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Temporal Visions: Hurricanes as Chronotopes in Caribbean Art and Cultural Politics

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Temporal Visions: Hurricanes as Chronotopes in Caribbean Art and Cultural Politics

Joseph R. Hartman

Abstract

Hurricanes reveal chronotopes in Caribbean art histories that participate in interrelated histories of transculturation, colonialism, and decoloniality. This essay traces the aesthesis, destruction, and creation of hurricanes in Caribbean art across generations. By taking a longue durée view of hurricanes within Caribbean visual cultures, this essay aims to expose the limits and possibilities of art and art history as a means of mitigating and responding to climate disasters alongside colonial legacies. State-sponsored arts produced after meteorological disasters have historically reenforced the colonial matrix of power, while modern and contemporary artists suggest the need for decolonial solutions to ongoing eco-traumas. The processes and visualization of decolonization, like the hurricane itself, however, is not something always-already in the present or future. It is also historical, proposed over again by Caribbean peoples in art and song. Recording the hurricane in the diverse time-spaces of Caribbean art history helps us to re-envision decolonial narratives.

Keywords: chronotopes · decoloniality · eco-trauma · hurricane · visual culture

Temporal, temporal, ¡qué tremendo temporal! San Felipe, San Felipe, ¡qué terrible temporal! ¿Qué será de Puerto Rico, cuando pase el temporal?

Tempest, Tempest, oh terrible tempest! San Felipe, San Felipe, that awful storm. What will become of Puerto Rico, when the hurricane passes by? –

El Temporal – popular plena in Puerto Rico (Homar et al. 1955).

"Tempest, tempest, oh terrible tempest!" These lines echo throughout the cultural history of Puerto Rico and the wider Caribbean. *El Temporal* is a Puerto Rican folksong (plena) written in 1929 by anonymous musicians. The song commemorates the horror and cultural upheaval that followed hurricane San Felipe II on September 13, 1928. That hurricane devastated Puerto Rico and the French colonial island of Guadeloupe before moving on to kill thousands around the flooded banks of Lake Okeechobee in Florida. In the United States the storm is named after that lake, while in Puerto Rico it is known by the name of the saint's holiday occurring in mid-September. In Guadeloupe, they simply call it *Le cyclone de 1928. El Temporal* is specific to one meteorological event, but the adjectives "terrible" and "tremendous" could apply to many storms in Caribbean history. In Puerto Rico's case, we could add the hurricanes of San Ciriaco in 1899 or María in 2017. Both storms followed the same deadly course as that of 1928. The storms formed into hurricanes in Atlantic waters near Guadeloupe, settled on Puerto Rico, and then passed through to the United States' coast and mainland. The song captures the angst and devastation of those terrible hurricanes that permeate the history of the greater Caribbean. Among them was the hurricane of 1780, the deadliest in the region's history that killed more than 20,000 people in the eastern Caribbean; the Labor Day hurricane of 1935 that killed over two hundred unhoused veterans in the Florida Keys; or hurricane Katrina of 2005 that left New Orleans, especially the city's Black and Brown communities, in ruin (Monteith 2010, Recovery Efforts after 1935, Tannehill 1938). We might also consider storms of legend, like the 1502 hurricane that sunk the fleet of Christopher Columbus' arch-rival Francisco de Bobadilla after Dominican governor Nicolás de Ovando ignored warnings of an impending storm (Millás 1968, 38-41); and hurricanes lost to the annals of history, hinted at only in the sediments of blue holes and the ruins of the Maya, Taíno, and other Caribbean Indigenous civilizations (Acosta and Lozoya 2021, 47-51, Schmitt et al. 2020, Winkler et al. 2022.).

Hurricanes are, by nature, transregional and transtemporal super-forces, equally so in art history as in current political debates about global climate change, racial injustice, and decolonization. Perhaps that radical potential of the hurricane as an agent of destruction and creativity in cultural politics attracted Puerto Rican printmaker Rafael Tufiño when he depicted the 1929 plena *Temporal* in his linocut engraving of the 1950s (fig. 1). Tufiño personified the balladic hurricane nearly thirty years after the storm of 1928 for the book *12 grabados: La Plena* (Homar et al. 1955). The book was created in collaboration with Puerto Rican printmaker Lorenzo Homar and US graphic designer Irene Delano, with an introductory text by Puerto Rican poet Tomás

Blanco. It comprised a series of engravings representing different Puerto Rican folksongs or plenas. Only 850 copies were initially made of the collection. In Tufiño's illustration, a god-like figure sweeps away humble masses of men and women in one hand while reaching for clustered wooden homes with the other. The masculine-appearing deity blows out sublime winds over the multitude and their fragile places of dwelling. Beneath the image we see the rhythmic annotation of the plena itself. With a cut time signature, tied eighth notes, and held whole notes, the melody moves up and down the scale with a satiric beat matching the odd mixture of benevolence and malevolence in Tufiño's depiction of the storm god.

