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***The Tears of Hispaniola*. By Lucía Suárez. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2006. ISBN 0-8130-2926-0. 223 pp. \$59.95 cloth.**

Reviewed by Roberto Strongman, University of California, Santa Barbara

Through a very clever *double entendre* relying on the uses of “tear” as both verb and noun, Lucía 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 grasping the limitations of this claim. In the conclusion, reflecting on her own critical odyssey, Suárez comes to see her initial assertion as being utopian in nature. Suárez, like the authors she studies, realizes how the power of the literary marketplace fomented the production of narratives of violence for the sake of profit.

If the text succeeds to fill a critical void by demonstrating the existence of a transnational literature of Hispaniola, it also brings attention to the problematic nature of studying Diaspora from the perspective of the U.S. academy. A reading of *The Tears of Hispaniola* raises a number of questions that other cultural and literary critics shall take up. For example, what are the limitations of seeing the U.S. as the telos of migration? Some might interpret Suárez’s exclusion of any extended discussion of the Hispaniola exodus to Canada, France, and Spain as an oversight, yet it is undeniable that it renders focus to her study. Does Suárez’s text exhibit the customary U.S. academic favoritism for First World theories at the expense of taking a closer look at what local Third World intellectuals might be producing? How does Suárez’s omission to cite Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha and the prominent Postcolonial journal *Diaspora* shed light on the rift between Caribbean and South Asian critics in their study of diasporic identities? I believe that such a silence could be read as a sign of the impossibility of theorizing “Diaspora” globally. If Diaspora implies a postmodern condition, as Suárez argues, how might the late modern technologies of air travel and telecommunications enable such a condition of global commuting instead of migrancy? If Diaspora is a late modern condition, should the 1937 massacre of Haitian workers in the Dominican Republic fall outside the chronological scope of Suárez’s text?

Suárez’s superb handling of the polysemy of “tearing” as both lacrimating and dismantling presents how language lies at the core of the “trauma of memory” of Hispaniola. As if to suggest that a resolution to these horrors implies a transcending of language, the art of Hersza Barjon on the cover presents alternating strips of weeping madonnas: Erzulies and Altagracias radiating catharsis through saline tears that tear histories of violence.