's most careful contemporary readers, understands Walker to be "presented not, as he would be later, as a manifestation of a consistent project of US imperialism, but rather as a natural calamity that befell the city [of Granada]" (64), suggests just how well the historical circumstances of Walker's imperialist enterprise have been occluded. Henighan notes, "The poem is

ostensibly about Nicaragua, and yet it also reflects “Granada’s particularity – the exceptional devoutness of its inhabitants, its grand colonial square and location next to Lake Nicaragua” in such a way as to “take precedence over any assumption of a national identity” (65). While “Walker” indeed “concentrates on a city, rather than a country,” the symbolic importance of Granada as the Conservative stronghold, cannot be overstated. In Cardenal’s lament for the city, he writes of its residents:

Amaban a Granada como a una mujer.
Todavía asoman las lágrimas a sus ojos
cuando recuerdan la pérdida de su querida Granada
la ciudad de los Chamorros... (*With Walker* 62)

They loved Granada like a woman.
Even today tears well up in their eyes
when they remember the loss of their dear Granada
the town of the Chamorros... (63; Cohen’s translation)

Despite acknowledging that Cardenal writes his poem as a “Granada Conservative,” Henighan argues the “two themes [of Walker and Granada] are not integrated into an analysis of the power relationships that connect them, as Cardenal’s verse would do once he fell under stronger nationalist and Marxist influences” (65). Yet one might argue Granada is lamented precisely for being “the town of the Chamorros,” members of the Conservative ruling class. From this vantage, “Walker and Granada” are, in fact, integrated into an analysis of power relations that is profoundly nationalist. But this is vanguardista nationalism, rather than the Sandinista variety.

The Walker episode ended up as a seminal moment in Nicaraguan national identity. Liberals and Conservatives together constructed an enduring narrative of

“Walker” as the yanqui enemy of Nicaragua and Central America. Gobat writes:

Walker’s downfall produced an oligarchic restoration that crushed “the radical promises of democratic liberalism,” which had fueled his rise to power. Profoundly shocked by the filibuster revolution, leaders of Nicaragua’s Conservative and Liberal parties made every effort to settle their differences and circumscribe the power of nonelite groups that had been Walker’s main native supporters. (284)

The wake of the Walker episode ushered in three decades of Conservative rule prior to the Liberal Zelaya government in 1893. It was a time in which elites engaged in a concerted effort of nation-building and consolidation, including the commissioning of a flag, national anthem, an official history textbook, and a system of public education (Herrera 28), and the requisite nationalist discourse had “su germen en la literature y el periodismo” [its origins in literature and journalism] (Herrera 36).

The “oligarchic restoration” or “los treinta años de los conservadores,” was a project with which Cardenal’s family was deeply involved. His great-grandfather on his father’s side, Pedro Cardenal, was foreign minister in the first Conservative government after the defeat of William Walker, while Cardenal’s maternal side included several notable Liberal figures:

Cardenal’s maternal great-grandfather, a German Jew from Poland named Johannes Jakob Teufel, came to Nicaragua in order to travel to the California Gold Rush, was captured in a battle between Liberals and Conservatives, and remained in the country, adopting the name Jacobo Martínez in honour of the man who spared him from the firing squad. After his release, Martínez married into the Somoza family: Bernabé Somoza, a famous nineteenth-century bandit, was Cardenal’s great-great uncle and Anastasio Somoza García’s grandfather. (Henighan 418)

In its mix of Liberals and Conservatives, the Cardenal family provides an example of

the ways in which the ruling class consolidated political difference through criollo marriage. The gold rusher “Jacobo” is elsewhere described as a filibuster, while Bernabé, though described here as a “bandit,” other sources—including Cardenal—consider a “class fighter” and “communist.” Anastasio “Tacho” Somoza is, of course, the most famous Liberal of all. He ruled the country, directly or indirectly, from 1936 until his assassination thirty years later, coming to power with the help of Conservatives and the U.S. Marine Corps. Aware it was a brutal dictatorship, the U.S. supported the Somoza regime, as a non-communist stronghold, famously summed up in the apocryphal statement, attributed to F.D.R. in 1939 “Somoza may be a son of a bitch, but he's our son of a bitch.” The political diversity of the Cardenal family was ample enough to include both Somoza loyalists and detractors, and the poet belonged to the latter group.

Cardenal wrote “Walker” in 1950, the same year, Somoza was elected for the second time and began his third term as president. Somoza, the son of a wealthy coffee planter educated in the U.S., rose to power in the late 1930s with the help of the U.S. Marines, who occupied Nicaragua from 1912-1933 during the so-called Banana Wars. Part of Somoza’s consolidation of authoritarian control in the 1950s involved an agreement made with Conservatives that gave the country the veneer of democracy: “In return for guaranteed minority representation in congress Conservatism accepted Somocista control and was permitted to lead the formal opposition to it, thus sustaining the fiction of a liberal democracy” (Dunkerley 231). In so doing, Somoza was able to achieve some sense of legitimacy through apparent

stability, the direct result of the regime's ability to "mollify, co-opt, or repress dissidents" (Beverley and Zimmerman 64). Opposition intensified, particularly among the dissident Conservative faction to which most of Cardenal's family belonged: in 1950, Cuadra affiliates organized the First Nicaraguan Intellectual Congress, which had the object of "taking cultural powers so as to officially establish national cultural work under their control" (qtd. in Beverley and Zimmerman 64).

When Cardenal returned to Managua and began work on "Walker," it was in the thick of anti-Somocista opposition; the poet would soon be attending clandestine meetings that eventually culminated in the failed assassination attempt of the 1954 April Conspiracy, detailed in *Hora 0*. Strangely enough, although *El estrecho dudoso* has been recognized for the poet's arranging of conquest narratives to make a critique of Somoza, critics have yet to consider that Walker, "el Presidente de Nicaragua," is a veiled allegorical critique of the sitting Nicaraguan President in 1950: like Walker, Somoza was able to capitalize on a chaotic political situation between the Liberals and Conservatives, and with the help of the United States, gain and maintain power; in Somoza's case, for decades. What better time to marshal the story of Walker's defeat, and the bankruptcy of U.S. expansionist values? Or for the Conservative establishment to institutionalize a nationalist narrative by granting the poem the Premio Centenario de Managua?

Yet if "Walker" is a nationalist poem, it is one that also reflects obvious hemispheric concerns. Filibusters, who violated national and international laws, had affected not just Nicaragua, but Mexico, Cuba, Ecuador, Hawaii, Honduras, and

Canada; they disrupted relations with Spain, England, and France. At the same time, filibustering worked to consolidate identities of emerging nations in the region vis a vis the threat filibusterism posed to national sovereignty and imperial control; filibustering, and opposition to it, also encouraged extra-national relations of solidarity. Though many of his supporters understood Walker to have a brand of filibusterism in service of the creation of a “Central American Republic” based on liberal capitalist values, it was an entirely different version of such a “Republic” that came into being as several young nations united with Vanderbilt to ensure Walker’s first defeat: when the coalition of Central American armies first captured and deported Walker in 1857, it was the first time Central America had acted as a regional confederation, a single geopolitical actor.

Culturally, the event had enormous ramifications that extended beyond Central America. As Gobat points out, “because the [Central American] alliance [that ousted Walker] was made in the name of a ‘Latin race’ besieged by ‘Anglo-Saxon America,’ the Walker threat helped consolidate the very idea of Latin America” (285), a project still very much in flux in the 19th century. The reverse is also true, in so far as the policy of Manifest Destiny, which gave rise to Walker in the first place, was instrumental in consolidating national identity in the United States: by the end of the Mexican-American War, seeing U.S.-“Americanness” as the expression of superior Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic character was a widely accepted ideological perspective (Horsman). Nations throughout the hemisphere, in the process of forming their own “imagined communities,” formed civic and radicalized identities by means of a

process involving the negation of the other, particularly as those others were represented in popular print culture: Parkhurst's installments provide a paradigmatic example. In reshaping the discourse of one "imagined community" to suit the immediate political needs of another, Cardenal emphasizes to Nicaragua and Latin America the threat of U.S. expansionism and one history of defeating it.

Walker was captured by the British in early September 1860, during an expedition in which he was preparing to invade Trujillo, Honduras. He appears to have surrendered only under the condition that he was being taken into custody by the British, not the Hondurans. A British Navy officer afterwards, apparently on his own volition, made a deal with the Honduran government: Walker and his chief of staff were given up as prisoners to Honduras in exchange for the release of the rest of Walker's men, most of whom were weak with disease. The final scene of "Walker" details the general's execution by firing squad, a week later on September 12:

Y le hombre dijo:
"El Presidente
el Presidente de Nicaragua es nicaragüense..."
Hubo un toque de tambor
y una descarga.
Todas las balas hicieron blanco.
De noventa y uno solo doce volvieron. (*With Walker* 70)

And the man said:
"The President
the President of Nicaragua is Nicaraguan..."
There was a drum roll
and gunfire.
All the bullets hit the mark.
Out of ninety-one men only twelve made it back. (71; Cohen's
translation)

The material in quotations, presented here as Walker's last words, refer to what has been said about one of the filibuster's numerous rhetorical performances while in custody. Apocryphally, when given an opportunity to claim U.S. citizenship and the protections afforded therein, Walker is said to have refused, instead replying "The President of Nicaragua is a Nicaraguan citizen."⁵⁹ The *New York World* claimed that Walker and his chief of staff would have been able to return safely with the rest of his men "if they claimed to be America citizens" though one historian finds this "doubtful" (Courtemanche 362). Parkhurst contradicts the story, saying instead that "[Walker] had protested when the British told him he would have to be given up to Honduras. He had blustered, threatened, boasted his American citizenship, and insisted on what the United States government would do in the case, but no heed was paid to him" ("Execution").

Whether or not the story is true, Walker's "last words" in Cardenal's poem appear in Spanish rather than English. I have found no historical evidence anywhere, however, that suggests Walker, if he did indeed claim to be president, did so in Spanish. Placed where they are at the poem's end, Walker's "last words" perform a complicated reversal: the filibuster whose original mission was to "democratize" and "Americanize" Nicaraguan state institutions renounces his own citizenship in favor of Nicaragua, despite knowing death is the consequence. Vaca reads the moment idealistically, as evidence of Walker's acceptance of the Nicaraguan nation as his own: "Las últimas palabras que escuchó y pronunció estaban en español. Con sus últimas frases afirma su segunda nacionalidad, su segundo idioma y su posición

pública ante la sociedad nicaragüense.” (60) [His final words, the last ones he heard, were said in Spanish. With his last words Walker affirms his second nationality and his public position before Nicaraguan society.] Yet, in refusing his claim on U.S. citizenship, Walker is not “affirming” a second nationality, but in fact exchanging nationalities in a situation in which the stakes could not have been higher; moreover, his claim to Nicaraguanness (and the presidency) is made not in front of “Nicaraguan society,” but Honduran society and the British Empire, who recognized and protected Honduran sovereignty as part of their own economic interests. As Martelle explains, Walker’s alleged words, if taken seriously, have political ramifications within the Central American region that extend far beyond mere personal affinities:

If his claims of a legitimate presidency are to be taken at face value, rather than committing a “political” act, Walker had waged war on a neighboring country. And if one discounted his claim that he was a president, he had at the least invaded a foreign country with the intent of installing a new government. (487)

One has to consider the possibility, too, that Walker, well aware of his limited support among Liberals upon his return to Honduras and that only very tenuous support in the South remained back home, chose to die rather than face the U.S. public and government once more. This is how Harrison reads Walker: as “an automaton, an affectless killer,” a “vicious machine dedicated to death” (163) whose negation, representative of the imperial project, ultimately leads to self-annihilation” (165). Cardenal’s poem’s final lines refer obliquely to the historical fact that, after Walker’s execution, a group of Nashville citizens requested the body be returned to Tennessee, so he could be given a hero’s funeral; the Honduran government refused. Here

Cardenal reiterates the filibuster's U.S. identity, in a notably regional fashion: "Y allí quedó sin coronas ni epitafio junto al mar / William Walker de Tennessee" [And there, by the sea, with no wreaths or epitaphs remained / William Walker of Tennessee] (*With Walker* 70-71; Cohen's translation).

One can't help but notice that Walker's end lies in stark contrast to Cardenal's own relative, Johannes Jakob Teufel *cum* Jacobo Martínez, the settler who also renounced his home country and his name when in front of the firing squad and who did, indeed fall in love—or at least marry—one of "the dark-eyed daughters of the land." Jacobo's narrative provides an example of how, with the proper patriarchal sacrifices to the local elite, such as giving up one's name and language and the prospect of reproducing one's own culture, one could become "Nicaraguan." Still, "Walker" does leave open the possibility that there are two types of civic belonging: one determined by the place of one's birth, and the second determined by the claim one stakes on other places through the type of life one is determined to lead. Cardenal's appropriation of Walker's apocryphal last words implies there is a distinction to be made between one's *páis* and one's *patria*.

Chapter 2: Dorothy Livesay's "Canadian Genre":
Cultural Nationalism, Postwar Liberalism & the Political Limits of
Documentary Poetry

On the opposite end of the continent, at "Malcolm Lawry's fisherman shack in Dallon, B.C.," Dorothy Livesay began composing a "documentary poem for radio" in the summer of 1948, just one year after the publication of Cardenal's "Proclama del conquistador" (*The Documentaries* 32). Originally broadcast by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in August 1949, *Call My People Home: A Documentary Poem for Radio* is a compilation of research-based dramatic monologues which, in aggregate, constitute an invented ethnography that foreground the perspectives of Nikkei who were labeled "enemy aliens" by the Canadian federal government under the War Measures Act: despite opposition from military officials and the RCMP, who argued Japanese Canadians posed no threat to security, from 1941-1949, 22,000, or over 90% of the population, were interned, the majority of them Canadian citizens by birth. In its juxtaposition of fictional Nikkei voices, *Call My People Home* denounces racist, inhumane, and undemocratic policy in the name of wartime "military necessity," while being equally suggestive of preexisting structural conditions which rendered forcible removal of Japanese citizens not only possible, but the culmination of a decades-long movement to eliminate Asians from the west coast of Canada. Livesay constructs an uneasy picture of race relations among a Japanese fisherman and "white fishermen" who "hungered also, who had mouths to feed," even before Pearl Harbor takes place:

ANNOUNCER

His ancestors had lived near water
Been fishermen under Fujiyama's shadow.
Each season in the new land found him struggling
Against the uncertain harvest of the sea,
The uncertain temper of white fishermen
Who hungered also, who had mouths to feed.
Who pressed the government to give them licenses
Before the yellow faces. So these cut his share
From half to one-eighth of the fishing fleet:
But still he fished, finding the sea his friend. (*Call My People Home 2*)

The subject, a fisherman, serves as metonym for descendants of the first wave of Japanese immigrants who arrived in Canada between 1877-1928 and settled in the fishing villages, mining, sawmill, and pulp mill towns along the Pacific coast.⁶⁰ The fisherman's precarious existence "struggling / Against the uncertain harvest of the sea" is rendered still more so by the "uncertain temper of white fishermen," a line suggestive of long-standing economic anxieties among white Canadians that Japanese and Chinese immigrants were taking their jobs and driving down the cost of labor; Vancouver-based white supremacist, anti-immigrant groups such as the Asiatic Exclusion League and the White Canada Association organized around efforts to force Asians to leave the country. Jettisoning the racialized synecdoche "the yellow faces" ironically to criticize the white supremacist discourse disseminated by such institutions, the poem's charges of racism would be softened in revised iterations of *Call My People Home*, which eliminated the line "Who pressed the government to give them licenses / Before the yellow faces."

The reference made to the discriminatory regulation of economic activity, a result of white anger and perceived disenfranchisement following an influx of

Japanese labor,⁶¹ is simultaneously undercut by Livesay's empathetic description of xenophobic fisherman as those "Who hungered also, who had mouths to feed." Still, this same phrase also dryly indexes the logic of a system governed by a ruling class which divides workers based on racial and national distinctions, pitting them against one another in competition for access to jobs and resources during times of supposed scarcity. The B.C. fishing industry, in which many Japanese immigrants and their descendants were employed, was a primary site in which anti-Asian economic anxiety became codified into law, especially during the interwar years: the cutting of "his share / From half to one-eighth of the fishing fleet" references 1938 legislation in which a redrawing of borders in fishing districts, one of many discriminatory regulatory changes made by the state, disproportionately affected the Japanese and their livelihood. The ANNOUNCER's citation of "half to one-eighth" establishes Livesay's documentary aesthetic by citing, if obliquely, the quantitative material impacts of the policy change.

As Tania Aguila-Way has observed, "Livesay was the first Canadian poet to explicitly define herself as a documentarist, and it was largely thanks to her critical writings on the subject that the Canadian documentary was consolidated as a genre" ("Returning the Gaze" 140). The most influential of these is "The Documentary Poem: A Canadian Genre." Originally given as a conference paper in 1969, the essay constructed documentary poetry as a quintessentially "Canadian" genre that "followed the experimentations originally made by [Scottish filmmaker John] Grierson" (269), with precursors dating back to the settlement of the Canadian

frontier in the 19th century. Her argument, a culturally nationalist contribution to postwar projects related to the consolidation of Canadian Literature as a field, is meant to be a provisional one. Livesay states, “I know my [thesis] can only be substantiated by a very close analysis of literature in this genre, a task beyond the scope of this paper. But I hope, dealing here with a few representative examples, to give enough evidence to at least generate discussion” (269). She undoubtedly achieved this, as the paper became a classic in Canadian Literature (“CanLit”).

Almost twenty years later Livesay was invited to give a companion paper, “The Canadian Documentary Poem: An Overview,” for the Long-liners Conference at York University. Her talk was part of a panel with George Bowering, Travis Lane, and bpNichol. By the early 1980s, the postwar nationalist sentiment of the 1950s and 1960s that marked Livesay’s original paper had faded into little more than a generic comment: “That this genre is particularly Canadian I would not dare say,” Livesay remarks, “But it is a genre particularly suited throughout this vast and varied country” (127). Throughout the conference, Livesay continued to claim Grierson as a forebear, even as other attendees were vocal about the filmmaker’s characteristic cultural nationalism. In a comment suggestive of growing concerns among a younger literati about the baggage associated not only with Grierson but the term “documentary,” Colin Browne stated:

I just wanted to be careful about the term ‘documentary’ because it’s such a slippery word - in a country that has, since its inception, was almost invented for the purpose for what I think was the biggest advertising industry in the world. The word ‘documentary’ became the word that was used to describe the arm of government which advertised government and the aims of

government, became a kind of nationalist arm. So I just want to say we should be careful about using it. We should seek another term. (Davey and Mutton 90)

While Browne's critique of the Griersonian project is predictable, no one engages with his provocative final statement, that "We should seek another term"; instead, a brief lament is made about the fact that the production arm of Grierson's former National Film Board was then in the process of being privatized—and then the discussion time runs out.

By the end of the conference, the latent generational tension erupts in several heated exchanges. Resistant to "the so-called postmodernism," Livesay repeatedly finds herself in a defensive position, particularly vis a vis male junior scholars associated with poststructuralist theory and/or Language poetry. Their main complaint was that she continued to stake out a difference between poets, including the academic poets in the conference room, and "the ordinary man" or "everyday woman" who in aggregate makes up "the people" (223-24). Charles Bernstein remarks "the initial assumption that you make suggests that poets are not people, which I think is a genuine mistake" (225), while Fred Wah jumps in to say, "I don't see poets who are working with language or trying to grapple with what I see as new possibilities in language as retreating from anything. In fact, I see it quite the reverse..." The moment indexes a tension between documentary poetry and Language poetry, discussed in more detail in chapter four, that grew even more acute as time wore on.

The greater tension, however, had to do with a shifting national paradigm with

respect to race: the 1984 Long-liners conference was convened as the 1988 Canadian Multiculturalism Act was in the process of being legally codified. In this legislation, the first of its kind, the federal government committed to promoting and maintaining a diverse, multicultural society by providing “that persons belonging to ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities shall not be denied the right to enjoy their own culture” (Canadian Multiculturalism Act). Canadian poets of color attending the conference, among them Fred Wah, as well as a post-*Billy-the-Kid* Michael Ondaatje and Roy Miki, eventual author of the biting critique of *Call My People Home*, rightly problematized Livesay’s vague, homogenizing and quintessentially Griersonian conception of the citizen-reader. Yet while Livesay’s theorization of documentary is rife with issues, her historiographic approach to poetry has been taken up in anti- and non-nationalist ways by abolitionist and anti-colonial poets of color: Livesay’s namesake prize has been awarded to works of documentary poetry by Wah (2010), Jordan Abel (2014), and Mercedes Eng (2018). Each of these, like Livesay’s before them, is “a poetic investigation of racialized otherness—and the composition of “citizen” and “foreigner” through history and language” (*is a door* book site), suggesting the durability of Livesay’s “Canadian genre,” even as her own instantiations of—and thinking about—it demonstrate severe political limitations. A critical analysis of her contributions to documentary poetry, namely one that accounts for but goes beyond *Call My People Home*, one of her earliest and most troubling documentary poems, is long overdue.

In this chapter, I trace the origins of Livesay’s documentary poetry, famously

theorized in “The Documentary Poem: A Canadian Genre.” My readings of two illustrative examples of her work demonstrate the ways the genre was conceived of in the postwar period in concert with and in response to Griersonian cultural nationalism. Aguila-Way’s recent scholarship on Livesay’s *Call My People Home: A Documentary Poem for Radio*, Livesay’s most well-known documentary poem, argues that “Livesay legitimized her foray into ‘mass’ culture by aligning herself with the Griersonian tradition of documentary cinema” even as her reliance on the Griersonian model “compromised her manifest aim to create a poetics of social protest” on behalf of Japanese Canadian people (“Griersonian ‘Actuality’” 39-40). Showing how Livesay’s intertextual engagement with Grierson took place as part of the greater movement of postwar Canadian nationalism of which the filmmaker formed only a part, if a very influential one, I expand upon Aguila-Way’s reading by contending that, while undoubtedly a liberal critique of the forced relocation and incarceration of Japanese during WWII, *Call My People Home* is also thinking through the category of Canadian citizenship more broadly. I situate Livesay’s documentary poem within a larger ideological cultural project which sought to define “Canadian-ness” at a moment when what it meant to be “Canadian” was very much in flux. Appearing at a time when the legal concept was in the process of being engineered by Mackenzie King’s government, Livesay’s poem typifies an accompanying dominant cultural narrative which sought to construct Canada as a “nation of immigrants” in order to unify a diverse population, including indigenous peoples, under the new category of “Canadian citizen.” I unpack the political

implications of the documentary poem's engagement with liberal statecraft, its greater participation in settler imaginaries for which "becoming Canadian" is inseparable from the imposition of Anglo culture and values upon second generation immigrants.

A second uncollected documentary poem written almost two decades later, Livesay's 1966 "The Hammer and the Shield: A Found Poem," provides a counterexample that reveals how Livesay's engagements with nationalism and the documentary aesthetic shift outside the context of postwar Canada. In what is the first extended reading of "The Hammer and the Shield," published posthumously in the 1998 anthology *Archive of Our Times: Previously Uncollected and Unpublished Poems of Dorothy Livesay*, I argue Livesay's documentary poem utilizes found materials concerning the life of former U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld in an ambivalent memorialization of Hammarskjöld's legacy that centers his disastrous handling of the Congo in order to question the legitimacy of liberal internationalism and the U.N. as the premier institution of global security. Though taking form as a lyric biography of Hammarskjöld, the poem centers the death of Patrice Lumumba, first Prime Minister of the independent Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the potential his political movement represented before it was thwarted by the West. At the same time, however, Livesay's selective appropriation of African sources significantly blunts their original anti-colonial force.

Together, these two examples of distinct documentary poems demonstrate how Livesay's "Canadian genre" utilizes source documents imbricated within distinct discourses of postwar nationalism (Canadian and Zambian) to reconstitute our

understandings of states and the peoples recognized as belonging to them, as well as the processes of racialization which underly both.

Livesay's Political Beginnings & the Varied Origins of the "Documentary Poem"

Livesay grew up in Winnipeg, Manitoba, "a city which is an intensely multiethnic patch in the cultural quilt of the prairie provinces" (Thompson 53), where she lived comfortably with her parents, both journalists, and their domestic servants from Poland, Austria, and Ukraine; Livesay's mother, Florence Randal Livesay, had her own kind of documentary poetic practice whereby she collected and translated their folksongs as *Songs Of Ukania, With Ruthenian Poems* (1916), an amateur ethnography of oral tradition in the Ukrainian diaspora. As she grew older, Livesay frequently clashed with both parents: her Canadian mother, who held beliefs such as "the white race must survive, because it is infinitely superior to any other race" (Livesay's diary, qtd. in Briscoe 54) and her British father, by all accounts even more staunch in his conservatism, who, while abroad as a foreign war correspondent, sent the family to the countryside during the Winnipeg General Strike which he saw as "dangerous" and "warranting evacuation" (Hoerder 136). Livesay tells us that "As a small girl, I identified with the 'servant girls' as FRL [her mother] called them whether they were Galicians or Anglo-Saxon farm girls" (qtd. in Briscoe 53), crediting them as an influence not only for the musicality of her poetry, but the egalitarian thinking for which it would become known.⁶²

While her first two collections of poetry reflected the influence of high

modernism (*Green Pitcher*, 1928; *Signpost*, 1931), her third and fourth, *Day and Night* (1944) and *Poems for People* (1947), reflected her 1932 conversion to communism as agitprop-influenced engagements with Marxist themes related to labor struggle and anti-authoritarianism. These two collections, which directly preceded *Call My People Home*, each received the Governor General's Literary Award for poetry, and their early acclaim garnered Livesay the Royal Society of Canada's Lorne Pierce Medal in 1947 for distinguished contribution to Canadian literature. By this time, having married and begun a family, Livesay grew disenchanted with communism, and had broken ties with the Party by the time she wrote her first draft of *Call My People Home*, the work that two decades later served to exemplify her own theorization of the documentary poem.

In *Right Hand Left Hand: A True Life of the Thirties: Paris, Toronto, Montreal, the West and Vancouver. Love, Politics, the Depression and Feminism* (1977), her memoir *cum* "Popular Front narrative of English Canadian literary culture in the 1930s" (Irvine "Among Masses" 206), Livesay traces the origin of her earliest documentary poems to a conversation with Louis Kon, a Russian emigre and family friend who served as an informal mentor to the young writer. Kon, according to Livesay, challenges her on her decision to attempt to include politics in her writing: "'You have the lyric gift', she recounts him asking her, 'and you are writing propaganda?'" Livesay, who would soon be attending anarchist Emma Goldman's 1934 lectures in Toronto, wonders to herself, "*Could Louis Kan be bourgeois revisionist?*" before responding that she "did not want to write lyric poetry anymore"

and that her “guide was Lenin” (*Right Hand Left Hand* 100-101). Kon scoffs and retorts with the argument that: “*If an artist is given the power to create, he must do so. In that way he will be helping humanity. There are plenty of other able people who can go out on the picket line. Your job is to write*” (*Right Hand Left Hand* 101).

Their debate went on for well over a year, the poet tells us, at which point she went to New Jersey to work as a social worker, where she “discovered apartheid” as well as Cecil Day Lewis and other English poets who were “writing about ‘A Hope for Poetry’ namely, alignment with revolutionary forces for change.” Upon returning to Canada in 1935, Livesay relates that she was able to integrate her conversations with Kan with her experience in Jersey to write “The Outrider” (1935) and “Day and Night” (1936), poems which she would classify retrospectively as “documentary” as Livesay’s conceptualization of the genre evolved over time (100-101).⁶³ However, “Old Trees at Pere La Chase” (*Right Hand* 141), a poem about poverty in Paris described by at least one critic as “social documentary” (Irvine “Among Masses” 199), is indicative of her engagement with a type of documentary poetry as early as 1931-32.

Written at the height of the Kon-Livesay debate, the earlier 1933 “Broadcast from Berlin” is perhaps the closest antecedent to both *Call My People Home* and the documentary aesthetic for which it would become known. Originally published in the Toronto-based communist paper *Masses* (1932-34) the uncollected “Broadcast,” much like *Call My People Home*, figures the poem as “a global radio transmission in which speech is freed from physical restraint in a disembodied medium” and her

audience as “the masses as an audience of ‘millions’”(Irvine “Among Masses” 196), though it would be another sixteen years before Livesay’s “documentary poem for radio” would be read on air: a 15-minute version of *Call My People Home* was broadcast on CBC Vancouver in March 1949, a 30-minute version with CBC Montreal alongside the Montreal Symphony Orchestra in August of that same year; and, in 1954 another 30-minute version was broadcast with CBC Winnipeg. *Call My People Home* first appeared in print in full in Alan Crawley’s September 1949 issue of *Contemporary Verse* (after being rejected by both *Poetry* and *Saturday Night* [Irvine *Editing Modernity* 119]), and the following year the poem was published as chapbook number 143 of the Ryerson Press Chapbook Series edited by Lorne Pierce. Praised in an influential review by Northrup Frye, who named it the “best thing” of the series “by far,” *Call My People Home: A Documentary Poem for Radio* was for a time considered by Livesay to be her best work. In 1968, the piece was reprinted with an explanatory preface of sources in *The Documentaries: Select Longer Poems* (Ryerson), alongside “The Outrider,” “Day and Night,” and three other poems now classified as “documentary.” A revised version also appeared in her 1972 *Collected Poems: The Two Seasons* and her collected, *The Self-Completing Tree* (1986), two self-edited retrospective anthologies.

In the latter, *Call My People Home* appears in a section entitled “Struggle: The Documentaries,” prefaced by a brief contextualizing introduction in which Livesay self-historicizes her engagement with documentary writing through her own self-identification with “a whole movement of poets writing politically-oriented

social criticism” during and after the 1930s (155). Situating her role within this wider phenomenon in both national and temporal terms, in a line taken from the original foreword to the 1968 *The Documentaries* she tells us, “I... was fired with the desire to set down what was happening to my Canadian generation, historically and socially” (155). She continues, retrospectively contextualizing the work as inspired by two contemporary extraliterary genres: the “American documentaries” that were “written for radio and stage” by Archibald MacLeish, who as we saw was also an intertextual interlocutor for Cardenal; and Grierson’s “documentary film experiments” (155). Livesay notes:

I had been quite excited by the American documentaries by Archibald MacLeish, written for radio and stage, and also by the documentary film experiments of John Grierson. Both McLeish [sic] and Grierson returned more and more often to the need for the artist to speak with a public voice. I identified myself with a whole world movement of poets writing politically-oriented social criticism and was fired with the desire to set down what was happening to my Canadian generation, historically and socially... I think, as I have written recently, a poem is an archive for our times (*The Documentaries* 155).

MacLeish and Grierson had each held high-ranking posts related to the war effort and public relations (i.e. the dissemination of Allied propaganda) during WWII:

MacLeish was the assistant director of the Office of War Information, while Grierson was general manager of the Canadian Wartime Information Board. Inspired by their work, Livesay came to believe radio offered a medium more effective in inspiring people to effect political change than poetry.

Call My People Home is her most famous attempt at realizing this vision. The

source material for much of the poem comes from research “needed to corroborate [her] personal impressions of the Japanese-Canadian evacuation,” themselves based on her own direct experience. Her husband served on a committee that organized in 1941 in protest of Ottawa’s authorization to relocate Japanese Canadians, and unsuccessfully legally challenged individual cases of expropriation. Later in the war, when Ottawa allowed high-school age students to return to Vancouver for educational purposes, provided foster homes could be found, Livesay, herself a social worker, took in Amy Tabata, a student at North Vancouver High School who assisted with the household’s childcare; her brother Susumu, an oceanography student at University of British Columbia, took Livesay to Lulu Island in the Fraser Delta where he learned to fish as a child. His account of relocation made a lasting impression on Livesay, who, while drafting the section “A Young Nisei,” realized additional research would be necessary.

By her account, she spent “several afternoons reading back files of the Nisei newspaper” in order to “obtain the material” she needed. The “authenticity” of the poem’s description (“verified” by Livesay’s son who “himself fished halibut up [the BC] coast”) Livesay attributes “to the letters of Japanese fisherman [sic] who wrote to the paper describing their personal uprooting,” though neither the names of the fishermen nor the “Nisei newspaper” (*The New Canadian*) is explicitly cited. Livesay also interviewed W. E. McArthur Sr., also unnamed, the mayor of Greenwood, B.C., a former mining town in the Similkameen Valley and the first to be converted into an internment camp. The poem came together as a series of what she would eventually

refer to as “dramatic monologues” brought together by the “energizing force” of “political criticism” (Davey and Mutton 128). This idiosyncratic research process behind the poem Livesay codified in the poem’s subtitle as “(A Documentary Poem for Radio),” and *Call My People Home* would come to serve as the primary example of what Livesay would theorize at length the following year as a “new genre, neither epic nor narrative, but *documentary*” (267).

Call My People Home (1947) as Response to *Of Japanese Descent* (1945)

Known as the “father” of both British and Canadian documentary film, John Grierson⁶⁴ is famously credited with coining the term “documentary” in a review of *Moana* (1926), directed by U.S. filmmaker Robert J. Flaherty.⁶⁵ As first commissioner of the National Film Board (NFB) (1939) and Canada’s major promulgator of the “docudrama,” Grierson argued the documentary could be employed as democratic form of “social persuasion” to engage ordinary citizens in government. Film, he argued, could teach; and teaching could forge national unity through a common identity. He was at work during a time in which integrating immigrant communities via public information became part of Canadian statecraft at a time when its narrative of cultural pluralism was emerging. In a quotation aptly summarizing the paradox between this Canada’s emergent multiculturalism, and liberalism on the one hand, the individual’s right for his liberty not to be impinged upon, Grierson once stated, “[Y]ou discipline a democracy by creating the collective will from within; not by imposing it from without” (qtd. in *Cinema Canada*).

Grierson believed film had the potential to resolve this contraction. That *Call My People Home* turns Livesay's gaze towards the Japanese in service of a project conceived of as a form of social advocacy, then, is a quintessentially Griersonian move. Livesay's framing of her work as a continuation of Griersonian tradition in documentary filmmaking, as Tania Aguila-Way observes, "as contributions to a preexisting—and culturally-entrenched—Griersonian project of civic education" ("Griersonian 'Actuality'" 43), is indicative of her faith in the democratic value of his work, which the filmmaker himself advocated as "democratic propaganda."⁶⁶

Of particular relevance to *Call My People Home* is the Griersonian "documentary" *Of Japanese Descent: An Interim Report* (1945), one of several propaganda films released by the NFB during WWII.⁶⁷ Grierson, at the height of his power during his final year as director, was also general manager of the Canadian Wartime Information Board at the time. His films had enormous circulation: every week, forty to fifty million people around the world watched Canadian newsreels (*Cinema Canada*, 25). The twenty-two minute film *Of Japanese Descent* circulated near the end of the war, when the government was looking to garner public support for the eventual dispersal of Canadian citizens ("residents of Japanese racial descent") who had been forcibly relocated from the coast of British Columbia (the "Western number one defense zone") to the interior. Internment was fiscally supported by the seizure and eventual selling by the Custodian of Enemy Alien Property of all Japanese-owned property, though the film makes no mention of the homes, farms, fishing boats, businesses, and personal property confiscated by the federal

government from 1943-46,⁶⁸ nor of the fact that the “social assistance” received by the owner or his family while interned was deducted from the proceeds of the sale. Instead, the film opens by reproaching the lives of Japanese Canadians who prior to detention failed to properly adopt “Canadian ways and [live] a healthy life in good surroundings.” British Columbia and its fishing villages in particular, communities subject to generations of policies both economically oppressive and environmentally racist, are singled out for their “unsanitary living conditions” as shots of ramshackle housing imply the moral failings of inhabitants. Much of the remainder of the film focuses on Tashme, an internment camp which serves as a synecdoche for all “relocation centers” along the 100-mile quarantine in the Canadian interior.

The film’s ethnographic paradigm of civilizational “progress” at Tashme, itself a former Depression-era workers’ camp, shows the inhabitants as benefitting from internment, experiencing increased health and productivity and an expedited path to assimilation into Anglo-Canadian ways of life.⁶⁹ As an example of the cultural nationalist approach Grierson designed to promote a distinctly “Canadian image” and culture, both at home and abroad, *Of Japanese Descent* is, as film scholar Chris Gittings has commented, a “Griersonian documentary par excellence” (72).

Deploying, under the guise of documentary realism, classic “yellow peril” tropes of threat invasion and disease, *Of Japanese Descent* rehabilitates internment as “relocation,” a benign and beneficial process for both the Japanese and the Anglo-Canadian state. Framing Japanese Canadians as a “problem” that was “solved only temporary through the war” and whose “ultimate solution” will depend on “the

measure of careful understanding by all Canadians” [i.e. Anglo-Canadians], *Of Japanese Descent*, as Gittings has convincingly argued, “sanitizes the fascist racism practiced by white Canada while continuing to stoke the white nation’s insecurities” (70). Espousing a “unifying white nationalism that is predicated on the manufacturing, persecuting and disenfranchisement of a raced Other,” the film interpellates “Canadian national subjects as white English speakers and disciplines them to see Japanese Canadians as ‘less than’ Canadian” (73).

Livesay’s utilization of the Griersonian model in *Call My People Home* is not uncritical of *Of Japanese Descent*.⁷⁰ In the poem’s middle sections, for example, Livesay’s Nikkei voices testify to the various atrocities committed—naturally deemphasized in *Of Japanese Descent*—throughout the detention process. Perhaps more interesting is how the opening of Livesay’s poem exhibits a clear understanding of the structural violence present in Japanese Canadian communities long before detention, and suggests that it is this precondition of discrimination and disenfranchisement that ultimately makes wartime incarceration possible. Further, a far cry from the suggestion in Grierson’s film that Japanese Canadians were living in squalor due to some innate cultural defect, Livesay emphasizes a desire to create, care for, and maintain a relation to the surrounding environment, a yearning that constantly comes into conflict with a hostile, xenophobic state. The FIRST FISHERMAN’s monologue in *Call My People Home* relates the thirty-year journey of a B.C. fisherman who finds a sense of belonging through his most meaningful possession, his boat; that is, before he is dispossessed of it following Pearl Harbor.

FIRST FISHERMAN:

Home was my boat: T.K. 2930-- (*Self-Completing Tree* 170)

...

Now after thirty years a free man, naturalized,

A man who owned his boat!

... I was my own master--

Must prove it now, today!...

She churned off up the river --my own boat, my home.

That was before Pearl Harbor...

...

Must have been dozing when I work up sharp--

What was he saying? Some kind of government order?

'All fishing craft on the high seas must head at once

To the nearest port, report to authorities.'

...

'Our boats were to be examined, searched

For hidden guns, for maps, for treachery... ' (*Self-Completing Tree*

171)

...

Stood lonely on the wharf, holding the *Tee Kay's* line

For the last time, watching the naval men

Make a note of her number, take my name.

That was the end of my thirty years at the fishing

And the end of my boat, my home. (*Self-Completing Tree* 173)

Livesay emphasizes here that the Japanese fisherman is already a Canadian by law.

The reader learns the fisherman's length of residence in Canada ("thirty years"), his citizenship status ("naturalized"), as well as information about his economic status (boat owner). Presumably, after years of fishing for canneries which leased boats to laborers who could not afford to buy them outright, the speaker had succeeded in purchasing and owning the *Tee Kay*, a possession he equates with "home" as well as self-autonomy and an almost-Emersonian form of determination ("I was my own

master.”).

If Livesay has suggested the existence of a “problem” at this point in the poem, the source is not the “Japanese” as in Grierson, but rather the Canadian state, which has allowed itself to be corrupted by white-supremacist lobbying, as we saw at the poem’s opening, and is here represented by the “naval men” unjustly confiscating property from citizens. The FISHERMAN’s status of naturalized Canadian citizen makes no difference: the order (“All fishing craft on the high seas...”) brings the *Tee Kay* ashore in Steveston, where it indexes a total of 1,137 vessels that were seized by the Canadian government after Pearl Harbor. This is the last we hear of this character in the poem, deprived not only of his source of income but of his sense of liberty, as conflated in the image of the boat is his status as citizen (“... after thirty years, a free man, naturalized, / A man who owned his boat!”). In bearing witness to specifics of the unlawful treatment of Japanese Canadian citizens at the hands of the state, Livesay “redresses the ethnographic orientation of her original model [Grierson] by reinscribing the Japanese Canadians as ‘historifiable’ subjects in their own right” (Aguila-Way “Griersonian ‘Actuality’” 46).

As Livesay’s documentary poem moves on from the first FISHERMAN to other characters, however, it continues to track—and, like Grierson, conflate—the internment process and processes of assimilation. As focus shifts to households including both Issei and Nisei, notions of civic belonging and estrangement that the FISHERMAN articulates concretely, through the ownership of the *Tee Kay* and its loss by government-seizure, become figured in increasingly troubling terms. This is

especially the case as the poem's emphasis turns toward the second generation:
"These, their children, the Niseis, were born / Into the new world, called British
Columbia home, / Spoke of her as mother and beheld / Their future in her pungent
evergreen" (173-4). Here, Livesay's troping of B.C. as "the new world," and—
according to a long cartographic tradition of figuring feminizing unknown and as-yet
unconquered land—"her," figures Nisei into recognizable narrative structures
surrounding the birth of Canada as a white settler state: as the children of colonial
settlers; on the contrary, fleeing government-induced economic devastation in his
home country, the fisherman would have entered Canada in 1910-11, just five years
after riots incited by the Asian Exclusion League in Vancouver harnessed anti-Asian
sentiment to push for legislation limiting passports given to male Japanese
immigrants.