Fig. 1: Rafael Tufiño Figueroa, *El Temporal*, linocut, 1954. Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña Collection, San Juan, Puerto Rico

Tufiño revived that storm god in his masterpiece "La Plena," a large 4.5m x 9m (15ft x 30ft) oil on masonite mural created around the same time (fig. 2). Inspired by the revolutionary rhetorics of the so-called *Tres Grandes* in Mexico (Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros), Tufiño envisioned his work as a largescale political statement against Spanish and US colonialism. He realized that vision through a popular recombination of Puerto Rico's many folkloric songs (the same plenas featured in the book of engravings). In it, Tufiño shows us fascistic US soldiers, sacrificed Puerto Rican women, and a muted racial discourse. Looming over the scene, once more, is the temporal deity. The figure's design appears nearly identical to the engraving *El Temporal*, but in reverse. Likely, Tufiño used the same print matrix as his model for the mural. This time, however, the figure is depicted as a sickly sea-green storm god. The god's finger points accusingly at the colonial order and popular dissent beneath, as traditional wooden and thatch-roofed homes are sucked into its corpus. The haunting syncopations of the song *El Temporal* implied once more in Tufiño's mural, remind us that hurricanes are events that may paradoxically define and transcend multiple synchronic experiences. Hurricanes provide metaphors of destruction across time and space, even as they also suggest the possibility of new life after each individual storm. Here, we see the potential of the hurricane as a cultural agent capable of upsetting, while also facilitating, the colonial matrix of power (Quijano 2000; Mignolo and Vázquez 2013).

Fig. 2: Rafael Tufiño Figueroa. *La Plena*, casein/masonite, 1952-1954. Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña Collection, San Juan, Puerto Rico.

The mural also lays bare the misleading topos of the "natural disaster." The catastrophe of the hurricane is cultural rather than natural. Hurricanes embody dynamic forces that have the po-

tential to dramatically affect human and non-human intra-actions across generations (Barad 2007). That potential is unlocked, in part, through art and visual culture. The visualization of the hurricane throughout time and space, including the most ancient of images created by peoples of the Indigenous Caribbean, is part of a larger cultural-political iconography. A study of hurricane imagery in the twenty-first century has an obvious political resonance. Hurricanes and the human disasters that follow them are part of the economy of cultural studies debates on the Anthropocene, climate change, industrialization, globalization, and environmental activism. Aerial photographs of New Orleans drowned after Hurricane Katrina; or wide-angled shots of downed powerlines in San Juan after Hurricane María provide a set of tangible and iconographic arguments for current political debates. Ranging the spectrum, those photographs operate as icons for the effects of climate ruin. Or they visualize dubious arguments against the inhabitants of those places, who have chosen to live in cities that never should have been built in the first place. The photojournalist snapping shots of victims huddled together after the storm may offer an argument about systemic racism and colonialism. While other audiences take a removed and cynical view. The same images represent sentimental distractions from more sensationalist stories of lawlessness, looting, crime, and property damage after the storm. Current politics, however, overlook the wide-ranging cultural significance of disaster iconographies in the long view of history. From Shakespeare to Tufiño, *el temporal* (the tempest) and its destructive wake emerges as a potent metaphor for both social entropy and dynamic possibility.

German philosopher Hans Blumenberg once dwelled on the metaphor of the shipwreck and spectator, which finds much in common with the political iconography of *el temporal*. Ancients like the Roman poet Lucretius saw the debris of the shipwreck in the infinite ocean as a warning against exceeding natural boundaries. Later Enlightenment writers saw the same poetic image as a metaphor for the price that must be paid for global capitalism (Blumenberg 1979). The media imagery of the hurricane and its aftermath carries a similar valence in present-day debates, as both a warning against and necessary consequence of human industries. When depicted by artists of the Caribbean itself, however, we could argue that the iconicity of the hurricane and its wake has more in common with that of the spectator *aboard* the soon-to-be wrecked ship. Or, more radically, hurricane-themed art suggests an imagined future in which the spectator stops their curious gaze and becomes an active agent – one who seeks new beginnings in the "naked nothingness of the leap overboard" (Blumenberg 1979, 83). In other words, the problem with the metaphor of the shipwreck and spectator, in a historic context, is that it argues against leaping off the safety of the boat or the shore and seeking new solutions. The same may be true of the political iconographies of "natural disasters" (Wessolowski 2011, 182-187). News photos of a deadly hurricane's destruction raise curiosity, as they also express danger and "natural" consequences. But that media discourse rarely gives courage to those who wish to begin anew. For that, we turn to art. Art-historically speaking, the icon of the storm and its destruction represents one element in a much larger story of generative potentials. Artists like Tufiño create images of the hurricane to juxtapose with infantilizing narratives of victimhood and helplessness, in both liberal and conservative political discourse, which have traditionally supported colonialist and racist assumptions. Works like *La Plena*

engage the storm as a shifting and powerful time-space with deep cultural roots that entwine, critique, and transcend current political debates. *El Temporal* as an image has a long history, which cannot be separated from the complicated political and cultural genealogies of the Caribbean.

