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ISSN 1090-3488

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Through a very clever double entendre relying on the uses of “tear” as both verb and noun, Lucia Suárez presents us with the first book-length treatise on the transnational literature of Hispaniola. For Suárez, the political and historical forces that rip apart the island of Hispaniola produce discourses of lament whose weeping renders a singular voice to the Creole, English, French, and Spanish autobiographical writings of the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and their respective diasporas in the United States. Suárez is indeed a stellar cultural and literary critic who knows how to travel along with her text. With each dazzling chapter opening up like a border gate, the reader is able to follow the author’s outstanding intellectual evolution through the book in much the same way as one would trace the journey of the Haitian and Dominican migrants she studies. Her belief in “the power of the novel” (188, n.4) is evidenced in her thesis: “Fiction and testimony, I propose, are fundamental political acts of resistance that create a narrative space for these experiences of horror, and thus bring to the narrative the memory and the experience of that horror” (27).

Suárez’s groundbreaking study breaks down the binary and oppositional conceptualizations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic in order to craft a new post-national narrative that reveals a foundational citizenship of liberation that characterizes the island as a whole. According to Suárez, Edwidge Danticat’s The Farming of Bones returns to Dominicans and Haitians a history that corrupt leaders have stolen from them. Similarly, Suárez proposes that Marie Chauvet’s Amour, Colère, Folie functions as an act of resistance to rape by traumatizing readers with its horrors. Along the same lines, Suárez considers the various ways in which Junot Díaz’s collection of short stories entitled Drown brings to the surface submerged and suffocated Dominican lives. Likewise, Suárez argues that Jean-Robert Cadet’s autobiography Restavec: From Haitian Slave to Middle Class American underscores the mechanisms through which testimonial writing can redirect the discourse of human rights.

Even as Suárez aptly sustains and elaborates the idea that the production of literature functions as a politically enabling memorializing of violence, one perceives the author progressively grasing the limitations of this claim. In the conclusion, reflecting on her own critical odyssey, Suárez comes to see the initial assertion as being utopian in nature. Suárez, like the authors she studies, realizes how the power of the literary marketplace foments the production of narratives of violence for the sake of profit.