Whereas the Issei fisherman is described in relation to his ancestors and the
Japanese landscape which constitute his past, this spatio-temporal relation is reversed
in forward-looking Nisei who speak of B.C. "as mother": kin-based relations between
the Issei mother and Nisei child are transferred from the Nikkei family to the state,
representing "their future in her pungent evergreen." Tensions between Issei and
Nisei are further compounded as the poem continues:

THE WIFE:

Had it all to be done again, worked at again
By our gnarled hands, in a harsh new land
Where summer passes like a quick hot breath
And winter holds you chained for half the year?

You took my hands, and said: 'It's the children's country.
Let them choose.' They chafed for independence
Scenting the air of freedom in far fields.
Therefore we had no choice, but one straight way:
The eastward journey into emptiness,
A prairie place called home.

THE HUSBAND:

It was harder than hate. Home was a blueprint only.
We lived in a hen coop perched on a farmer's field
Soaked by the sudden storms, the early rains of April.
Yet there was time for ploughing, time to sow
Beet seed upon the strange black soil in rows
Of half an acre; we saw in neighboring fields
Bleak tableland, the stabbing green
Of the young wheat; and heard the sweet
Heart-snaring song of meadowlarks... (*Self-Completing Tree* 170)

The “choice” refers to the government’s “solution” to the “problem” of Japanese Canadians; that is, their ongoing status in the Anglo-Canadian imagination as non-normative (and enemy “alien”) citizen-subjects: following the temporary detention centers was either forced deportation to Japan (described in *Of Japanese Descent* as “repatriation”) or forced relocation to the “prairie place” of the interior, at carceral sites where their labor would fill war-time shortages. Family separation was common, with men sent to labor camps and women to internment camps.

These WIFE and HUSBAND represent one of the families of farmers that, in order to stay together, agreed to work in Alberta and Manitoba on sugar beet fields. An essential commodity during the war—yielding industrial alcohol, munitions, and synthetic rubber—sugar beet farming is notoriously brutal. The husband’s invented testimony reflects, in part, the dehumanizing conditions under which many labored,

but in a move recalling Grierson's portrayal of the internment camp Tashme as a pleasant micro society, Livesay's poem goes on to present sowing beet seed as a pastime rather than subsistence wage labor ("there was time for ploughing, time to sow / Beet seed"). In short, the "eastward journey" of this family, from B.C. into the interior state of Manitoba, problematically frames relocation as "a character-building struggle against the landscape" according to specifically colonial terms in which "the wife and her family are cast as pioneers who embark on a trying, but ultimately rewarding, quest to tame and cultivate a new frontier land" (Aguila-Way "Griersonian 'Actuality'" 50-51).

Much in the same way Livesay attempts to write documentary poetry into the Canadian canon, then, Japanese Canadians in *Call My People Home* are written into a narrative about "Canadian character" founded in the Anglo-European project of settler colonialism. As a result, *Call My People Home* comes uncomfortably close to the Griersonian account in *Of Japanese Descent* that figures the internment process as a net benefit to Japanese Canadians given the opportunity to become Anglicized during their time as wards of the state; Livesay merely suggests that the process of assimilation takes place via a different mechanism: it is through a relationship to the landscape of the Canadian interior (developed as a result of forced displacement) rather than incarceration itself that Japanese Canadians ground their aspirations of feeling at "home" within the Commonwealth. Grierson's film attempts to convince his audience that this newfound "assimilation" is proximate to whiteness in so far as internment has resulted in Japanese Canadian widespread acceptance of Anglo values

and legislation, and for this reason Anglo-Canadians ought not to resist the reintegration of Japanese Canadians into their home communities. Livesay's text puts forth a similar political logic, if with notably more compassion for the injustices endured by Japanese Canadians at the hands of the state and its Anglo citizens. As Aguila-Way's reading of Livesay's text convincingly shows, this "reliance on the Griersonian model... compromised her manifest aim to create a poetics of social protest" in *Call My People Home* thereby "diffusing the political implications of the relocation by embedding it within a teleology that bolster's Canada's tradition of tolerance and diversity" ("Griersonian 'Actuality'" 51). If Druick has aptly summed up Grierson's career as "the ambivalent project of selling Canada to itself" (76), such a description resonates strongly with the postwar nationalism at also work in *Call My People Home*, and the emerging narratives of liberal multiculturalism which animate its figuration of citizenship: not conceived of according to the values of cultural pluralism, but reliant on assimilation within the dominant culture.

Post-War Nationalism & the Limits of Liberalism in *Call My People Home*

Livesay's attempts at poetic historiography in *Call My People Home* do her subjects considerable epistemological violence, as scholars of Canadian Literature have observed.⁷¹ While in *Of Japanese Descent* "... white Canada's undemocratic human rights crime against its citizens of Japanese racial origin is re-visioned as a benevolent intercession providing salvation for the Japanese" (Gittings 71) and "internment [is represented] as a space where citizens of Japanese racial origin are

transformed into loyal Canadian through assimilation” (Gittings 73), in *Call My People Home*, though interment is denounced, the progressive temporality of the “character-building opportunity” afforded by internment is written in such a way as to resonate “with a pioneer ethos in which the empty landscape figures as a terrain for individual endeavor and conquest” (“Griersonian ‘Actuality’” 50). While Aguila-Way generously reads this move as Livesay’s attempt to generate sympathy among her target audience by translating Nikkei hardship into a narrative recognizable to Anglo-Canadians, Roy Miki outlines the more sinister implications of the poet’s approach, describing the speaker of *Call My People Home* as “the voice of hegemony that demarks, tames, and finally inscribes Japanese Canadian subjectivity, not in terms of a betrayal of democratic process—a violence woven into the fabric of white liberalism—but as a stain that can be rubbed clean through the (ultimate) absorption by ‘white’ totality” (102). Stripping the Japanese Canadians of all particularity and cultural and historic specificity before ultimately subsuming them under the Anglo-Canadian project of statecraft (liberalism, white supremacy), the work, in Miki’s eyes “... becomes itself another kind of internment, a site of containment by which the white majority re-identified ‘Japanese Canadians’ within a mainly anglocentric political space” (103). Agreeing with Miki’s assessment, I’d also like to suggest that, while appearing to center on the incarceration of Japanese Canadians during WWII, Livesay’s poem more broadly—and perhaps, more nefariously—reveals that “absorption by white’ totality” as the central demand of nation-building in the West.

From such a vantage, *Call My People Home: A Documentary Poem For*

Radio, while undoubtably centering on Japanese detention and internment, also needs to be understood—like “The Documentary Poem: A Canadian Genre”—as part of a longer history of Canadian nationalism during the postwar era. In the aftermath of WWII, liberal and conservative politicians began to engage in the construction of the nation in such a way as to mitigate long-standing tensions between English and French Canada, as well as to include for the first time in its narrative the Canadian North, various immigrant populations, and aboriginal and First Nations peoples. During the postwar period, Canada’s “imagined community” was, in short, being reimagined as part of a top-down process engineered by Mackenzie King’s government, in which Canada transitioned from a colony to an autonomous nation within the British Commonwealth. Central to all of this was the creation of “Canadian citizenship” as a legal concept, though the new status still relegated Canadians to being British subjects. Canada’s new-found “independence” did not translate into a rejection of British political heritage or its associated ideals of liberalism, democracy, and freedom: indeed, these were the common values “with which a diverse population could be made to identify and support,” according to Paul Martin Sr., the architect of the bill (qtd. in Bohaker and Iacovetta, 432). The Canadian elite continued to imagine “Canada” according to the pro-capitalist white settler values upon which the nation was founded, though when citizenship came into being in 1946—just two years prior to Livesay’s first drafts of *Call My People Home*—the rhetoric by which it did so began to take on aspects of liberal multiculturalism. In so doing, it anticipated shifts in official policy in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly under

Pierre Elliot Trudeau (in office 1968-1979) that were affirmed in the 1988 Canadian Multiculturalism Act. Liberal multiculturalism continues to form the basis of Canada's contemporary national narrative as a progressive, diverse, and pluralistic state and, in turn, represents a distinguishing feature of its image of its citizens today.⁷²

Nativist white people had to be convinced that non-white "others" could be assimilated into the fabric of what they perceived as "their" nation. *Of Japanese Descent* was a state-sponsored propaganda film seeking to convince an Anglo-Canadian audience that the internment process had allowed for Japanese immigrants, and their children, to properly assimilate Anglo-Canadian values and culture. Government officials knew that if the legal category of citizenship they invented was going to function, it would have to be accompanied by the cultural project of "Canadianization." It was precisely this propaganda effort Grierson spearheaded at the NFB,⁷³ and which Livesay sought to emulate in her early documentary poems. Just as *Of Japanese Descent* is one of many films Grierson made in an effort to project an image of what it meant to be "Canadian" at home and abroad, the political logic Livesay puts forth in *Call My People Home*, while revolving around the internment of Japanese-Canadians during WWII, is by no means limited to the series of events the poem seeks to represent. Rather, at its heart is the role migration plays in contemporary nation-building.

The inclusion of a Ukrainian neighbor in the latter half of *Call My People Home*, an aspect rarely—if ever—remarked upon in criticism of the poem, indexes

this larger project of “Canadianization” as it pertains to a demographic distinct from the Japanese community. The neighbor, a farmer, appears only once, when the unnamed Issei WIFE relates the hardships of life following relocation to Manitoba:

THE WIFE:

I think we had nearly given up, and wept
And gone for government help, another home—
Until, one evening lull, work done,
You leaned upon the poplar gate to watch
A lime green sky rim the mauve twilight
While in the pasture fireflies danced
Like lanterns of Japan on prairie air.

Leaning the other way spoke our new friend
The neighbor from the Ukraine;
Touching your arm, using words more broken
Than yours, like scraps of bread leftover.

‘See how tomorrow is fine. You work
Hard, same as me. We make good harvest time.’
He came from a loved land, too, the mild
Plains of the Dneiper where, in early spring
(He said) the violets hid their sweetness. ‘This land
Is strange and new. But clean and big
And gentle with the wheat. For children, too.
Good growing.’
He lifted up his hands, his praise; we heard
Over the quickening fields a fresh wind blowing. (*Self-Completing*

Tree 180)

In strictly formal terms, the Ukrainian functions as a plot device for the Issei couple that brings about a turning point in their psychic relation to the difficult landscape of the Canadian interior, the “home” in Manitoba the state thrust upon them. Indeed, this is the last we hear of the couple, though their exit from the poem, heralded by “a fresh wind blowing,” is significantly more optimistic than the FISHERMAN who is dispossessed of the *Tee Kay* and never appears again. Instead, the couple’s

geographic location within prairie farmlands, a direct result of the relocation process, ultimately leads to a moment of inter-immigrant solidarity between two disparate populations. To anyone without an extensive knowledge of Canadian history, the mention of “the neighbor from the Ukraine” and his specific origins in “the mild / Plains of the Dneiper” appear to be details included for documentary effect. However, the inclusion of this figure’s national and geographic affiliations also refer to another history of migration and discrimination, the specifics of which are essential to understanding how Livesay’s poem conceives of the nation of Canada—and the role of Japanese-Canadians within it.

Though there are marked differences between the two populations and their histories of naturalization, namely Ukrainian proximity to Europe and therefore whiteness, Ukrainian Canadian migration set many of the preconditions related to the type of structural violence perpetuated a generation later against Japanese Canadians, including wartime internment. As was the case with Japanese migrants, the first wave of Ukrainian arrivants landed in Canada in the late 19th century. The majority were members of the working class, fleeing economic devastation in their home countries, though Ukrainians were farmers rather than fisherman, as was the case with the Japanese. A major difference between the two communities, however, is that Ukrainians were recruited by the Canadian government to fill “the huge expanses of an underpopulated country” (“Ukrainian Immigration and Settlement Patterns in Canada”).⁷⁴

Aware of the difficult nature of the Canadian interior and how far afield it was

from farming in Britain, Canada's 19th century recruitment strategy focused on enticing Germans, Scandinavians, Ukrainians, Poles, and Russians while deterring Asians, Jews, Arabs, Italians, Greeks, Africans, and African Americans. The task of turning the prairies into arable land, as officials saw it, would be one of enduring constant hardship, and so his vision of the ideal

Canadian immigrant was a "stalwart peasant in a sheepskin coat, born to the soil, whose forefathers have been farmers for ten generations, with a stout wife and a half-dozen children," implicitly white (16). On the basis of this ethnoracial understanding of identity, one Clifford Sifton blanketed parts of Europe, including the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with propaganda touting Canada's offer of 160 acres of land to any male agricultural immigrant who agreed to cultivate at least forty acres, build a permanent dwelling within three years, and pay a fee of \$10. However, recognizing that posters alone would not be enough to divert farmers from boarding competitor ships bound for Argentina, Australia, Southern Africa, and the United States, in 1899 Sifton set up a shadow corporation, the North Atlantic Trading Company, a network of recruiting agents which bribed European port workers to direct farm emigrants toward Canadian ships. Sifton's entrepreneurial efforts were responsible for what is today known as the nation's "heyday of western settlement." Between 1886 and WWI, more than two million settlers flocked to Canada, 96% of them of European descent; the prairie population more than doubled. In aggregate, the state granted 478,000 square kilometres (118,000,000 acres) of indigenous lands

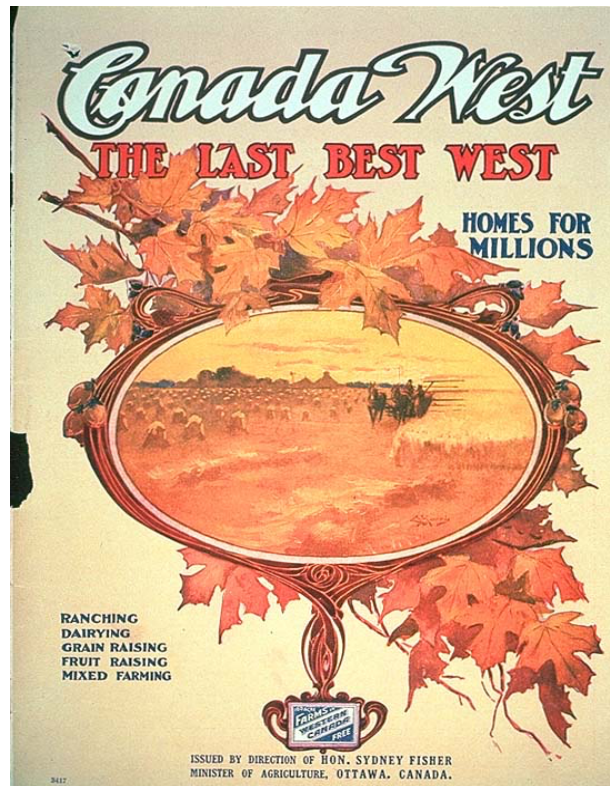


Fig. 4. *Canada West* promotional travel magazine. Published by the Canadian government to market the Canadian prairies to English-speaking immigrants abroad, primarily in the U.S. and Britain. Distributed circa 1909-10. *Canada West* ran from 1904-1930. Issues were translated into French, Swedish, German, Dutch, and Hungarian, for distribution to these communities in the industrial towns of Biddeford, Detroit, Toledo, Chicago, Boston, Watertown, Minneapolis, and Indianapolis.



Fig. 5. "160 acres of free land in Canada." Advertising card distributed by the North Atlantic Trading Company, Sifton's shadow corporation. Distributed circa 1900-1905. The backside includes a map of potential sea routes to Canada from Europe. Library and Archives Canada C-088625. Held in GARDD, RG 76 Immigration Branch Records, Vole 225, file no. 113228, part 9.

whose communities were never compensated.

Ukrainian migration history allows us to see how, following Canadian Confederation, the young Canada attempted to engineer a nation of white and white-adjacent farmers, an endeavor that backfired in large part due to British xenophobia. In contrast to other European peoples who entered Canada at this time, over half of them from the British Isles, Ukrainians, a majority of whom who were Greek Catholics, did not readily assimilate within Protestant culture. Their enduring presence provoked among Anglo-Canadians a public backlash unanticipated by the government which had recruited them in the first place. Much like we saw in *Of Japanese Descent*, diasporic communities that maintained Ukrainian culture and ways of life in lieu of assimilating were referred to as a “problem,” and Ukrainians—like the Japanese—soon became subject to restrictive, though not identical, legislation passed in response to Anglo-Canadian jingoism in the early 20th century.⁷⁵ Sifton’s replacement as Minister of the Interior, the ethno-nationalistic Frank Oliver, who successfully lobbied to have the Papaschase Cree removed from their territory and wrote a government order to keep Blacks fleeing the Jim Crow South out of Canada, staunchly opposed Slavic immigration. During his term, from 1905-1911, Oliver instituted an immigration policy he proudly described as more “restrictive, exclusive and selective” than that of his predecessors. With the passage of the 1910 Immigration Act, which excluded immigrants from Japan and all Asian nations, all other nations were divided into either “preferred” or “non-preferred” status, and Ukrainians fell into the latter category.

In an episode largely forgotten in Canadian history and for which the government has still not apologized—but which would have been fresh in the memory of Livesay and her generation—Ukrainians were declared enemy-aliens and subjected to the detention process during WWI, albeit on a much smaller scale than the Japanese during WWII (~5% of the total Ukrainian population, compared to 90% of Japanese): from 1914-1920, over eight thousand Ukrainian men were interned in twenty four detention camps, where their forced labor helped to continue to develop the interior. In 1925, when the demand for labor to construct Canadian rail rose, the federal government made a deal with railroad companies that shifted Ukraine’s official immigration status from “undesirable” to “desirable,” beginning a shift in their public image in the eyes of the state and Anglo-Canadians. During WWII, Ukrainians were allowed to enlist in the Canadian army for the first time, while the Japanese were declared enemy-aliens subjected to internment. Active participation in the war effort did much to “rehabilitate” the image of Ukrainians in the eyes of the white Canadian public, as did the larger cultural project emphasizing the importance of integrating via “Canadianization” non-Anglo populations into the nation. Ukrainian numbers continued to increase in subsequent decades, both among the second, third, and fourth generations, as well as through third, fourth, and fifth waves of Ukrainian immigration. So, too, did Ukrainian proximity to whiteness.⁷⁶

At the time of Livesay’s writing *Call My People Home*, Manitoba, the likely location of the Issei couple (and Sifton’s and Livesay’s home province), contained the nation’s largest Ukrainian diasporic community, with nearly 30% of all Ukrainian-

Canadians (306,000 in 1941) living there. However, the poem's inclusion of the Ukrainian Canadian farmer does not only register the particular migration history of Ukrainians to the Canadian interior outlined above. This device, used to bring about a turning point in the poem in which the Japanese characters are provided with a heartening example of a foreigner who's successfully made a home (and, presumably, a family) in the Canadian interior, also needs to be understood for the ways it implicitly links Ukrainians and Japanese through their mutual experience of detention and wartime internment as "enemy aliens." Through the character of the first-generation farmer, Livesay indexes an analogous example of discrimination, carceral geography, and assimilation preceding that of the Japanese Canadian experience—and ushers the Issei into the same progressive temporality of assimilation: "This land / Is strange and new.' / But clean and big / And gentle with the wheat. For children, too. / Good growing.'" It should go without saying that the correlation implied in such a "dialectic" is a problematic one.

Though Ukrainian-Canadians and Japanese Canadians indeed share a history of being "problem" populations and being subject to wartime discrimination as a result, the scales of interment are almost negligible (~5% compared to 90%). Moreover, Ukrainians did not undergo the same sort of ascriptive racialization the Japanese did; though they weren't always considered "desirable" immigrants, Ukrainians, being Europeans, had a flexible if unpredictable positionality to whiteness and could become acceptable "alternatives" to Anglos when state-supported capital projects, whether agricultural or industrial, demanded labor. In contrast, xenophobic

federal policy exemplified in the Immigration Act of 1910, which banned Asian immigration, kept the Japanese out of Canada for more than fifty years; Japanese would not be able to legally enter the country again until 1967, at which point Livesay would be returning to *Call My People Home* as she began to conceive of “The Documentary Poem: A Canadian Genre” (1969).

Demographics in the period following Confederation were profoundly shaped by labor demands and the racialized policy designed to fill them. With the passage of the 1946 Canadian Citizenship Act, which distinguished the “Canadian citizen” as a status separate from that of “British subject,” Mackenzie King’s administration fabricated from a variety of diverse ethnic groups a vision of multicultural democracy in which difference could be subsumed under the narrative of Canada as “nation of immigrants.” Approaching *Call My People Home* from this wider vantage of migration history in Canada allows us better understand as crucial the moment in which the Ukrainian farmer functions as the *deus ex machina* by which the Issei couple are relieved of their desire for “another home” represents a continuation of settler colonial ideology inseparable from Duncan Campbell Scott’s vision “to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question” (qtd. in Miller 223). As Miki puts it, how a “stain that can be rubbed clean through the (ultimate) absorption by ‘white’ totality.” But the moment in the Manitoba field refers to much more than Japanese assimilation into the body politic. It is indicative of the processes by which, according to the promise of liberal Protestant ideology, anyone can come to be a part of the

“strange and new” despite being “strange and new”: working the land and raising a second generation whose values can be molded through state institutions, including the education system.

Becoming Canadian: Assimilationism & the Right to Pluralism

The Ukrainian’s last words describe the Canadian interior as “... For children, too. / Good growing’.” The voice, the only written in such heavily broken English (“like scraps of bread leftover”), is indicative of the way this character, and *Call My People Home* more broadly, envision the second generation in relation to the land and, by extension, the nation. The Ukrainian, himself a first-generation immigrant, seeks to impart upon the Issei couple that the place where they have been interned is as good for childrearing as it is for wheat. The Canadian state, of course, would have agreed, and gone farther: within this “nation of immigrants,” children of immigrants were preferable the first generation “problem” because they were better able to assimilate to Anglo-Canadian ways of life. As the Ukrainian Canadian Congress puts it:

... all [those in power] agreed that, if East Europeans were to be allowed into Canada, they must be assimilated with the British majority. While the adult immigrants were considered irredeemable, the younger generation was targeted for assimilation through such channels as the Y.M.C.A., Frontier College and the Protestant churches, all of which assumed that Canadian meant British and Protestant. Most important of all, however, was the public school system; its function was assumed to be the training of “good Canadians.” (“Ukrainian Immigration”)

Unlike their immigrant parents, the Canadian-born generation was disciplined from a

young age by state- and Anglo-controlled institutions which imparted liberal values onto this group of “good” (as compared to “irredeemable”) citizen-consumers. A not-unrelated dynamic is also at work in Livesay’s Japanese characters, in so far as *Call My People Home* contrasts competing visions of national belonging among Japanese generations, presenting the second (Nisei) generation as the future and the first (Issei) as that which can only return to Japan or yield to Nisei aspirations of integrating within “the British majority.”

Livesay’s liberal investment in assimilation can be clearly tracked via the shifting signification of the word “home” and the ways in which the motif, introduced by the fisherman and the *Tee Kay*, becomes increasingly evacuated as the poem unfolds. The original claim to self-autonomy on the basis of life-sustaining property (and, by extension, the assumed security that such property will not be unlawfully seized and sold by the federal government) made by the adult Issei FISHERMAN at the beginning is one ultimately discarded, as is the storyline of the character who disappears into his final line: “That was the end of my thirty years at the fishing / And the end of my boat, my home” (173). For the uprooted and once-incarcerated Issei couple, “home” no longer denotes either possession (they live in a hen coop on what we can infer is a white farmer’s property) nor a sense of liberty. Their sense of “home” is imposed top-down from a representative of the state: in the MAYOR’s section (based on actual mayor W. E. McArthur Sr., of Greenwood, B.C.), the speaker had asked a Nisei child to translate his words: “... ‘I’m mayor here... your mayor. / This is your home. Can you tell the people that?...” (178). The Nisei child

becomes the conduit of the state's message, which presumably would have been communicated to his community at yet another remove, the community leader: "Okay, I'll tell my mother, sure. / The rest will believe whatever she says to do" (178). Livesay's conception of a postwar, post internment Canada ("home") is then thought through the homonormative nuclear family indexed by Issei THE WIFE and THE HUSBAND, and—most importantly—their Nisei children who are disciplined by the normalizing project state citizenship represents. While Issei understand "home" as being both imposed via interpellation ("a prairie place called home") and aspirational (a "blueprint only"), the Nisei, having been "born / Into the new world," have a more active relationship with respect to the state: they "called British Columbia home, / Spoke of her as mother, and beheld / Their future in her pungent evergreen" (173-4).

The Nisei—despite having been unconstitutionally detained—locate "independence" and "freedom" as qualities intrinsic to the Canadian landscape, while for the Issei Canadian territory remains a searingly material reality: "a harsh new land" which must be "worked at again," under demeaning conditions, if the family hopes to remain. The husband reinforces this generational contrast when he says that the country (both land and nation) is "the children's"—not theirs—and commands the WIFE to "Let them choose" between returning to Japan or internment and subsistence farming, an act which transfers the state's brutal and unconstitutional ultimatum into the will of children. The Issei couple, like the fisherman, are left without autonomy in the face of their children ("Therefore we had no choice"), as the father yields his

patriarchal decision-making power to the Nisei, who “chafe” for a “freedom” that, paradoxically, translates to incarceration by the Canadian government rather than an unincarcerated life in Japan. Having cast-off not only the existential baggage of their parents’ immigrant past, but even the parents themselves, at least symbolically (“Spoke of [British Columbia] as mother”), the Nisei of Livesay’s poem establish a sense of belonging among and exclusive to these “good Canadians.” In the span of one generation, any oppositional political claims toward inclusion made by the Issei are neutralized by the state, and specifically by the second generation’s supposed eagerness to assimilate to its demands with respect to the qualities that constitute a citizen who “belongs.” Materially-based concepts of self-autonomy and determination that existed in the poem’s previous Issei characters are attenuated as they become flattened into abstract platitudes of Western liberal democracy evinced in the end of the poem, where a CHORUS OF NISEIS describes “home” is little more than a disjointed series of abstractions:

Home, we discover, is where life is:
Not Manitoba’s wheat
Ontario’s walled cities
Nor a B.C. fishing fleet

Home is something more than harbor—
Than father, mother, sons;
Home is the white face leaning over your shoulder
As well as the darker ones.

Home is labour, with the hand and heart,
The hard doing, and the rest when done;
A wider sea than we knew, a deeper earth,

A more enduring sun. (*Self-Completing Tree* 182)

Shifting Issei conceptualizations of home associated with material property or aspirations of obtaining it, the FISHERMAN and the couple whose “blueprint” of home included “neighboring fields / Bleak tableland, the stabbing green / Of the young wheat” here have their vision refuted by the Nisei claim that “home” is “Not Manitoba’s wheat... nor [is home] a B.C. fishing fleet // Home is something more than harbor.” Over safety, sustenance, or even family (“more... Than father, mother, sons”), the poem instead privileges an Anglo-Protestant conception of “labour... / the hard doing, and the rest when done” and unsettling image of multi-racial surveillance: “the white face leaning over your shoulder / As well as the darker ones.” By invalidating the Issei conceptions of home the poem previously constructs by drawing on source texts (the Issei newspaper, interviews with Livesay’s Japanese-Canadian intimates), the end of this “documentary poem” works to dispossesses Issei of material and affect-based understandings of what it means to belong to a place. Or, more precisely, a nation; and, more specifically, Canada. The poem’s final line, “a more enduring sun,” is difficult to read as anything other than a reference to *Nippon*, the Japanese name for Japan often translated as “sun’s origin” or “land of the rising sun,” one that seeks to supercede Japanese origins and nationality altogether.

Indeed, the political constraints of *Call My People Home* are such that autonomously-functioning Japanese communities, such as those fishing villages of pre-war British Columbia from which Japanese Canadians were uprooted, can only become a memory for the second generation Nisei in a postwar world. The poem’s

final monologue belongs to THE PHILOSOPHER, whose discourse emphasizes the importance of remembering such a past, while also underscoring its ultimate irretrievability:

Yes, to remember, is go back ; to take
The path along the dyke, the lands of my uncle
Stretching away from the river—
The dykeside where we played

Under his fruit trees, canopied with apples,
Falling asleep under a hedgerow of roses
To the gull's shrill chatter and the tide's recurrent
Whisper in the marshland that was home...)

So I must remember. It cannot be hid
Nor hurried from. As long as their abides
No bitterness ; only the lesson learned
And the habit of grace chosen, accepted. (*Self-Completing Tree* 181)

Once again, Issei conceptions of belonging tied to the land are decidedly in the past (“the lands of my uncle... the marshland that was home”), which, like internment, cannot “be hid / Nor hurried from” yet demands an affect of “No bitterness.” The speaker’s willingness elsewhere in the monologue to “Without rancor ; to let the past be / And the future become,” having “accepted the blow, Pearl Harbor” illustrates the same forgiveness of the carceral state (180-1) described as “the habit of grace chosen, accepted.” The character name of THE PHILOSOPHER (in earlier versions THE STUDENT) belies his indoctrination at the hands of the state’s schooling system, that training ground for “good Canadians; in an earlier section, the schoolhouse is shown to be the place where racial hierarchy is learned. A boy describes his sisters:

“Deliberately bent on learning—
(And learned son enough, of

The color of their skin, and why
Their hair would never turn golden.) (*Self-Completing Tree* 174)

While Livesay seems to be implicitly criticizing racialization in this passage, much as she acknowledges white supremacist effect on lawmaking in British Columbia at the beginning of the poem, THE PHILOSOPHER's final monologue puts the burden of "the habit of grace chosen, accepted" upon those who have been repeatedly marginalized by the state and its institutions. In this way, Issei ways of being and belonging are supplanted by those of the Canadian-born Nissei, "the premises of liberal democratic citizenship and its promise of soon-to-come-but-never-arrive inclusion, which undergirds the privileged access of normative citizen-subjects" (Brandzel 3-4) take precedence over a trans-generational commitment to truth and reconciliation or claims to material reparations on behalf of the greater Japanese community.

Livesay's most well-known documentary poem seeks to imagine the inclusion of not only of people of Japanese origin, but Ukrainians and by extension all immigrants, within a postwar Canadian state. However, it performs this cultural work through the erasure of difference. Ultimately, the assimilationist cultural narrative Livesay promotes in *Call My People Home* cannot be disentangled from the nationalist project promoted by Grierson, as the work of Aguila-Way has made clear. Livesay's text is not only deeply invested in modern constructions of the nation as the primordial category of "home," it deploys an entire politics on how immigrants can, over time and despite the rampant xenophobia of whites, successfully discard their original national affiliation for a new "home" where they are tolerated—their children

may aspire to themselves be accepted—to use a term by Yásnaya Elena Aguilar Gil “annexed”—into the totalizing and homogenizing project of the nation state. On the one hand, in decrying the treatment of Japanese citizens during WWII and referencing the “successful” example of assimilation represented in the nameless Ukrainian, Livesay’s poem makes a claim for expanding the fabric of the Canadian nation to include within it persons not of Anglo descent.

Yet on the other, her vision of Canada remains grounded in the values of the racialized, (neo)colonial endeavor of modern nation building under global capitalism. First generation Issei encounter “home” through the triumph over the landscape of the interior, a reiteration of the trope of 19th century rugged frontierism (Aguila-Way “Griersonian ‘Actuality’” 51) which cannot be separated from its historical precedent: the extermination and internment of First Nations peoples; second generation Nissei, shaped by ideological state apparatuses, become desirable citizens through shifting their loyalties from their parents and Japan to the “more enduring sun” of their adoptive nation, in a process resembling the Canadian Indian residential school system in the century prior. Much like Canada’s insistence on multiculturalism while discouraging the preservation of cultural difference, Livesay’s poem evinces a vision of liberal democracy without a meaningful commitment to pluralism, reinforcing state ideology even as the poet challenges aspects of the state’s wartime treatment of its citizens. In short, the most radical claim in *Call My People Home* is for inclusion and recognition, not justice. Livesay registers the unfortunate ways Japanese were systematically othered and excluded from Anglo-Canadian life prior to and during the

detention process, and proposes second-generation assimilation—rather than redress, which would not come until 1988—as the “solution” to the “problem” posed by Japanese and the broader question of non-Anglo immigration into Canada, for which Japanese Canadians provided the paradigmatic example in the 1950s.

Dhamoon and Abu-Laban have summarized Canada as “not only a ‘country of immigration’ but also a ‘nation-state’ which also contains ‘stateless nations’ in its borders” such as indigenous peoples and the Québécois community (164). Since the existence of migrants and indigenous people call into question the legitimacy of existing state borders, the Anglo-Canadian state—and by extension, dominant culture—has constructed these “stateless nations” as “problems” at various points throughout Canadian history: prior to WWI, the white ruling class lamented the Ukrainian “problem” while the Japanese “problem” overshadowed WWII and the postwar period; as we saw in earlier sections, discussion of the “Indian problem” dates back to settlement and Confederation.⁷⁷ Yet the drive to “civilize” groups othered as “savages” or “irredeemable” by figures such as Duncan Campbell Scott should be understood as constitutive of settler colonialism and the wider project of capitalist nation-building, not reflect, as the word “problem” suggests, the inability of these groups to assimilate into a white supremacist state.

This is one reason Paulette Reagan and others have called for the conceptual reframing of the “problem” as “the settler problem” or, more simply, colonialism. In the foreword of Reagan’s 2010 *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada*, Taiaiake Alfred summarizes

the material undertaking such an epistemological shift implies for contemporary settlers: “non-Natives must struggle to confront their own colonial mentality, moral indifference, and historical ignorance as part of a massive truth telling about Canada’s past and present relationship with the original inhabitants of this land” (x). Livesay’s *Call My People Home*, well-intentioned as it is, is inseparable from such a colonial mentality. In fact, it echoes almost precisely Scott’s assertion with respect to First Nations peoples: “the happiest future for the Indian race is absorption into the general population” (623). Polyphonic and dialogic as Livesay’s collection of research-based monologues is, the characters of the FISHERMAN and the neighbor are subsumed by the languages of the next generation: postwar nationalism and assimilation (NISEI CHORUS). Japanese Canadians in *Call My People Home* are written into a narrative about “Canadian character” reliant on the Anglo-Canadian project of settler colonialism. The aesthetic Livesay inaugurates as “documentary poetry” with the broadcast and publication of this poem she came to understand as specifically “Canadian.”

“A Canadian Genre”: Documentary from the Confederate Poets to 1969

When it first appeared in print, Livesay’s 1969 essay “The Documentary Poem: A Canadian Genre”⁷⁸ constituted the most extensive theorization of the documentary poem since the 1940s. A seminal, if understudied, piece within studies of documentary poetry, “The Documentary Poem: A Canadian Genre” has been limited to a largely Canadian audience, in part due to the explicitly national focus

Livesay's title indicates.⁷⁹ In the essay, Livesay begins to conceptualize a type of writing marked by "a conscious attempt to create a dialectic between the objective facts and the subjective feelings of the poet" (267) that, in her view, Canadians had "been using... for a considerable time" (267), tracing a genealogy ranging from Confederate poets Isabella Valancey Crawford and Duncan Campbell Scott to contemporary found poems by John Robert Colombo, F.R. Scott, and Al Purdy; to this list she also includes Anne Marriott's 1939 *The Wind Our Enemy* ("the product of a brief summer spent visiting an aunt in Southern Saskatchewan") and her own *Call My People Home*.⁸⁰ Such texts are not "isolated events," according to Livesay, but make up a 150 year old Canadian-English literary tradition "based on topical data but held together by descriptive, lyrical, and didactic elements" (269).

Distinguishing the genre from existing literary categories, Livesay claims a documentary poem is "not truly a narrative at all—and certainly not a historical epic" (269). Rather, making recourse to notably visual metaphors, she describes the documentary poem as "a frame on which to hang a theme" in order to "illustrate a precept" (269) whose impact is "topico-historical, theoretical, and moral" (281) and even prophetic (275).⁸¹ Eschewing a single protagonist in favor of multiple voices, documentary poems are meant "to be heard aloud, often specifically for radio" (269); in this Livesay credits Dylan Thomas's 1954 radio drama *Under Milk Wood* and mentions both MacLeish's radio plays⁸² and Grierson's documentary as inspiration.⁸³ Exemplary for Livesay is the work of the Irish-born "pioneer woman" Isabella Valancey Crawford and her 1884 *Malcolm's Katie*, a Tennysonian epic described as

“a documentary and a prophecy” that is “not ‘researched’ in the contemporary sense of the term” but the product of the author’s living “in a narrow world which she was able to explore with intensity: the world of the British settler vis-a-vis the native Indian culture and myth” (275). What seems to have attracted Livesay to Crawford is that, as David Arson writes in the introduction to *Right Hand, Left Hand*, Crawford “wrote poems which... expressed sympathy for the poor and the oppressed” (np). Laudable in intention but lamentable for the way it appropriates First Nations culture, Crawford’s work prefigures Livesay’s own white liberal, proto- white feminist position in *Call My People Home*.

As the Crawford example suggests, latent in Livesay’s conceptualization of the documentary poem—and her vision of the Canadian literary tradition more generally—is the specter of indigenous presence. Indeed, eliding First Nation literary traditions entirely, Livesay goes so far to say that without the early documentation of “fur traders, missionaries, and Indian agents” studied by early practitioners of documentary poetry “it is doubtful whether literature could have flourished at all—in Canada or for that matter, America” (276). Several of the white settler authors Livesay references make some form of recourse to what Latin Americanists refer to as indigenismo: for example, Livesay lauds the “pioneer woman” Crawford’s “animism, her description of primeval nature as seen through native Indian presence” in *Malcolm’s Katie* (271).

The more extreme example is Duncan Campbell Scott, who, as “a civil servant in Indian Affairs,” had “a firsthand knowledge of the terrain and of Indian

history, folklore, and culture,” a “factual background” with which he was “able to create narratives strongly dramatic, often bound together by theme” (276). Scott is remembered today for his long tenure at the Department of Indian Affairs, including as its head from 1913-1932, where he championed the assimilation of First Nation Peoples and administered oppressive policies that lead to cultural genocide.⁸⁴ In a 1975 interview originally published in *Canadian Forum magazine*, Livesay reiterates her admiration for Scott’s documentary poetry, commenting that “A narrative poem which also documents the history of that period is quite a Canadian thing, and probably the most brilliant person to do it in this century was Duncan Campbell Scott with his Indian poems” (excerpted in BC Booklook’s entry #113, on Livesay). The other (to Crawford) of Livesay’s originary practitioners of documentary poetry, Scott’s literary and political careers equated citizenship with whiteness and constitutively posed as a “problem” or as “uncivilized” anyone of non-British heritage: though First Nations peoples served as Scott’s primary concern, rhetoric based on the logic—and supposed “solution”—of the “Indian Problem” in the public sphere came to include Ukrainians and Japanese Canadians, both groups that not incidentally appear assimilated into Anglo-Canadian life, to various degrees, in *Call My People Home*.

It would be a mistake, however, to equate Livesay’s citation of a figure as canonical as Scott as indicative of her own attitude towards First Nations peoples, or an endorsement of Scott’s policies at the DIA. Livesay spent her career as a poet—and, literally, as a social worker—advocating for socially marginalized groups,

including blacks and Japanese Canadians. So it should not come as a surprise that she is on the record with much more sympathetic attitude regarding “West Coast Indians”: in a 1953 letter, she includes an indictment of contemporary policy that is unmistakably part of Scott’s political legacy:

No other race has given this country such an original art; therefore I have been grieved to see, in some Indian Schools, the children being made to do artwork that is a copy of European art: or else, asked to model totem poles with no relationship to the legends that the totems tell. I have heard how children are taught to forget the Indian language and to sneer at their own culture: to forget the legends, the wonderful stories, the dances and the art of their people. This is a great loss to Canada as a whole. (Livesay to W. A. Martin)

At the same time as she advocates for the epistemological value of Native culture, while also, we might note, reifying the fictional concept of a homogenous “Indian” “race,” Livesay has exhibited a rather cavalier attitude about her decision to advocate on behalf of communities to which she does not belong. When questioned about her CBC radio play *Momatikum* and the “right to interpret Indians,” Livesay, Thompson tells us, “pointed to her considerable research of the Indian condition and visits to reserves, retorting, ‘If the Indians themselves are not heard on the air, at least someone should be speaking for them! ... The more inter-racial understanding there is, the better’” (55). What Livesay’s unabashed admiration for Scott *does* indicate, then, is a liberal colonial understanding as to how white settlers may appropriate the cultural production of non-white communities in the name of aesthetic endeavors that seek to further their own visions of the role said communities ought to have within the fabric of the nation.

In this light, Livesay's position on research, her career-long interest in Crawford in particular—a fellow woman poet whose work was “not ‘researched’ in the contemporary sense of the term” but based on empirical quasi-ethnographic observations of a people whose plight undoubtably deserved greater sympathy—becomes easier to understand. Beginning in “A Canadian Genre” and throughout the 1970s, Livesay would be instrumental in successfully writing Crawford into the Canadian canon, itself in the process of formation. Crawford, Livesay's essay argues, was the “firstborn” of the Confederate Poets, a group of late 19th century Canadian English-language writers whose usage of traditional verse forms, along with their romantic and transcendental examinations of the individual's relationship to modern civilization and the landscape of the natural world represented, at least in part, disparate efforts towards a unified national literary consciousness. These authors were born around the Confederation of 1867, the process under which the British colonies of the Province of Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick were united into one federation, Canada. In no way a cohesive group or movement, the term “Confederate Poets” had, at the time of Livesay's writing, only recently been coined as part of the retrospective process of canonization undertaken in Malcom Ross's influential anthology *Poets of the Confederation* (1960) of male Anglo-Canadian poets, itself a cultural artifact of rising Canadian nationalism in the 1950s.⁸⁵ It is this male-centric anthology that spurs Livesay's argument that Crawford, too, should be considered a Confederate Poet.

Ross's anthology was part of a nation-wide surge in cultural nationalism

including, but not limited to, literature. In 1951, the landmark Massey Report had published the findings of the Massey Commission on the state of arts and culture in Canada. Building on the establishment in 1936 of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation as an official means for the promotion and dissemination of Canadian culture, the Massey Report resulted in the 1957 establishment of the Canadian Council, further expanding the role of the state as the driver of a publicly funded national artistic culture; the conservative and militaristic terms under which the Massey Report conceived of culture in Canada—as a project of cultural and national defense—was part of a larger postwar enterprise to define and secure Canada’s borders (Edwardson). During this period “Canadian English” was invented, through the publication of English dictionaries using uniquely Canadian spellings and pronunciations that constructed language as a marker of national difference to distinguish Canadian English from British and American English. In short, a distinctly Canadian literary tradition was in the process of formation.

Livesay’s own contribution was to reverse-engineer a national “documentary genre” (that included her own work *Call My People Home*) by means of Ross’s scholarship on Western poetic forms and the canonization of those forms. Livesay dates the documentary genre to the origins of a CanLit beginning with the Confederate poets (hence the examples of Crawford and Scott), rather than forms of indigenous poetic production which antedate them, and also to CanLit as a field of academic study (via the invocation of the Confederate poets and the implicit citation of Ross). What Livesay’s essay ultimately reveals, then, is less about documentary

poetry than her stubbornly national efforts to write documentary poetry—and by extension, her own work—into the Canadian canon. “The Documentary Poem: A Canadian Genre” is a calculated extension of the ideological investments the title announces: the linkage of the documentary genre with nationalist literary and scholarly production, the attempt to construct of this “hundred and fifty year old tradition” a canon along national lines.

According to Livesay’s account, documentary poetry has been written in Canada at least as long as the nation has existed in modern formation; not surprisingly, the genre relies on settler colonialism and indigenismo and fails to take into account extant contemporaneous indigenous texts, oral or written. The troubling result is Livesay’s related assessment that documentary poems are “deeply representative of the Canadian character” (269), an essentializing claim reiterated in the paper’s final lines in which “the Canadian character” can only be understood as a synonym for whiteness. Here, colonial and nationalist interests converge with dominant cultural narratives consolidating this “character”—its reliance on the trope of the white savior—within documentary poems: “For we are a curious breed, we Canadians, who somehow or other imagine we can save man from self-destruction. A myth? Likely! But one in which our poets continually challenge us to believe” (281). The particular (anglo-)“Canadian character” celebrated here is a direct inheritance of Griersonian cultural production, and of state policy outlined in the infamous Massey Report: this is what brings Livesay to say that, since the 1930s, “our narratives have followed the experiments originally made by Grierson in film” (269).

UNESCO, Africa & “Post-War Documentary”

Livesay’s documentary aesthetic underwent a radical shift following four years in Africa, where from 1959-1963 she held a UNESCO post teaching English in the then-British protectorate of Northern Rhodesia, today the nation of Zambia.⁸⁶ Following in the footsteps of her mother, who in 1902 had been one of forty Canadians sent to teach in Boer concentration camps in South Africa, Livesay assumed her post at a time in which UNESCO was implementing a number of literacy initiatives in the Global South designed to combat what Ronald Barker has called “book hunger”: lack of access to books and other forms of printed reading material, a condition resulting from the ways colonialism impeded the development of localized publication and distribution networks (Spahr 91). Understanding the issue as compounded by inequities of the Eurocentrist “international” publication industry, UNESCO began by focusing on two primary goals that eventually came into conflict with one another: increasing indigenous literary production, and the greater circulation of world literature translated into English and French (Brouillette 43). By the 1970s, “The organization’s suggestions about how to correct industry imbalances were challenged by the nations who stood to benefit from the further solidification of their own productive power” (50). The fact that Western copyright laws, for example, prevented the local translation of foreign titles resulted in a “donation-based” scheme funded by the US and UK in which cheaply printed select foreign titles—often steeped in anti-Soviet Cold War ideology—flooded the local market and negatively impacted sales of local texts in autochthonous languages (44).

Livesay's affiliation with UNESCO in the late 1950s and early 1960s is part of what Brouillete describes as a "radical political impetus behind most of the approaches to and uses of books that UNESCO devised" which, in the years following Livesay's departure, was eventually delegitimized by the West because "UNESCO's approach to the book was at odds with the new globally dominant political order, which began to take hold of the world's governments in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and which we now commonly label neoliberalism" (50). Even so, we might see the poet's post of teaching English in greater service of this latter project, in so far as the imposition of colonial languages by colonial states and NGOs, in addition to affecting indigenous literary production and its political efficacy, poses an existential threat to local languages and dialects. Livesay's time as an English instructor in Northern Rhodesia coincides precisely with robust Cold War cultural diplomacy efforts which helped to lay the foundations for English-language literature of the African continent most visible in *Black Orpheus* (1957), a journal funded by the CIA-affiliated Congress for Cultural Freedom (Spahr 93), a form of linguistic imperialism that authors such as Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o continue to combat by publishing only in African languages and demanding translation bridge the cultural difference.

Upon returning to Canada in 1963, Livesay composed *The Colour of God's Face* (1964), first published as a pamphlet by Vancouver's Unitarian Church, "a personal response to the land, the people, the religion and the politics of an emerging nation," the Republic of Zambia (jacket). This series of linked poems, later revised,

became known as the “Zambia cycle” or “Zambia suite” and it was republished, in differing iterations, in section four of *The Unquiet Bed* (1967) as well as in *Collected Poems: The Two Seasons* (1972) and *The Self-Completing Tree: Selected Poems* (1986). Self-described as a “post-war documentar[y]” (*Self Completing Tree*, 155) of a “country wresting itself from a tribal way of life into the modern world” (“Song and Dance,” 46), the cycle includes poems such as “The Leader,” about Kenneth Kaunda of the United National Independence Party (UNIP) and the first President of Zambia, as well as “The Prophetess,” which presciently acknowledges the growing political tensions between Kaunda and Alice Lenchina, founder and leader of the Lumpa Church. Advocating a feminist mysticism that blended Christianity with indigenous spiritual practices, Lenchina sought a return to tribal life by purifying consciousness and material life of white culture and domination. The Church rejected the authority of any “earthly government,” refused to pay taxes or be registered with the state, and established its own justice system, reasons Kaunda eventually outlawed the Lumpa Church; in response, members rebelled against him in what is known as the Lumpa Uprising. Livesay’s inclusion of Lenchina alongside Kaunda in her “post-documentary” cycle emphasizes to a Canadian readership how heterogenous and contested liberation movements actually are.

As “a freer expression of the impact of socio-political events, written in a more contemporary style,” this work represented a shift in Livesay’s thinking around documentary: “It is not a documentary in the sense that the Japanese-Canadian ‘Call My People Home’ was: a presentation true to the ‘found’ facts. [The Zambia cycle] is

rather a white outsider's appraisal, interpretation, of what was happening to the blacks" throughout Northern Rhodesia's violent transition from colonial rule to sovereign nationhood ("Song and Dance" 46-47). While one might make a similar argument about *Call My People Home*, that it, like *Of Japanese Descent*, is an "outsider's appraisal, interpretation, of what was happening to the [Japanese]," Livesay's ability to acknowledge her outsider status with respect to the Zambia cycle marks an important change in the way she chose to frame her documentary poetry in *Call My People Home*.

She is no longer attempting to represent voices of another culture "true to the 'found' facts," rather but speaking from a situated and limited perspective of someone who does not belong to the "imagined community" of the place formerly known as Northern Rhodesia. Aguila-Way rightly observes that "the narrative innovations introduced by Livesay [in the Zambian suite]... dismantled some of the key ideological maneuvers that the Griersonian documentary (and its literary incarnation in Livesay's early documentary work) had traditionally deployed in order to establish its claim to archival authenticity" and "in so doing... paved the way for a more self-reflexive documentary praxis... [which] acknowledged the politics of representation inherent in the act of documentary narration... and encouraged the reader's participation in the creation of meaning" ("Returning the Gaze" 103). The remainder of this chapter unpacks the political stakes of this shift within a lesser known, uncollected contemporaneous documentary poem, Livesay's 1966 "The Hammer and the Shield: A Found Poem." Turning from the poet's intertextual dialogue with

Grierson, I instead seek to understand the extent to which Livesay's documentary poem continues to engage in, or forgoes, a kind of literary statecraft that in *Call my People Home* is inseparable from an implicit colonial investment in whiteness.

Livesay arrived in Africa 1959, months before Patrice Lumumba took office as prime minister of the first democratically elected government in Congo. Lumumba's Congolese National Movement was part of the wave of African nationalist and pan-African solidarity movements then sweeping the continent: following the demand for the end of colonialism articulated at the Fifth Pan-African Congress, three dozen new states in Africa and Asia had achieved autonomy or outright independence from their European colonial rulers by the time Lumumba was sworn in on 30 June 1960, the day the Belgian Congo gained independence. Livesay found herself at the epicenter at the height of what is known as "the Congo crisis" (1960-1965), described by Georges Nzongola-Ntalaja, as "a crisis of decolonization, due to the manner in which the Belgians managed the transfer of power with a view to retaining as much control over the Congolese state and economy as they could, and the unpreparedness of Lumumba and the radical nationalist leaders to grasp fully the reins of power" (Kindle 972-974).⁸⁷ The United Nations' interventionist attempts at peacekeeping was, during its time, the largest in the organization's history. Over 19,000 active troops were deployed and 100,000 people are estimated to have died in the Congo crisis, including Lumumba. The complicity of U.N. Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld in the former Prime Minister's deposal, imprisonment, and execution tarnished the young institution's reputation and its consequences very likely brought

about the Secretary General's own death, the circumstances of which have never been fully elucidated: en route to attempt to mediate Katanga's succession his aircraft crashed over the mining town of Ndola, a few miles from the airport. 1961, which claimed the lives of both Lumumba and Hammarskjöld, was a watershed year in the history of post-war decolonization in Africa; Livesay was "on the ground" during its most seminal events. Before returning to Canada in 1963, she saw the breakup of the white-dominated Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, as well as the formation of two new republics, Zambia and Malawi, whose independence from the U.K. was formally established the following year.

"The Hammer & the Shield: A Found Poem" (1966): A Liberal Critique of the U.N.

The contents of Hammarskjöld's briefcase, recovered after the crash, provide a small window onto the Secretary General's inner life: found were the New Testament, a German edition of poems by Rainer Maria Rilke, a recent novel by French writer Jean Giono, and a copy of Martin Buber's *I and Thou* in German, which the Secretary General was in the process of translating into English during the flight; he had completed five pages before his plane, the *Albertina*, went down. The apparent contradictions between Hammarskjöld's Christian mysticism and a career of diplomacy unmistakably marked by political realism have formed the basis of much scholarly speculation. They hover in the background, too, of Livesay's "The Hammer and the Shield: A Found Poem," a piece that relates Hammarskjöld's life in a series of moments juxtaposed in rough chronological order. Not entirely "found" after all,

“The Hammer and the Shield” oscillates between apostrophic address to Hammarskjöld and a variety of source materials: portions of Hammarskjöld’s journal published posthumously as *Markings*, for which W.H. Auden authored the introduction and contributed to the translation; excerpts from *Servant of Peace* and U.N. archival records; the speeches and letters of Patrice Lumumba; and portions of Julius K. Nyerere’s 1964 Dag Hammarskjöld memorial lecture, “The Courage of Reconciliation.”⁸⁸ “The Hammer and the Shield” appears at first to be an admiring eulogy, but Livesay’s treatment of Hammarskjöld becomes increasingly complicated by assessments of his actions in the Congo. Specifically, the poem addresses the disastrous consequences of Hammarskjöld’s stance on neutrality, itself a source of inner conflict: the materials drawn from *Markings* are used to reveal the interior of a man who, based on a lesson of his father, “learned to say no to both sides” while in private “found / a need for ‘yes’” (*Archive* 142).

Though the speaker of Livesay’s poem addresses Hammarskjöld in second person, the lyric “I” is constantly interrupted by, quotes, or bleeds into different voices, and makes a point to foregrounds African ones: the poem begins with Nyerere’s lecture, for example, while poem’s longest and final section quotes (if lightly paraphrased) Lumumba (146, 150); eyewitness accounts of Lumumba’s imprisonment (149) and the crash of the *Albertina* (153-4) also contribute to the poem’s documentary aesthetic. Working between her various sources, Livesay assembles a sort of fragmentary lyric portrait of Hammarskjöld, driven by the poet’s own incredulous question “How could he breathe and be?,” this statesman with “an

exceptionally aggressive / super-ego“ (143), taught from a young age that “*A Hammarskjöld shall do better / shall be better / than other men*” (143). Livesay’s selection of materials offers a different version of the proverbial briefcase, one which draws out the tensions between Hammarskjöld’s sense of his own personal morality and the devastating material effects his tenure as Secretary General had on national liberation movements in Africa. The title “The Hammer and the Shield” underscores the irony that the Swedish diplomat’s name, a marker of his Viking nobility, should encompass both offensive weapon and tool of self-preservation (hammer + shield), a dialectic that played out constantly throughout his career.

Livesay draws attention to Peking, 1955 and Suez, 1956, diplomatic victories which lead to “If there is a conflict, Leave it to Dag” (shortened to “Leave it to Dag”) becoming a popular phrase in the late 1950s, before shifting to “the dark encounter: / the Congo” (145), where this motto fails: though Hammarskjöld manages to get Belgian troops to withdraw from the Congo, his refusal to provide U.N. military protection of Lumumba’s young nation amounted to a gesture assessed by the speaker as “generous... but not sufficient.” The Secretary General’s insistence on the “cold truth” of neutrality contrasts with the “fiery /... nationalist whose magnetism / rallied the Congo” (147) and the “fire [that] devoured the country: / Katanga against Congo / Tschombé against Kasavubu—Lumumba caught, in between / held captive...”

Livesay draws upon Lumumba’s January 1961 letter to A.M. Dayal, Special Representative of the U.N., communicating the inhuman conditions under which he was being held in Thysville prison, confirmed by an eyewitness account from a U.N.

worker also included in the poem. His name “sullied” after the USSR withdrew its recognition of the Secretary General’s authority in response to Lumumba’s eventual execution (151), Hammarskjöld futilely attempts to negotiate, first with Kasavubu, then with Tschombé before boarding the fateful crash, “the flash... then the fateful silence” (154). The poem concludes with Hammarskjöld’s final journal entry, quoting once more from *Markings*: “*And I begin to know the map / And to get my bearings*” (155).

Hammarskjöld inherited the UN in 1953, “during the period that its transformation from an almost exclusively Western, post-Second-World-War body towards a more global governance institution took place” (Melber, 151), and “was especially keen to exploit the opportunity presented to the UN during this period of the Cold War to establish a U.N. role as a protector of newly independent nations which would otherwise be at risk of intervention from the rival superpowers” (Gibbs 358). Wanting to shield young, resource rich nations often put him at odds with leaders in Europe, the USSR and the United States: the Eisenhower and Kennedy administrations in particular, though JFK publicly referred to Hammarskjöld as “the greatest statesman of our century.” In liberal circles, Hammarskjöld was admired for his strategy of “quiet diplomacy” and commitment to U.N. autonomy, and an unwillingness to compromise internationalism by capitulating to national interests. For others, however, the Swede’s public persona obscured the ways he acted as an instrument of Western imperialism through policy that thwarted the fragile sovereignty of the nations he claimed to shield. Rich puts it thus:

He was never a great believer in any form of ‘international morality’, though it is clear that he was driven by a strong Christian conviction in the brotherhood of men and a belief also that he had in some way been chosen to fulfil some sort of divine purpose. To critics this strong self-belief appeared as an overbearing arrogance worthy of an old imperial proconsul combined with a political naivety which failed to grasp many of the essential dynamics of global power politics. (362)

Whether or not Hammarskjöld was ultimately driven by what Melber has called “anti-hegemonic convictions” (157), the Secretary General presented a vision of the UN in which that the institution be “an expression of our will to find a synthesis between the nation and the world” (1955 commencement address at Stanford, qtd. in Melber), while certain actions he took—or did not take—make clear that not all nations or national liberation movements could count on the U.N. to serve as protectorate: he did not act, for example, when Russia quashed the Hungarian Revolution, or as China suppressed the Tibetan uprising. Livesay’s poem appears to split the difference: if the voice which governs “The Hammer and the Shield” is at times awed by the Secretary General’s sense of “divine purpose” as applied to the U.N., particularly in the opening sections, the authority of the international institution becomes increasingly undermined by Hammarskjöld’s political naiveté, particularly as Lumumba and the Congolese movement for national liberation come into sharper focus.

The vast majority of the poem (section iv) is devoted to Hammarskjöld’s most famous failing as Secretary General: his refusal to use U.N. forces to preserve Lumumba’s democratically elected and newly independent Congo or, ultimately, defend the Prime Minister’s bodily safety (149-151). To protect the sovereignty of the nation, Lumumba had appealed to the United States, Canada, and the United Nations

for help to suppress the Belgian-supported secessionists led by Moïse Tshombé in the mineral rich province of Katanga, represented in Livesay's poem through Lumumba addressing Hammarskjöld directly: "Why are your blue berets / your Swedish bodyguard / so helpless? Why don't they help us fight?" Hammarskjöld responds, "*These are not soldiers of war; but soldiers of peace.*" (147). "The Hammer and the Shield" then details how Lumumba turned to the Soviet Union for support, an act which would lead to his dismissal by President Kasavubu as Prime Minister and fanned Cold War flames against Hammarskjöld: "And Moscow cried out / And Khrushchev accused you: "While there are neutral countries / there are no neutral men! / A journalist reported: "It is now the view of the Soviet Government / that there is no such thing as an impartial civil servant" (148). Indeed, Hammarskjöld's blue berets "stood by, on duty / but on orders / of the Secretary-General / could not take action / or interfere / when, in the dead of night, a car swept into the compound: / it carried Lumumba northwards" (149), beginning a series of events that, compounded by the U.N.'s inaction, would lead to Lumumba's death at the hands of Belgian mercenaries.⁸⁹ Livesay's poem presciently outlines Lumumba's death as the definitive episode that would delineate the limits of the much-admired Secretary General's ideals, and his failure to use his institutional power to establish and defend newly autonomous nations on the African continent.

"The Hammer and the Shield" juxtaposes sources in such a way to suggest Hammarskjöld's death was itself a product of an approach to international relations which failed to prioritize the needs—and realities—of developing nations in the

Global South, trusting instead in Hammarskjöld's version of himself as one of history's Great Men. Appealing again to the Secretary General's sense of divine purpose, Livesay quotes from Hammarskjöld's diary to emphasize a fatigued yet fated determination to set things right after Lumumba's death:

Weep

*If you can,
Weep,
But do not complain.
The way chose you—
And you must be thankful.*

So you tried again:
this time to bring back Katanga
into a United Congo
To meet with Tschombé
persuade him to call a cease-fire
to end the attacks on U.N. detachments
to end the firing on U.N. planes

*I suggest that I should meet you
personally,
so that we can together try
to find peaceful methods
of resolving the present conflict
thus opening the way
to a solution of the Katanga problems
within the framework of the Congo.*

*I am awaiting
your urgent reply. (Archive 152)*

The poem moves between *Markings* (first strophe in italics), the poem's apostrophic governing speaker (in roman), and Hammarskjöld's final letter to Tschombé (second strophe in italics), sent before the Secretary General boarded the flight that claimed his life. Repetition ("*Weep... Weep*") and anaphora ("To meet... To end... To end...")

compounds both a sense of exhaustion and a sense of futility with respect to one man's ability to alter the course of history, all of which made more concrete in the line "So you tried again." Livesay constructs a causal relation between Hammarskjöld's insistence to himself that "*The way chose you*" and his faith in his ability to persuade Tschombé might have some effect, while at the same time her mention of "the firing on U.N. planes" foreshadows the suspicious circumstances of the crash of the *Albertina*.

The use of Hammarskjöld's letter, its useless decorum suggestive of an "old imperial consul," underscores the lack of acumen in global power politics for which the Secretary General has so often been criticized: aligned with the Belgian mercenaries who had killed Lumumba, Tschombé, businessman and President of the secessionist state of Katanga, had no interest in "opening a way to a solution of the Katanga problems." (Though his tenure, like Lumumba's would be brief; Tschombé was ousted as Prime Minister in 1965 when Mobutu staged a coup against then sitting President Kasa-Vubu. Tschombé, sentenced to death in absentia, fled to Francoist Spain, while Mobutu led one of the longest dictatorships in modern African history [1965-1997], a brutal totalitarian regime responsible for numerous human rights violations. In the meanwhile, supported by the West and the IMF, Mobutu amassed a personal fortune of \$5 billion USD by selling off the nation's natural resources, even as citizens lived in poverty.) The poem, reaching its ending, turns to address Hammarskjöld directly once last time:

It was Tschombé who

did not reply.
But you set out anyway
from the Northern Congo
in a DC 6B—Swedish Transair:
September 17, 1961. (*Archive* 153)

As the specifics of the *Albertina* provide documentary details of the flight that, even today, continues to be a source of speculation, the line “But you set out anyway” makes explicit the poet’s lack of faith in Hammarskjöld’s dubious mission. Her assessment, as was the case with Kaunda and Lenchina in the Zambia cycle, is astute, aligning with the take of modern scholars of international relations who have suggested it a desperate move to fly to Zambia at midnight when Tschombé had still not agreed to a ceasefire “to end the firing on U.N. planes”:

It is unlikely that Hammarskjöld would have been able to set in train any substantially different path. However his apparent efforts to try and resolve the Katangan conflict and to restore a united Congolese state has secured him a certain martyr-like status in the mythology that has developed around his life and death. The brutal logic of events in Katanga, though, suggests a more tragic interpretation of his death as, with his self-belief in some doubt, he took the plane flight to Ndola despite the obvious risks this entailed. (Rich 372)

“The Hammer and the Shield” relates Hammarskjöld’s flight to Ndola through the voice of a kind of eyewitness account that we can infer saw the *Albertina* at some point in the air but is not ultimately privy to the plane’s fate. Instead of attempting to present an authoritative version of the events themselves, which have for decades been the source of intense scrutiny and investigation without yielding conclusive results, Livesay emphasizes the anticipation arose by Hammarskjöld’s landing, announced locally on the Copperbelt radio, to ironically underscore the Secretary

General's failure to fulfill expectations yet again: "he'd be coming in / he'd do the job," the voice tells us hopefully, as "'Near midnight, above in the vast pocket of sky... a speck circled / a humming was centered / recorded" (153). When no news of the plane landing is transmitted half an hour later, the voice tells us they slept "uneasy" and at "7am / turned on the radio," at which point they receive the suggestive information that "There had been a flash, sighted / at midnight / over Mufulira: / then the fatal / silence" (154).

In what is perhaps one of the most rigorous examples of Livesay's interrogation of the documentary form, unlike in *Call My People Home*, individual voices in "The Hammer and the Shield" do not serve to transmit information about "the objective facts." Indeed, this final eyewitness can tell us nothing more than what we already know: at some point, the *Albertina* was in the air, and afterwards it wasn't. What Livesay underscores instead, through the device of the radio, are the technologies which mediate our relation to world events, even the ones we play a part in ourselves. The radio provides a kind of meta-poetic intertextual linkage with *Call My People Home*, even as Livesay is no longer seeking to utilize the radio script form as a means of disseminating her documentary poem in hopes of manifesting material change, but emphasizing the ways in which the radio is a front-line technology by which historical narratives about particular events get formed in the first place, and which documentary and its subgenre of "found" poetry—and its readers—can later interrogate. That "The Hammer and the Shield" is received differently depending on the extent of a reader's knowledge of contextual information is suggestive, too, of the

completing narratives in efforts to narrativize and explain the “what happened” first transmitted through forms of global communication.

Just as Rich suggests is true of the decision to board the *Albertina*, “The Hammer and the Shield” is perhaps most convincingly interpreted as tragic: Livesay more than suggests the Secretary General’s failure to support Patrice Lumumba as a kind of hamartia that ultimately brought to a screeching halt Hammarskjöld’s public vision of the U.N. as a protector of newly independent nations vulnerable to intervention from rival superpowers. (Indeed, as we saw in the previous section, the cultural front suffered a not unrelated fate: predatory publishers from the UK and USA successfully thwarted UNESCO’s objective of supporting indigenous literature and local modes of literary production and distribution.) One last, rather long-winded selection from *Markings* is utilized before Livesay’s poem concludes in Hammarskjöld’s voice: “*And I begin to know the map / And to get my bearings*” (155). A rare sense of humility on the Secretary General’s behalf notwithstanding, Livesay’s choice of the final line only compounds the poem’s sense of Hammarskjöld’s lack of suitability to resolve “The Congo Crisis”: only in death does Hammarskjöld begin to have any concrete sense of how to locate himself.

Nevertheless, according to such an interpretation, the “tragedy” amounts to the fact that the institutions of Western liberalism, personified in the figure of Hammarskjöld, unsurprisingly failed to prioritize the ideals of justice, democracy, or freedom during the crucial wave of global decolonization from the mid-to-late 1950s to about 1975. By extension, it should be clear by now that “The Hammer and the

Shield” falls short of being a radical defense of African liberation. We need look no further than Livesay’s usage of the words of Tanzanian anti-colonial activist, politician, and political theorist Julius K. Nyerere used to open the first section. In Livesay’s glossing of the Tanzanian President’s 1964 “The Courage of Reconciliation,” Nyerere explains “the lesson taught by Dag Hammarskjöld” is that while a log by itself is difficult for a single man to handle or make useful, two men can hew from the log a canoe with which they can “win a fish and build a camp,” so long as the two men “go / together” in “the same canoe” (141). While Livesay’s excerpt presents Nyerere’s parable of the canoe as one of teamwork’s indispensability, turning to the source document reveals a more complicated story, one in which the men can easily be read as stand-ins for nations and the canoe represents some sort of joint international enterprise: the creation and regulation of a global economic system, for example. Within Nyerere’s explication, building the canoe reveals a set of particular social relations outlining the tensions between democratic egalitarianism and individual freedom which define global liberalism: “Though their cooperation,” Nyerere states, “each of the men will have increased his power to travel—will have enlarged his effective freedom on earth. But, at the same time, each of the men has lost his individual freedom in relation to the log” (10). He continues:

Their joint effort has enlarged the freedom of both; but it has also introduced new possibilities of conflict which did not exist when each of them built a small canoe on his own... The peace which is essential between two men if they are to work together in making and using one large canoe is also most endangered by their joint activity. (10)

Nyerere argues that it is law which facilitates human cooperation, but that law imposed by force will always be tenuous, as countless historical examples of revolution have shown. Therefore:

for peace in a society to be ensured these three things are essential: a system of law which respects the human rights of every member of the society; a system of law which treats every member equally in both its guarantees of protection and its restrictions on individual license; and a system of law which can be changed by peaceful agreement of the citizens governed by it. Nothing else will suffice. (11)

Read to the end, Nyerere's "tribute" to Hammarskjöld is unmistakably critical of the U.N., emphasizing the imperative for global governance unfettered by the naturalized hierarchical difference and inequalities that have marked liberal political institutions since the Enlightenment. Having just won independence, Nyerere was on his own quest to cement a coherent national identity for the newly created category of Tanzanian citizens in one of the most ethnically diverse areas in Africa, home to an estimated 130 languages; Pierre Englebert and Kevin Dunn would later describe Nyerere's centralized nation-building policy during independence as "one of the most successful cases of ethnic repression and identity transformation in Africa" (87).

Livesay's selective appropriation of Nyerere's speech, framed to serve as evidence of Hammarskjöld's moral character rather than in the political spirit of Nyerere's nationalist critique, is representative of the poem's limitations with respect to the ways it deploys its original sources to center the whiteness and Western values which Hammarskjöld epitomizes over African struggles for international support and recognition at the height of postwar decolonization movements. While we may laud

Livesay's formal choice to cite and incorporate African voices, using their own words instead of the invented caricatures of *Call My People Home*, we must also concede that ultimately the poem itself, while casting doubt on the legitimacy of global liberalism, is certainly not an indictment of it. Even as Livesay's more self-reflexive postwar documentary praxis acknowledges, to repeat Aguila-Way's assessment, "the politics of representation inherent in the act of documentary narration," "The Hammer and the Shield: A Found Poem" presents an exemplary case study as to why a politics of representation, even a self-conscious one, does not equate to a politics of justice.

Yet, as an example of a localized counter-history, the prescience of "The Hammer and the Shield" is undeniable. Even if "Hammarskjöld's interest wasn't in the liberation of Africa, but in ensuring that the U.N. managed the transition and, if possible, in showing the value the U.N. could have in achieving peace" (Podur 63), for his efforts, Hammarskjöld became the only person to posthumously receive the Nobel Peace Prize (1961). In the decades after his death, he became known as one of the best Secretary Generals of all time; the U.N. emulated his example as its status quo, eschewing armed support of former colonies in the process of nation-building in favor of inter-positional peacekeeping, a much less radical mission in which force was used only in self-defense. Just last year, the U.N. General Assembly commemorated the 60th anniversary of Hammarskjöld's death. In stark contrast to Livesay's assessment of Hammarskjöld's disastrous attempts at statecraft in the Congo, chief António Guterres constructed Hammarskjöld as "a man of action" who "nurtured and sharpened the UN's obligation to act" ("UN Chief").

Chapter 3: Testimonio a Poema-Documento

Aída Cartagena Portalatín's anti-Trujillo, Afrofeminist Documentary Poetry

... writing the history of the Caribbean has been a fluid intellectual project that does not belong solely to historians.

Lorgia García Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad*

At the end of first light, this town sprawled—flat, toppled from its common sense, inert, winded under its geometric weight of an eternally renewed cross, indocile to its fate, mute, vexed no matter what, incapable of growing according to the juice of this earth, encumbered, clipped, reduced, in breach of its fauna and flora.

Aimé Césaire, *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land* (translated by Arnold and Eshleman)

The colonized intellectual who wants to put his struggle on a legitimate footing, who is intent on providing proof and accepts to bare himself in order to better display the history of his body, is fated to journey deep into the very bowels of his people.

Frantz Fanon, "On National Culture" (translated by Haakon Chevalier)

Trasmite la cultura
Un quehacer la devora
Da la investigación
En cada pentagrama recoge una enseñanza
En cada poesía se mira frente a frente
La desata / Se hace un sitio grande
En nuestra historia triste

She transmits culture
The task consumes her
She researches
In every pentagram she finds a lesson
In every poem she looks squarely at herself
This unshackles her / A great place is made
In our sad history

Aída Cartagena Portalatín, *YANIA TIERRA: Poema-Documento*

Shortly after Nazi Germany surrendered, André Breton and his wife Helena visited Santo Domingo while enroute back to France, eager to meet the surrealist poets at work in the Dominican Republic. On the second floor of the La Gloria building on calle El Conde, Breton met with several poets known collectively as la Poesía Sorprendida (associates of the revista of the same name). Among those present was Aída Cartagena Portalatín, the group's sole woman affiliate. At some point during their meeting, which eventually changed locales to the home of poet Fernández Granall, Breton presented Cartagena Portalatín with the final issue of *Tropiques*, the quarterly magazine published in Martinique by Suzanne and Aimé Césaire from 1941-45. Breton's gesture was particularly formative for Cartagena Portalatín whose first collection, *Vispera del sueño: Poemas para un atardecer* (1944), had been published only a year before. It was her first introduction to negritud, and to Césaire and Senghor, whom she would later meet in Paris. "Desde esa misma noche vi otro mundo dividido no en países sino en hombres blancos y en hombres negros" [From that night on, I saw a different world: one divided not in countries but in men, black and white], she related years afterwards (*Culturas africanas* 12). Opening the pages of *Tropiques* marked the beginning of Cartagena Portalatín's career-long exploration of afrodescendiente identity, one she approached through an idiosyncratic combination of poetry, criticism, ethnography, and as the director of several editorships which emphasized Dominican and transnational literary production alike (La Isla Necesaria [1953-1955], Colección Baluarte [1963-1975] and Colección Montesinos [1980-1988], as well as a short-lived revista,

Brigadas Dominicanas [December 1961-March 1963], initiated at the end of the Trujillo dictatorship).

Known as “la Cartagena” or “Doña Aída,” Cartagena Portalatín (1918-1994), was a revolutionary feminist whose reputation as the most important Dominican woman writer of the 20th century is generally undisputed. In addition to serving as forerunner to a younger generation of women, Sherezada (Chiqui) Vicioso, Nelly Rosario, Daisy Cocco de Filippis and Julia Álvarez among them (Captain 47), the ways she shifted cultural norms about race left a lasting imprint on her national literary milieu, regardless of gender. When, following Trujillo’s fall in 1961, Cartagena Portalatín began to claim her own afrodescendiente ancestry explicitly in writing, “without having to resort to euphemisms or justifications” (de Filippis 81), it was an act unheard of at the time, especially among the Dominican upper class ladino literatti of *Poesía Sorprendida*. In Cartagena Portalatín’s poetry, Yvonne Captain finds “los comienzos duraderos de una voz afrodominicana” [the steadfast beginnings of an afrodominican voice], one related to but distinguished from an early generation of afrocriollo literary production: “No sería exacto llamarla poeta de la negritud, pero al declararse con alegría una mujer mulata, entre otras características, Cartagena Portalatín hace referencia a su sangre negra” [She’s not exactly a poet of Négritude, but in happily declaring herself a mulatta woman, among other identifications, Cartagena Portalatín makes reference to her black roots]⁹⁰ (47).

Importantly, Cartagena Portalatín’s construction of blackness was not limited to her national context of dominicanidad, but involved a transnational, relational

understanding of anti-racist struggle in diaspora. Poems such as “Otoño negro,” for example, condemn the murder of four black girls in the Jim Crow South, while her transnational study *Culturas africanas: rebeldes con causa* (1986) comparatively analyzes cultural production in Africa and the African Diaspora more broadly. Trained in art theory and museography at the École du Louvre, Cartagena Portalatín developed a documentary aesthetic deeply concerned with the history and self-determination of her home country, the Greater Antilles, Latin America, and the black diaspora more broadly. Her research-based aesthetic reaches an apex in *YANIA TIERRA: Poema Documento* (1981), a book-length poem addressing histories of insurgency in the Dominican Republic, and the island more broadly, from 1492 to 1981, using a combination of avant garde poetry and secondary source material, including a selection of images (“gráficas”) which makes up the second half of the book.

This chapter historicizes Cartagena Portalatín’s documentary aesthetic within contemporary debates regarding anti-colonial struggles in Latin America and the Caribbean. First, I provide a brief consideration of how Cartagena Portalatín’s twin interests in poetry and anthropology increasingly began to dovetail under the category of “testimonio,” a self-designated genre in which considerations of race and citizenship reveal themselves as central. Next, my analysis turns to on *YANIA TIERRA*, Cartagena Portalatín’s collection best-known to Anglophone academia and her only full-length work to be translated into English. As tends to be the case with works of documentary poetry more generally, existing scholarly interpretations of

YANIA tend to be overly formalist, even as the vast majority of them neglect the index of photographic material which not only makes up over half the book object. These images, which assert black and indigenous exploitation as central to the nation-building project, anticipate, in many ways, contemporary debates surrounding the limits of latinidad. Attending to the various intertextual vectors at work in Cartagena Portalatín's "nationalist epic," I suggest, allows us to challenge critics who are either romantic about the text's oppositionality or make exaggerated claims of anti-Haitianism which fail to account for the role the United States has had in creating and policing the Dominican-Haitian border.

Contextualizing *YANIA TIERRA*'s emergence during the democratic opening between Balaguer's third and fourth terms as president, and within the longer history of postcolonial discourse with which it is in dialogue, reveals the how Cartagena Portalatín engages non-normative temporalities as a means of activating alternative futures of the Dominican Republic which never came to pass. *YANIA TIERRA* figures history as a palimpsest of racial and colonial violence beginning with Columbus's crash landing in present-day Haiti and punctuated in various moments by the heroic resistance of citizens-in-formation, particularly Juan Pablo Duarte's Trinitaria Society which successfully fought for Dominican sovereignty during Haitian occupation. In remobilizing 19th century discourses which envisioned the Dominican Republic as a multiracial democracy—and even as part of a pan-Antillean confederation—Cartagena Portalatín refutes hegemonic narratives of Trujillan nationalism that figured history as dark and barbaric in contrast to a dictatorship which ushered the

nation into modernity. Yet it also bears emphasizing that *YANIA* is acutely conscious of how foreign-imposed colonial discourses of racial hierarchy preceded, sustained, and outlasted the dictatorship. It is in this light that I approach Cartagena Portalatín from the perspective of Fanon’s colonized intellectual, and *YANIA* as a work consistent with the author’s efforts toward national consciousness—particularly sensitive to the need for an “internationalist dimension”—in works prior and subsequent to the text’s publication at the heels of the decolonization of Africa (1950s-1975). *YANIA*, like all of Cartagena Portalatín’s later works, exists in service of an anti-imperial consciousness that includes women, the African diaspora, and the legacy of indigenous peoples.

Este es un libro testimonio: Development of a Documentary Aesthetic

Cartagena Portalatín’s black internationalist sensibility was nurtured in Paris, where she went for the first time in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Following Breton’s fateful visit and the subsequent dissolution of *La Poesía Sorprendida*, she became involved in a number of literary circles, including *Présence Africaine*, while completing her graduate work. Anticolonial thinking, and French involvement in Algeria, were at the forefront of conversation. These were “los años de James Baldwin y de Léopold Sédar Senghor, donde el imaginario del colonizado y del colonizador son trazados por Frantz Fanon en su libro *Los condenados de la tierra*” [the years of James Baldwin and Léopold Sédar Senghor, when Franz Fanon is tracing the colonizer-colonized imaginary in *The Wretched of the Earth*] (Mena

Poesía completa 8). In Paris, too, she met Nicolás Guillén and Aimé Césaire, the latter of whom she co-translated with Hilma Contreras. She returned frequently to the French capital over the next few decades, notably as a UNESCO delegate in 1965. If the Paris Cartagena Portalatín had visited in the late 1940s was the focal point of Négritude from which early forms of Afro-surrealism began to coalesce, the Paris she returned to two decades later was replete with surrealism from across the Global South: this was the Paris of the Latin American boom. By her own accounts the “vedette” among everyone at the 1965 UNESCO meeting who “wanted to know about the Dominican Republic because the Revolution had just taken place,” Cartagena Portalatín herself met some of the epoch’s luminaries, including Rosario Castellanos (“one of the greatest writers in America”) and Julio Cortázar (and his wife Aurora who “used to do all his work, while he listened to music, drank wine...”), among others (González 1082).

Upon returning to the Dominican Republic from Paris, Cartagena Portalatín took a position as director of the Museum of Anthropology at the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo, and her writings began to reflect the influence of the research her new position entailed. This is made quite literal in *La Tierra Escrita* (1967, published by the imprint she directed, Colección Baluarte), a collection which begins with epigraphs by Lévi Strauss (9) and Apollinaire (11). While the Strauss is an aphorism underscoring the mutually constitutive relationship of truth and freedom, the excerpt from the French poet’s “The Betrothal,” a poem dedicated to Picasso, asks the reader to forgive the writer’s supposed “ignorance” and inability to conform to

older aesthetic forms; in Apollinaire’s original poem, the lines cited by Cartagena Portalatín directly follow the speaker’s assertion that he has “had the courage to look behind me / At the corpses of my days” who died “Before the eyes of a mulatto woman who improvised poetry,” suggesting a causal relationship between the “mulatto woman” and the speaker’s “no longer knowing the old game of riming” (*Selected Writings* 69). Whereas in Apollinaire the woman is a trope who functions as an exotic plot device, *Tierra Escrita* integrates black female creative energy with Apollinaire’s unflinching gaze toward contemporary violence and his unwillingness to conform to literary tradition. The epigraphs foreshadow Cartagena Portalatín’s unapologetic use of avant-garde forms, while the Strauss serves to accentuate the incorporation of ethnographic content referenced in the name of liberation.

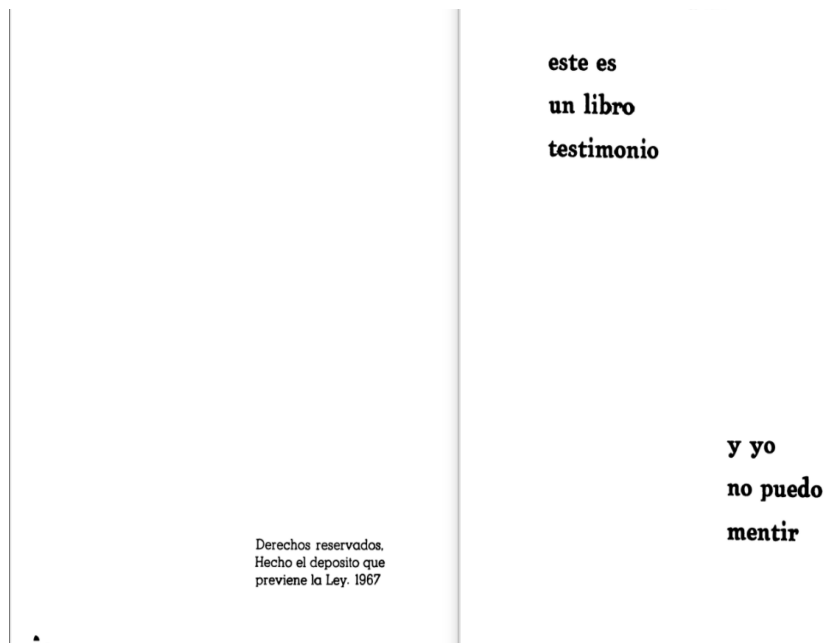


Fig. 6. Opening pages of *La tierra escrita* (1967)

Cartagena Portalatín's particular combination of experimental poetry and anthropology comes together under the term "testimonio," included as part of the subtitle of her 1960 *La Voz Desatada: Testimonio de una Mujer, del Mundo y de los Hombres*, and as a descriptor of much of the work she collected and published in *Brigadas Dominicanas*. Dedicated to her own memory and opening with the announcement "este es / un libro testimonio // y yo / no puedo / mentir" (5; see. Fig. 6), *Tierra Escrita* conceives of a non-narrative, auto-ethnographic form of testimonio that did not require an anthropologist mediator, unlike the genre's most recognizable collaborative works, such as *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (1983) and the more contemporary *Biografía de un cimarrón* (1966). Indeed, Cartagena Portalatín's training and the expertise required by her day job, combined with her lived experience structured by the Trujillo dictatorship and the subsequent U.S. deposition of the democratically-elected President Juan Bosch, situated her somewhere in between Rigoberta Menchú and renowned Cuban anthropologist Miguel Barnet. In the following excerpt, the dissident Cartagena Portalatín articulates her own fear of torture and condemns the indifference by which political victims were disposed of in mass graves:

Personalmente declaro que temía los métodos salvajes de tortura
y, muy especialmente,
las muertes lanzado a un muerto caliente a un abismo
con la misma indiferencia que se bota un "CHICLE" masticado
después de perder la menta.

Esta no es una fábula para niños de pecho.
Me refiero a la época en que cuando salir de la cárcel
era como contagiar un virus tísico.

Son TESTIMONIOS de un tiempo o un Caldera del demonio llamado FORO PUBLICO. (*Tierra Escrita* 60-61)

I hereby declare that I feared the savage methods of torture
and, most especially,
the dead flung still warm into an abyss
with the same indifference that chewed “CHEWING GUM” is chucked into the
trash
after losing the mint.

This is not a fable for infants.
I’m talking about a time when getting out of jail
was like contracting a deadly virus.
These are TESTIMONIES of a time or a Cauldron of the demon called PUBLIC
FORUM.

Such “TESTIMONIOS” work against what she mentions earlier in the poem as
“bastante oscuridad o parálisis / en muchas zonas de la consciencia nacional que no
comprendió el golpe” [widespread darkness or paralysis / in many parts of the
national consciousness which did not understand the coup] (60): that is, the 1965
military coup responsible for installing a three-man military junta to replace Juan
Bosch, a prominent writer, intellectual, and head of the Dominican Revolutionary
Party who, in 1963, had won the first free presidential election in 30 years. The ten
elegies collected in *Tierra Escrita* (nine numbered elegies plus an “elegy for the
elegies,” the first poem in the collection) mark Cartagena Portalatín’s first extensive
examination, outside of her editorial direction of *Brigadas Dominicanas*, of what she
calls “la Isla nuestra” [our Island] left “Solo. Sin padrino” [Alone. Without a
godfather] after the deposition of Bosch (13). Here the Dominican nation is
characterized by both political neglect and nefariousness on behalf of “almost all”
politicians (Bosch a notable exception). In “Elegy for the Elegies,” the poet writes:

21) Nuestra historia nacional no tiene nada en común
con la historia de la felicidad.
A casi todos los gobernantes dominicanos
los gestaron con material de excusado y del Infierno. (*Tierra Escrita*)

Our national history has nothing in common
with the history of happiness.
Almost all Dominican rulers
were gestated with material from the toilet and Hell.

Yet, at the same time, the island itself is a source of erotic creative potential marked as both feminine and black. In “Fifth Elegy,” the speaker draws parallels between poetry, suffering, and the fertile sugar cane fields of the Dominican-Haitian borderlands: “PARA ESTA ELEGÍA fértil como el dolor. / Como la tierra negra del centro de la Isla” [FOR THIS ELEGY fertile like pain. / Like the black earth in the middle of the Island] (60). Likewise, the oft-cited “Second Elegy” offers up black motherhood as a political alternative to ill “gestated” Dominican politicians. The speaker’s mother “ignoraba a las Teorías Políticas. (Encíclicas y a Max.) / Sólo entendía que el pobre sufre hambre, reclama pan y necesita abrigo” [ignored Political Theories. (Encyclicals and Max.) / She just understood that the poor suffer hunger, demand bread and need shelter]⁹¹ (35). The generative, if bloody, power of birth serves as a metaphor for the symbolic reconstruction of the Dominican nation— “Como en el parto la sangre bañado las extremidades” [As in childbirth the extremities bathed in blood] (13)—explicitly contrasted with the United States:

MI MADRE FUE UNA DE LAS GRADES MAMÁ del mundo.
De su vientre nacieron siete hijos
Que serían en Dallas, Memphis or Birmingham un problema racial.

(Ni blancos ni negros.) (*Tierra Escrita* 35)

MY MOTHER WAS ONE OF THE GREAT MOTHERS of the world.

Her womb bore seven children

That in Dallas, Memphis or Birmingham would be a racial problem.

(Neither black nor white.)

Cartagena Portalatín marks several interrelated sites of struggle during the Civil Rights Movement: Dallas (the 1963 assassination of John F. Kennedy); Memphis (a popular place for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to give speeches, and the site of his assassination the following year); and Birmingham (The Birmingham Campaign). In 1967, the year *Tierra Escrita* was published, the United States found itself in the “long, hot summer,” with race riots arising across the country in response to widespread police brutality, systemic inequality, de facto segregation, and vicious white supremacist racism. Equally important, and implicit within Cartagena’s reference of “children / That... would be a racial problem,” is the 1967 landmark Supreme Court case *Loving vs. Virginia*, which on June 12 struck down Virginia’s anti-miscegenation law and ended race-based legal restrictions on marriage in the United States. Through such explicit and implicit references, “Second Elegy” builds on readers’ knowledge of contemporary race relations to present tri-racial Creole culture in the Dominican Republic as not only the desirable alternative to the one-drop rule governing the legal category of “African-American” in the United States, but to produce Afrodominicanidad as constitutive of the nation and all its citizens.⁹² Writes Duke:

“Elegía segunda” [emerge] como un trabajo de concientización, a la vez que [sirve] para ampliar el valor de la figura afro-dominicana por medio de la idea de sus influencias interminables que trascienden todas las subsecuentes generaciones, que marcan a todos sus hijos. El deseo de la redención histórica de la mujer acompaña una postura nacionalizada de reconocer la diversidad étnica, una forma poética de promover la armonía nacional para no caer en la trampa estadounidense de represión racista y segregación totalizadora en la modernidad. (570-71)

“Second Elegy” emerge[s] as a work of coming to consciousness, at the same time that [it] serve[s] to give value to the Afro-Dominican as a figure of ongoing influence that transcends all subsequent generations, that marks everyone as their children. The desire for the historical redemption of women accompanies a nationalized stance of recognizing ethnic diversity, a poetic way of promoting national harmony so as not to fall into the trap the United States, in which modernity is inseparable from racist repression and totalizing segregation.

Cartagena Portalatín’s vision for the Dominican nation in “Second Elegy” emerges from her hometown of Moca.⁹³ Established in 1780, today the city is affectionately known as the “La Villa Heroica” [Village of Heroes], given the number of people from Moca who have played a major role in toppling dictators Ulises Heureaux and Rafael Trujillo. Moca, the site of the speaker’s mother’s interracial births, not only serves as the example for a multiracial Dominican Republic, but is suggestively juxtaposed as a synecdoche for Latin America more broadly:

EN MI PUEBLO DE MOCA, República Dominicana.

INDIAS OCCIDENTALES
A-M-É-R-I-C-A

(Continente de indios
mestizos
negros
blancos
y rubios.

Continente de HOMBRES
y de HAMBRE—Trópico
y flechas al Sur.) (39)

IN MY HOMETOWN OF MOCA, Dominican Republic.

WEST INDIES
A-M-E-R-I-C-A

(Continent of Indians
mestizos
blacks
whites
and the light-of-skin.

Continent of MEN
and of HUNGER — Tropic
and arrows pointed toward the South.)

Here, the poem's spatial scope continuously widens from the municipal, to the nation, to a fictive colonial region ("WEST INDIES") to the continental A-M-E-R-I-C-A, before calling attention to a multi-racial population between which the shared conditions are HUNGER and the threat of violence ("arrows"). The descriptive language in the final two lines ("Tropic" and "South") specify that Cartagena Portalatín's A-M-E-R-I-C-A does not necessarily refer to the entire Western Hemisphere ("The Americas," including North America) as much as to Latin American peoples in Meso-, Central and South America: the type of counterhegemonic nationalism based in the collective mestizo identity—and shared political, social and economic realities—of Nuestra América. However, Cartagena Portalatín's emancipatory poetics of the nation expands Martí's vision in so far as hers is explicitly black.

Formally, *Tierra Escrita* relies on a series of textual interruptions of found

text, facts, images, and other forms of recognizably documentary material, such as the following short digression on “Jean Marie Gerint científica / en la década sexta de este Siglo XX / que el hombre procede del mar y se acerca a la esponja / porque el 72% de su peso es AGUA” [Jean Marie Gerint scientifically demonstrated / in the sixth decade of this 20th century / that man comes from the sea and resembles the sponge / because 72% of his weight is WATER] in “Second Elegy” (39). Such an example is illustrative of Cartagena Portalatín’s circular vision for the role of poetry as “el fenómeno de la transformación heroica de las palabras en hechos... el fenómeno de la transformación heroica de los hechos en palabras” [the phenomenon of the heroic transformation of words into facts... the phenomena of the heroic transformation of facts into words] (59). The resulting documentary aesthetic is part of a process that combats national forgetting, as theorized in “Third Elegy”:

Este pueblo no tiene memoria.
La obra no se representa: trata sobre Conciencia Pública.
La Comisión de Espectáculos la prohíbe.
Aparecen más letreros: “Cepillos Wolks Wagen,” “La 40,”
“El 9,” “La Beata.”

TODO en esta Elegía es como una cinta cinematográfica
Un documental significativo de los impulsos agresivos
de esa época que cambiará y ha venido cambiando

A GOLPES DE CACHIPORRAS.
A GOLPES DE CULATAS.
A GOLPES DE REJAS.
A GOLPES DE PASAPORTES CON PASAJES
GRATIS.

¡CARAMBA! (48)

This people has no memory.

An artwork does not represent: it's about raising Public Awareness.
The Entertainment Commission prohibits it.
More signs appear: "Volkswagen Bugs," "La 40,"⁹⁴
"El 9"⁹⁵, "La [Isla] Beata"⁹⁶.

EVERYTHING in this Elegy is like a film reel
A documentary signifying the aggressive impulses
of an era that will change and has been changing

BY THE FORCE OF NIGHTSTICKS.
BY THE FORCE OF RIFLE BUTTS.
BY THE FORCE OF PRISON BARS.
BY THE FORCE OF PASSPORTS GRANTING PASSAGE
FREE-OF-CHARGE.⁹⁷

CARAMBA!

Cartagena Portalatín announces her vision of the art or literary work whose charge is not mimetic ("La obra no se representa"). Instead, "la obra" has to do with raising "Public Awareness" in a context where the coming-to-consciousness of a people with "no memory" is prohibited by a bourgeois state driven by consumerism: the "Comisión de Esppectaculos" and foreign import commodities represented by Volkswagen bugs. The latter, juxtaposed with three secret detention centers from the Trujillo era ("La 40," "El 9," and "La Beata"), draw comparisons between capitalism, dictatorship, and torture: the "aggressive impulses of an era that will change and has been changing," stilled and immobilized in "this Elegy like a film reel," itself "A documentary."

The reception of this avant-garde form has been uneven among literary critics in her home country. In *Antología panorámica de la poesía dominicana contemporánea 1912-1962* (1996) critics Manuel and Lupo Hernández Rueda complain: "En su último libro de versos 'La Tierra Escrita' recurre a grafismos,

diálogos, técnicas periodistas e imágenes cinematográficas, usando como centro aglutinante una preocupación por el hombre y sus libertades inculcadas...” [In her most recent book of verse, *La tierra escrita*, Portalatín resorts to graphics, dialogues, the techniques of journalism, and the imagery of the cinema, using as a binding center her concern for mankind and his usurped freedoms...] (qtd. in Cocco de Filippis 83; her translation). While disparaged at times by Cartagena Portalatín’s literary contemporaries, “testimonio” is a crucial early example of postwar documentary poetry; if read within a broader national historical context, in which the hegemonic narratives of national history were in the process of being contested, we can see the contributions the poet-anthropologist’s aesthetic sought to make.

The 1970s in the Dominican Republic were marked by forms of historical revisionism that sought to loosen the hold the Trujillo dictatorship had consolidated over the national memory: “A partir de la década del 1970 surgió en la comunidad intelectual dominicana una historiografía de orientación marxista que tuvo como fin subvertir la manera de recordar el pasado dominicano que había sido impuesto por la dictadura trujillista” [From the 1970s onward, a Marxist-oriented historiography emerged within the Dominican intellectual community, with the aim of subverting the way of remembering the Dominican past that had been imposed by the Trujillist dictatorship] (Torres-Saillant 39). Cartagena Portalatín contributed to such efforts not only in her experimental poetry, but through her anthropological research.

Her 1974 *Danza, música e instrumentos de los indios de La Española* illustrates the rich cultural practices of the Taíno people prior to contact, refuting the

dictatorship's characterization of the island's indigenous people as barbarous and without culture. *Estudio Etnológico remanentes negros en el culto del Espíritu Santo de Villa Mella* [Ethnological Study of Blacks Remaining in the Cult of the Holy Spirit of Villa Mella] (1975), is an ethnographic study of forms of black communal life outside of Santo Domingo and the role of music within them. A short section, "La desafrikanización en la República Dominicana. Conclusiones y Sugerencias" [De-Africanization in the Dominican Republic: Conclusions and Recommendations], concludes the written portion of this study with an affirmation that, although "En la República Dominicana el mayor porcentaje humano es multato" [In the Dominican Republic the vast majority of the population is mulatto], "el process de desafrikanización es acelerado en nuestro país" [the process of de-Africanization is particularly accelerated in our country] (173). In response, she advises a plan "A NIVEL NACIONAL" [OF NATIONAL SCOPE] to educate and preserve black cultural patrimony at risk of disappearing due to migration from rural areas to cities; the article is followed by photographs of instruments, dances, shrines, and ethnographic subjects that she took on-site while completing her field work. The scope of Cartagena Portalatín's research, however, extended beyond both the Dominican Republic and the island formerly known as Hispañola. *Dos técnicas, cerámicas indoantillanas: diagnóstico de origen de los yacimientos de las Antillas Mayores* [Indo-Antillean Ceramics, Two Techniques: Provenance of Archaeological Sites in the Greater Antilles] (1971), which includes photographs taken between 1963 and 1968, is a comparative study of ceramics within two island dwelling peoples, the

Arawak (Taíno) and Carib (Kalinago), necessitating by definition an archipelagic approach. A final, unfinished work aspired to tell the prehistory of island peoples prior to colonial contact. In her expansive attention to blackness and indigeneity in an island context, Cartagena Portalatín's research anticipates contemporary forms of black feminist inquiry attentive to indigenous genocide and survival.

Cartagena Portalatín's literary works of the 1970s, particularly *Escalera para Electra* (1970) and *Tablero* (1978), showcase her evolving relationship with research in national and hemispheric forms of art, culture, archaeology, and historiography. *Escalera*, for example, is a "re-construcción de la historia dominicana" [reconstruction of Dominican history] (Rodríguez Guglielmoni, "el texto perdido" 92) through a version of the Elektra myth which functions as a "synécdoque, o representa en miniatura, la historia oculta y suprimida de la República Dominicana" [synecdoche, or represents in miniature, the hidden and suppressed history of the Dominican Republic] (Rodríguez Guglielmoni, "Cómo combatir" 130-131). Cartagena Portalatín's fragmentary approach to narrative and self-reflexive experimental style of "intertextualidad y reciclaje literario" [intertextuality and found language] (Rodríguez Guglielmoni, "el texto perdido" 100) places the novel in conversation with Cortázar's *Rayuela* (1963) and other works of the Latin American Boom; to quote Linda María Rodríguez Guglielmoni, "en su obra maestra destruye la línea tradicional narrativa y muestra como la historia de su nación se convierte en una repetición interminable de gobiernos autoritarios, proyectos políticos que no progresan e intervenciones extranjeras" [In her masterpiece, she destroys the

traditional narrative line and shows how the history of her nation becomes an endless repetition of authoritarian governments, political projects that do not progress and foreign interventions] (“intertextualidad” 110). *Tablero*, a collection of stories about women, is particularly celebrated among scholars for the ways its opening story, “They Called Her Aurora. A Passion for Donna Summer,” debunks romanticized capitalist narratives of the United States as the land of opportunity—and weaves a deft critique of anti-Haitian racism, South African apartheid, and other global forms of antiblackness.

This phase of Cartagena Portalatín’s work was enriched by her frequent travels around the world and, importantly, to Africa. Paris had granted her access to black internationalist networks that laid the groundwork for travel to Africa, “uno de los momentos claves en su vida en general y con la identificación declarada en voz alta con el pueblo negro en todo el mundo” [one of the key moments in her life and in terms of her identification with the black diaspora] (*Captain* 51). In 1975, she visited, among other places, Loanium University in Zaire and the Institute for Afro-American Studies in Kinsasa, attending the Festival of Negro-African Cultures in Dakar and the Congress of Pan-African Cultures in Nigeria. “Más que *politizarse*,” writes Miguel D. Mena, “diríamos que era una manera de integrarse a una militancia con los órdenes del conocimiento imperantes, que sólo nos situaban dentro de la tutela hispanizaste” [Rather than politicizing her, we might say {Africa} was a way of integrating a militancy into prevailing orders of knowledge, which situated Dominicans only within Hispanicized tutelage] (*Poesía completa* 9). She further

explored this project in the form of ethnographic research, collected in the posthumous *Indios y negros en la cultura dominicana* (2018), much of which examines Afrodominican legacies on the island. Integrating her training in anthropology with black internationalist approaches to cultural production, Cartagena Portalatín's post-Africa poetry reinscribes Hispaniolan history with indigenous and African pasts doubly occluded by colonial racial hierarchies and by the reinforcement of such hierarchies via U.S. interventionism on the island and the importation of Jim Crow racial formations which brought the light-skinned Trujillo to power.

YANIA TIERRA: Poema-Documento (1981): History as Palimpsest

Cartagena Portalatín's works from the late 1960s and 1970s are written in the aftermath of the 1965 deposition of the democratically-elected Bosch, the subsequent invasion of the U.S. Marines sent by Johnson to support the junta, and the imposition of Trujillo lackey Balaguer as president. *YANIA TIERRA* (1981), published three years after *Tablero*, appears during a subsequent phase in the political history of the Dominican Republic, when Balaguer was dealt a significant, if temporary, blow when his bid for a fourth successive term proved unsuccessful following the May 1978 election. When Balaguer declared himself the victor over the democratically-elected Antonio Guzmán Fernández of the Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (Bosch's party) and ordered the military to destroy ballot boxes, then-sitting U.S. President Jimmy Carter refused to recognize Balaguer's claim and, confronting a potential loss of foreign investment and aid, Balaguer eventually stepped aside; this marked the country's first peaceful transition of power in which an incumbent surrendered to an

elected member of the opposition. The end of “the 12 Years” (1966–1978) thus represented a fragile and partial transition toward more democratic life, though the economic fallout of Hurricane David (1979), along with a precipitous drop in sugar prices and a steep rise in the price of crude oil, marred the 1980s with a series of economic crises that accelerated the wave of migration to the United States begun under the brutal regime of Balaguer’s second presidency.

It is in this context that Cartagena Portalatín writes *YANIA TIERRA: Poema Documento*, a documentary poem about the history of the Dominican Republic, and the island more broadly, from 1492 to 1981. Cartagena Portalatín’s unusual compound subtitle (translated as “A Documentary Poem” on the title page of the English edition) frames the work according to an idiosyncratic genre combining the poet’s aesthetic and research-based interests: “By attaching the label ‘documento’ to her poem,” writes Lorna V. Williams, “Cartagena signals her desire to expand the traditional categories of Dominican poetry by combining two antithetical terms. Poetry is thereby posited to be both the inscription of empirical reality and the textualization of a self-sufficient world” (“Coloring” 200-201). *YANIA TIERRA*’s opening pages claim the work to pay “HOMENAJE a las mujeres de nuestra tierra que a través de un lapso de Cinco Siglos han sido ultimadas o se han sacrificado por su pueblo” (*Yania* 1981 7) [HOMAGE / to the women of our land / who over a period of / five centuries have been murdered / or have sacrificed themselves for their people] (*Yania* 1995 29; Fenwick and White translation), one the text announces at the outset would have been impossible without the “examen investigativo en textos de

relevantes historiadores” [careful researching / of texts by knowledgeable historians] (Fig. 7).

Cartagena Portalatín takes pains to mark the work’s literary influences, citing two comments made by Carlos Fuentes, at the University of Puerto Rico in 1981, on the same page: (Fig. 7).⁹⁸ Fuentes’s *A Change of Skin*, published the same year as *La tierra escrita*, shares

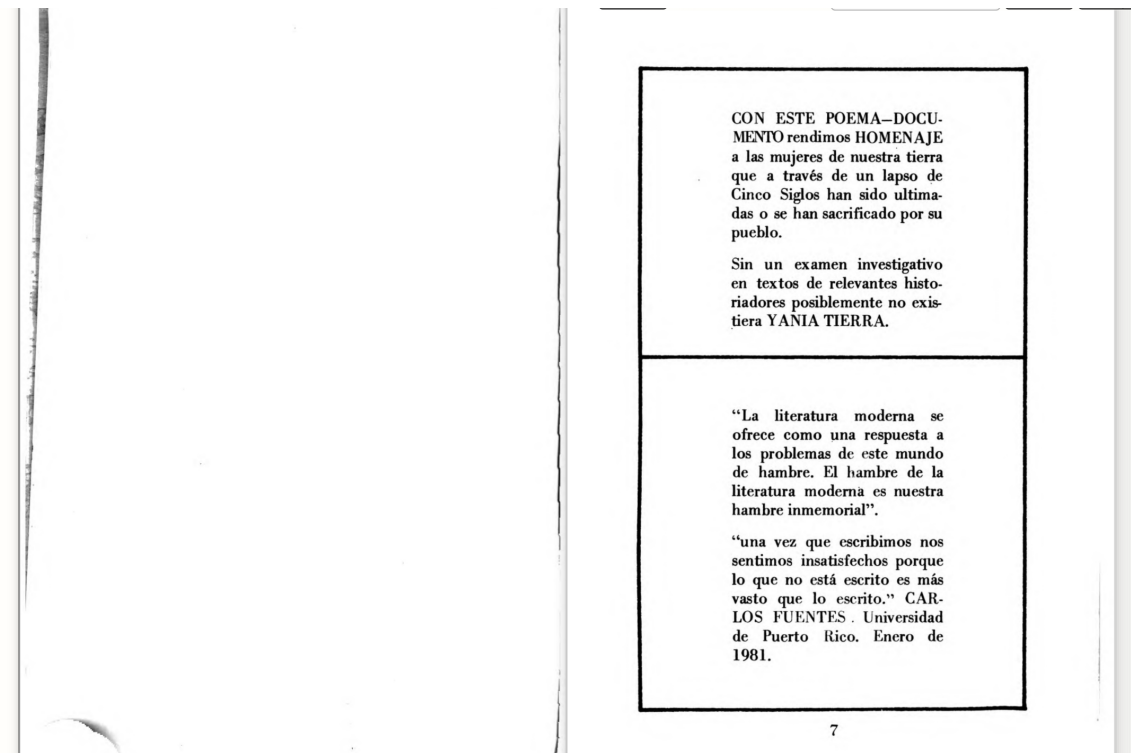


Fig. 7. opening pages of *YANIA TIERRA* (1981).

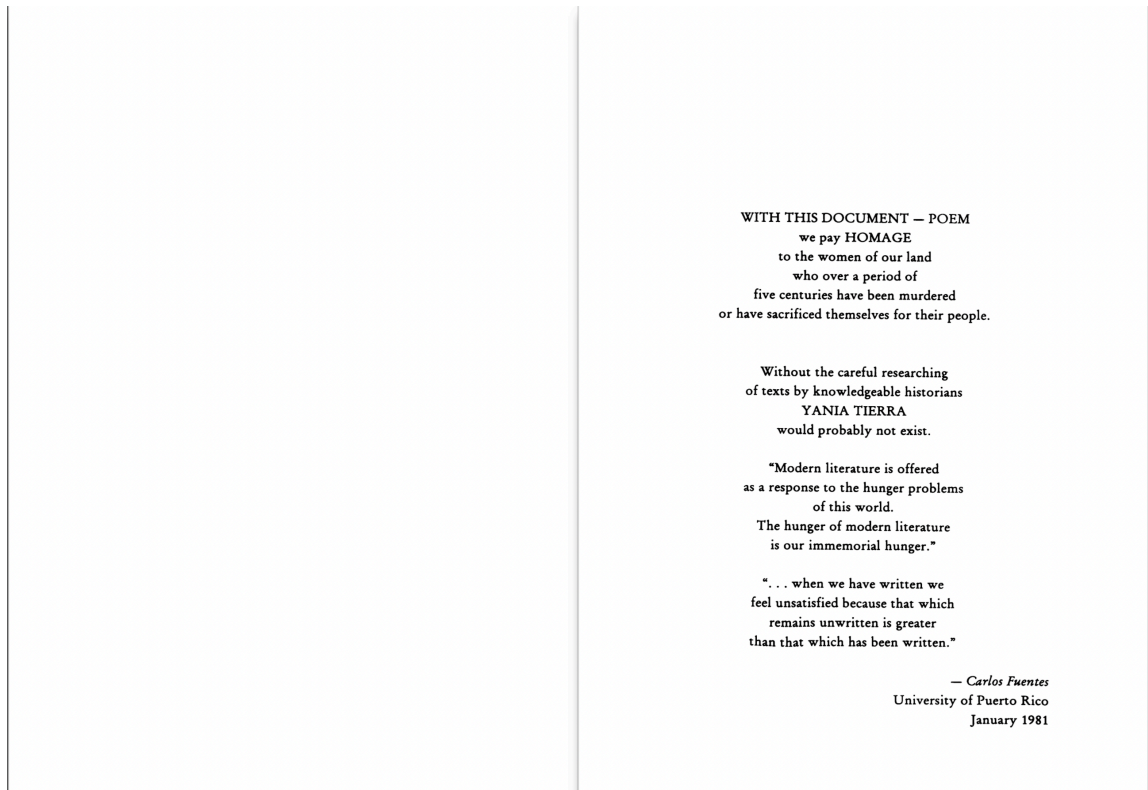


Fig. 8. Opening pages of *YANIA TIERRA*, English translation.

remarkable similarities with *YANIA TIERRA*: of the experimental novel delineating a collective Mexican consciousness via an interrogation of the nation's most enduring myths, Edith Grossman has commented that "... human history is envisioned as an obsessively repeated mythic drama or cycle" (99), a model Cartagena Portalatín emulates in *YANIA*. Fuentes's more recent 1975 *Terra Nostra* had attempted to relate the story of all Hispanic civilization, much in the same way *YANIA* sought to tell the story of Hispañola and the founding of the Dominican nation through the conquest. And, indeed, the two were friends and interlocutors. In the 1969 Premio Biblioteca Breve, he had supported her novel, *Escalera para Electra*, for which it was a finalist (González 1083). A Dominican version of the Elektra myth interspersed with

intertextual references and found text (and images), *Escalera para Electra* “seeks to alter conventional readings of the mythical by reclaiming the story of female development from her male” (Williams, “Inscription” 220). In *YANIA TIERRA*, Cartagena Portalatín extends this approach, somewhat tempering mythic aspects of Yania Tierra as an epic character by situating the project epistemologically within the realm of artifacts, documents, and cartography.

YANIA TIERRA is most commonly read as an experimental epic poem that revises “the prevailing categories of the national” by focusing on acts of anti-imperial struggle waged by women in the struggle for Dominican sovereignty (Williams, “Inscription” 211).⁹⁹ Cartagena Portalatín intermixes the nationalist masculinist rhetoric of sovereignty with a feminist rhetoric of radical collectivity to unite Dominicans in their centuries-long nationalist struggle against foreign intervention. Rather than focus on the complicities of the Dominican elite who have benefitted from centuries of exploitative labor (black, indigenous, and mestizo), however, the text seems to privilege moments in which women of the ruling class contributed to collective resistance against colonial domination. By paying special attention to the role women have played in the fight for Dominican self-determination, *YANIA TIERRA* offers a historiography that refutes nationalist hyper-masculinist rhetoric of the Trujillato. This doesn’t necessarily mean the text succeeds in offering a feminist account of Dominican nationalism or the Dominican state. Several women, for example, are celebrated primarily for having mothered nationalist heroes. As Williams points out, at times the text defines the three “women’s civic value

exclusively in terms of their reproductive function,” though “this occurs only after the preceding sections of the portrayed these very women and a plethora of other individuals engaged in variety of tasks to sustain the nationalist cause” (“Coloring” 211).

As much as it is a celebration of female historical actors, *YANIA TIERRA* also documents the way history repeats itself according to predictable patterns, themselves the products of structural inequities and institutional violence. Over time, events layer themselves upon national narratives, national psyches, and national sites, in an ever accumulating palimpsest. Rather than making it harder to see the historical truth, however, the palimpsest is a representation of how oppressive History can be, and how it is only through exceptional acts of courage that people can hope to shift the course of events in another direction. The text dramatizes how worlds are divided, reformed, destroyed, and rebuilt. In so doing, *YANIA* counters Trujillo’s linear narrative of a dark past redeemed by the modernity of the dictatorship.¹⁰⁰ By her account, Columbus’s crash landing swiftly concludes an idyllic period in which the Taíno people lived in peace and thrusts the island into a cycle of repeated violence perpetuated in the name of [European] “History” and “Civilization.”

History is presented as beginning on Christmas Day, 1492, when Christopher Columbus’ flagship of the first voyage, the *Santa María*, runs aground on the north coast of the island that would become known as Hispaniola: “La historia nace en Marién / Con la palabra manifiesto del gran Almirante (*Yania* 1981 17) [History is born in Marién / With the word made manifest¹⁰¹ of the grand Admiral]. Columbus

returns to Spain, and the crew left behind establish a colony (La Navidad), the first in the Americas. What follows is that series of imperial protocols with which Cardenal was also in dialogue in “Proclama del conquistador”; what distinguishes Cartagena Portalatín is the willingness to name the legal procedures by name as “Ecomenederos” and “Repartimientos”—as well as an insistence that their legacies repeat endlessly:

YANIA vomita oro
sange

azúcar

Sabe que la historia comienza en Marién
Con un cacique / luego dos / después todos /
Que los Encomenderos/ Los Repartimientos
Los indios / los negros
Base de la Tragedia Humana / Llamada Civilización
Desde un día 25 todas las golondrinas
Durante cinco siglos
Continuamente trazan círculos
Sobre los mástiles de los navíos
Con cargazones de lanceros en busca de tesoros
Con toneles de vino para alentar la abulia (*Yania* 1981 22)

YANIA vomits gold
blood

sugar

She knows that history begins in Marien
With one cacique¹⁰²/ then two / finally all of them /
That the Encomenderos / the Repartimientos
The indians / the blacks
The foundation of the Human Tragedy/ Called Civilization
Since day 25 all the swallows
For five centuries
Continually trace circles
Above the ships' masts
Carrying huge cargos of soldiers in search of treasures
With kegs of wine to ward off boredom (*Yania* 1995 57; Fenwick and White)

Throughout this passage, Cartagena Portolatín reemphasizes conquest as the defining event which initiated (“since day 25”) a fundamental, history-defining shift: the gradual but inevitable fall of the indigenous political system “one cacique / then two / finally all of them,” and the subsequent transfer of power from caciques to the institutionalization of Spanish rule and the racial hierarchy upon which colonization depended (“the Indians / the blacks”). That the same swallows “continually trace” the masts “For five centuries” imparts an endless repetition compounded by the “boredom” of the “soldiers in search of treasures” who occupy the same extended time-space. Over time, the “Human Tragedy / Called Civilization” becomes increasingly literalized as a palimpsest of development that represents decline: “Con la historia se inicia la fatal opresión / El suelo gris de muchas capas / El hambre en los villorios / Pueblos y ciudades / Simetria de miseria” (35) [With history begins the fatal oppression / Layer upon layer of gray dirt / Hunger in the slums / Towns and cities / Symmetry of misery] (*Yania* 1995 81 Fenwick and White translation).

A comparison of the Dominican Republic to ancient Rome focalized through a character called the “cojito” [the crippled], tropes the Caribbean nation’s transformation from democratic life to dictatorship as one node within a larger network of similar collective historical tragedies.¹⁰³

LO MAS PENOSO ES LA HISTORIA DE LA CORRUPCION QUE
ENGENDRA EL PODER / Y LO ASOMBROSO / QUE TODAS ESAS
COSAS OCURREN REALMENTE COMO LO ESCRIBE CLAUDIO EN
ROMA (*Yania* 1981 79)

WHAT’S MOST PAINFUL IS HOW THE HISTORY OF CORRUPTION
BREEDS POWER / AND WHAT’S TRULY STAGGERING / IS THAT

ALL THESE THINGS REALLY HAPPEN JUST AS CLAUDIO WRITES
IN ROME (*Yania* 1995 166; Fenwick and White translation)

Here it is helpful to recall that the Trujillato exaggerated the awesome power of the nation's dictator by comparing him to Roman emperors. In a well-known speech addressed to a national audience in 1952,¹⁰⁴ Balaguer describes the Dominican "multitudes" as quickly "seduced by the arrogance of this man of arms or conquered by the prestige that already had begun to radiate from this Cesarean personality" (qtd. in Horn, "Dictates" 32); that is, Balaguer compares Trujillo favorably to Caesar while also suggesting the Dominican people, "seduced... conquered," are especially predisposed to prefer autocrats. Claudius, of course, wrote dozens of volumes on the history of Carthage, the Etruscans, and the Roman Republic, and is remembered in particular for his incisive histories of the Roman civil wars that critiqued the reigning emperor Caesar Augustus. In the above passage, Cartagena Portalatín's text implicitly draws a connection between itself and the work of the Roman historiographer, each anti-imperial and anti-dictator.

The reference would have been particularly fresh for her audience: Robert Graves's 1934 *I, Claudius* was adapted to television by the BBC in 1976 in what is considered one of the best shows in television history, and the novel was translated into Spanish for the first time by Floreal Mazía in 1979. In this way, Cartagena Portalatín activates a fictionalized version of history to comment upon present history of the Dominican Republic, contrasting truth-telling and democracy, represented by Claudius with lies and dictatorship, associated with Augustus (and, by extension, Trujillo). Unfortunately, if one follows the analogy all the way through, the result is

rather unfortunate: after a short and controversial reign himself, notably marked by the usage of freedmen in his administration, Claudius loses power and the Republic becomes an Empire that lasts until the Fall of Constantinople in 1453: that is, contemporaneous with the ascent of the Spanish Empire. Yet this might be a reading the author anticipated. Cartagena Portalatín places history as beginning in Marién (present-day Haiti), and projects it forward even beyond the present to the 500 year anniversary of contact: “A doce años para el gran HAPPY BIRTHDAY / al pie de Cinco Siglos” (*Yania* 1981 80) [Twelve years until the big HAPPY BIRTHDAY / at the end of Five Centuries] (*Yania* 1995 169). That Balaguer would ultimately compromise the welfare of the Dominican people by spending an exorbitant amount on constructing the Faro de Colón would not have surprised her in the least; in fact, the construction of a monument to Columbus fits perfectly within the model of a poem figuring Dominican history as an endless chain of imperial abuses.¹⁰⁵

Cartagena Portalatín’s vision of history as an endless reverberation arose within a network of contemporary artists and thinkers engaged in questions of temporality in relation to coloniality. The figuration of history as “Symmetry of misery,” for example, recalls Aimé Césaire’s 1939 *Notebook of a Return to the Native Land*:

Au bout du petit matin, cette ville plate— étalée, trébuchée de son bon sens, inerte, essoufflée sous son fardeau géométrique de croix éternellement recommençante, indocile à son sort, muette, contrariée de toutes façons, incapable de croître selon le suc de cette terre, embarrassée, rognée, réduite, en rupture de faune et de flore. (2)

At the end of first light, this town sprawled—flat, toppled from its common

sense, inert, winded under its geometric weight of an eternally renewed cross, indocile to its fate, mute, vexed no matter what, incapable of growing according to the juice of this earth, encumbered, clipped, reduced, in breach of its fauna and flora. (3; Arnold and Eshleman translation)

The unnatural colonial incursion prevents “growing according to the juice of this earth,” or what Cartagena Portalatín figures as “Peace” living “in harmony with seagulls doves and cornfields” (*Yania* 1981 47 Fenwick and White translation). Contact results in the rupture of the existing temporal structure, “a timeless idyll broken,” and the imposition of a linear regime: the beginning of history inaugurated by the “imperial command of the great Admiral” (*Yania* 1981 47 Fenwick and White translation). Prefiguring Cartagena Portalatín’s Santo Domingo, Césaire presents a town destroyed “under its geometric weight of an eternally renewed cross” but which, meeting the incessant imposition of Christianity as a justification for domination, refuses to capitulate, “indocile to its fate, mute, vexed no matter what.” The interest in non-linear time as an anticolonial epistemology, exemplified in Césaire’s text, intensified during the postwar period, as “Colonial and metropolitan thinkers who wrote from within the historical fissure that opened with the war attended repeatedly to the relationship between the problem of freedom and the politics of time” (Wilder 39).

Writers of the Latin American Boom, many of whom crossed path with Antillean intellectuals in Paris, theorized the political utility of reimagining normative conceptions of time and progress. Crucial to Fuentes in *La nueva novela hispanoamericana* [The New Spanish American Novel] (1969), was a conception of a “new” novel differentiated from the traditional, realistic one by its rejection of

realism and of what the author calls the “bourgeois” belief in historicity or temporal linearity. As opposed to historic realism, the new art was, for Fuentes, a function of “myth, language and structure” (20). In this spirit, Cartagena Portalatín’s *YANIA TIERRA* reveals the structure of Dominican nation building project as the product of an originary trauma (colonial contact) at once compulsorily initiated by and marred by a series of interruptions at the hands of colonial and capitalist powers. While the nation of the adversary may change over time, the structure—of a former colony whose sovereignty is vulnerable to foreign impositions of power (external and internal)—remains the same. In so doing, *YANIA TIERRA* resembles what Anthony Maingot has referred to as a “populist historiography” (qtd. in Mena, *Archivos* 142-143) to refer to works by writers such as C.L.R. James, Eric Williams, and Juan Bosch which take a “critical look at the trialectical interaction between present perceptions, aspirations for the future and interpretations of the past” as a means of providing “powerful myths for the movement” and “historical analogies to assist decision making” (qtd. in Mena, *Archivos* 148).¹⁰⁶

The inability of the Dominican political elite to make competent decisions that would mitigate, however partially, the historical oppression of the nation’s people is presented as one of the key problems in Cartagena Portalatín’s text; meanwhile, the dismal conditions of the working class preclude the possibility of organizing resistance. Throughout *YANIA TIERRA*, the title character walks through the history of Hispaniola accompanied by two other characters, “el cojito” [the cripple] and “el tonto” [the idiot] physically and visually impaired, respectively.¹⁰⁷ Fenwick describes

them as archetypal figures impeded from taking meaningful political action:

Both the cripple and the idiot are symbolic of two kinds of Dominican citizens: those who are loyal but powerless to change her course (the cripple) and those who are easily distracted by insignificant things to change her course (the idiot). The two figures suggest a class identity or at least a political consciousness: the cripple, who knows the historical struggles by memory, seems to represent the oppressed rural and urban working sectors; and the idiot seems to represent the idle patriot whose political consciousness is limited to silly fretful gestures. (*Yania* 1995 13)

Using the crude language of disability, the text marks the processes by which such characters adopt their stances—and relative access to political agency—regardless of the classes or populations they might represent. Using the crude language of disability, the text constructs the powerless “loyalty” of el cojito, for example, as a product of national indoctrination. Particularly influential is one of the nation’s most notorious antiblack thinkers, Manuel de Jesús Galván:

EL COJITO CONOCE LAS HISTORIAS DE ANTES Y DESPUES /
REMEMORA LAS COSAS APRENDIDAS / LLENO DE TRISTES
PENSAMIENTOS SIGUE GUARDANDO EN EL ARCA DE SU
MEMORIA EL DESOLADO PAISAJE / SUSDEVASTACIONES / LO QUE
ENSEÑA EL ENRIQUILLO DE GALVÁN / LA OBRA MEMORABLE DE
UN AUTOR QUE SIGUE AL INVASOR. (*Yania* 1981 25)

THE CRIPPLE KNOWS THE STORIES FROM BEFORE AND AFTER /
HE REMEMBERS THE THINGS LEARNED / FULL OF SAD THOUGHTS
IN THE ARK OF HIS MEMORY HE SAFEGUARDS THE DESOLATE
COUNTRYSIDE / ITS DEVASTATIONS / THE THINGS THAT
ENRIQUILLO BY GALVÁN TEACHES / THE CLASSIC WORK OF AN
AUTHOR WHO CHRONICLES THE INVADOR.

The above passage, perhaps the most detailed characterization we get of el cojito, suggests “HIS MEMORY” has been inculcated by “THE CLASSIC WORK OF AN

AUTHOR WHO CHRONICLES THE INVADOR”; that is, the 1879 novel that Doris Sommer has famously referred to as the nation’s “foundational fiction” (118). Based on the journal of Las Casas, *Enriquillo* celebrated “an indigenous mythical hero who was culturally Hispanic ‘a la moda de Castilla’ but racially marked as nonwhite” (García Peña 38), producing an influential vision of Dominican mestizaje that elided the presence of black persons in the national narrative. Galván, whose politics were motivated by “a profound pessimism about whether the Dominican Republic could be an independent country” (Mayes 22), was a proponent of Spanish annexation and used all manners of anti-Haitian discourse as a means to advance his case. Creating a mulatto woman as its mythic hero, while celebrating the various ways historical women, including mulatto women, have struggled for Dominican sovereignty, *YANIA TIERRA* is in many ways a direct refutation of Galván’s legacy. In aligning *Enriquillo* with “THE INVADOR,” Cartagena Portalatín implicitly rebukes Galván’s antiblack nationalism by presenting it as aligned with imperial Spain. The suggestion, then, is that a worldview based on imperial capitulation results in a cycle of learned helplessness marked by a lack of political agency. Towards the end of the text, el cojito is often depressed and immobilized by the weight of history repeating:

EL COJITO / VOIME A MORIR DE AMOR DE PENA / POR NO HABER
VISTO OTRA MANERA / TIRANOS / DICTADORES / DEPREDADORES
/ LAGRIMAS NEGRAS EN TODAS DIRECCIONES / MUERTOS
HEROES Y MARTIRES (*Yania* 1995 166)

THE CRIPPLE / I’M GONNA DIE OF LOVE OF SORROW / BECAUSE I
HAVEN’T SEEN ANY OTHER WAY / TYRANTS / DICTATORS /
PILLAGERS / TEARS OF RAGE EVERYWHERE / DEAD HEROES AND

MARTYRS (*Yania* 1995 167; Fenwick and White translation)

Nevertheless, at the end of the written portion of the poem, it is the cojito who, finally propelled to action, makes a call for unity based on interracial solidarity:

GRITA EL COJITO CON ALEGRIA Y PENA / INDIAS / NEGRAS/BLANCAS
/ MESTIZAS / MULATTAS / LAS AMAN LA JUSTICIA Y EL AMOR CON
RESPETO ¡VENID!

¡Ea! ¡Mujeres!

¡Ea! ¡Mujeres!

¡Soltad los pájaros de la esperanza!

¡Ea! ¡Mujeres!

¡Soltad Palomas! (*Yania* 1981 82)

THE CRIPPLE CRIES OUT IN JOY AND SORROW / INDIGENOUS WOMEN /
BLACK WOMEN / WHITE WOMEN / MESTIZA WOMEN / MULATTA
WOMEN / JUSTICE AND LOVE LOVE THEM WITH RESPECT COME ON!

Come on! Women!

Come on! Women!

Release the birds of hope!

Come on! Women!

Release the doves!

The ending of *YANIA TIERRA* suggests that, even if history does repeat in a cycle of oppression, the point is not to it and lament that fact, as el cojito does in the earlier portions of the text. Rather, as the female heroes of *YANIA* did when confronted with

the opportunity to act on behalf of a sovereign Dominican nation, one must act as if another world is possible. This was the position of Aimé and Suzanne Césaire, and countless other decolonial thinkers whom Cartagena Portalatín counted as contemporaries and for whom a critical look at the past yielded political insights for the present—and future. A crucial question motivating C.L.R. James’s 1938 *The Black Jacobins*, for example, was what Louverture could have done differently. Such attention to temporality came to define anti-imperial struggle in the decades to come. As Wilder writes, once again, of the postwar wave toward decolonization:

This was a period of anachrony, when politics, whether founded on flashback or animated by anticipation, were often conducted in the subjunctive mode: “as if.” Many actors experienced time in an unsteady and disjointed manner. The present was densely layered; incomplete histories were pressed up against imagined futures. There was a great deal of temporal misrecognition and historical acting out, much discussion of unrealized pasts that could now be re-activated and unfolding futures that were already at hand. (39)

YANIA TIERRA asks what happens when we reject prefabricated narratives of the Dominican nation based on racial exclusion, and turn instead to various democratic openings supported by the historical record. Dominican history, and the 19th century in particular, is replete with centuries of examples in which interracial solidarity became manifest before elided by official narratives of mestizaje and dominicanidad.

“Gráficas”: “Desde la Prehistoria hasta nosotros” as anti-Trujillo Revisionism

The original 1981 text of *YANIA TIERRA* ends on pg. 82; the remainder of the book is made up of a series of images, roughly forty in total, which make up over half

of the book object. A sheet at the back of *YANIA TIERRA* (Fig. 9) divides the book into two sections: “YANIA TIERRA: Poema Documento” followed by “gráficas,” explained as “Intentamos dar una idea con gráficas de cosas y hechos habidos desde la Prehistoria hasta nosotros” [Using diagrams we shall try to give an idea of things and events that have happened, from Prehistory up until us] (*Yania* 1981 89).

YANIA TIERRA

- poema documento -

graficas

INTENTAMOS dar una idea con gráficas de cosas y hechos habidos desde la Prehistoria hasta nosotros.

Cuántas contiendas para sentirnos orgullosos y capaces de defender tu integridad Oh Yania / Tierra / Yania López / Yania Patria.

Fig. 9. YANIA TIERRA (1981)

Using diagrams we shall try to give an idea of things and events that have happened, from Prehistory up until us.

So many contenders to inspire pride in us, to make us feel capable of defending your integrity Oh Yania / Tierra / Yania López / Yania Patria.

Many of these “gráficas,” which emphasize the enslavement of both Taíno and Africans on Hispaniola, are drawn from Cartagena Portalatín’s anthropological research, notably her 1974 article “Danza, Music e instruments de los Indios de la Española.” At times, images refer back to moments in the poem, but often the significance of individual photographs is oblique, suggesting a reader can make sense of them only in the context of other photos, or based on preexisting knowledge.

Lorna V. Williams is perhaps the only scholar who has considered these images as part of their interpretation of the text (“Coloring” 198-200). That this is the case is no doubt due not only to the difficulty of obtaining the 1981 Spanish text in the original, but to the fact that the “gráficas” section is not included in Fenwick and White’s 1995 translation into English, likely due to the already substantially increased printing costs of a bilingual edition with a lengthy introduction and copious notes. In other words, the images were likely excluded from the translation for practical reasons more than anything else: not only would their inclusion have made for a very thick book, but the array of uncited sources employed by Cartagena Portalatín in her curation of the visual materials doubtlessly presented a number of difficulties: indeed, the process and cost of obtaining the rights to reprint the images may have been prohibitive on its own. Even so, the tendency of scholars to rely on the English edition results in analyses that leaves out over half of the “poema documento” as it was originally published. To take seriously the innovative genre suggested by *YANIA TIERRA*’s subtitle requires giving due consideration to the “graficas” section as an essential component of its expression. Doing so within the context of Cartagena



En lujosos edificios modernos se instalan lujosos comercios, sitios de diversión, familias pudientes.

Fig. 10. Final image in graficas section. "Luxury shops, entertainment venues, wealthy families settle in to ritzy modern buildings."

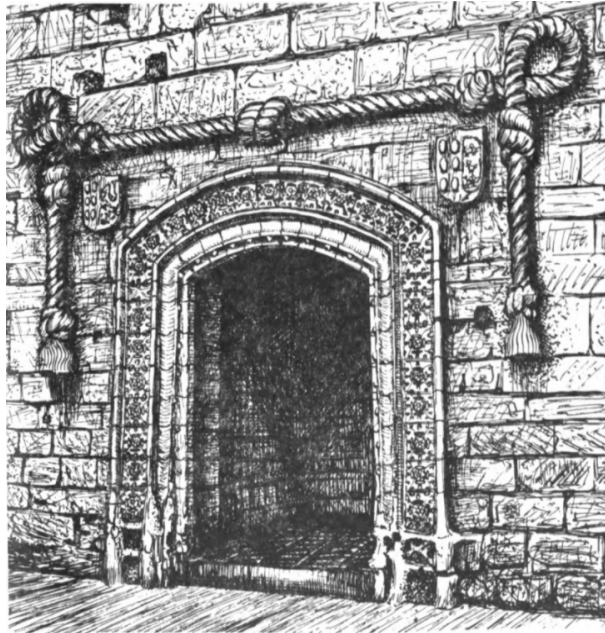


Santo Domingo, uno de los primeros países productores de azúcar del mundo.

Fig. 11. Penultimate image in the graficas section. Santo Domingo, one of the first countries to export sugar.

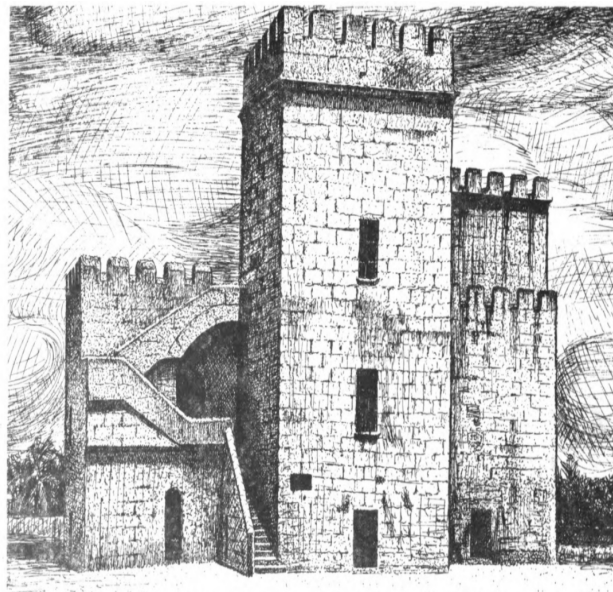
Portalatín's figuration of poetry more broadly, as a reel of film stills "signifying the aggressive impulses / of an era that will change and has been changing" meant to "raise Public Awareness" amongst a people with "no memory" (*Tierra Escrita* 48), will help us more rigorously approach her documentary aesthetic.

Like the poem preceding them, the images trace the history of Hispaniola from its Taíno beginnings to the moment of the book's publication. While juxtaposed roughly chronologically, the images do not accrue to a teleological model of development; indeed, the opposite is suggested by the caption of the final image of the book [Fig. 10], a modern building accompanied by the description "En lujosos edificios modernos se instal an lujosos comercios, sitios de diversión, familias pudientes" [Luxury shops, entertainment venues, wealthy families settle into ritzy modern buildings] (*Yania* 1981 171) whose adjectives imply the decadence of capitalist society. If the series counters Trujillian narratives of progress, it also implicitly critiques the many sovereigns, governors, conquistadors, privateers, and foreign settlers who have benefitted from the oppression of those who forcibly developed the island into the colonies that would one day become two independent nations. I'll focus on two buildings constructed under Nicolás Ovando, whose brutal reign laid the foundations of Santo Domingo and the Devastaciones de Osorio (1505-1506).¹⁰⁸ The sedimented histories of the Casa de Cordón and Torre de Homenaje remind us of the structural repetitions underlying the history of Hispaniola as an island repeatedly devastated by foreign invasion and extractivism; the conditions under



Puerta del Cordón en la mansión de Francisco Garay (1505).

Fig. 12. Casa de Cordón. Door of Francisco de Garay's mansion (1505). Served as Treasury and was the site of Drake's weighing of his collective ransom. Located on calle Isabel la Católica, the building has been leased by the Banco Popular Dominicano since 1974.



Torre del Homenaje primera fortaleza militar del Nuevo Mundo. 1508.

Fig. 13. Tower of Homage (La Fortaleza Santo Domingo or Fortaleza Ozama), first military fortress of the New World, 1508.

which they were built attest to the shared oppression of Taíno and African peoples, depicted as the literal foundation-layers of the colony that would become the Dominican and Haitian nations.

The Casa de Cordón [Fig. 12] is a site that, since its construction (begun in 1503), has served to store wealth extracted from the island. The first house built out of stone in the Americas, La Casa de Cordón received its name from the rope belt carved into its façade, the symbol of the Franciscan order.¹⁰⁹ Its first owner, Francisco de Garay, was a servant on Columbus's first voyage who amassed wealth through Ovando's mining industry; de Garay became governor of Jamaica and participated in the conquest of Mexico. In 1509, Diego Columbus (Columbus's son and Ovando's successor) exchanged the Torre de Homenaje (Fig. 13) for the Casa de Cordón, where he remained until his residence was completed. The building has also served as the city treasury during various key moments, including Drake's invasion:

Yania sabe que son damas
La Casa del Cordón las ve llegar
Entregan sus joyas / su dinero
Yania sabe que son damas
Damas rescatan la ciudad (*Yania* 1981 36)

Yania knows they are ladies
The Treasury authorities see them arrive
They hand over their jewelry / their money
Yania knows they are ladies
Ladies will rescue the city (*Yania* 1995 83 Fenwick and White translation)

In this passage, Cartagena Portalatín's references the upper class women who offered their own wealth to meet Drake's ransom, bringing it to La Casa del Cordón to be weighed and assessed for value. At the time of Cartagena Portalatín's writing *YANIA*,

LEMBA
esclavo africano se levanta desde su Ma-
nuel en pos de la libertad
es el primer cimarrón



Trapiche de caña de azúcar

Fig. 14. [SEBASTIÁN] LEMBA. Enslaved African who led a prolonged maroon rebellion in Santo Domingo throughout the 1530s and 1540s. "He is the first cimarrón." Sugar mill for processing raw cane.

Las casas son de madera y
paja, muy luenga y delgada,
hechas del modo de una
campana." (Bohios indigenas,
según grabado de Oviedo, 1547).

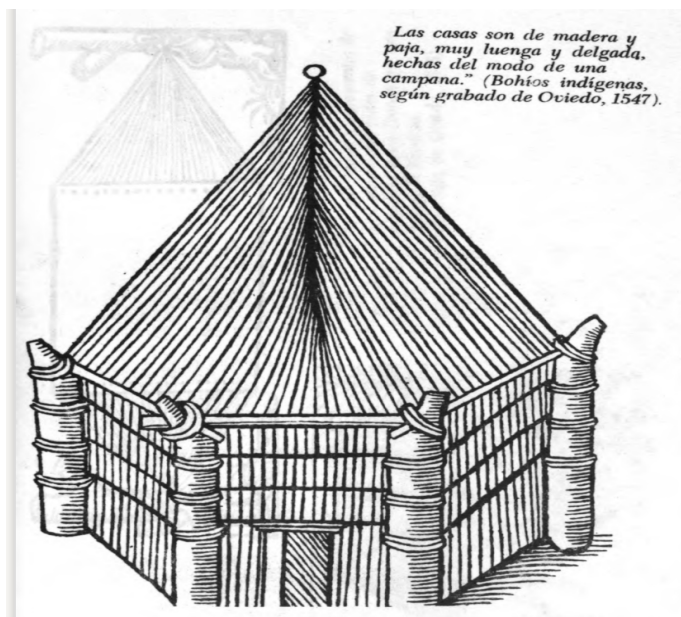


Fig. 15. Taíno dwellings. "The houses are made of wood and straw, very long and thin, bell-shaped." (Indigenous huts, print by Oviedo, 1547).

the Casa de Cordón housed a bank, the Banco Popular Dominicano (established in 1974 under Joaquín Balaguer), continuing the building's trajectory as a seat of extractivist wealth creation and monetary exchange.

The Torre de Homenaje would have had similar colonial and modern resonances for Cartagena Portlatín's Dominican readership. Recognized by UNESCO as being the oldest military construction of European origin in the Americas, the Torre was built by black and Taino slaves; its original function was to protect the port of Santo Domingo and the city from seaborne enemies. Nevertheless Drake seized it for around a month. During the 1844 Independence movement, the Torre served to imprison nationalist revolutionaries, a function later repeated by Trujillo, who used the Torre as a prison; violent strategies once used by the state to squelch foreign political enemies were ultimately used against domestic nationals. That the building has served for centuries, under distinct regimes, as a place of incarcerating and executing political adversaries, underscores the palimpsestic nature of Dominican history. At the same time, this photograph suggests imagined futures that never came to pass. In 1965, the building was seized by Bosch supporters during the U.S. occupation, and housed their prisoners. The U.S. quelled the uprising, reinstated Balaguer, and began "the 12 Years" (1966-1978).

In positing history as one of decadent repetition rather than progress, Cartagena Portlatín's timeline refutes the historiography popularized by Trujillo and Balaguer who constructed the past as dark and barbaric and were "notorious for emphasizing the country's Hispanic and long-extinct indigenous heritage, at the

expense of its African roots” (Horn, “Dictates” 30). Inverting Trujillo’s narrative, in Cartagena Portalatín’s curation of images it is the Spanish who are shown as barbaric, enjoying the mauling of the Taíno (Fig. 16) and the sale of adolescents (Fig. 17). Visual cues underscore the shared exploitation of the non-white underclasses. Taíno dwellings (Fig. 15), for example, have the same bell-like shape as the sugar mill, connecting the Taíno and the Africans brought to replace them when their population was decimated. Ovando was responsible for the first importation of Spanish-speaking black enslaved people into the Americas in 1501,¹¹⁰ the development of the island’s mining industry, and the large-scale cultivation of sugar cane.

Depicting the Taíno¹¹¹ alongside enslaved Africans (“The indians / the blacks) emphasizes the way the forced labor of both groups was integral to the construction of Santo Domingo and, by extension, the Dominican nation-building project and “The foundation of the Human Tragedy / Called Civilization.” The gráficas includes histories of insurrection of these peoples: Sebastián Lemba (Fig. 14), “el primer cimarrón,” appears as the earliest figure of black resistance in the Americas, while the Taíno cacique Anacaona (Fig. 18), leader of indigenous revolt, is portrayed as the rightful sovereign: “REINA Y SEÑORA DE LA ISLA exterminada por Ovando” [QUEEN AND LORD OF THE ISLAND exterminated by Ovando]. Moreover, Cartagena Portalatín’s explicitly black attention to the visual culture of Santo Domingo (exemplified in Fig. 19), and buildings constructed by Wynter’s famous triangulated relation between the colonizer, the indigenous, and enslaved African, emphasizes the shared history of peoples now divided as Haitians and Dominicans.



Fig. 16. Conquistadores use dogs to attack and maim the Taino people.



Venta de adolescentes en un mercado de esclavos. (La trata de Negros, Barcelona).

Fig. 17. Auction of adolescents in a slave market. (Slave trade, Barcelona)

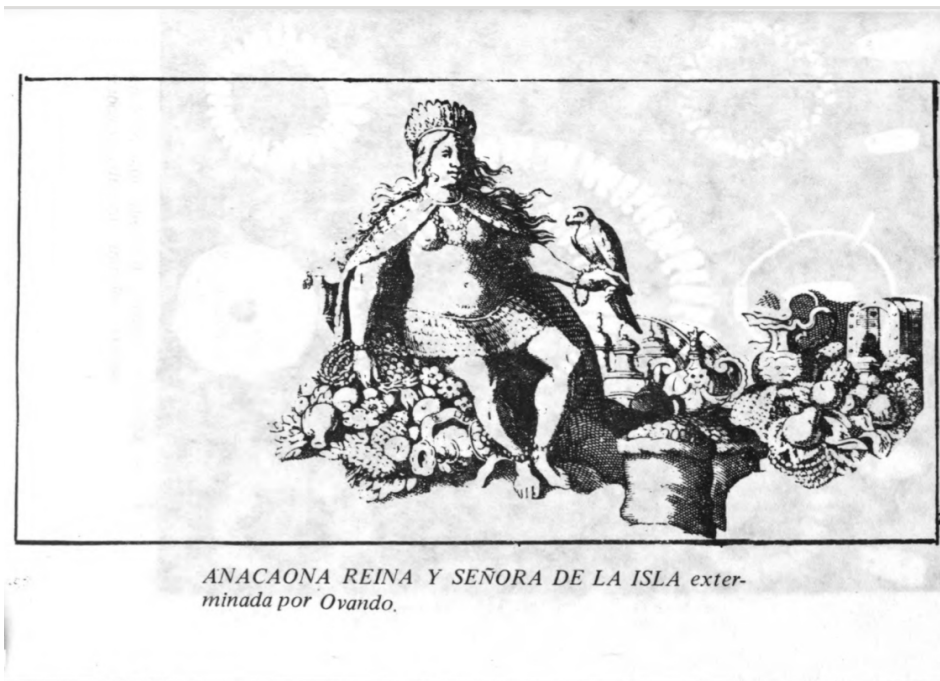


Fig. 18. ANACAONA QUEEN & LADY OF THE ISLAND exterminated by Nicolás de Ovando y Cáceres, governor and administrative official of Hispaniola (1502-1509).

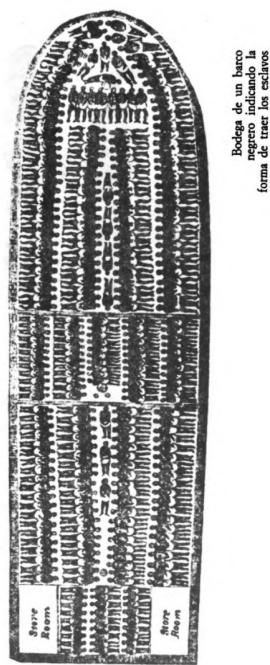


Fig. 19. Hull of a slave ship indicating the manner of transporting their human cargo. Black slaves were brought to Santo Domingo as early as 1520, to replace the Taino workforce, decimated by disease.

Returning as Mulataje as Rayano Consciousness during the Interregnum

Such a reading, however, runs counter to much of the extant criticism on *YANIA*. In a particularly notorious passage, Cartagena Portalatín presents several Haitian leaders as invaders of the territory that would become the Dominican Republic: “AÑOS de Boyer / Herad / Borgellá y Carrie Deshechos de deshechos / Horizonte negado a la esperanza / Tam-tam tambores de Occidente” (*Yania* 1981 37) [YEARS of Boyer / Herard / Borgella and Carrie / Scum of the scum / A horizon without hope/ The tam-tam of drums from the West (*Yania* 1995 85; Fenwick and White translation)].¹¹² For many critics, this oft-cited excerpt provides textual evidence of anti-Haitianism, usually presented as a hangup from Trujillan nationalism rather than along the lines of García Peña’s more nuanced formulation of anti-Haitianism as “colonial bequeath that was in turn upheld and sustained by the United States to preserve its own imperial ventures, rather than the recent legacy of the Trujillo dictatorship” (15). However, at least one scholar has been careful to point out that the critique leveled here by the poem “never links Haitian aggression to blackness. On the contrary, it likens Haitians, with their imperialistic hubris, to their counterparts in Spain, France, and the United States” (Russ, “Between the Unthinkable” 116). Nevertheless, the copious amount of scholarship based that mentions Cartagena Portalatín’s supposed anti-Haitianism, combined with the poem’s conspicuous silence on Haitian independence, and the 1937 “Parejil” massacre, merit an assessment regarding anti-Haitian discourse within Cartagena Portalatín’s national vision.¹¹³

Following Horn, I suggest that critics' "insistent foregrounding of Dominican–Haitian enmity, often represented as an almost inevitable struggle arising out of two nations sharing the same island, omits how outside forces—both U.S. and European—helped produce and foster tensions between them" (*Masculinity* 23-24). In particular, readings of *YANIA TIERRA* that build their arguments around anti-Haitianism bolstered by the text's representation of Haiti as invaders understate the role of U.S. and colonial powers in the creation of the Haitian-Dominican border, which was not delimited until 1929, a period during which the U.S. occupied Haiti and just five years after the first U.S. occupation of the Dominican Republic (1916-1924).¹¹⁴

Even so, Cartagena Portalatín's figuration of the book's title character Yania Tierra as both the island formerly-known as Hispaniola *and* the Dominican Republic—"Ella misma su Tierra Desposeída por absurdos argonautas" (*Yania* 1981 20) [She herself Dispossessed of her Land by absurd argonauts]—raises the question of the implied status of Haiti, which makes up about three eighths of the island's land mass. The figuration of *YANIA TIERRA*'s title character as such often elides Haiti as a modern state:

... el personaje que da nombre a la obra, Yania Tierra, es la encarnación misma de la isla. Para confundir el asunto aún más, la figura de Yania encarna, no sólo la isla, sino también, y más importante, la nación dominicana. Así que el poema funde (o confunde) la protagonista con la isla, y la isla con el territorio dominicano. Por ende, borra la distancia entre la narración y la nación, y reduce Haití al papel de un invasor sin derecho "natural" a la tierra. (Russ, "La Representación" 66)

The character who gives the work its name, Yania Tierra, is the incarnation of the island itself. Confusing this point even further, the figure of Yania gives form not only to the island but to the Dominican nation. In this way, the poem portrays (or confuses) the protagonist with the island, and the island with Dominican territory. It erases the distance between narration and nation, and reduces Haiti to the role of an invader without a “natural” right to the land.

At the same time, it’s worth remembering that the island has a long history of changing hands and redrawing borders due to the impact of rival colonial powers, all of which is reflected in certain ambiguities regarding the linguistic references used to delineate portions of the island, or the island as a whole.¹¹⁵ In the interest of avoiding presentist critique, particularly given that *YANIA TIERRA* (the *gráficas* section in particular) attempts to tell the history of the island from first contact to 1981, Yania might be framed as a character who does not so much “erase” the nation of Haiti as she points to moments in which the island was not yet divided into two nations or peoples—Quisqueya; Hispaniola; Santo Domingo/Saint-Domingue—as well as the trauma of the island’s eventual division at the hands of colonial powers.

The 1777 partition of Hispaniola into two territories, French and Spanish, is constructed not as a single historical event, but a process initiated by Columbus’s landing in Marién:

EN SU incomoda posición
Ella Isla por la mitad un día
Pianos cambiantes en todos los espejos
Como paquetes de laminas en una vieja moto
Para cargar películas
Desde la mañana 25
Diciembre 92 del 400 (*Yania* 1995 64)

IN her difficult position
She an Island one day divided down the middle

Boundaries changing in all the mirrors
Like in the frames of an old
Movie projector
Since the morning of 25th
December 92 of 400 (*Yania* 1995 65; Fenwick and White translation).

YANIA TIERRA applies this cinematic simile to the process of geopolitical boundary drawing as a means of emphasizing the instability and constructedness of the border, itself a colonial imposition: “Boundaries changing in all the mirrors / Like in the frames of an old / Movie projector / Since the morning of 25th / December 92 of 400.” In this way, we can see the poem as a space that seeks to renegotiate the colonial artifact of the Haitian-Dominican border by drawing attention to its inherent and ongoing fluctuating permeability.

Understanding *Yania* to index a pre-divided Hispañola *and* a divided Hispañola focalized primarily through the Eastern portion of the island would also explain why, during a moment that seems at first to refer to the Haitian invasion, *YANIA TIERRA* invokes colonial intervention more generally. *Yania*’s lament of the arrival from “todos los cuadrantes / En la tierra de Yania” (*Yania* 1981 38) [every quadrant / of *Yania*’s land], a figuration in which troops cannot only be Haitian, because they are arriving from all four cardinal directions. These might index, roughly, Marién/Cap-Haïtien (Spain, France); Santo Domingo (Spain, England, Haiti, U.S.); Puerto Plata (Spain, France, U.S.); and Port-au-Prince (Spain, France, Holland, Great Britain, U.S.). While the use of the term “invasor” is applied to Haitians, in 19th century portions of the text (128), in 20th century portions of the text, it refers primarily to the U.S. landing (148) responsible for the eight year occupation of the

Dominican Republic (1916-1924)¹¹⁶ and the subsequent 1965-1966 “Operation Power Pack.” The former invasion marked a period in which the U.S. instituted the formation of the Dominican national guard, through the ranks of which Trujillo quickly rose to power; the latter restored Balaguer’s dictatorial rule. By contrast, the opponents of these invasions (particularly the founding fathers, such as Duarte, who would become “Dominicans”) are characterized in *YANIA TIERRA* as the “libertadores” (*Yania* 1995 128). Writes Horn, “In order to understand certain Dominican nationalist discourses and their problematic presumptions, we must take into account [the] history of imperialism and cultural paternalism [waged by the U.S. on both Dominican Republic and Haiti]” (*Masculinity* 204) that is, a “geopolitical context of longstanding histories of colonialism, imperialism, and unequal global power structures made surreptitious through a language of benevolent paternalism that variously infantilizes, emasculates, and racially others the global South and helps to produce vituperative responses” (*Masculinity* 205).

Historically speaking, the overwhelming focus of the “poem” half of *YANIA TIERRA: Poema Documento* is the period of Dominican independence after Haitian occupation. Why is Cartagena Portalatín revisiting this moment a full two decades after Trujillo’s fall, during the temporary defeat of Balaguer? In order to approach this question, we must understand the poem’s return to the Dominican independence movement within the context of *YANIA*’s emergence. Consistent with her views of Caribbean history as a palimpsest of imperial abuses, Cartagena Portalatín’s “poem documento” portrays the centuries-old struggle for Hispañolan sovereignty as playing

out again in the present, drawing parallels between the threat of U.S. occupation in the 19th century and the 20th. At the time of writing, Haiti was embroiled in a dictatorship of its own: the Duvalier Dynasty. Jean-Claude “Baby Doc” Duvalier (1971-1986) had succeeded his father François “Papa Doc” Duvalier (1956-1971). Despite well-documented human rights abuses enacted by the regime and its secret police, the Dynasty received the support of U.S. aid, thanks in large part to Duvalier’s firmly anti-communist stance. Between Balaguer’s second and third presidencies, the Dominican Republic was in a comparatively better position politically. Economically, however, the nation was in crisis. A precipitous decline in the sugar industry beginning in the 1970s¹¹⁷ left the Dominican Republic subject to constant foreign intervention in the form of free trade: working conditions deteriorated, poverty skyrocketed, and protests were violently suppressed by the government; by 1985, unemployment exceeded 30% and an estimated 800,000 Dominicans had migrated to the U.S. or Puerto Rico, causing a labor shortage filled largely by Haitians. By the late 1990s, most state owned sugar mills had been privatized, and the industry would never be revitalized. Cartagena Portalatín, whose prescient understanding of post-colonial temporality is as informed by Hispanophone authors as those of the Greater Antilles, sees history (“fatal oppression”) as doomed to repeat in the same way “all the swallows / For five centuries / Continually trace circles / above the ships’ masts / carrying huge cargos of soldiers in search of treasures” (*Yania* 1995 57; Fenwick and White translation).

Published during the early years of the Guzmán/Blanco interregnum, a brief period of democratic opening where the dictatorial Joaquín Balaguer was ousted from power (1978-1986), *YANIA TIERRA* makes an uncanny return to the period immediately following Haitian occupation: the overwhelming focus of the textual “poem” half of *YANIA TIERRA: Poema Documento* is on the Dominican War for Independence (1844-1856). Why is Cartagena Portalatín revisiting this moment a full two decades after Trujillo’s fall, during the temporary defeat of Balaguer? Consistent with her views of Caribbean history as a palimpsest of colonial violence, Cartagena Portalatín’s “poem documento” portrays the centuries-old struggle for Hispaniolan sovereignty as playing out in the present, once again drawing structural connections between the threat of U.S. occupation in the 19th century and the 20th. That Balaguer would ultimately be reelected and compromise the welfare of the Dominican people by, among other things, spending an exorbitant amount on building the Faro de Colón would not have surprised her in the least; in fact, the construction of a monument to Columbus fits perfectly within the model of a poem figuring Dominican history as an endless chain of imperial abuses. Importantly, though, this repetitive history is shown in *YANIA TIERRA* to be interrupted most forcefully during the successful war for independence, a period that finds its 20th century parallel in the Guzmán/Blanco interregnum. The text’s cyclical logic suggests it behooves those concerned with national and regional history, democracy, and self-determination to study closely the mid 19th century, when Dominican intellectuals succeeded, however ephemerally, in

having the nation's sovereignty recognized by the same foreign imperial powers which imperiled it.

The threat to Dominican autonomy by Old and New World colonial powers set the terms for 19th century discourse about the geopolitical fate of the island more broadly; the black insurrection which transformed the French colony of Saint Domingue into the Republic of Haiti in 1804, condemned throughout the Western world, was inseparable from these debates. At the time, the ideal relationship between the eastern part of Hispaniola and the rest of the Western hemisphere was fiercely contested: U.S. annexation (championed by Fredrick Douglass), Spanish rule, and forming a Pan-Antillean confederation were all options proposed by the young nation's intellectual and political class. Spanish annexation, championed by Manuel de Jesús Galván (one of *YANIA*'s great antagonists), was an explicitly antiblack and anti-Haitian "solution." Dominican elites such as Galván, who appears in *YANIA TIERRA* as "UN AUTOR QUE SIGUE AL INVASOR" [AN AUTHOR WHO FOLLOWS THE INVADER] (*Yania* 1995 60), believed Dominicans were unfit to govern themselves, in large part because they were not white (Mayes 21-22), and constantly raised "the specter of Haitian incursion" to quell insurgent uprisings which challenged Spanish rule.

Other potential models for Dominican sovereignty, however, championed by political intellectuals such as Pedro Frederico Bonó and antillanos Eugenio María de Hostos and Gregorio Luperón, advocated political alternatives to annexation that nevertheless had to reckon with Haiti's complicated situation as the black republic

whose sovereignty as a nation Western powers refused to formally recognize. Bonó, for example, was ambivalent about the legacy of Spanish rule, even as he romanticized the resulting mixed-race “cosmopolitanism” of mestizaje in comparison to Haiti as a nation-state based on racially exclusionist policy. The latter, however, he understood as an effect of Haiti’s difficult geopolitical position. In his vision of “a dominicanidad that was not anti-Haitian, just critical of policy choices made by Haitians in power,” Bonó “blames the antagonism that existed between Haiti and the Dominican Republic not on their supposed racial differences but on their leaders’ “politics with white foreigners”—their relations with European countries and the United States”; he saw Boyer’s rule as “a lost opportunity for both sides of the island to unify in the name of bringing about economic development and peace” (Mayes 25). Because Bonó went beyond racial narratives of Dominicans as Indo-Hispanics and affirming the place of blacks and mulattos in a project of nation building grounded in racial equality and shared Hispanic cultural norms, Pedro San Miguel and Michiel Baud have characterized his nationalism as mulatismo or mulataje (Mayes 26-27). Luperón, who corresponded with Bonó and shared many political affinities, was part of a separate nationalist movement among Dominicans that, in the 1880s and 1890s, advocated for a Pan-Antillean federation capable of challenging U.S. and Spanish hegemony in the Caribbean. Composed of the Greater Antilles—Cuba, Puerto Rico, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic—antillanos developed an anti-imperialist critique of Spanish annexation and the Monroe Doctrine, which they saw as interrelated threats to a sovereign Confederation.

Nevertheless, Haiti represented a challenge to the Antillean Confederation project, whose architects were reticent about including the western half of the island. Mayes speculates that, despite an admiration for Haitian democratization efforts during unification, fellow antillano Eugenio María de Hostos (“El Gran Ciudadano de las Américas”) may have “remained silent about that country’s place in the federation because he feared that explicit support for Haiti could be used by Spain against independent movements in Cuba and Puerto Rico” (32). Yet Luperón characterized Haiti and the Dominican Republic as “sister nations” (Mayes 31), countering antagonistic narratives that emphasized Dominican whiteness and Haitian blackness by underscoring each nation’s mixed-race *raza*, the product of a shared history of colonialism. *Mulataje* and *antillanismo* each offered a separate vision of Dominican nationalism that “while Hispanic-centric, was neither anti-Haitian nor Negrophobic” (Mayes 31), underscoring instead the affinities and struggles between the two sides of the island.

If, as Mayes suggests, “Dominican narratives of racial mixture may carry within them the possibilities of undoing antiblack Hispanic nationalism” (14), then it is possible to read *YANIA TIERRA*, and Cartagena Portalatín’s career more broadly, as reanimating 19th century discourses of *mulataje* drawn from earlier forms of Dominican nationalism to problematize contemporary hegemonic Trujillian Dominican nationalism that were explicitly antiblack and anti-Haitian. When Haitian unification and its after effects prove to infringe upon Dominican sovereignty, the bargain that must be struck, the condition of possibility for self-rule, is separation

from Haiti: ““QUE QUISQUEYA SERA DESTRUIDA / PERO SIERVA POR SIEMPRE / JAMAS”” (*Yania* 1981 70) [“THAT QUISQUEYA BE DESTROYED / BUT ETERNAL SERVANT / NEVER”], a line taken from the Dominican national anthem, authored by Emilio Prud’homme (one of Hostos’s collaborators); later on the text, the sentiment is reiterated in a second citation of the hymn, when “Los coros de mujeres se repiten” [A chorus of women repeat]:

“Ningún pueblo ser libre merece
Si es esclavo / indolente y servil” (160)

“No people deserve to be free
If they are slaves / indolent and servile”

Prud’homme’s “Himno nacional” is animated by a reciprocal relation between servitude and emancipation:

Mas Quisqueya la indómita y brava
Siempre altiva la frente alzará;
Que si fuere mil veces esclava
Otras tantas ser libre sabrá. (“Himno nacional”)

But Quisqueya the indomitable and brave
Ever-haughty will always raise her head
For if one thousand times a slave
One thousand times will she know freedom.

Here, too, we can see Cartagena Portalatín’s conflation of the island of Hispaniola or Quisqueya (Taíno for “mother of all lands”) and the Dominican nation, is symptomatic of Dominican nationalism more generally, even as Prud’homme’s invocation of slavery and its inevitable overcoming is at once suggestive of Haitian independence. Importantly, the anthem—which makes reference to its colonial ruler

as “De Castilla al soberbio león” [the arrogant lion from Castille]—makes a claim for the inevitability of self-emancipation. In this light, it is important to remember that the Dominican Republic became an independent state only after rising up in revolt during the period of Haitian unification. The anthem, like *YANIA TIERRA*, is a celebration of “el genio de Sánchez y Duarte” [the genius of Sánchez and Duarte], the Dominican nation’s founding fathers who conspired against and eventually ended Haitian occupation in 1844.

Approaches to Haiti championed by Bonó and Luperón in the late 19th century found their origins in Juan Pablo Duarte, whose solution to resisting both Haitian and U.S. occupation was the formation of Dominican multi-racial democracy.

According to Mayes:

The idea that Dominicans were racially harmonious may have started with Juan Pablo Duarte (1813-1876), a founding leader of the Dominican revolt against President Jean Pierre Boyer in 1844. As he once wrote, “Whites, blacks / Browns, Mixed-Bloods / Marching peacefully / United and brave. / Let’s save the fatherland / From vile tyrants, / And show the world / That we are brothers.” In this instance, Duarte rallies support among Dominicans, regardless of their color, against tyranny, not against Haitians. Given that Haitians, too, were in revolt against the government makes Duarte’s message less anti-Haitian than strategic and pragmatic. (21)

In the reading of many scholars, Duarte’s rationale in separating the Dominican Republic from Haiti was not racist but a political necessity in a world that refused to accept a black nation as sovereign. García Peña illuminates the importance of Duarte in the period of independence:

Following the principles of the Illuminati and Freemasons that had been so successful in the early stages of organizing during the French revolution, Juan

Pablo Duarte formed La Trinitaria Secret Society in 1838. La Trinitaria launched the political and military actions that led to the 1844 independence. Along with Duarte, the founding members of La Trinitaria— Santo Domingo philosopher Juan Isidro Pérez, and Azua hatero Félix María Ruiz—believed the “ideological differences between Haitians and Dominicans made it impossible to continue governing as a unit. The Trinitario Manifesto of 1838 thus identified the need to break away from Haiti as political and ideological in nature. Difference, though irreconcilable, did not appear in ethnic or cultural terms. Rather, it was Haiti’s crippling debt following France’s imposition, paired with continued international disapproval of Haiti’s sovereignty due to the nation’s self-proclamation as a black republic that preoccupied hateros and criollos as the volatile economy made the future unstable and vulnerable to US expansion. (32)

Put more succinctly, “Duarte understood that to remain free from colonial or US intervention, Dominicans needed to separate from Haiti and secure immediate international recognition from both Europe and the United States. To reach this goal, the founding father needed the support and trust of all Dominican races” (García Peña 32). As part of this effort, Duarte wrote a series of literary works, several of which were poems, which García Peña has referred to as “solidarity narratives” because they honor the racial, ethnic, and cultural plurality of the people of Hispaniola, while also maintaining the self-determination of the western portion of the island. The call to action which concludes *YANIA TIERRA* is very much in line with Duarte’s vision in this respect, though where Duarte emphasized the need to “show the world / That we are brothers,” Cartagena Portalatín focuses explicitly on uniting a multiracial coalition of women: “INDIAS / NEGRAS/BLANCAS / MESTIZAS / MULATTAS / LAS AMAN LA JUSTICIA Y EL AMOR” (*Yania* 1981 82) [INDIGENOUS WOMEN / BLACK WOMEN / WHITE WOMEN / MESTIZA WOMEN / MULATTA WOMEN / JUSTICE AND LOVE LOVE THEM]. In bringing Duarte’s

vision of a pluralistic democracy into the present of the 1980s, *YANIA TIERRA* juxtaposes the constant reverberations of racialized colonial misery with reverberations of solidarity which challenge antiblack forms of Dominican nationalism.

Cartagena Portalatín's call to action directly follows a passage that emphasizes the deleterious effects of stories from "the North." The conception of an interracial Dominican society based on "JUSTICE AND LOVE" is suggestively posed, then, as a counternarrative to the myriad Western historical imaginaries, of which anti-Haitianism is only one, that are imposed upon the Global South:

SALEN / salen historias que parecen mancas
Prendidas a la piel con alfileres
Sonido
Olfato
Lágrima
Y la degustación a plomo puro
Salen historias como partos / Salen
Con aureola de placenta agria
Llegan aún del Norte / Los piratas saquean
La riqueza del café / azúcar / cacao
oro / plato / níquel / la bauxita (*Yania* 1981 81)

THEY COME / stories come out looking deformed
Fastened to the skin with pins
Sounds
Smells
Tears
The taste of pure lead
Stories come out like births / They come out
With an aroma of sour placenta
They keep coming from the North / the pirates loot
Riches from coffee / sugar / cacao
gold / silver / nickel / bauxite

Anticipating Walter Mignolo’s famous observation that “the Americas exist today only as a consequence of European colonial expansion and the narrative of that expansion from the European perspective” (xi), Cartagena Portalatín here points to the ways that foreign narratives—deformed and foul-smelling—are used to justify forms of domestic extraction and exploitation which, in turn, scaffold existing hierarchies. By conflating both “stories” and “pirates” as the relevant subject in the line “They keep coming from the north,” Cartagena Portalatín’s poem suggestively links the human actors’ looting to their ability to manufacture narrative. In such a way, the poem suggests that dominicanidad has been produced in large part, though by no means exclusively, by foreign powers for the purpose of resource extraction.

Cartagena Portalatín’s poem is especially attentive to the ways contemporary dominicanidad is the product of the colonial imposition of a racial hierarchy used to justify and facilitate extractivism, even as *YANIA TIERRA* at times romanticizes the Taíno people as naïve, shameless inhabitants of an idyllic society:

EN Marien se inicia la Conquista
 Al nativo le sorprende el forastero
 Que construye derrotas...
 Se apodera del oro
 De otros bienes y riquezas

Yania sabe que la Paz
 No transita por caminos de odio
 Y usted / blanco / indio / negro / mestizo o mulato
 Usted sabe / Desde entonces la Paz se muere de

vergüenza
 por usted
 Señor Usted (*Yania* 1981 18)

IN Marien the Conquest begins
The native is surprised by the outsider
Who constructs downfalls
He seizes the gold...
Other goods and riches

Yania knows that Peace
Does not take the path of hatred
And that you / white / indian / black / mestizo or mulatto
You know / Since that moment Peace has been dying of

shame
because of you
Lord Admiral you

Peace, here the normative state of the “surprised native,” is contrasted with the moment of colonial contact that, as a “path of hated,” represents the onset of Taíno demise (the prolonged death of Peace). Using an accusatory formal direct address aimed at Columbus himself (“Señor Usted”), Cartagena Portalatín suggests racial division and its byproduct of indoctrination—a hitherto unknown racialized “shame”—is the driver of calculated and systematic extermination: downfalls constructed as a means of seizing “gold... / Other goods and riches.” Racialization, the poem suggests, is the most enduring colonial narrative, not only for the ways it fosters hate, but enables the continual appropriation of wealth.

In her uncanny return to the narratives of multiracial democracy that emerged during Dominican independence, Cartagena Portalatín anticipates contemporary forms of *mulataje* that challenge *mestizaje* and hegemonic forms of *latinidad* and *dominicanidad*: “*mulataje*” is “one of the two emerging racial projects challenging *mestizaje* [in the Dominican Republic]. It articulates a new racial view and reflects a negro-blanco (black-white) mixture with assertions of being *mulato*” (Mayes 146).

Likewise, *YANIA TIERRA* is particularly sensitive to the artificial imposition of a border upon land that, prior to contact, was home to Taíno chiefdoms who relied on reciprocity and exchange for survival: to invoke García Peña's conception of rayano consciousness as "the historical and present awareness of Dominican borders—symbolic, political, and geographical—a process that includes marginalized subjectivities in the imagining and narrations of dominicanidad" (18), Cartagena Portalatín, as García Peña says of Manuel Rueda, "proposes rayano consciousness as an antidote to the colonial imagination that dominates and cuts Hispaniola into two antagonistic halves" (139).

Cartagena Portalatín's rayano consciousness is figured most strongly when the character of Yania, the island personified, is portrayed as pregnant with fraternal twins: "ahora / LA BOCA DEL LEÓN ESTA EN EL PONIENTE / CON DOS LENGUAS DE tierra proyectadas / LAS BOCAS detras de LINEAS fronterizas / CON DOS SILUETAS COMPLETAMENTE DISTINTAS sobre UN MISMO vientre DEFINIDAS" (114). [now THE LION'S MOUTH IS IN THE WEST / WITH TWO TONGUES OF land projected / THE MOUTHS behind TOUCHING BORDERS / WITH TWO COMPLETELY DIFFERENT SILHOUETTES OUTLINED on THE SAME womb] (*Yania* 1995 115; Fenwick and White translation). While at least one scholar has read "TWO COMPLETELY DIFFERENT SILHOUTETTES" as evidence of Cartagena Portalatín "othering" Haiti (Past 93), what is happening is more nuanced. The invocation of the lion's mouth in the West aligns the Haiti of Haitian unification with the colonial power of Spain ("the arrogant

lion of Castile,” a reference to the Dominican national anthem). While the poem condemns the imperial rule of both, the passage otherwise takes pains to emphasize similitude (“DOS LENGUAS DE tierra,” or “two isthmuses”; “UN MISMO vientre”), proximity (“LAS BOCAS detras”), and relation (“TOUCHING BORDERS”), rendering an interpretation based on anti-Haitianism unconvincing. Instead, it allows us to reframe the colonial splitting of Yania “down the middle” as violent but, at the same time, a kind of Cesarian birthing of two distinct but interrelated peoples, troped by Cartagena Portalatín as fraternal twins, to be born once again from Yania’s womb (the island of Hispaniola) after Dominican independence.

YANIA TIERRA’s multiple scales of inquiry—Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic, Hispaniola, the Caribbean, Iberoamerica—are indicative of her enduring transnational political commitments to the Antilles as a space of shared colonial heritage and mixed-race identity. The final chapters of the roughly contemporary *Culturas africanas*, extending this line of inquiry, clearly promulgate “una visión ampliamente pan-africana, pan-caribeña y pan-americana” [a vision amply pan-African, pan-Caribbean, and pan-American] (Russ, “La Representación” 68): recalling the final lines of *YANIA TIERRA*, the poet calls upon an archipelagic audience to affirm their pluralistic origins, an act that seems to contradictorily hold the potential for transcending divisive colonial racial formations: “Busquemos nuestras raíces. Los pueblos de las ínsulas extrañas somos pueblos mestizos y mulatos. Busquemos nuestras races. No hay color sino hombres sobre la tierra” [Let’s

seek out our roots. The peoples of the islands, we are mestizo and mulatto peoples. Let's seek out our roots. There is no color, just man upon the earth] (84).

“Democracy”: “A Story That “Keeps Coming From the North”

In a 2008 survey, residents in several Latin American nations were asked questions such as, “What does democracy mean for you? What is its most important meaning?” [“¿Qué significa para usted la democracia? ¿Cuál es el significado más importante?”]. The most frequent response of Dominican participants was “It has no meaning” [“No tiene ningún significado”], by a staggering 33.5%—the highest among all the nations surveyed other than El Salvador (Horn, “Dictates” 34). That this is the case must be understood from within the context of Trujillo and Balaguer, each of which trafficked in hollow democratic rhetoric that worked to erode the classic democratic freedoms promised to citizens under a liberal democracy. Balaguer once declared, “If we have sacrificed the dogma of alternation,... we have created, in turn, our own democracy, and thanks to Trujillo we are today the most authentically egalitarian nation that exists on the American continent” (“Si hemos sacrificado el dogma de la alternabilidad,... hemos creado, en cambio, nuestra propia democracia, y gracias a Trujillo somos hoy el pueblo más auténticamente igualitario que existe en el continente americano”) (ibid 28). Cartagena Portalatín was acutely aware of this doublespeak and its roots in the U.S. In *Escalera para Electra* (1970), she writes:

En Dominicana, desde que los gringos pisotearon por primera vez la soberanía nacional, a los patriotas que defienden su tierra, sus minas y sus cosechas, los llaman bandoleros o gavilleros... En la Dominicana, como en la antigua

Esparta, se imponen tiranías con el respaldo militar. A ese engaño lo llaman democracia. (74)

In the Dominican Republic, since the gringos trampled on national sovereignty for the first time, the patriots who defend their land, their mines and their crops have been called bandits or gavilleros... In the Dominican Republic, as in ancient Sparta, tyrannies are imposed through military force. They call this deception democracy.

Cartagena Portalain's comparison between "gringos" and ancient Sparta is particularly incisive. And prescient, given the way the city-state has become central to several strands of contemporary far-right rhetoric (Britain's Tory hardliner "Spartans"; the U.S. militia group Oath Keepers; Greek's Golden Dawn party; Italy's Alleanza Nazionale). Equally disturbing is the way laconophilia (mania for Sparta) is integrated within quotidian and supposedly democratic life in the Global North—imbricated in "everything from the French Revolution to the British educational system to the Ivy League to the Israeli Kibbutz movement" (Cole). Such culture is, in turn, exported to "developing nations" in the Global South, using a rhetoric of democracy as the thinnest veneer for corporate resource extraction. Inextricable from foreign invasion is the language used to justify it—and the inevitable violently-imposed regimes of racial capitalism which have for centuries eviscerated community building and self-determination in Latin America, often under the banner of "democracy."

Indisputably, anti-Haitianism is one such damaging discourse, imported from the Global North, that continues to inform dominicanidad as much global antiblackness affects conceptions of national identity around the world, particularly in the United States. In *YANIA TIERRA*, forms of racist nationalism are rightly presented

as an effect of Trujillo (“a son of a bitch, but... our son of a bitch”) and the caudillo rulers who predated him; that is, as a long-standing afterlife of European colonialism and U.S. interventionism. Readings which accuse Cartagena Portalatín of anti-Haitianism do so without fully accounting for the role of the U.S. in the history of Haitian-Dominican relations, particularly in delimiting and policing the border. As a result, a structural relation is turned into a personal failing used to support deeply-entrenched scholarly narratives in which the role of U.S. hegemony on the island goes unexamined.

When one scholar goes so far as to say that “there’s no room for the other side of the island” in Cartagena Portalatín’s “imagined community, to use Benedict Anderson’s phrase” (Past 96), we might understand the absence of modern Haiti in *YANIA TIERRA* not as anti-Haitianism, but as a tacit acknowledgement that a 20th century nation under dictatorial rule did not represent an exemplary case of national liberation as much as cooptation of a people and a culture by an oppressive state. Such a position was common among other Caribbean thinkers, including Césaire.¹¹⁸ In other contemporary texts, Cartagena Portalatín was deeply sympathetic to the dire contemporary political situation in Haiti: despite well-documented human rights abuses enacted by the regime and its secret police, the dictatorial Duvalier dynasty continued to receive the support of U.S. aid, thanks in large part to a firmly anti-communist stance. In 1984, writing in solidarity with the Haitian working class, she condemns the fact that “La negritud como Duvalier y sus cómplices la aplican en Haiti no es otra cosa que una forma antillana de un fascismo y neofascismo

totalitarian contra los trabajadores y campesinos negros” [Négritude, as applied by Duvalier and his accomplices in Haiti, is nothing other than an Antillean form of totalitarian fascism and neofascism used against black workers and peasants] (*Culturas Africanas* 64). For Cartagena Portalatín, it was a Haitian author—Jean Price-Mars—who was the progenitor of Négritude, a transnational, liberatory discourse that enriched her own work over the course of her entire career, though she understood its limitations as much as its potential to be abused toward nefarious political ends.

It is true that in *YANIA TIERRA* Cartagena Portalatín’s allegiances to Haiti as a black republic are not made as clear as her feelings about Haiti as a black empire. It is perhaps disappointing that Cartagena Portalatín does not use the category of Hispaniola as expansively as she might have: she does not for, example, call for the radical dissolution of Haiti or the Dominican Republic as states. Yet, rather than once more “importing” the pervasive narrative of Haitian-Dominican enmity, it is far more interesting, I suggest, to read Cartagena Portalatín as negotiating the limits of liberal democratic discourse in the wake of a brutal dictatorship, originally enabled by the U.S., that outlasted its dictator for decades through Balaguer, whose post-1966 reign might have gone uninterrupted until 1996 were it not for the anomaly of Jimmy Carter’s foreign policy.

While in power, Trujillo and Balaguer repeatedly used Western European democratic rhetoric not only as a screen for torture, censure, and other features of autocracy, but to present these as essential defining features of democracy itself. As

Horn points out, “We cannot simply assume that this long-lasting “false” discourse of democracy that Dominicans were inundated with for over thirty years was simply replaced with “true” notions once democracy supposedly took hold (generally dated to 1978, after the end of the twelve-year presidency of Joaquín Balaguer, one of Trujillo’s intellectual figureheads and puppet presidents)” (“Dictates” 22). Rather, as scholars such as Silvio Torres-Saillant have shown, anti-Haitianism is an enduring (neo-)imperial phenomenon, as global as it is local, continually reinforced by those Western powers whose discourse on representative democracies occludes their oppressive border regimes that serve extractivist capitalist projects (43-44).¹¹⁹ In constructing the interregnum as just one more moment preceding reverent celebration of Columbus’s landing, *YANIA TIERRA* exposes not only the “false” democracy imposed upon the Dominican Republic under decades of colonial and U.S.-supported autocratic rule, but the hollowness of the period during the neocolonial “turn” to democracy. In relating various collective movements in the name of liberation, most of them failed, the text underscores just how fleeting—and elusive—“true” democracy is. Freedom, as it were, is a constant struggle against:

... Cinco Siglos / Los Años / Meses /
Días / Horas / Minutos y
Todas las afrentas con que quieren destruir a
Yania López (*Yania* 1995 36)

... Five Centuries / The Years / Months /
Days / Hours / Minutes and
All the crimes committed in an attempt to destroy
Yania López (37; Fenwick and
White)

Beyond *YANIA: The Antechamber to the History of America*

In this chapter, I have historicized Cartagena Portalatín's documentary aesthetic in an effort to reinterpret *YANIA TIERRA* as a text seeking to construct a culturally specific Dominican national consciousness that was meant to resist, during a particularly fragile moment in the history of Dominican democracy, future attempts of colonial domination the author saw as inevitable. Assuming *YANIA TIERRA* was intended to be "combat literature in the true sense of the word, in the sense that it calls upon a whole people to join in the struggle for the existence of the nation" (Fanon 173), I have attempted to think alongside Cartagena Portalatín, as Wilder writes of Césaire and Senghor, "by regarding their world and moment from their perspective, to appreciate their constraints and the possibilities they discerned, in order to understand their political and intellectual goals" (12). From this perspective, we can understand the absence (or specter) of Haiti in *YANIA TIERRA* not as nefarious or anti-Haitian, but a strategic compositional choice made by Cartagena Portalatín with respect to a single text within her much larger oeuvre. In such a reading, I am trying to avoid what García Peña has called the "fatal conflict" myth, which constructs and reinscribes the Dominican Republic and Haiti as eternal adversaries in scholarship consistently marked by "a strange inability to let go of narratives emphasizing Dominican self-hatred, negrophobia, and anti-Haitianism" (Chetty and Rodriguez 2). My chapter contributes to "a recent wave of scholarship that shifts the focus of Dominican studies from the historical Haitian-Dominican conflict by foregrounding the role of imperial and colonial powers in dominant

discourses of Dominicaness still prevalent today” (Chetty 134).

YANIA TIERRA presents a vision of “mulataje,” recuperated from 19th century nationalists, as an alternative to hegemonic conceptions of *dominicanidad*. The political ramifications of mulataje discourse are at present politically contested. As Mayes points out, “Whether Dominicans will embrace *mulataje* as a new national identity is still unclear. Nevertheless, the turn to a mulatto identity may have the positive outcome of countering *hispanidad*. In a context where blackness remains a troubled category for many Dominicans, mulatismo may represent a good first step in undoing the legacies of the Trujillo regime” (146). For Cartagena Portalatín, it is integral to present the integral historical contributions of black people to the nation building, a project she situates as beginning with their arrival on the island—and remains ongoing. Figures such as María Trinidad Sánchez, the paternal aunt of Francisco del Rosario Sánchez and a descendent of enslaved persons, are invoked explicitly in lines such as “MARIA TRINIDAD EN EL PATIBULO / YO LLEVE LA POLVORA,” while the countless enslaved Africans (and Taíno people) who built the Torre del Homenaje where Sánchez was executed by firing squad, are invoked more subtly and indirectly in the photograph of the building included in the “gráficas” section of *YANIA TIERRA*.

Yet if *YANIA* is full of repressive and uncannily accurate repetition, Cartagena Portalatín’s later work returned to the question of anticolonial temporality in order to find an alternative way of relating the colonial encounter. Her final, unfinished research project, “La antesala de la historia de América [The Antechamber to the

History of America]” perhaps best illustrates the capaciousness behind Cartagena Portalatín’s historical thinking. Conceived as “an enormous project, which traces the history of civilization from the Paleolithic period, from the time man appears on the Earth after the Last Ice Age, and when he begins to make and perfect paintings” (González 1083), she described the endeavor as a reverse chronology that sought to decouple Columbus from the “discovery” of the Americas, instead figuring contact as a multi-sited, multi-temporal, and culturally pluralistic process: “It ends in 1492, and goes from there backwards to the many different ‘discoveries.’ The Greeks almost arrive here; you see it when Ulysses says he went as far as the Sargasso Sea and turned back. And there are many who say they traveled here before Columbus. In my work, I choose four of those travelers as examples. That is why it is the “antechamber” of history in America...” (González 1083-84). Reflected in the spatial metaphor invoked in Cartagena Portalatín’s title is the combined sense of potentiality and anticipation: one waits expectantly in an antechamber, often the first room a visitor enters; in this way, history is framed as a kind of invitation to relation.¹²⁰ Central to the project were areitos, an oral Taíno literary form combining poetry, myth, music, dance, and history:

Areitos were ritual songs and dances often given as a tribute. They were performed as dances, directed by one who recited the stories and repeated in a louder voice by a dancing chorus, accompanied by a wooden drum. They were used to commemorate events that were worthy of being preserved as a historical or cultural lesson. Their purpose was didactic as well as celebratory, to reinforce the bonds of community between the members of each group through participation in a common history. (*Yania* 1995 176)

As Fenwick notes, areitos were central in maintaining communal belonging through shared history; that is to say, they were integral in the process of citizenship formation and reinforcement. For Cartagena Portalatín, areitos represent a kind of subjugated indigenous knowledge that travelled hemispherically as an inter-island communicative art form. She relates:

I've collected about 18 to 20 thus far from other islands and the northern coast of South America, areas that are incredibly interrelated. There was a great deal of communication between all islands and the coast, great similarities, all the way to Mesoamerica, to parts of Mexico. They are not quite myths, not quite history. And they are so beautiful. I've been researching and collecting them for a very long time, because that is something you're never taught in school. (González 1084)

This sense of connection she brought to her political beliefs regarding the interrelated history and struggle of the Greater Antilles, Latin America and Africa. She found models for American futurity in African liberation and self-determination movements, arguing in *Culturas africanas* that “aquellos pueblos ofrecen lecciones a los de América. Se han superado porque están conscientes de su identidad, de su capacidad y de la explotación de que han sido víctimas. Dijeron ¡YA!” [the peoples of Africa offer several lessons to the peoples of América. They have overcome because they are conscious of their identity, their abilities, and of the exploitation they have been victim to. They said: ENOUGH!] (84).

The shared exploitation of slavery's afterlives implied a shared task of transnational anti-imperial struggle and, as such, drew its strength precisely from Fanon's conception of an “international dimension” which transcended individual

nations. For Cartagena Portalatín, political power derived from various forms of consciousness: of both one's past and one's potential to be free in the future.

Activating the uncanny trajectories of unfinished liberation projects of the past in the present, her documentary aesthetic seeks to tell what Hartman has called the "history of the present," the purpose of which is "to imagine a free state, not as the time before captivity or slavery, but rather as the anticipated future of this writing" (4).

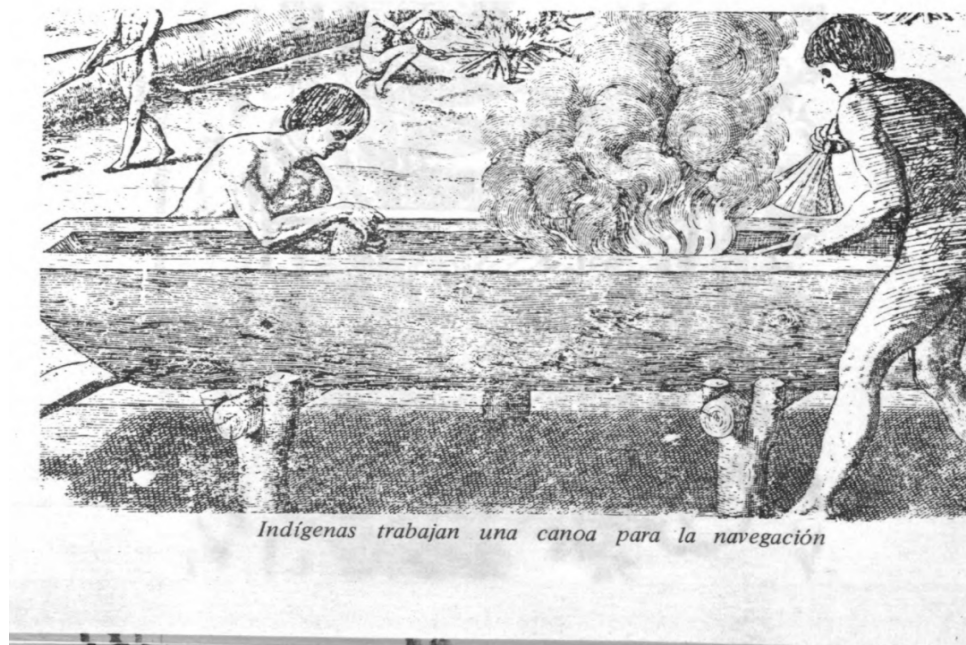


Fig. 20. Image from YANIA TIERRA: indigenous people work on a canoe for navigation

Chapter 4: Pre 9/11 (re-)Codification(s) of Documentary Poetry
Special Issues “Documentary” by *Chain* (1995) & *XCP: Cross-Cultural Poetics*
(2000)

In the spring of 1995, Susan Howe taught a graduate seminar entitled “Poetry and Documentary” at the State University of New York at Buffalo; Jena Osman and Juliana Spahr were advanced students in the SUNY PhD program when Howe gave her seminar, though neither took the course. Still, it is a course one has to imagine is one of the earliest possible “second-wave” codifications of documentary poetry, conceived of by a poet-scholar herself recognized as a documentary poet. Howe’s syllabus reflects, interestingly, a particularly Russian influence: following two epigraphs, one by Yelizaveta Svilova that mentions both Vertov and Mayakovsky, the course description begins, “What is a word in relation to a moving picture? What is 1995 in relation to 1918? This course will be an investigation of poetics by way of cinema” (1). The class included screenings of films inspired by Vertov, with a special emphasis on French New Wave filmmaker Chris Marker,¹²¹ and found its focus as reading poetry in relation to filmmaking to “explore some relations between the way film and poems work with facts” (1).¹²² Ten years out from *My Emily Dickinson* (1985), Howe had just published *The Birth-Mark: Unsettling the Wilderness in American Literary History* (1993) and was on the verge of seeing *Frame Structures: Early Poems 1974-1979* (1996) in print. While recognized as a key figure associated with Language poetry, she had also demonstrated an affinity for a poetics grounded in the archival and material traces of quotidian life, itself shaped by structural forces both national and geopolitical. In other words, a poetics grounded in “the real.”

That the nation's premier institution for studying experimental poetics should be the site of an early form of institutionalizing a particular type of poetry writing is not, in itself, surprising. What is notable is that the documentary-Buffalo connection does not only encompass SUNY, but the city of Buffalo. Mark Nowak, a Buffalo native, wrote his first work of documentary poetry about the Polish American neighborhoods in and around the city (*Revenants*, 2000), and shortly thereafter came to edit a separate special issue on documentary for his own journal, *XCP: Cross-Cultural Poetics* (2000). At SUNY, Osman and Spahr, students of Charles Bernstein, were exposed to an eclectic version of modernism that framed the Objectivists within then-ongoing conversations about "documentary poetry," a term in circulation at the time (author interview with Spahr). It was within such a milieu that, a full year prior to Howe's seminar, they decided the second issue of their journal *Chain* would be dedicated to documentary; a call for contributions was listed in the inaugural issue (287): Spring/Summer 1994. In the same way that movements between Mexico City and New York, and Santo Domingo and Paris, gave rise to distinct nexuses of documentary poetry, Buffalo represents a third site of emergence whose trajectories reach to: Waikīkī, where and about which Spahr wrote her first work self-described as "documentary poetics" (*Fuck You – Aloha – I Love You*, 2001); Philadelphia, where Osman composed *Public Figures* (2012) and continues to offer courses on documentary poetics at Temple University; and New York City, St. Paul, MN, St. Elizabeth, South Africa, and other sites of Nowak's workshops guided by "social poetics."¹²³

Considering the contributions to documentary poetry made by Spahr, Osman, and Nowak from 1995-2000, this epilogue sketches out a few preliminary comments on how documentary poetry became re-codified in late twentieth-century print through the relevant anthology projects of some of its most recognizable contemporary poets, each of whom has ties to the city of Buffalo. I say “re-codified here” since, as I’ve detailed throughout this dissertation, “documentary poetry” has functioned as a heuristic for literary critics and scholars since at least 1940. Yet the mid- to late-1990s also mark a period in which poets—leftist poets in particular—began to demonstrate traceable interest in presenting speculative groupings of poetic texts engaged with the question-topic-problematic of “documentary.”

While not necessarily generating a canon, per se, the special issues of *Chain* and *XCP* assemble a list of poets who have a demonstrated interest in a shared affinity toward the poetic writing of history, and who, moreover, evince “documentary” as an emergent generic category during the five-year period between 1995 and 2000. In situating these journals within the longer literary history of documentary poetry, I continue to complicate conventional periodizations by demonstrating the circulation of relevant texts in the years leading up to 9/11. While it is true that an “explosion” of documentary poetry indeed takes place in the early twenty-first century, here I simply hope to signal the continuity of documentary poetry from the 1930s to the present, while also situating Buffalo as an additional node within a larger, ever-expanding hemispheric text network of documentary poetry. Finally, in addressing the content of the *Chain* and *XCP* issues, as well as the

poetic production of Spahr, Osman, and Nowak, I point one last time to the applicability of my overarching argument, demonstrating its utility beyond the three prior case studies.

Chain 2, “Documentary”

The same year, *Chain*, a journal edited by Spahr and Osman and supported (institutionally but not financially) by SUNY (Snelson), put out its second issue, “Special Topic: Documentary” [Fig. 21]. Following *Chain*’s inaugural issue on “Gender and Editing,” and continuing its attention to women poets, editors, and critics, *Chain 2* sought to outline “some of the possible relations between the ‘real’ or the ‘political’ and the individual’s creative response” (3). Including contributions by Lyn Hejinian, M. NorbeSe Philip, Harryette Mullen, Dodie Belamy, Anne Waldman, Nathaniel Tarn, Cecilia Vicuña, Sianne Ngai, Rodrigo Toscano, Darcy Frey, and Eleni Sikélianòs and others, *Chain 2* juxtaposes text-based writings with photographs, mixed media, literary and scholarly prose, painting, and other visual imagery. “All of the work,” assert Spahr and Osman in their “Editors’ Notes,” “highlights the way we use language/image to cut up our experiential encounters so as to (re)see them” (3). They observe that “Ironically, documenting of the ‘real’ seems to rely on defamiliarization, a shift in the angle of reception/reception/expectation” (3). In the spirit of Howe’s syllabus, their idiosyncratic curation evinces a surprisingly playful, yet critical, approach to reading poetry in relation to documentary and poetry, without ever explicitly posing (or reifying) “documentary poetry” as a category.

Indeed, the issue’s epigraph disavows documentary altogether by means of a

now-seminal quote from Trinh T. Minh-ha: “There is no such thing as documentary—whether the term designates a category of material, a genre, an approach, or a set of techniques. This assertion—as old and fundamental as the antagonisms between names and reality—needs incessantly to be restated despite the very visible existence of a documentary tradition” (3). Even so, the task of incessantly restating the non-existence of documentary in *Chain* presents itself as one of considerable difficulty, given Spahr and Osman mention at the outset that each contributor was invited to respond to a series of questions about documentary, including one (2) which challenges Minh-ha’s line of thinking: “1) How do you define the word ‘documentary’? 2) In what forms can ‘documentary’ exist? 3) What names come to mind when thinking of those who deal in documentary forms (both in the traditional and innovative senses)? 4) If you were to create a documentary, what would be your medium and topic?” (3).¹²⁴ In response to these questions, contributors themselves continually assert a documentary tradition, often situating their work within it. Andrew Levy writes, for example, that his contribution, “Song for My Family” is a “documentary poem” (131), evincing Jill Magi’s observation that the term has long circulated without being attached to a definition.¹²⁵

By printing these responses, *Chain* applies Language poetry’s “retrospective documentary impulse” (Izenberg 145) to documentary writing. This “anthropological motive that underwrites Language poetry’s peculiar forms of self-presentation and preservation” involves “its tendency to publish not just its poems, but its conversations about poems, and not just those conversations, but jokes amidst the

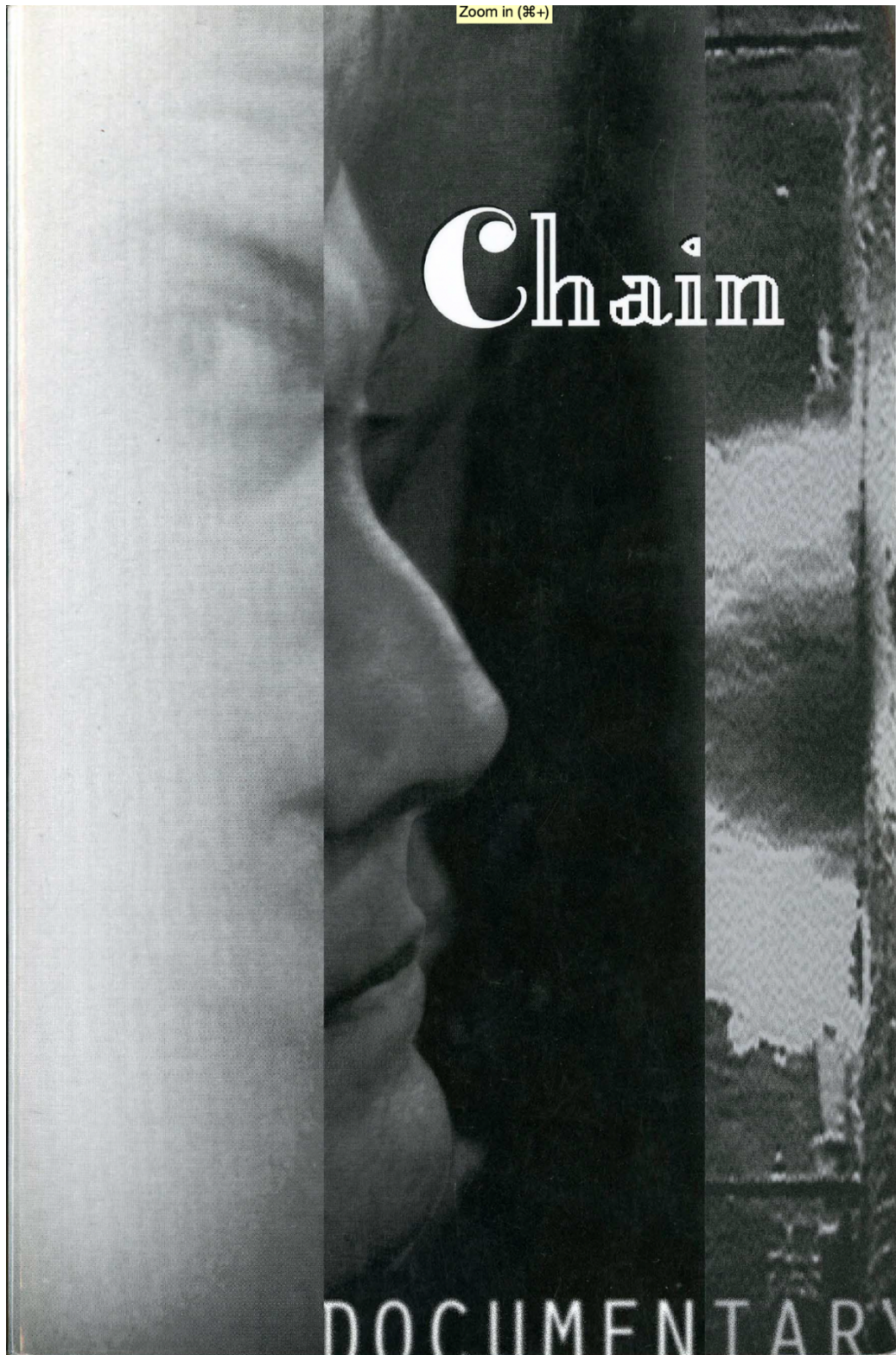


Fig. 21. Cover, Chain 2 (Documentary) (1995).

conversations, laughter at the jokes, stumbles, interruptions, and silences—as though on behalf of some future civilization studying its own past” (145).¹²⁶ Where “Documentary” separates itself from this impulse, however, is that rather than the gesture *Chain 2* makes is better understood as an outlining some preliminary terms and figures associated with the hitherto ad-hoc “documentary writing,” rather than as an attempt to consolidate or “preserve” a literary movement. Instead, Spahr and Osman collated a range of distinct, if at times interrelated, literary formations in a single issue.

Bringing together poets associated with Language poetry, queer poetry, black experimentalism, ethnopoetics, literary journalism, and performance, *Chain*’s special issue “Documentary” identified an existing poetic impulse that was in wide enough usage to stake out a diverse, transnational, multilingual, and surprisingly prescient collection of contemporary artists and writers, several of whom have since become key figures associated with documentary poetry, such as Vicuña and Philip. Others are much difficult to trace today, and without biographical material about the contributors included in the issue, there is little to go on for those interested in following the trajectories of their artistic and/or literary careers. *Chain 2* marks 1995 as an inflection point in the history of documentary poetry, providing a speculative grouping that presciently registers several aspects by which this type of writing continues to be discussed today: self-conscious manipulation of state archives, appropriation of popular culture and discourse (found text) or archival material, generation of idiosyncratic data collections that contest bureaucratic authority, and a

general “skepticism” of documents for the ways “they are prone to falling into patterns and structures if institutionalized hegemony” (Catalina Cariaga 60). Spahr and Osman’s question, “What names come to mind when thinking of those who deal in documentary forms?” invites contributors to generate a list of artists and works associated with documentary modalities, thereby generating a working archive. Names like Dorothea Lange and Theresa Hak Kyung Cha will strike readers as familiar, while mentions of Picasso’s *Guernica* (9; 70), Andy Warhol’s *Sleep* (34), or Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz (61) invoke more unconventional possible lineages.

A repeated attention to the imagination is perhaps one of the most surprising features of the work collected in a special issue ostensibly devoted to the documentation of the “real” or the “political” (3). In the response which follows her poem “Venus Return,” Karen Kelley writes, “My brother Nick died of AIDS June 13, 1994. I have his death certificate and certification of the dispersal of his ashes, shocking documents in black and white, yet the real documentation occurs, I think, in how he filters through the consciousness of those who love him... Now that he’s gone, when I am most open (in half-sleep, in sex) to hearing my blood returning to my heart, he’s with me. In dreams, I hear his voice. In bed, he shares the man I sleep with, as if now he’s not physical we share my body” (122). Kelley marks a distinction between “the real documentation” and the “shocking documents in black and white,” suggesting that the state-issued documents associated with death (“his death certificate and certification of the dispersal of his ashes”) somehow fail when compared to the ways her brother “filters through the consciousness” of his loved

ones. The language echoes Spahr and Osman's call for work on documentary, printed at the back of the *Chain*'s first issue: "In what ways does the topical world filter through the creative word?" (167). While in recent years documentary poetry has become known for a serious, often pedagogical if non-linear attention to "the real," the lineage of poets presented in *Chain 2* presents a kind of alternate trajectory for a grouping of those interested in the "topical world"—its detritus—while providing various, open-ended ways of interpreting it. This is not to say there is no interest, on behalf of the contributors, in contemporary events. On the contrary, the content reflects, in addition to the AIDS epidemic (122), genocide in Bosnia (17-18), and the beating of Rodney King (149), the 1986 execution of Jerome Bowden (151),¹²⁷ among other forms of state violence. The curation of *Chain 2* foregrounds race, class, and sexuality and, in particular, how state aggression and neglect affect the inhabitants of specific, localized communities in disparate and unequal ways.

Cariaga's "His Civil Rights" examines generations of colonial trauma and struggle in a Filipino family, including the poet's father's incarceration in a state mental health facility under the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act. Incorporating letters he wrote to her, the poem moves between aspects of the 1965-1970 Delano Grape Strike that "you won't find in a history book" (57), to George Bush wearing a *barong* Tagalog "so the Filipinos snicker at a colonialist in the mandatory indigenous costume" (53) when visiting the Philippines, to an image of the father watching the 1972 Democratic Convention. Cariaga interrogates whiteness as a state and colonial ideology replicated in the press, and which, most insidiously, is reified in intimate

life. This is most clear in the poem's motif regarding how the speaker was prevented from learning Ilocano, her parents' native language, because her "parents / decided early on / that we would be / better off mastering / Californian English" (58), an aspect which connects the italicized English phrasing drawn from the father's letters to forms of linguistic and epistemological violence. That the police teach the speaker's brother how to "make a citizen's arrest" of the father while experiencing a mental health crisis raises the question of social belonging, here quite fraught due to the conflation between police, incarceration, ("good") citizenship, and familial care.

"Do You Love the Dyke in Your Life?" (1993) by Dyke Action Machine (Carrie Moyer and Sue Schaffer) [Fig. 22] depicts five butches of different racial backgrounds, each wearing men's underwear and with their arms crossed. The sardonic expressions of their faces, along with the visible branding on the briefs, invokes and parodies contemporary Calvin Klein campaigns. As one writer put it in *Vogue*, "In 1990s New York, it was hard to escape Calvin Klein," especially "the designer's ads for his underwear, which were so ubiquitous at the time that *The New Yorker* published a cover showing a geriatric type shocked speechless by a bus stop ad hawking men's underwear, her mouth a pinched 'O'" (n.p.). At the time, Klein ads were dominated by Mark Wahlberg, who often appeared embracing Kate Moss, "the waif to his beefcake" (Phelps). With its five models covering their chests, "Do You Love the Dkye in Your Life?" refers more to sexuality more than sex, not only detourning the overtly sexual visual language of popular advertising but undermining the visual identity of a brand rooted in extreme heteronormative whiteness. In so

doing, Dyke Action Machine targets a “distinctly American” brand reflective of narratives of national identity that construct citizenship in the United States along the same terms. At the same time, “Do You Love the Dyke in Your Life?” poses alternative forms of belonging. The title asserts the ubiquitous presence of lesbians (“the dyke in your life”), while using the interrogative form, second person, and slur to implicate the viewer as either homophobic or as part of a pluralistic community; that is, of dyke lovers: the various racial identities of the “models” reminds that sexuality cuts across communities, regardless of race. The piece suggests that *if* we can answer affirmatively the question posed by the title, *if* our usage of the term “dyke” affirms queer community, we might begin to imagine a United States composed not of homogenous citizens but pluralistic contestations of a cis-white, heterosexual norm.

While it would be impossible to make consistent generalizations about such diverse work, we can say with some certainty that a great many of the writers gathered in *Chain 2* appropriate a range of discursive content of everyday life. That content is then shaped with an attention to the specific, localized material effects of racial capitalism and heteropatriarchy, structures frequently constructed as afterlives of the settler colonial project. Invoking what Bernstein has referred to as “the local, the particular, the partisan, the committed, the tiny, the peripheral, the unpopular, the eccentric, the difficult, the complex, the homely” (143) in conjunction with Lyn Hejinian’s emphasis on poetry as the language of inquiry, Spahr and Osman’s selection straddled key impulses behind Language poetry while also raising the

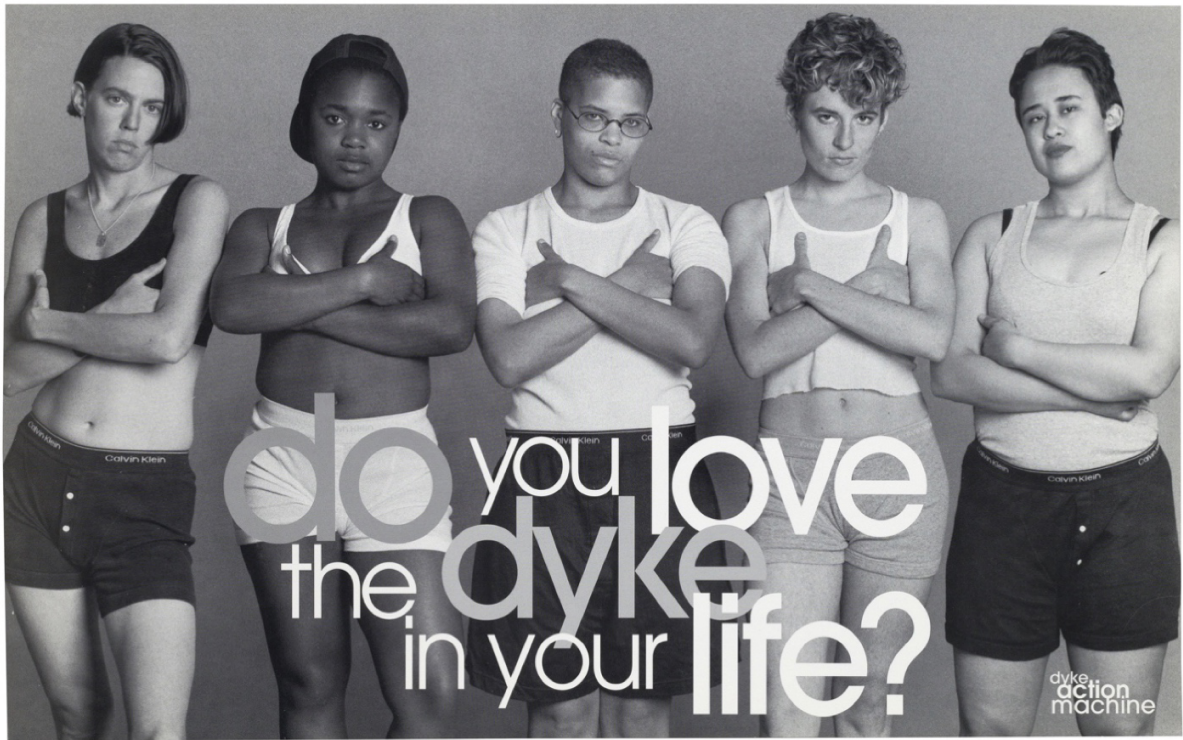


Fig. 22. *Dyke Action Machine*, Carrie Moyer and Sue Schaffer. “Do You Love the Dyke in Your Life?” (1993). Black and white poster, 11” x 19.”

of a type of writing that went beyond abstract claims which conflated linguistic experimentation with meaningful political engagement. (Izenberg has written that, despite Bernstein’s claims to the local and particular, “Language poetry does in fact succeed in being universal, general, uncommitted, vast, central” [141].) If, as Izenberg notes, the “de-situating of the lyric speaker” was a key Language strategy (161), *Chain 2* relied upon a *re*-situation of poetic subjects within the specific discourses which structured their quotidian conditions of possibility. Whereas Language poetry often reveled in the unreadable results of syntactic density, “documentary” writers like Cariaga point toward the need to engage the historicized

present as a site of contestation, the meaningful interpretation of which relies upon involving readers in active forms of contextualization and historicization themselves.

Perhaps one of the most compelling aspects of *Chain 2* is a playfulness, reminiscent of Vertov's film, that signaled entry points to a "the real" today less common in works of documentary poetry. "Variations on chain/chance generation and collaboration of work is VERY welcome," Spahr and Osman wrote in their call for contributions (287). In so doing, they inaugurated an image- and imaginatively driven lineage of documentary perhaps best represented today by a work such as Edgar Garcia's 2019 *Skins of Columbus: A Dream Ethnography*. In composing by means of a procedure that involved the author reading Christopher Columbus's journals each night before going to sleep and recording his dreams upon waking, Garcia shares obvious affinities with a poet like Cariaga, for whom the documentary aesthetic demands an artistic commitment to "document a reclaiming, retrieval and remixing of cultural metaphors, symbols, nuance, queues—not merely to freeze them in an anthropological or archival depository of 'art'—but to enliven and set them in motion in a world and time that is most intent on forgetting or denying them" (61). Rather than seeking to canonize or fix documentary as a stable category, *Chain 2*'s great contribution to documentary was to begin to sketch the contours of a decades-old, ongoing, multidirectional, multilingual "setting in motion" of "the real."



Fig. 23. Cover, XCP: Cross Cultural Poetics 6 (Documentary) (2000).

XCP: Cross Cultural Poetics 6, “Documentary”

Nowak’s sixth issue of *XCP: Cross Cultural Poetics* on “Documentary,” published five years after *Chain 2*, similarly encourages readers to move between visual, poetic, and academic content that addresses writing state violence and, thus, the writing of history. *XCP*, however, weighs more strongly toward meta-commentaries on documentary, more toward the scholarly, and more toward the masculine: three of ten poetic contributions were written by women. There is a more aggressive rejection of Language poetry and an even stronger aversion to the theory which underpins it. *XCP* underscores the importance of the reading practices surrounding documentary poetry as much as how it is produced. Theoretical readings of documentary texts are generally approached as mis-applied and indicative of a larger failure of situated contextualization on behalf of the scholar and/or critic. The contributions in *XCP* 6 demonstrate markedly more ambivalence toward the academy as an institution than *Chain*, even as the majority of them, as is the case with the contributors of *Chain*, have built their careers as poets in institutions. *XCP* contains a handful of recognizable documentary figures, such as C.S. Giscombe, whose work opens the issue and who is listed as a contributing editor; by and large, however, the contributing editors, Juan Felipe Herrera and Kamau Brathwaite among them, are more commonly associated with documentary poetry today. This is in part simply because *XCP* features fewer contributors overall; *XCP*’s ten total contributions by poets make up less than one sixth of those included in *Chain*. Even so, much of the content is today recognizable as documentary poetry: there is an extended discussion

of Bernadette Mayer's *Midwinter Day*, for example, as well as of the ethnographic work of Zora Neale Hurston.

Having noted several important differences between *XCP* and *Chain*, it bears mentioning that *XCP*'s special issue presents a vision of documentary and poetry in ways that echo, at times, Spahr and Osman's assessment that defamiliarization is a driving impulse behind their work in documenting "the real." Although Nowak provides no editors' note contextualizing the work within, nor any explanation of the collective selection process under which the magazine's contributing editors determined the contributors, portions of two separate artist statements suggest ways of approaching the material. Tirtza Even's in particular, which appears in the early pages of the issue, recalls *Chain*'s emphasis on the defamiliarization process which allows an image to be re-seen by means of "a shift in the angle of reception/reception/expectation" (3). Even writes, "One of my main attempts... is to undermine the frame as a stabilizing element or a base or grid... I look to... to expose perspective, look at it... and mobilize it to the point that I can't differentiate between it and the event or object itself. To look at what is... outside the frame (off frame), and isolate it within the image, alternating its character constantly" (24).

Even, a Jerusalem-born video artist and experimental documentary maker, was at this time a video art instructor in Pelican Bay and San Quentin State Prisons engaged in making experimental documentaries about occupied Palestine: *Occupied Territory* (2000)¹²⁸ and *Kayam Al Hurbano (Existing on its Ruins)* (1999),¹²⁹ each of which showed at the Carnegie Art Center in Buffalo in 2000 and 2002, respectively.



Fig. 24. Still from CityQuilt, Tirtza Even, 1995. XCP 6 (21).



Fig. 25. Still from Kayam Al Hurbano (Existing on its Ruins), Tirtza Even, 1999. XCP (28).



Fig. 26. Still from CityQuilt, Tirtza Even, 1995. XCP 6 (23).



Fig. 27. Still from Zoom, from the Blind Series, Tirtza Even, 1997. XCP 6 (29).

Without clearly depicting carceral spaces, Even's stills in *XCP* invoke surveillance, bars and fences, separation, imprisonment, walls, and borders in a way that exemplifies her career-long attempt "to depict the less overt manifestations of complex, and at times extreme, social/political dynamics in specific locations (e.g. Palestine, Turkey, Spain, the U.S. and Germany, among others)" (author website). Even's pieces are not labeled or captioned: the people in her photographs could be from San Quentin or a refugee camp in Palestine. The effect is to deemphasize national context in the name of presenting the pervasiveness of a world still in dire need of prison abolition and decolonization.

Paul Naylor, whose *Poetic Investigations: Singing the Holes in History* is discussed briefly in the introduction to this dissertation, appears twice in *XCP* 6, in a review of the monograph and as the author of an essay on the work of Paul Metcalf. Christopher Winks's incisive review of *Poetic Investigations* points out that Naylor's "amorphous impulse" to define the poets of his study as "singing the holes in history" comes at the expense of rigorous engagement with the cultural and historical contexts of his three Afro-diasporic poets (Brathwaite, Philip, and Mackey) (158-159), a problem less pronounced in discussions of Susan Howe and Lyn Hejinian who are each better situated within U.S. literary production. Even so, one of Winks's main criticisms of Naylor's work is that his interpretations in general rely too heavily upon scholarly discourse outside of poetry studies, leading to a bibliographic omission that borders on absurd, particularly given Naylor's title: leaving out all together as classic a contribution as Ed Sanders's "investigative poetry" (156). For Winks, Naylor's

oversight “points to a more general problem resulting from poetic criticism’s retreat of late behind academic walls — namely, the emphasis on so-called ‘theory’ as at best an analytical filter through which literature is read and at worst as a substitute for creative interpretation” (156). Naylor’s own contribution to *XCP*, a more recent essay that makes a convincing case of writing Paul Metcalf into the U.S. documentary canon, demonstrates more or less a continuation of the hermeneutic approach Winks takes issue with. Though his application of Deleuze and Guattari’s theory of nomadology makes for a convincing reading, and while Naylor takes efforts to situate Metcalf’s poetic production as the continuation of a Melvillian lineage, none of this disproves Winks’s critique that Naylor over-relies on theory and is only able to historicize the work of U.S. poets.

Winks’s observation that “the kind of cross-cultural work... to which Naylor clearly wishes to contribute... makes certain demands on its sympathizers that go beyond a simple desire to rectify or mend the imbalances and distortions caused by generations of imperial canon-shapers and cannon-deployers (159) represents a kind of lodestar as relevant to “investigative poetry” as reality-based literary production in the Global South more broadly: the “unraveling of latent (and immensely complex) spaces” (159) not only demands the contextualization of texts within specific local, national, regional, and transnational contexts, but eschewing “rhetorics of ‘inclusion’ (i.e. integration into a burning house, to quote Malcolm X) in favor of what [Wilson] Harris [in *History, Fable & Myth in the Caribbean and Guianas*] has called ‘tilting the field of civilization’ in order to ‘release... a different *reading* of texts of reality’

(50)” (159).

A double review by Nowak similarly reiterates the importance of reading texts that engage with processes of investigation and documentation using a hermeneutic apparatus that remains true to the history and political spirit of the work at hand. In his reading of Pamela M. Lee’s *Object to be Destroyed: The Work of Gordon Matta-Clark*, Nowak points to the way Lee’s failure to properly contextualize a piece such as “Day’s End,” in which the artist made a series of cuts into New York City’s Pier 52 warehouse, where he was squatting in at the time, “does injustice to the philosophical and ideological underpinnings of Matta-Clark’s work” (164); what is for Nowak “a site of labor work/occupation, and class strife” Lee approaches as a mere “workplace,” to use Nowak’s words, “avoiding the economic and social spheres in her critique” (164). Lee’s error is not, as it was in Winks’s discussion of Naylor, the application of theory at the expense of a situated analysis; instead, it is a case of applying the wrong “analytical filter,” which ultimately leads to the same result: writes Nowak, “Instead of a more obvious reading of Matta-Clark’s work through a Marxist perspective on private property, industrial consumer-capitalism, the abandonment of urban tracts by white flight bourgeoisies, and issues of labor.... or a reading based on Benjamin’s materialist city, for that matter—Lee chooses instead to couch her reading in an odd Merleau-Pontian perspective” (163). Perhaps one of the most notable features of *XCP*, and one which clearly distinguishes it from *Chain*, is a shared commitment to detailing the political consequences of methodologies incorrectly applied, including using “so-called theory” as the primary hermeneutic

tool for poetry, “investigative” or otherwise.¹³⁰

“In all my life,” announces poet Deborah Meadows, “I have theorized no more than Mandelstam’s found horseshoe” (33). In her poem “Gift: After Mandelstam’s ‘Armenia,’” Meadows reads Mandelstam’s 1923 “Нашедший подкову” [The Horseshoe Finder] alongside his Armenia cycle to come up with a theory that “makes all prior ways of thinking obsolete if not embarrassing” (33). Like documentary poetry more broadly, both of Mandelstam’s poems famously take up the theme of using the material world as a “renewable source of poetic creation” (Kahn 528), though without making recourse to extrapoetic discourse. Written at a time when “it seemed to many poets that the end of Russian lyric poetry was imminent” (Myers 38), “The Horseshoe Finder” asserts art’s “permanency, as opposed to history’s permutations,” according to Stephen Broyde. “For it is, after all, the horseshoe that is found” (199). Meadows, who grew up in Buffalo in a working class family, attended SUNY, and worked in a factory, invokes Mandelstam to articulate a skepticism of ways of academic thinking that lead to “obsolete” ways of thinking as well as intellectual arrogance. Disavowing herself as a theorist of anything other than Mandelstam’s horseshoe, that is, the poetic image, Meadows’s speaker constructs herself as a reader who tries “to avoid theories that make the critic even smarter” (33).

It’s not that *XCP*, with several scholarly essays and reviews, is anti-intellectual, though several of its contributors display a certain amount of ambivalence toward the academy. In the words of Nathaniel Tarn, “The expectation of exegesis in a constitutively backward-oriented academy... fosters a belief that

significant writing is writing that needs explicating by critics, thus ever strengthening the hold of ‘theoreticians’ and canon-formulating critics over the one-time freedom of the one-time poet” (Tarn qtd. in *XCP* 157). *XCP*, like Meadows and Tarn, takes reading poetry seriously as a mode of thinking, particularly about “the real”; that is to say, about material life and political reality. For this reason, the issue repeatedly suggests that people trained in the reading of poetry need to get better at identifying an interpretive method that arises inductively from the specifics of the work and its various contexts, rather than deductively through the critic or scholar’s own idiosyncratic theoretical interests. Much of this work has to do with asking what happens when poetry is institutionalized; Stephen Cope’s incisive review of Christopher Beach’s *Poetic Culture: Contemporary American Poetry Between Community and Institution* makes this point most explicit. When he critiques Beach’s discussions for “often remaining strictly within the realm of the literary, and thus failing to establish the grounds for an in-depth analysis of how these local manifestations inform and are informed by broader — and non-literary — social, cultural, and political concerns” (131), Cope summarizes a concern recurring throughout *XCP* 6.

Ed Pavić’s analysis of Zora Neale Hurston’s ethnographic work provides one alternative of how scholars might “undermine the frame” or “tilt the field... ‘to release... a different *reading* of texts of reality.’” Pavić reads Hurston’s essay “The Characteristics of Negro Expression” as “never... adequately recognized as a crucial modernist theoretical text” (14). Yet rather than merely writing Hurston into the

canon of modernist theory, Pavić unpacks how her fieldwork-informed writings shifted race-based understandings of social and literary formations alike. Of particular interest to Pavić is how Hurston’s dialogic, improvisational techniques work to create black communal place (14) and communal underground place (18) by disrupting white cultural values (11), including the modernist idea of the “individual sovereign genius” which, he contends, Hurston instead “ascribes to communally enacted cultural patterns” (15). *Mules and Men*, the montaged collection of Hurston’s ethnographic work researching black folk culture in Eatonville, Florida, is exemplary for the ways its emphasis on public forms and performances “constantly challenge and renew people’s ability to connect to each other” (10). And while delving into narratives of racial democracy is beyond the scope of Pavić’s discussion, his analysis can easily be extended to address the ways Hurston’s *Mules and Men*, so often elided from discussions of documentary poetry of the 1930s, invokes “found” material to challenge the terms of an existing racial order and, in so doing, reimagine the fabric of communal social life.

In aggregate, *XCP* presents itself as, to use Even’s words, “A prototype for a new type of documentary, or a new form of editing, whereby the goal is not to convey a coherent physical space or a linear narrative, but to make use of space as an interface (or metaphor) for the representation of other types of sequences (e.g. temporal, thematic)” (28). Meadows’s poem “We’ve held subject positions” reflects explicitly on the process of constructing that story through the appropriation of documents, an act described as “words picked out of the historic document like eyes /

or tidbits leaving the thing with holes and gaps” (36). For Meadows, writing a documentary poem mirrors the process of redaction: “It’s like the results of censorship in that way,” she writes, “but if you did it to your own writing your readers could put it together like an acrostic of historic atrocity” (36). Shifting attention from process (“if you did it to your own writing”) to reception (“your readers put it together”), Meadows underscores how the interpretation of “poetry written in this style / of the resultant holes” (36) allows for readers to adopt a new, interactive perspective on “historic atrocity.” Even puts it thus: “The user’s exploration is a creative act of rewriting a story already told by the author” (28).

After Lang-Po, Docu-Po (& Con-Po): Between “the End of History” & 9/11

Of Christopher Beach’s *Poetic Culture Contemporary American Poetry Between Community and Institution* (1999), reviewer Stephen Cope asks: “How... does the work being done in an experimental community such as that of Language writing actually participate in cultural debates that extend beyond the immediate sties of its very specific articulations?” (131). Beach’s question points to the ways that theoretical assumptions of Language writing leave it “at a familiar theoretical impasse which it has noted, but to which it has not adequately responded” (Izenberg 140). *Chain* and *XCP* are two responses to this impasse. Each stakes out an experimental poetic community bound by a mutual interest in poetics that exceed cerebral interrogations of language or discourse. Bringing material reality into focus through the appropriation of state documents, print and popular culture, archival materials, and other related historiographic forms, the poets included in these issues share an

interest in site specificity while also situating their work within larger debates about violence on both national and transnational scales. If Language poetry was “a response to two roughly contemporaneous if incommensurable developments—the American government’s involvement in the Vietnam War and the American university’s enthusiastic reception of continental literary theory” (Izenberg 139), *Chain* and *XCP* had to contend with the fall of the Soviet Union, “The End of History” (1989-), and the problems Fukiyama’s argument raised for the political imagination of the poetic left in the United States. At the same time, mass mobilizations marked the mid to late-1990s as a moment of radical collective demands. Published during the window between NAFTA and 9/11, the special issues on documentary in *Chain* and *XCP* appeared in 1995 and 2000, respectively, one year each after a major uprising: the 1994 Zapatista rebellion and the 1999 WTO protests.

Together, the special issues on documentary published by *Chain* and *XCP* address what Izenberg lays out as one of the principal problems of Language poetry: a failure of collective imagination. “The poetic effort to construct a nonparodic version of collectivity in the wake of the fall of historical communism—one that would allow full autonomy not only for the poem but for the poet, not only for the poet but for the person,” he writes, “—that effort is relegated to fantasy by an inability to imagine that poetry could offer anything other than another set of conventions that come to look oppressive as soon as they are understood to be conventions (154). In contrast, *Chain* and *XCP* alike poetry propose a widespread and preexisting convention—the historiographic appropriation of extrapoetic discourse—under the assumption that, far

from being oppressive, juxtaposing situated speakers within various forms of public and state discourses allowed for poets to experiment with the construction of a kind of collectivity that emerged from recognizing artistic autonomy and material social relations. This type of writing called for the interpretation of social, national, racial, and gender formations as much as it did the interpretation of language. Those poets who continued to approach poetry as an ever-fervent search for the newest set of conventions turned toward algorithms, machines, and conceptualism.¹³¹

Proposing “documentary” as an alternative literary and political framework meant different things for *Chain* and *XCP*. The questions *Chain* editors posed to contributors centered the creative process of documentary-based literature and sought to generate a tradition through the naming of relevant texts and artworks. Osman and Spahr’s collection of over sixty contributors working in multiple genres presented an extensive, intersectional vision of contemporary documentary artmaking. Their selection process demonstrates careful attention to gender and sexuality as much as race and class. The content of *XCP*’s slimmer volume focused primarily on the latter two terms, while repeatedly pointing to the interpretive dangers of failing to properly contextualize documentary-based work. A major divergence between the two issues lies in their implicit positions on the institutionalization of poetry. *XCP* presents itself as deeply skeptical of “language writers”’ abilities to “produce a ‘revolutionary’ text” (156), not least “as most of them seem to have found their desired and singularly unrevolutionary niches in both the U.S. academy and po-biz” (Winks 156). *Chain* collects the work of such poets, self-consciously probing the political implications of

institutionalization, a theme which drives Dodie Bellamy's interview with Lyn Hejinian about UCSD's acquisition of her letters.¹³² Yet even as their special issues on "Documentary" offer two distinct rosters and approaches, *Chain* and *XCP* demonstrate significant continuity in their radical political affinities, not to mention in editorial participation. At least two contributors included in *Chain*, Nathaniel Tarn and Walter T. Lew, were contributing editors for *XCP* 6, with Lew as a cross-over figure whose poetry appears in both *Chain* 2 and *XCP* 6.

While neither *Chain* 2 nor *XCP* 6 explicitly theorized documentary poetry as a genre, these two special issues laid the preliminary groundwork for doing so in the near term by laying out two groupings of affiliate poets. Five years later, in a kind of retroactive provisional canon for poets such as those included in *Chain* 2, Osman created a list of "documentary poems" including texts by both Cardenal and Livesay, as well as Cha's *DICTEE*, Ondaaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* and others, staking out a second preliminary grouping of what "documentary poetry" entail, based on qualities presumably shared among the works listed, though this not stated explicitly. One such quality is the contestation of national narratives of racial inclusion, equally evident in several of the most seminal works of early twenty-first century documentary poetry in the United States. Nowak's first collection, *Revenants*, released in 2000, for example, Nowak "presses on the white working class to confront the ramifications of its nationalist identification with the United States as a superpower, a national 'winner' in the Cold War (Shea 622-23). The following year, the jacket of Juliana Spahr's *Fuck You – Aloha – I Love You* announced the collection

as a “book of documentary poetics.” Incorporating Hawaiian and pidgin words to form a “mongrel mixture, bliss, outrage, displacement in Waikīkī” (Wilson 133), the speaker watches from her apartment balcony as ships in harbor prepare for 2003 Iraq invasion while self-consciously reflecting on her position as one of many white outsiders who have impinged upon Hawaiian sovereignty.

The emergence of *Revenants* and *Fuck You – Aloha – I Love You* is roughly contemporaneous with art historian Mark Nash’s historicization of “the documentary turn” as beginning with documenta 11 in 2002 (cited in Magi 248) and, of course, each predate 9/11: the conventional periodization marking a twenty-first century “return” to the documentary aesthetic.¹³³ *Essay in Asterisks*, Jena Osman’s first recognizably documentary work, and *Don’t Let Me Be Lonely*, Claudia Rankine’s, were each published in 2004. Spahr’s *This Connection of Everyone with Lungs* appeared the following year. That each of these seminal works of contemporary documentary poetry addressed the U.S. invasion of Iraq explicitly may be one reason that critical and scholarly discussions have repeatedly emphasized 9/11 as a paradigm shifting moment. Yet the decades of predecessors detailed in *Chain* and *XCP* point toward a more complicated narrative, dating back as far as Hurston and the bombing of Guernica.

In gathering relevant names and works under the category of “Documentary,” *Chain* codified a long-standing history of experimental writing grounded in material and social life. At the same time, its wide-ranging sample of contemporary authors at work demonstrated an ongoing, future-oriented trajectory for documentary literature,

and poetry in particular. *XCP* 6 gave additional credence to reading poetry through a documentary lens, bringing along with it scholarship on documentary poetics that provided extensive analysis of relevant texts from the 1930s through midcentury and the Cold War to NAFTA. *XCP*'s stance toward Language poetry marked, to some extent, a break with the then-dominant avant-garde literary formation as well as with theoretical hermeneutics; instead, contributors advocated for a situated, historicized approach to reading documentary poetry that remains equally germane two decades later. Neither *Chain* nor *XCP* presented a homogenous model of "Documentary." Rather, the multiple, and at times contradictory, visions of documentary poetry published in 1995 and 2000, respectively, offer us early, if idiosyncratic, glimpses into the challenges of codifying documentary poetry as a genre, movement, style, "verse culture," or literary community, however diffuse. Even so, what remains surprisingly constant is poets' interest in marking the intersections of racialization and nationalization as driving vectors of events in whose tangled afterlives we construct our present.

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NOTES

¹ Robert Creeley's famous formulation, popularized by Charles Olson's famous essay "Projective Verse."

² Briante argues against reproduction, too: "If the poem is a monument, it cannot simply reproduce the words of a historical marker such as the one Rukeyser found at Harper's Ferry. Following Rukeyser's example, the poem is made when the monument is defaced, when we have written into it, breaking syntax to allow space for more nuanced meanings" (n.p.).

³ Feinsod writes: "In order to stress intra-hemispheric reciprocities in the poetry of the Americas and to signal the variety of forms and discourses through which poets articulate a relation to statecraft, I often refer to an *inter-American poetics*. The prefix *inter-* favors common political designations of the era over a *trans-American* imaginary whose utopian allure may too readily promise to override the residual power of nation-states" (11).

⁴ Glicksberg is explicit regarding his views on Soviet Realism, which he sees as an "extreme form" of documentary poetry: "Documentary poetry, however, need not suffer from the rank contagion of the Marxist aesthetic" (214).

⁵ However, as Jorge H. Valdés points out, Cardenal's mentor José Coronel Urtecho had drawn parallels between Cardenal's work and documentary film in a 1966 letter-prologue to *El Estrecho Dudoso* in which Urtecho describes Cardenal as having "la rápida técnica alucinante de una película documental" [the rapid, hallucinating technique of a documentary film] (15).

⁶ Given that Pring-Mill was a Latin Americanist based in the United Kingdom before the advent of the internet, it unlikely he would have been aware of either Livesay or Honig and so it is not surprising he thought he was the first to use the term.

⁷ Gander's excellent monograph *Muriel Rukeyser: The Poetics of Connection* (2013) remains the most extensive examination of Rukeyser's work to date.

⁸ Harrington holds that Rukeyser's "refusal to set forth a linear, unambiguous argument" and her "critique of the documentary gaze" have become "hallmarks of twenty-first-century documentary poetics" and explain why she has received "the lion's share" of recent criticism ("Politics of Docupoetry" 68). Metres's 2018 commemorative essay "(More) News from Poems: Investigative / Documentary / Social Poetics On the Tenth Anniversary of the Publication of 'From Reznikoff to Public Enemy'" comments that "One might draw a straight line between Rukeyser's poem and practice" and contemporary poets working in the documentary vein, including Nowak, Rankine, Spahr, himself, and "many others" (n.p.). Poets themselves have suggested similar configurations of influence. In a recent article, for example, Michael Dowdy points out that epigraphs from *The Book of the Dead* begin three recent relevant collections: Solmaz Sharif's *LOOK* (2016), Briante's *The Market Wonders* (2016), and Rebecca Dunham's *Cold Pastoral* (2017). As recently as 19 March 2022, Anthony Cody traced his *Borderland Apocrypha* directly to Rukeyser when asked where he positioned his work vis a vis documentary poetry at a recent Zoom reading moderated by Jena Osman. Rukeyser's influence thus remains powerful, and her firmly established position as *the* forebear of contemporary documentary poetry is almost entirely uncontested.

⁹ Cristina Rivera Garza names *The Book of the Dead* and *Testimony* as "trabajos fundacionales de la poesía documental estadounidense" [foundational works in U.S. documentary poetry] which "transcriben y recontextualizan el lenguaje" [transcribe and recontextualize language (90), serving as forbears to more contemporary poets like Nowak and Spahr who "buscan la diferencias ente lo literario y lo cultural propiamente dicho" [pursue the dividing line between what's considered literary and what's considered culture proper] (91). Leong affirms that we "in an age of Rukeyser's afterlife" (6), while also naming Reznikoff's *Testimony* as a precursor to what he calls "the documental turn in contemporary North American poetry" (5).

¹⁰ For an account of experimental formalism and documentary as "*complementary* moments of a broader modernist poetics," see Tryus Miller.

¹¹ Dowdy's nuanced account makes particularly resonant the two periods with the observation that "the historical rhymes between the Great Depression and Great Recession suggest that documentary

techniques are well suited for addressing the material and ideological dimensions of global crises, from crises of representation and technological change to those of inequality, migration, and ascendant fascism” (161).

¹² Additional examples include but are not limited to: Nowak’s *Shut Up Shut Down*; C.D. Wright’s *One Big Self*; Juan Felipe Herrera’s “A Day Without a Mexican: Video Clip”; Craig Santos Perez’s *from unincorporated territory* tetralogy.

¹³ Dowdy writes: “Documentary poetry emerged in the United States during the 1930s, when documentarians were funded by the state, through the Federal Writers’ Project and other New Deal programs. Their documentaries conceptualized citizens as agents of History empowered to change its course” (“Shakeout” 155).

¹⁴ The work of Feinsod, Yomaira C., Figueroa-Vásquez, Edgar Garcia, Rachel Galvin, Brent Hayes Edwards, Walt Hunter, Ignacio Infante, Ana Patricia Rodriguez, Sonya Posmentier, Rachel Price, Gayle Rogers, Kirsten Silva Gruesz, Clemens Spahr, Susan Stanford Friedman, and Vera M. Kutzinski, among others, all scholars who explore genre and literary movements by means of border-crossing literary and historical phenomena within and beyond the Americas have been fundamental to this study.

¹⁵ “Rivera Garza argues that documentary poetry in the Latin American context “Al menos en cuanto a temperamento se refiere, más Nicanor Parra que Ernesto Cardenal... Más Raúl Zurita, aunque no en estilo o en método” [At least in terms of temperament refers more to Nicanor Parra than Ernesto Cardenal... More Raúl Zurita, though not in style or method] (115-116). In so doing, Rivera Garza works to *dissociate* Cardenal’s reputation as a documentary poet par excellence of the anglophone world, to instead associate documentary poetry with Latin American—and specifically Chilean—conceptualism (Parra and Zurita were and are conceptual artists themselves whose trenchant critiques of capitalism, neoliberalism, political violence, and environmental destruction remain some of the most influential in the Spanish language). Rivera Garza’s argument is that Parra and Zurita “aprovecharon las prácticas y enseñanzas del modernismo estadounidense -entre ellos la ruptura de la linealidad en la forma- para incluir el documento histórico, la cita textual, la historia oral, el folclore e incluso los anuncios comerciales en la formulación de textos híbridos marcados por una pluralidad de voces y, luego entonces, por una subjetividad múltiple” [took advantage of the practices and teachings of American modernism -rupturing linearity of form among them- to include the historical document, the textual quotation, oral history, folklore and even commercial advertisements in the formulation of hybrid texts marked by a plurality of voices and, then, by a multiple subjectivity] (116). I challenge this argument in Chapter 1, demonstrating how Ernesto Cardenal’s exteriorista aesthetic was conceptualized in dialogue with Anglo-American modernists, whom he translated. Though my focus is on Cardenal’s earliest understudied documentary work and thus I do not discuss the text in detail, the polyvocal *El estrecho dudoso* (1966) serves as a useful counterexample with respect to Rivera Garza’s suggestion that pluralized voices and subjectivities do not appear in Cardenal’s work. The famous *Hora 0* likewise constantly interrupts the poem’s lyric speaker by means of other voices, several of which offer facts and figures drawn from documentary material. It is true, however, that many of Cardenal’s documentary poems, particularly the earliest, take form as a dramatic monologue with a single speaker.

¹⁶ Hooker’s theorization of juxtaposition is an extension of the approach put forward by Gillman and Gruesz (2011).

¹⁷ Livesay was in residence at the University of Manitoba from [years]. While she was there, she co-founded the important literary magazine CVII, and compiled her hybrid work about the 1930s, *Right Hand Left Hand* (1977).

¹⁸ Though Magi does touch briefly on the introduction to the special issue of *CHAIN* (249-250).

¹⁹ On coloniality of power, see Quijano. On the “coloniality of citizenship,” see Kamugisha, Arrizon-Palomera, Boatcă, and Boatcă and Roth.

²⁰ See *Social Poetics*, particularly the introduction.

²¹ The topography of *Conquistador* similarly finds its origins in the direct experience of the poet’s travels, which included going to Guatemala City to see the original manuscript “corroded by time, worms, and various other things” (*Reflections* 74). See Cavanagh for a discussion on how MacLeish’s

geography tropes east as the “secure past” that “constricts” and west as the “‘nude’ land that promises” (299). Cavanagh doesn’t, unfortunately, go so far as to spell out the implications of MacLeish’s implicit investment in Manifest Destiny. He does, however, mention the impetus for MacLeish’s literary tourism: the writing, which began in 1928 in Paris, was going “badly” as MacLeish felt too “distant from the landscape” (303).

²² As Newcomb has commented, the device of the first-person here should be understood to represent “a collectively defined community,” one which “explicitly revised the atomized and alienated narrative figures of such landmarks of high modernism as ‘Prufrock,’ *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, and *The Waste Land*” (17). At the same time, Newcomb’s statement begs the question of exactly who is included—and excluded—from this imagined community. MacLeish’s poem relies upon, quite literally, a “we” versus “them.”

²³ In this chapter I quote extensively from Jonathan Cohen’s translations of “Raleigh” and “With Walker in Nicaragua.” All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

²⁴ See Gould in particular. Kuhnheim’s writings on Cardenal’s indigenism (2002) and (Ch. 1, 2004) perhaps represent the most recent instances in which the topic was broached in literary scholarship. The topic of mestizaje in Cardenal, as far as I know, has yet to be discussed outside of historical scholarship.

²⁵ See White, Borgeson

²⁶ Indeed, one way to understand the distinct approaches taken by MacLeish and Cardenal is through two specific forms of colonial discourse: the *probanza de mérito*, in MacLeish’s case and the *requirimiento* in Cardenal’s. See Restall pp. 11-14. Related to this is the difference in MacLeish’s figuring of the west as manifest destiny realized (one of *Conquistador*’s final lines is: “And the west is gone now: the west is the ocean sky....”) vs. Cardenal’s as a symbolic presence traveling over and through areas, affecting them, in particularly sonic ways: “the wall of shadows in the west upon which all sounds echo” (124) and “And we have dreamt these stormy jungles, / which the lonesome westerly wind crosses like a howl” (122).

²⁷ For Gómez-Rivas, “the Spanish imperial protocols of possession evident in the text of the *Requerimiento*... were learned from a context of competition and negotiation in Iberia, the western Mediterranean, and the Maghrib that preexisted and coexisted with the New World conquests” (n.p.).

²⁸ See Borgeson (30) in particular

²⁹ Thanks very much to Norma Klahn for pointing this out.

³⁰ Also the mentor of one Allen Ginsberg who, that same year, had his famous sunflower visions in response to the work of William Blake.

³¹ It is somewhat curious that, throughout his career, Cardenal always referenced Pound, hardly ever mentioning MacLeish, as the major Anglo-American influence on his work. Cardenal was not unaware, of course, of Pound’s politics. Mark Nowak has told a wonderful story of a poetry reading in which he asked Cardenal how he could continue to support Pound in light of his antisemitism and support of fascist Italy. Nowak describes Cardenal’s answer as rather “unsatisfactory” at the time but that afterwards Cardenal, impressed with the question, went out of his way to find out who had asked the question so they could speak further; in the end, the two spent the afternoon together. I believe I first heard this anecdote via Harris Feinsod.

³² Cardenal himself has described the poem as a sort of ode to the jungle: “Está basado en un relato que hizo el propio pirata inglés. En la búsqueda del Dorado en la selva como un especie de búsqueda del paraíso. Yo soy de un país tropical y amo mucho la selva. Este amor a la selva es lo que motivó este poema” (*Ernesto Cardenal Para Niños* 27).

³³ The thesis appeared as the introduction to the anthology *Nueva poesía nicaragüense*, edited with Orlando Cuadra Downing.

³⁴ He would continue the thread of this as a collaborator on D.W. Griffith’s film *Abraham Lincoln* (1930). See Gilpin for a fascinating discussion of Benét

³⁵ Benét appears in only two articles in *Modernism/modernity*: in a footnote in John Newcomb’s “The Footprint of the Twentieth Century: American Skyscrapers and Modernist Poems,” and in passing in Christopher MacGowan’s review of *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines: Volume II, North America: 1894-1960*. A rather uncritical chapter-length discussion of

John Brown's Body can be found in Ch. 2 of Grieve-Carlson, while an excellent contextualization and analysis can be found in Gilpin, a historian by training.

³⁶ Here is the full catalog: "... shifts of focus or of angle; cuts from close up or detail shorts right through to extreme long; jump-cuts for the sake of concision and abruptness; the poetic equivalent of pans and zooms; deft insert shots (to give additional data); the use of flashbacks (and flash-forwards), or of bridging shots (like those of railway wheels or newspapers in films); foreshortening and forelengthening, applied both to space and to time (where films would use the time lapse camera or slow motion); studied relational editing; match-cuts which link two disparate scenes by the repetition of an action or a shape (or a sound)—but most of all the dialectical process of 'collisional' montage, which generates fresh meaning out of the meanings of adjacent shots. Cardenal's highly visual poetry displays the verbal equivalent of each of those effects, and many of his most vivid sequences could almost serve as detailed shooting scripts" (xx).

³⁷ Almost immediately after *Lincoln de los poetas*, the two also began working almost immediately to expand Urtecho's recent anthology, *Panorama y antología de la poesía norteamericana* (1949), a landmark text that became enormously influential in the reception of U.S. poets in Nicaragua which included work from Muriel Rukeyser's *U.S. 1* but curiously nothing from *The Book of the Dead*. Their joint reissue would not be finished until 1963. Selections of their ongoing translation projects also appeared in the Mexico City revista *El Corno Emplumado/The Plumed Horn*. *El Corno* published several portions of their co-translations of Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams which would appear in longer, book-length anthologies in 1979 and 1985, respectively. As Michele Hardesty has commented, "These projects were predicated on the principle that U.S. poetry was not a force of cultural imperialism, but rather that poets and poetry were forces that could transcend political borders and that poets were the true representatives of a people" (118).

³⁸ Livon-Grosman explicates the complex two-pronged navigation by which Cardenal and Urtecho incorporated United States literature without becoming subordinated to or derivative of it: "Por una parte se trata de establecer ese puente sur-norte que remueva quirúrgicamente la conexión de la poesía nicaragüense con la tradición española y por el otro evitar una relación de subordinación jerárquica, un Estados Unidos magisterial por sobre una Hispanoamérica escolar" [On the one hand, {exteriorismo} is a question of establishing a south-north bridge, of surgically removing the connection of Nicaraguan poetry from the Spanish tradition and, on the other hand, avoids a relationship of hierarchical subordination, a magisterial United States over a pupillary Latin America] (202).

³⁹ See almost all introductions to his works in English translation. See Aparicio, Valdés, Livon-Grossman, Porrúa for Spanish-language criticism that better contextualizes the hemispheric origins of exteriorismo. As a result, the stark difference in Cardenal's subsequent Sandinista and Pound's Mussolinian politics has been a source of major confusion and speculation in U.S. scholarship. Henighan's *Sandino's Nation* clears up this confusion once and for all, convincingly demonstrating the conservative, Catholic, and fascist aspects of Cardenalian politics up until the poet's "second conversion" to Marxism after visiting Cuba in 1970. One of Henighan's most important contributions is to show that for decades, almost all of Cardenal's work has been read biographically, with his Sandinista politics retroactively applied to creative periods in which Cardenal's prior political views were all but anathema to his later ones

⁴⁰ See Pring-Mill in *Apocalypse* (xii)

⁴¹ Cardenal on the term *exteriorismo*: "Debíamos haberle llamado más bien "concreta," pues no se contraponía propiamente a un tipo de poesía "interiorista," sino a una poesía abstracta predominante en otras partes; y no lo hicimos porque en aquella época había en el Brasil una poesía que se llamaba "concreta," aunque en verdad no lo era." (Cardenal and Urtecho, *Antología* 2007 xiii) [We should have called it "concrete," since it was not properly opposed to a type of "interior" poetry, but to a kind of abstract poetry that prevailed elsewhere; and we did not {call exteriorismo "poesía concreta"} because at that time there was a poetry in Brazil that called "concrete," although in truth it was not.]

⁴² Recently reissued with in Caracas in 2007 and again in México in 2015, their translations and selection continue to play an influential role in the reception of U.S. poets in Latin America.

⁴³ Though I do not emphasize it in this chapter, since its readings focus on Cardenal's poetry prior to his political involvement, Cardenal actively participated in armed struggle against the US-backed

Somoza dictatorship (1936-1979) during the failed 1954 April Revolution, and as a member of and foreign ambassador for the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN), a militant nationalist political organization which, in 1979, succeeded in overthrowing Somoza and inaugurating the Nicaraguan Revolution (1979-1990); the ensuing decade would be marked by brutal right-wing paramilitary violence of the Contras, contrarevolucionarios trained by the CIA and covertly supported by the Reagan administration, who killed over thirty thousand Nicaraguans and inflicted severe economic suffering on the country. From 1979 until 1987, Cardenal served as the Minister of Culture for the Sandinista government. His role is remembered for his efforts towards organizing poetry workshops throughout the country based on the model of the campesino workshops of Solentiname, an experimental religious community and ongoing literary and artistic workshop he founded in the late 1960s. There, Costa Rican Mayra Jiménez, who had previously overseen poetry workshops in her native country and in Venezuela, encouraged local, working-class residents of Solentiname to write and share their poetry; the results of her efforts made a lasting impression on the priest.

⁴⁴ It is worth pointing out that many of the poets included in the Nicaraguan anthology Cardenal deems “exteriorista” would have been influenced by Urtecho’s seminal 1948 anthology of North American poets.

⁴⁵ In the opening of his 1978 prologue for an anthology of Cardenal’s work printed by Casa de Las Americas in 1979, editor Cintio Vitier includes Cubans here: “Ernesto Cardenal ha calificado su propia poesía y la que más le gusta de Nicaragua y Cuba, como poesía «exteriorista»” (vii). [Ernesto Cardenal has classified his own poetry and that which Nicaragua and Cuba likes best, as exteriorista poetry.] Cardenal also retroactively constructs a grouping of authors from around the world: “La poesía de la realidad exterior, objetiva o concreta, había existido desde Homero, incluyendo la poesía bíblica, la china y japonesa, el Romancero y *La Divina Comedia*” (Urtecho and Cardenal, *Antología* 2007 xiii). What distinguished exteriorismo from these older texts was the way it came to stand for Revolution.

⁴⁶ See in particular Juan Sobalvarro’s “Las mentiras del exteriorismo” and “Las verdades del exteriorismo”

⁴⁷ According to translator Thomas Merton, “This poem is based on a strictly historical account of the encounter with Drake written by a Spanish captain, in a letter to the Viceroy of New Spain, dated Realejo (Nicaragua), 1579” (*Apocalypse* 4).

⁴⁸ That “Walker” is a documentary poem is generally accepted in scholarship. Harrison refers to “Walker” as Pring-Millian documentary poem (161).

⁴⁹ Similarly, White has commented, “Considered as a group, early poems such as ‘Con Walker en Nicaragua’, ‘Los filibusteros’, ‘Joaquín Artola’, ‘José Dolores Estrada’, ‘Greytown’, ‘Squier en Nicaragua’, and ‘Viajero del siglo xix en el río de San Juan’, form an integrated series that effectively encapsulates the landscape, culture and history of Nicaragua in the nineteenth century” (110).

⁵⁰ Following the Missouri Compromise, options for slave states entering the Union progressively dwindled. As a result, pro-slavery Southerners began to consider Latin American territory as the only option for increasing their political and territorial power.

⁵¹ During this period of US expansionism, Nicaragua, along with isthmuses in Panama and Tehuantepec, were considered as sites for establishing an Atlantic-Pacific canal. Such a project was especially propelled by the 1848 discovery of gold in California, which led to an influx of people desperate to travel west as quickly as possible. California was not yet linked to the rest of the country by rail, so gold rushers had two options: take a stagecoach across the mainland (and risk being attacked or robbed by highwaymen) or circumnavigate South America by ship. Cornelius Vanderbilt, was one of several entrepreneurs who came up with alternative routes in order to capitalize on the demand for quick travel into California; a *de facto* agent of US expansion, he pressured officials at home and abroad and independently negotiated treaties with ruling parties of foreign nations. With the help of Ephraim George Squier (of Cardenal’s 1954 “Con Squier en Nicaragua”), who was sent by President Zachary Taylor to facilitate the deal, one of his representatives managed to get the government to revoke a previous contract granting rights to another company in 1849. He was granted exclusive rights to transport passengers across Nicaraguan territory by the sitting government of Nicaragua, under the understanding he would build a canal using the San Juan river through Lake Nicaragua in order to do so *and* colonize uninhabited areas contiguous to the river with U.S. settlers. Vanderbilt

instead built a cheaper route that was a combination of riverboat and stagecoach, which had no commercial value to Nicaragua, promising to pay the government rent. He never did, and when the Conservative government of Granada demanded it, Vanderbilt simply chose to instead recognize as the legitimate government the Liberals, the recently formed rival party in León, many of whom hoped U.S. annexation as a non-slave state would bring to an end the civil wars the country had suffered in the years since gaining independence from Spanish colonial rule. Vanderbilt hired Walker to support the Liberals, which Walker did, and won. But after first ruling through a local puppet, Walker began to act as a free agent. He arranged fixed elections, declared himself president of Nicaragua, made English the official language, and re-legalized slavery, which had been abolished in 1824. Walker also convinced two of Vanderbilt's associates to betray the mogul, promising he would reissue Vanderbilt's charter in their name rather than his, which Walker did, along with seizing and "nationalizing" Vanderbilt's assets. Vanderbilt undertook various efforts to oust Walker's government from Nicaragua, suspending sailings to Nicaragua to deprive Walker new recruits and ammunition; people—ultimately 12,000 of them—were flocking to Walker, promised free land in the fertile tropical lowlands of Nicaragua's Pacific coast. Vanderbilt also sent his own mercenary who, with the help of some 100 Costa Ricans, succeeded in overthrowing Walker's government in 1957. Still, many Americans greeted Walker as a hero when he returned home, and he was acquitted from federal charges of violating neutrality. He even returned to retake Nicaragua, at which point Vanderbilt demanded US government intervention; yet again Walker was removed, and yet again he attempted filibustering. In 1860 after a failed invasion of the Bay Islands off the coast of Honduras, he was finally executed.

⁵² For an in-depth study of literary texts inspired by Walker's writings, see Harrison

⁵³ From Vaca: "Estas crónicas fueron traducidas por el nicaragüense Arturo Ortega y el costarricense Guillermo Figueroa, ambos cumpliendo labores consulares en San Francisco, California, en 1909, y editadas en 1945. En la introducción Ortega cuenta que en aquel año el diario *San Francisco Chronicle* había anunciado la publicación dominical de una obra escrita por Clinton Rollins, posiblemente el último sobreviviente de los hombres de Walker. Según Ortega, Figueroa las tradujo al castellano y él las corrigió" ["These chronicles were translated by the Nicaraguan Arturo Ortega and the Costa Rican Guillermo Figueroa, both doing consular work in San Francisco, California, in 1909. They were published in 1945. In the introduction, Ortega says that in 1909 the *San Francisco Chronicle* had announced a Sunday column written by Clinton Rollins, possibly the last survivor of Walker's men. According to Ortega, Figueroa translated the installments into Spanish and corrected them] (49).

⁵⁴ As Vaca has observed, this choice is due to Parkhurst's willingness to be critical, at times, of Walker, "Cardenal se basa en los textos de Parkhurst porque expresa el discurso más crítico sobre el filibusterismo estadounidense en la América Central" [Cardenal bases his text on the Parkhurst because it expresses the most critical discourse on US-led filibusterism in Central America] (56).

⁵⁵ Cohen translates "frontera" as "frontier," rather than "border."

⁵⁶ For more on the the sea routes to California via the Nicaraguan or Panamanian transit, and around the tip of South America, during the gold rush, see Holliday

⁵⁷ The examples of this rhetorical move are countless. Here are two more, from Parkhurst's Dec. 5 installment. When the filibusters arrive in León, he comments, "The soldiers of Pizarro gazed upon Cuzco with no greater curiosity" ("Conquest of Nicaragua"). Similarly, in explaining why they did not take Granada early on, Parkhurst reasons, "A desperate leader would have taken Granada. Cortez went ahead when he won a fight" ("Conquest of Nicaragua").

⁵⁸ The vision is the closest we ever get to a reason for which Rollins decided to join the company. In this sense, we may see this racial hierarchy as another project Rollins eventually abandons.

⁵⁹ See Courtemanche 362

⁶⁰ The Meiji government began to loosen restrictions on emigration in the late 19th century, in large part due to economic reasons. The crash in commodity prices associated with the Matsukata deflation (1881-1885) caused many citizens to lose their property and livelihood; worsening stagnation, crisis, and poverty throughout the 1920s and 1930s led to a rise in emigration abroad. This aspect is not represented in Livesay's poem; we are told only that the Japanese "come from an island... to make a home near water" (*Call My People Home* 1; *The Documentaries* 34; *The Self-Completing Tree* 169).

⁶¹ Japanese Canadians were disenfranchised both economically and politically. In the years leading up to WWII, 29,000 people of Japanese ancestry lived in BC, 80% of them Canadian nationals without full access to constitutional rights: they were paid less than whites, denied the full rights of citizens, such as the right to vote in provincial and federal elections, and prohibited from working in most industries.

⁶² After receiving a B.A. in modern languages at the University of Toronto (1927-31), Livesay went to Paris to study for a Diplôme d'études supérieures at the Sorbonne (1931-32), where she became involved in communist circles. Upon returning to Canada, she joined the Party and studied social work before serving as a caseworker in Montreal (1932, 1934), Englewood, New Jersey (1934, 1936), and Vancouver (1936). She was concurrently active in various leftist organizations including the Young Communist League (CPL), the Canadian League Against War and Fascism (CPC), and the socialist New Frontier, for which she was regional editor in Vancouver in the years 1936-37. She began writing extensively herself for newspapers such as *Masses* and the newly established CBC Radio.

⁶³ In the pages following this discussion, we learn that Kon read "Day and Night" and wrote to Livesay to express his admiration for the piece, and her work more generally, which he compares to "Langston Hughes's," as well as to reiterate his brief that "a person like [Livesay] is of an immensely greater value to the cause of pushing humanity on the right track of just, peaceful, full life by writing and thus influencing others, than by running around with leaflets and posters" (102).

⁶⁴ Trained as a social scientist at the University of Chicago, Grierson began his career researching the psychology of propaganda, an experience to which he traces the origins of his own work in documentary. Inspired by Flaherty's treatment of everyday people and events, Grierson's work sought to politicize his predecessor's approach to filmmaking by turning from the past to the future; rather than "documenting" a falsified "exotic" version of history, he sought to disseminate a vision to be disseminated and replicated. Grierson emphasized the documenting of local rather than foreign subjects found in Flaherty's films, albeit using the same ethnographic eye and ambivalent relation to the documenting reality. Emphasizing the "arrangement, the rearrangement, and the reshaping of the natural material of the world" which presents an "interpretation of the world" to a particular audience. Grierson would come to champion this approach as the "creative treatment of actuality," an aesthetic method which existed in service of some particular end. Frequently, this end was determined by Grierson's own panoptic vision of film's role in social and political life, and his at times totalitarian leanings as to what constituted the ideal citizen-subject. "Grierson believed firmly in the idea that film propaganda was a legitimate weapon of the state" summarized one of his former students in a review of Gary Evans's *John Grierson and the National Film Board: The Politics of Wartime Propaganda* published in *Cinema Canada*, "a weapon to forge a national consciousness and collective will" (qtd. in "John Grierson" 25). Grierson was invited to study Canada's film production by King's administration in 1938: the years prior to WWII inaugurated a crucial moment in which the liberal government began to consolidate its ideological response to the tensions of imposing order and preserving individual liberties, a feat accomplished in part through the dissemination of culture. In his resulting report, Grierson recommended the founding of a centralized institution responsible for film production, approved the following year.

⁶⁵ A colonial ethnographic film or "docufiction" about the native peoples of Manoa that Grierson praised for its "documentary value," *Moana* was preceded by *Nanook of the North* (1922), the first commercially-successful feature-length "documentary film," which had cemented the popularity of Flaherty—and his new aesthetic. Both *Nanook* and *Moana* included exoticizing "reenactment" scenes staged by Flaherty, including anachronistic hunting sequences or then-obsolete rituals performed in traditional clothing among communities that had been using Western apparel for decades. As countless film scholars have noted, the genre of documentary, as inaugurated by Flaherty, has relied on fictionalizing devices and modes of emplotment from its very beginnings. Yet scholarship on documentary poetry frequently cites Grierson's coinage of the term "documentary" without contextualizing the way his usage blurred boundaries between historical "fact," racializing ethnographic practices, and genre fiction.

⁶⁶ On a more pragmatic note, Livesay's framing of "The Documentary Poem" can also be read as a

strategic response meant to retroactively deflect criticism she received when *Call My People Home* first appeared. Gendered, conservative, and classist modernist anxieties regarding the radio and the dissemination of art were widespread at the time. See Aguila-Way for an extensive discussion of this. See Marriott for a critical review of *Call My People Home* in *Contemporary Verse* in which Marriott refers to Livesay's work as "such outworn poetic stuff" (19).

⁶⁷ This connection between *Call My People Home* and *Of Japanese Descent* I owe to the careful work of Tania Aguila-Way in her master's thesis, "'Returning the Gaze': Reappraisals of the Griersonian Documentary in Livesay and Marlatt" and the book chapter "Griersonian 'Actuality' and Social Protest in Dorothy Livesay's Documentary Poems."

⁶⁸ One study by Price Waterhouse revealed the economic losses from the wartime property confiscation were \$443 million in 1986 dollars, or a little over \$1 billion when adjusted for inflation.

⁶⁹ In reality, Tashme was notorious for its harsh conditions; inhabitants lived in wooden shacks with no insulation, despite winter lows reaching -20 degrees C. It was also an exceptional, rather than representative case. Technically outside the "protected zone," Tashme was far from the other internment camps, which were located farther east in southeastern BC, near established towns and villages and relatively close to one another. Unlike the other internment camps created from abandoned ghost towns, Tashme was like an isolated company town.

⁷⁰ See Aguila-Way *Returning the Gaze* and "Griersonian 'Actuality'"

⁷¹ See Aguila-Way "Griersonian 'Actuality,'" Miki

⁷² The Canadian Citizenship Act went into effect January 1, 1947, and was followed by the construction of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration (DCI), a government entity intended to "to make Canadian citizens of those who come here as immigrants and to make Canadian citizens of as many as possible of the descendants of the original inhabitants of this country," to use the words of King's successor Liberal Prime Minister Louis San Laurent (qtd. in Bohaker and Iacovetta, 428). The DCI brought together the former Department of Indian Affairs and Canadian Citizenship Branch, a reorganization suggestive of how the government attempted to reframe all Canadians as immigrants, including First Nations peoples: either migrating "from reserve life to city centres" or had "migrated" to Canada long ago—via the Bering Strait (Bohaker and Iacovetta, 435). (As Gabaccia points out "Congressmen also called American Indians 'emigrants' when the United States army forced them over the Trail of Tears to trans-Mississippi territories in the 1830s" [13].) While many U.S. readers will recognize "nation of immigrants" as *their* foundational metaphor, the Canadian government's use of this narrative as a rhetoric of nation-building anticipates its southern neighbor's by almost two decades; the U.S. would not adopt the motto in earnest until after 1965, ironically, within a context of restrictive immigration reform (Gabaccia, Ngai). First-generation Japanese and their living descendants constituted one of many groups the Canadian state sought to "naturalize" under this new regime of Canadian citizenship. The expectation these groups of "immigrants" assimilate to dominant culture was central to the narrative of white-manufactured postwar "Canadian" identity.

⁷³ Grierson's politics made him lots of enemies. Consider the following comments made by Leo Dolan, head of the Canadian Government Travel Bureau, in a letter to Michell Hepburn, premier of Ontario, and an enemy of Mackenzie King: "This guy Grierson is the smoothest Limey to come here in years. He has had the inside path with your pal Willie King ... I know that these New York Jews are always with Grierson and I am convinced the little bastard is an English Jew. The whole film board setup should be investigated..." (qtd. in "John Grierson" 25). Following the war, the NFB would eventually be investigated—and smeared—and Grierson left without financial or political support in Canada.

⁷⁴ In the late nineteenth century, the Canadian population was concentrated in the five eastern provinces of Quebec, Ontario, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick. Eager to create a political stronghold in the west, as well as a reliable domestic food supply, Canada's once-haphazard approach to shifted to a concrete campaign promoting settlement in the prairie provinces under Wilfrid Laurier's liberal administration, elected in 1896. The Canadian Homestead Act (Dominion Lands Act), designed to encourage the settlement of Canada's western prairie provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba) on the model of the U.S. Homestead Act (1862), had been in place since 1872. However, low wheat prices and economic depression in the 1870s and 1880s had

curtailed arrivals in the Canadian interior, particularly amidst the intense global competition for settlers in other regions, such as Australia, Argentina, and southern Africa, where colonial regimes had also systematically removed native peoples and were in the process of “opening” agricultural lands and recruiting homesteaders to occupy them. Large scale immigration to the Canadian prairies did not happen until wheat prices began to rise, and immigration policy came under the purview of Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior (1896-1905), of Manitoba. He believed that if Canada failed to attract the requisite numbers of agricultural laborers from U.S., British, and Northern European sources, the “surplus populations” of Southern and Eastern Europeans were “the most promising alternatives” (“Ukrainian Immigration and Settlement Patterns in Canada”). Sifton began an aggressive recruitment strategy under the famous slogan “Last Best West.” Referring to the “closure” of the frontier lands in the U.S.—almost all “free” land had been taken by the 1890s—the campaign portrayed Canada as the “last” and “best” option for the competitive pool of remaining westward-headed homesteaders.

⁷⁵ Indeed, the particular slur used to refer to Ukrainians—“half-civilized Galicians”—is suggestive of Coleman’s theory that Canadians are obsessed with “the problem” of their “own civility” as defined according to Anglo-Saxon whiteness, and which “Galicia” marks as outsider. Livesay’s family had Ukrainian servants and contributed to the preservation of Ukrainian culture, though Livesay’s mother’s efforts are recognizable today for the ways in which they culturally appropriate their cultural production.

⁷⁶ Ukrainians entered Canada in subsequent decades as refugees of war, defectors of the Communist bloc, and under the collapse of the USSR, in the third, fourth, and fifth waves of Ukrainian immigration, respectively. Today, Canada boasts the world’s third-largest Ukrainian population, behind only Ukraine itself and Russia; Ukrainian-Canadians have founded a number of Ukrainian-specific political institutions and caucuses and, as a result, enjoy more influence in Canadian politics than any other East European group, particularly in the prairie provinces where—owing to Sifton’s vision—Ukrainian communities have historically been concentrated.

⁷⁷ As Bohaker and Iacovetta have written, “For decades, successive federal governments had assumed that what they called ‘the Indian problem’ would eventually disappear on its own, the product of demographic decline. But after reaching a low of 100,000 people in 1900, the population of ‘status Indians’ began a remarkable recovery. By the late 1930s, this population had grown 18 per cent; Indian Affairs officials were increasingly worried about the strain that such growth would place on government coffers” (434).

⁷⁸ A paper originally given in June 1969 at York University, it appeared in print two years later in Eli Mandel’s *Contexts of Canadian Criticism*.

⁷⁹ Harrington credits her with coining the term in English, but does not offer an extended reading of the piece. The essay is rarely mentioned in contemporary discussions of documentary poetry.

⁸⁰ One might also add to this list: Roy Kiyooka’s *Kyoto Airs* (1964) and Fred Wah’s *Lardeau* (1965).

⁸¹ “[*Malcom’s Katie* is not mere narrative,” writes Livesay. “It is documentary and a prophecy” (275). Though this association may seem contradictory at first, it is a combination found in several texts which have been referred to as “documentary”: Raúl Zurita’s *La vida nueva* (1994), Juan Felipe Herrera’s “A Day Without a Mexican: video clip” (2007), and M. NorbeSe Philip’s *Zong!* (2008) are three examples. It could also be argued that Rukeyser’s usage of the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* in her 1938 *The Book of the Dead* is itself a prophetic gesture.

⁸² See Livesay, “The Canadian Documentary Poem: An Overview” and *The Self-Completing Tree*

⁸³ Livesay would reiterate this throughout her life. See “An Overview”: “... the long poem that is both documentary and dramatic. Documentary because it is history, it has been researched; and dramatic because it uses voices, actors. It can be played on radio or screen or stage” (127).

Incidentally, Rukeyser originally imagined *The Book of the Dead* as a “radio oratory...[to] be played as a Living Newspaper is, with a free, staccato movement, laced with music and sound effects.” See *Collected* (605). She also tried (unsuccessfully) to adapt the text to film: between 1938 and 1940, Rukeyser worked on a film titled “Gauley Bridge.” On Rukeyser, see Lobo

⁸⁴ Scott’s 1920 amendment to the Indian Act not only forced indigenous children to attend residential schools, it sought to empower the government to strip males the Department deemed ready

for citizenship of their Indian status, whether the men wanted to be citizens or not. While tabling on behalf of the proposed legislation, Scott famously stated: “I want to get rid of the Indian problem. I do not think as a matter of fact, that the country ought to continuously protect a class of people who are able to stand alone... Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department, that is the whole object of this Bill” (qtd. in Miller 223). As head of the DIA, he played a key role in the nation building of English Canada, a project Coleman has argued is “obsessed, and organized by its obsession, with the problem of its own civility” and for which the “central organizing problematic of this endeavor has been the formation and elaboration of a specific form of whiteness based on a British model of civility” (5). By conflating whiteness with civility, Coleman argues, whiteness became the naturalized norm of English Canadian cultural identity, and nowhere is this more evident than in the nation’s literary tradition.

⁸⁵ Ross approached publisher Jack McClelland, troubled by the fact that nearly every Canadian book that would eventually be considered part of the Canadian canon—due in no small part to Ross’s efforts—was then out of print. The result of this partnership was the 1958 founding of the New Canadian Library publishing imprint, for which Ross would serve as general editor; his *Poets of the Confederation* was their first publication. Ross originally identified the Confederate Poets as Charles G.D. Roberts (recognized in his lifetime as “the father of Canadian poetry”), Archibald Lampman, Duncan Campbell Scott, and William Wilfred Campbell. They were divided into two branches, with Roberts in the Maritimes and the rest in Ottawa. Crawford came to be associated with the group later; Livesay’s discussions of *Malcolm’s Katie* marks a feminist recuperative gesture to write a woman into the all-male Confederate canon.

⁸⁶ In some sense, she was following in the footsteps of Grierson. When WWII ended, Grierson planned to pursue filmmaking with the newly formed United Nations as part of his his internationalist vision to create “collective will” among global spectators. Livesay, however, had more luck than her predecessor. The McCarthy Era was in full swing, however, and “[a]ctive intervention by no less than J. Edgar Hoover insured his rejection by a U.S.-dominated United Nations and eventual expulsion from the country [of Canada]” (“John Grierson” 25).

⁸⁷ The situation was further exacerbated by Western-backed secessions of the uranium-rich province of Katanga and the diamond-rich region of South Kasai, part of a wider counterrevolution against national liberation struggles “from the Congo basin all the way to the Cape of Good Hope, with mining companies, white settlers, and their backers in the Western establishment waging a vigorous campaign to preserve European interests and white supremacy in Central and Southern Africa” (Kindle Locations 1198-1200). Barry Goldwater and Strom Thurmond were two prominent U.S. senators that formed part of the Katanga lobby.

⁸⁸ A brief summary of Livesay’s engagement with source documents in “The Hammer and the Shield” might read as follows. The poem opens with a parable taken from Nyerere’s “The Courage of Reconciliation,” his Dag Hammarskjöld memorial lecture given just three years after the Secretary General’s death. Proceeding in roughly chronological order, the remainder of the poem provides select glimpses onto Dag’s life, interspersed with found material drawn from *Markings*. In section ii, Livesay details a childhood in which Hammarskjöld’s father, at one time a—very unpopular—Prime Minister of Sweden, raised his son for a life statesmanship, teaching him that “*Being neutral / is not a question of saying yes / to both sides / but of saying no*” (*Archive* 142). Section iii lingers rather bizarrely at times, on Hammarskjöld’s decision never to marry (his status as a “unicorn”), which made his sexuality a matter of public speculation at the time,⁸⁸ while section iv, which makes up the bulk of the poem, represents a selective appraisal of Hammarskjöld’s assuming “the mantle” of “the most impossible job / in the world’ / Secretary-General / of the United Nations” (*Archive* 144).

⁸⁹ In the wake of Lumumba’s execution, Fanon famously referred to the U.N. as “the legal card used by the imperialist interests when the card of brute force has failed” (204), an assessment which continues to be borne out by scholars of international relations and international human rights. Podur writes, “Under Hammarskjöld, the United Nations was never going to be an instrument of the decolonized African countries. Instead, Hammarskjöld walked a middle path, trying to please the West and placate African nationalism. When he had to choose, he chose the West—he protected the Katanga

secessionists and allowed the Belgians to kill Lumumba” (“Lumumba’s Death” 76). Lumumba had tried to “shape a nationalism based on three political pillars: revolutionary and coherent nationalism, political action relying on a mass movement, and an internationalist perspective” (De Witte, 176), and had offered the continent a basis for national identity predicated upon innate dignity of indigenous Congolese—and a collective, continental identity that centered Africa’s ability to survive and resist European colonialism: the West was aware of his power, and his assassination had been approved of—though not carried out by—the Eisenhower association.

⁹⁰ This and all other translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

⁹¹ Alternatively, “a coat.”

⁹² For more on the tri-racial Creole culture, see the work of Frank Moya Pons.

⁹³ The city’s indigenous name comes from moca (partridgewood), a cabbage palm tree endemic to the region.

⁹⁴ A secret detention center known as “La 40” was operated by Johnny Abbes García during the Trujillo dictatorship in order to interrogate, torture, and assassinate political dissidents. Many were disposed of in the “piscina” [swimming pool]: the ocean nearby Boca Chica beach, a known shark habitat.

⁹⁵ Another secret detention center, “la cárcel del Nueve” or “la cárcel del kilómetro 9,” was located on kilometer 9 of the carretera Mella. As the dictatorship went on, the methods employed there by Luis José León Esteve, Trujillo’s son in law, in El 9 came to be even crueller than “la 40.”

⁹⁶ A third, and less well-known detention center from the Trujillo era, located on La Isla Beata, a small island of the Dominican Republic.

⁹⁷ Possibly a critique of the gradual increase in hiring of Haitian day laborers in the Dominican Republic, which granted workers rights to transportation, as well as Dominican Social Security. In 1952, the Trujillo government began signing a series of agreements with the Haitian government for the hiring of temporary workers; three agreements were signed for a period of five years each: January 5, 1952, December 21, 1959, and November 14, 1966. The final agreement coincided with a broader context of agricultural diversification that began in the late 1960s, and marked a rapid decline in the Dominican sugar industry. The late 1960s also marked the beginning of outsourcing the Dominican economy, especially with the development of the service industry and free export sectors.

⁹⁸ The English translation dispenses with the boxes appearing around the Fuentes opening (Fig. 7), which visually connect *YANIA TIERRA* to *La tierra escrita* (Fig. 6), and give *YANIA TIERRA* a sense of public proclamation and militancy.

⁹⁹ The introduction to the English translation, written by co-translator M.J. Fenwick, is illustrative:

“The poem’s real images of heroic women throughout the poem represent a cross-section of Dominican society, and they span the centuries of invasion and exploitation by foreign powers. Although their class distinctions seem to be forgiven in the poem, the women represent an important political force by virtue of a shared anti-imperialist consciousness. Furthermore, the many women of social privilege, as documented in the poem, are willing to betray their class interests and stand against those Dominican sectors politically aligned with foreign interests which would compromise national self-determination in all its political and economic contexts.” (*Yania* 1995 26)

¹⁰⁰ See Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina, *The Evolution of Democracy in Santo Domingo* (33-34), in which the dictator declares the Dominican Republic as having been devoid of most physical markers of “civilization” and modernity before he assumed power.

¹⁰¹ Fenwick and Rosabelle White translate “la palabra manifiesto” as “imperial command” (*Yania* 1995 47) which loses the resonances of Catholic incarnation.

¹⁰² Guacanagarix, cacique of Marién received Christopher Columbus after the Santa María was wrecked during his first voyage to the New World. He allowed Columbus to establish the settlement of La Navidad near his village. Guacanagarix refused to ally himself with other caciques, who were trying to expel the Spaniards from the colony of Santo Domingo, and many times served as an informant and spy for the European settlers.

¹⁰³ Claudius was physically disabled and is widely believed to have been murdered by his wife. Here we have another example of postwar untimeliness: a physical resemblance between the two figures (el cojito & Claudius) through disability, as well as the suggestion that a female revolutionary

might seize power.

¹⁰⁴ Balaguer's speech is titled "The Principle of Alternability in Dominican History."

¹⁰⁵ Claudius conquered Britain (an enemy of the Dominican Republic). Used freedmen (former enslaved persons) in his administration, which was controversial (and resonates with Cartagena Portalatín's efforts toward the democratic inclusion of blacks and mulattos in Dominican nation building project). Claudius wrote dozens of volumes on the history of Carthage, the Etruscans, and the Roman Republic. His work on a history of the Roman civil wars was too truthful and too critical of the reigning emperor Augustus, and his mother Antonia Minor and grandmother Livia quickly put a stop to it. Caesar Augustus was the first Roman emperor, and his reign laid the foundations of a regime that lasted, in one form or another, for nearly fifteen hundred years through the ultimate decline of the Western Roman Empire and until the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. All Claudius's works have since been lost, but the legendary Roman historian Tacitus used Claudius' work as a source for his own writings.

¹⁰⁶ I am indebted to Magdalena López for the connection to Maingot. Though López's article refers to *Escalera Para Electra*, as well as *La vida no tiene nombre* (1965) by Marcio Veloz Maggiolo and *Cuando amaban las tierras comuneras* by Pedro Mir, the comparison works equally well—if not better—in the context of *YANIA TIERRA*.

¹⁰⁷ Their collective movement is described as a funeral procession.

¹⁰⁸ A period following Drake's invasion in which the Spanish governor Antonio de Osorio destroyed entire towns (of mainly black populaces) and herds of cattle, many notably located in present-day Haiti, in the name of halting the incursion of foreign contraband which resulted from illicit trade between the residents of Puerto Plata, Montecristi, Bayajá and Yaguana and the French, English and Dutch: "Osorio se aprovecha / destruye / las ciudades / los pueblos de la costa norte / por delante el ganado / detrás las poblaciones / muerte / desolación" (*Yania* 1981 36) [Osorio seizes the moment / destroys cities / towns of the north coast / first the livestock / then the townspeople / death / desolation] (*Yania* 1995 83; Fenwick and White translation). The governor's campaign, which José Buscaglia-Salgado has called "the first major calculated genocide in the history of coloniality" (93), failed to end smuggling in the region. Instead, an empty northwest Hispaniola made the region attractive to free blacks and foreign ranchers alike. Meanwhile, Hispaniola's monopoly on the sugar economy began to collapse, with Spanish presence in Cuba and Mexico. As colonial trade plummeted and poverty increased, ensuing economic misery diminished tax revenues to such a degree that Spain refused to continue underwriting either bureaucratic expenses or military presence in Santo Domingo. By the 1507 census, the slaughter, enslavement, and disease associated with Ovando's colonial reign had reduced the native population from half a million to 60,000 people. The decline continued until very few indigenous people remained, in the West Indies and Bahamas.

¹⁰⁹ In Fenwick and White's translation, the building's proper name is substituted for its sixteenth century function as the city "Treasury," a substitution which loses the various related, but not interchangeable, functions the building has had throughout the past five hundred years.

¹¹⁰ Las Casas also advocated for the importation of enslaved persons as a means of providing respite to the indigenous population (Dubois 15).

¹¹¹ Cartagena Portalatín's attention to, and at times sentimental depiction of, the Taíno people in *YANIA TIERRA* places Cartagena Portalatín, much like Cardenal, within a network of contemporary hemispheric cultural producers who employed indigenismo as a vital part of their nationalist visions.

¹¹² Williams, for example, sees "the fragments of drum language" as evoking voodoo practices as "signifiers of cultural difference commonly employed by Dominicans to signal their moral superiority to their western neighbors" ("Coloring" 205). Though she is not alone in reading the tam-tam drums as negatively inflected, they may also be a reference to Senghor/Roumain (see pgs. 21, 107 of *Culturas africanas*). Russ is perhaps the only scholar who entertains the tam-tam elsewhere in Cartagena Portalatín. See "Tam-Tam" 112-113

¹¹³ "The borderlands represented a main concern for the Trujillo regime and his nation-building project because of their fluidity and the lack of police control in the area. The Massacre of 1937 became a quick solution to a long-lasting obstacle for the project of Dominican nation building and modernity" (García Peña *Borders* 116). "After 1937 antiblack racism and anti-Haitianism served yet

another function: to justify the violent demarcation of Dominican territory along its border with Haiti and to manage the Trujillo state's takeover of sugar enterprises. Anti-Haitianism and antiblack racism, just like the idea of the Mexican *raza cósmica* or luso-tropicalismo in Brazil, served the needs of a consolidating, modernizing state." (Mayes 144-145)

¹¹⁴ In her note to the relevant passage in the English version of *YANIA TIERRA*, Fenwick repeats a common but historically-inaccurate narrative, that the murder of the Galindo virgins and their father was politically-motivated: "The three Andújar sisters, for example, were innocent young women who were raped and murdered because of their father's participation in the resistance against Haitian troops in 1822 and the subsequent wave of terror" (19). Archival research demonstrates otherwise. The men were not, in fact, exacting vengeance but rather identified as Spanish Dominicans from Eastern Santo Domingo; they were formerly-incarcerated criminals, drunk, who had escaped from prison during the transition from Spanish colonial rule to independence (García Peña 23). The crime, in other words, was a random, if brutal, one. Over time, however, Dominican nationalist literature written by the ruling class elite transformed the culprits into Haitians. César Nicolás Penson's 1891 dramatization, for example, contrasts the young white Dominican girls with the perpetrators, portrayed as Black and Haitian, as part of a nationalist narrative that construed Haitian unification (1822-1844) as "a historical period where Dominicans were dominated by an external aggressor who knew no boundaries" (Santiago 63); such writings "facilitated the erasure of plural histories of solidarity surrounding the Haitian unification of the island (1822-1844) while imposing a history of violence that would further the project of border making and civilizing of the new Republic as desired by the dominant criollo elite (García Peña 56). Unfortunately, literary scholarship often reifies this discourse: Fenwick's phrase "subsequent wave of terror" is particularly suggestive, as it both incorrectly ascribes Haitian unification as the cause of a crime committed by Spanish Dominicans and, worse, sensationalizes the period as one of extreme violence when "the twenty-two year unification of the island under the governance of the Haitian Republic was... the most progressive period of Dominican history in more than 400 years" (Santiago 63). Fenwick's imprecision reinscribes a narrative originally promulgated by "state-serving *criollo letrados*" which symbolically inaugurates the 22-year Haitian rule of Santo Domingo in such a way as to "preserve their own white colonial privilege" by construing "Galindo as a crime of barbaric black Haitians against white civilized Dominicans" (García Peña 16). Through precisely the kind of production and repetition on display in the English translation of *YANIA TIERRA*, the episode became foundational to Dominican anti-Haitian rhetoric.

¹¹⁵ The entire island of Hispaniola, inhabited for thousands of years by indigenous peoples who had migrated from Central and South America, was under Spanish rule from 1492 until 1697, when the Spanish crown ceded the western third of the island to France at the Treaty of Ryswick of 1697. Throughout the seventeenth century, "The name of the island's capital, Santo Domingo, was increasingly used to refer to the entire island, and the French who eventually settled there in the early seventeenth century simply translated the name into French, calling their colony Saint-Domingue" (Dubois 16). With the signing of the 1795 Treaty of Basel, Spain ceded its control over western Hispaniola to the French. However, France soon lost control over its colony, as Louverture emerged as the insurgent leader in 1800. Following 1804, France's "pearl of the Antilles" became the "First Empire of Haiti", taking the Taíno name of Haiti, or Ayiti in Kreyòl. (The Haitian revolution forced Napoleon to sell Louisiana to the U.S. in 1803, doubling the land holdings of the United States; many "Santo Domingans" left for Louisiana territory with the onset of revolt in 1791.) Haiti's repeated invasions and 22-year occupation of the territory known then as "Santo Domingo" and today as the Dominican Republic, further complicate matters. It's worth remembering, too, that during this point in history Black Haiti itself was itself in a process of consolidation: its formerly-enslaved residents "came from over a hundred different ethnic groups and originally had nothing to do with each other" (Oliver Gliech qtd. in Allmeling n.p.).

¹¹⁶ It's useful to remember here that the United States occupied Haiti at the same time, for even longer: from 1915-1934, and altered the Haitian Constitution.

¹¹⁷ The result of a fall in sugar prices at the international level, combined with new techniques of extracting sugar from corn, and competition from larger sugar-producing countries including India and Brazil, had devastating effects on the Dominican sugar industry. For more, see Coulange Méroné

¹¹⁸ Césaire’s visited Haiti in 1944 for about six months, teaching at the University of Haiti and giving public talks; it was at the the Congrès International de Philosophie in Port-au-Prince that he would deliver “Poésie et connaissance” for the first time. He described the nation as “this terribly complex society,” and at that moment saw the nation as a cautionary tale for other colonized peoples struggling to secure their own autonomy: he writes, “Most of all in Haiti I saw what should not be done! A country that had conquered its liberty, that had conquered its independence, and which I saw was more miserable than Martinique, a French colony!... It was tragic, and that could very well happen to us Martinicans as well” (qtd. in Wilder 30). Haiti, like the Dominican Republic, had been occupied by the United States (1915-1934), and a series of repressive regimes followed. At the time of Césaire’s visit, the head of state was Élie Lescot, who had served previously as an ambassador to the Dominican Republic, where he had made an alliance with Trujillo. A little over a decade later, Dr. François Duvalier (Papa Doc) was elected President, beginning the Duvalier dictatorship, which would last until 1986.

¹¹⁹ That a majority of Dominicans support Luis Rodolfo Abinader Corona in building a double perimeter fence to “counteract Haitian migration” should be expected, given the inextricability of Dominican democratic discourse from the United States, where in 2020 building a border wall with Mexico—and not Canada—is supported by 86% of Republicans, 39% of Independents, and 13% of Democrats. In 2021, as the border spaces of the Dominican Republic and the United States have overlapped, each nation continues to espouse antiblack, anti-Haitian xenophobia as one of many afterlives of colonial racialization.

¹²⁰ The antechamber also recalls Cartagena Portalatín’s figuration of her journal *Brigadas Dominicanas*, which also took the structure of a house with invited guests.

¹²¹ The 1983 *Sans Soleil*, it should be noted, has been a particular emphasis on documentary poet Claudia Rankine. *Citizen: An American Lyric* begins with an epigraph from Marker’s film.

¹²² In tracing the impact of Vertov to France, Howe finds much in common with Theresa Hak Kyung Cha’s anthology of film theory *Apparatus* (1980); yet if Cha’s own contribution to her volume, “Commentaire,” attempts to merge semiotics and apparatus theory with performance art and visual poetics, Howe’s syllabus works to foster a poetics of relation—rather than synthesis—between poetry and cinema, and between Soviet Russia and her contemporary moment, all the while keeping the individual terms distinct.

¹²³ For more on social poetics, see Nowak *Social Poetics*

¹²⁴ The questions mark a continuation of the structure of *Chain 1*, which asked contributors to respond to the following questions about women and editing: “We are most interested in presenting a collection of differing viewpoints on the subject of editing which illustrates the diversity and ever-expanding participation by women. We are trying to solicit work from women who have edited publications which alight be considered ‘separatist,’ and from those for whom gender is not a conspicuous part of their editorial agenda” (6).

¹²⁵ Those that participate in the exercise tend to foreground their own aesthetic practice. Visual artist Paul Maurice offers one of the more developed theorizations of his own work, without making recourse to documentary: he writes, “Political ideologies are master narratives whose realization depends on social actors who are willing to give up the right to tell other stories, or who have had this right taken away. I decided to defy the terms of these master narratives, to give in to irrationality, contradiction, and ambiguity, to tell some little stories about little bits of information, about little bits of cruelty. By using the particular and the personal story—its terms, issues, and stakes—my work is a kind of personal transgression” (155). Several contributors elect not to answer the questions at all, allowing the work to speak for itself.

¹²⁶ This observation also made by Paul Mann, in his review of *Leningrad* where he refers to “the enormous discourse that these poets have generated around their work, a vast array of books, periodicals, and public forums” (171).

¹²⁷ Bowden, a mentally handicapped man convicted of killing a white woman during a robbery, was executed two years before drew the state of Georgia banned executions of murderers found “guilty but mentally retarded.” His case drew protests from a variety of nonprofit organizations and from celebrities including Lou Reed, Sting, and U2.

¹²⁸ *OCCUPIED TERRITORY* (Producer, Camera Person, Editor, Programmer) CD-ROM and web site containing a navigable movie that displays scenes shot in Deheishe, a refugee camp in Palestine. Presented at Postmasters Gallery, New York (2001); Digital Flaherty Seminar (2001); Carnegie Art Center, Buffalo, New York (2002); Art Pace, San Antonio (2002); O.K Center for Contemporary Art, Linz (2003); the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (2004); L'espace Multimedia Gantner, France (2005); The Contemporary Art Institute of Detroit (2006); and others. Purchased for the permanent collection of the Jewish Museum, New York and the Conseil General, Territoire de Belfort Art Collection, France (artist's CV 10).

¹²⁹ *KAYAM AL HURBANO (EXISTING ON ITS RUINS)* (Producer, Co-Director, Co-Editor, Camera) An experimental documentary (35 minutes) made in collaboration with Bosmat Alon, depicting life in a refugee camp in Palestine. Selected for the Whitney Biennial (2002). Also presented at Ami Steinits Gallery, Tel Aviv, Israel (1999); L'immagine Leggera Festival, Palermo, Italy (2000, winner of 1st prize); Chisenhale Gallery, London (2000); Sienna Jewish Museum, Italy (2000); [d]vision 2000 Festival, Vienna; Locarno Film Festival, Switzerland (2000); Digital Flaherty Seminar, NY (2001); Le réel en scène - les écrans documentaires, Paris (2001); l'Ecole nationale supérieure des beaux-arts de Paris (2001); Cantor Film Center, New York (2002); Carnegie Art Center, Buffalo, New York (2002); Santa Monica Museum, Los Angeles (2002); Samuel P. Harn Museum of Art, Florida (2002); the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (2004); Pacific Film Archives, San Francisco (2004); L'espace Multimedia Gantner, France (2005); and many others. Distributed by Heure Exquise, France and Groupe Intervention Vidéo (GIV), Canada (artist's CV 10).

¹³⁰ A similar, if far more serious grievance is addressed in Robin Ann Lukes's review of Lane Ryo Hirabayashi's monograph about the ethnographic work of Tamie Tsuchiama, *The Politics of Fieldwork: Research in an American Concentration Camp* (1999). A Nisei doctoral student at UC Berkeley, Tsuchiyama did extensive, innovative field work in the internment camps at great risk to her personal safety. Hirabayashi's study integrates personal letters, anthropological reports, and public documents to examine "the politics and ethics of fieldwork, especially when senior scholars of one color deploy junior scholars of another to collect research data under difficult and sometimes dangerous circumstances" (Hirabayashi qtd. in *XCP* 143).

¹³¹ Specifically, the strand that Joshua Clover refers to as "brand-name conceptualism" (104): Goldsmith, Place, Bök, etc. According to Clover's account of institutionalized neoconceptualism is "a particular class fantasy wherein rising productivity simply means leisure for the owners of concepts," an approach to automation as "a utopia of contemplative freedom rather than a dystopia wherein market dependency guarantees that exclusion from the wage means immiseration and starvation" (113).

¹³² Izenberg argues "a retrospective documentary impulse "marks Language poetry, identifying "an anthropological motive that underwrites Language poetry's peculiar forms of self-presentation and preservation—its tendency to publish not just its poems, but its conversations about poems, and not just those conversations, but jokes amidst the conversations, laughter at the jokes, stumbles, interruptions, and silences—as though on behalf of some future civilization studying its own past" (145).

¹³³ See Leong, Dowdy