Tufiño's storm-themed engravings and mural suggest to me that we might better understand the impact of hurricanes in the contested cultural political arena of the Caribbean, and in the region's art history particularly, by taking a wider diachronic view of entwined human and non-human histories. This requires an understanding of hurricanes as a chronotopic force in art history and visual culture across generations, from Indigenous origins to the myths of colonialism and modernism into the complexities of our contemporary globalized world. Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin once used the term *хронотоп* (time-space, or chronotope), derived from the Greek *χρόνος* (time) and *τόπος* (space) to demonstrate how configurations of time and space are contested and reinscribed in language and discourse (Bakhtin 1981, 84-258). The multivalence of the hurricane as *el temporal* offers a similar reconfiguration of visual and material cultures in the Caribbean context. In the broadest of definitions, *el temporal* is a time-space of crisis in human society. As historian Stuart Schwartz argued, these moments of crisis after the hurricane define social histories in the Caribbean across generations (Schwartz 2015). I would add that these moments also call for new visual responses and analyses in the realm of art and art history.

Temporal is a fitting word to describe the transtemporal and transcultural role of the hurricane in Caribbean histories, including the region's art history. The Spanish word comes from *tiempo*, which is rooted in the Latin *tempus*, meaning weather and environment but also time and occasion. This reflects the hurricane as a meteorological embodiment of time and space. The Atlantic storm is a repetitive occurrence, happening year after year, but also a tremendously singular event (Benítez Rojo and Maraniss 1996). Hurricanes create crisis points that demand redefinitions and reconstructions of Caribbean arts and culture. It is no less a critical force in political and social histories as it is in the fields of art, architecture, poetry, music, and material culture. That is because hurricanes activate overlapping chronotopes (time-spaces) that participate in interrelated histories of colonialism, transculturation, and decoloniality in the art-historical, intellectual, and broader cultural context of the Caribbean. To make that argument this essay aims to trace the aesthesis, destruction, and creation of hurricanes in Caribbean visual and material cultures across generations.

Placed in the *longue durée*, the hurricane acts as a supreme catalyst whose cultural ramifications depend on what human actors do before and after each storm. In the context of Caribbean art history, state-sponsored art and public works produced after meteorological disasters have historically reenforced structures of power. That includes, for example, engravings documenting colonial landscapes, paintings of imperial maritime disasters, and state-sponsored and media photography; as well as colonial and modern architectures of discipline and punishment built or re-built after the storm, whether plantation, penitentiary, hospital, or school. Yet, history also provides us with Indigenous and non-hegemonic representations of

hurricanes in Caribbean art, evident in the material cultures that preceded European colonization and in modernist artworks aimed at critiquing colonialization like that of Tufiño. Contemporary artists, like Teresita Fernández, Gabriella Torres-Ferrer, Angelika Wallace-Whitfield, and many others, continue that process, as they create counter-hegemonic portrayals of hurricanes in art. Faced with the impending doom of climate ruin, Caribbean artists revive earlier ideas about the environment as a cultural force to challenge and confront harmful legacies of colonial history. Their art gestures at decolonial solutions to ongoing eco-traumas in the Caribbean and worldwide. It also suggests that the process and visualization of decolonization, like the hurricane itself, is not something always-already in the present or future. Rather, it is also historical, proposed again and again as Indigenous and Caribbean-born peoples represent and retell their own histories in art and song (Cusicanqui 2011). Recording the hurricane in the diverse time-spaces of Caribbean art history helps us to re-envision those stories.

Hurakán: The life, death, and rebirth of the hurricane in Indigenous visual culture

Many have embraced the term Anthropocene to describe our current geologic age, from the 1950s to the present. That is because, unlike previous ages like the Holocene, recent human activity and industry have affected the environment enough to create a distinct change in global temperatures. Yet, it should be acknowledged that humans have long influenced the environment and vice-versa, dating back to the earliest agricultural economies. This includes humanity's relationship with hurricanes in the Caribbean.

Fig. 3: *Stone Idol (Showing Anthropomorphic Figure in Abdomen)*, incised stone, date unknown. Courtesy of the Museo Provincial Bacardi Moreau, Santiago de Cuba, Cuba.

"Hurakán" was the Indigenous name used to describe several deities of destruction and creation across multiple Caribbean cultures, including the Taíno and Carib of the Antilles and the Maya of Yucatan and Mesoamerica.[1] Visual works made in honor of that ancient deity represent the earliest examples of *el temporal*, the hurricane as chronotope, in art history. Ancient Indigenous representations of the storm god in the Antilles included counterclockwise spirals around an ambiguously gendered head, sometimes depicted inside the body of a woman (fig. 3). These stone idols, mostly found in the caves of eastern Cuba, were likely an early representation of a deity, or *cemí*, known by the Taíno as Guabancex and her child Hurakán (Ortiz 1947, 17-65, Emanuel 2005, 18-23).

These older Indigenous Caribbean visualizations of the hurricane stand in contrast to the modernist image of Tufiño's Temporal men-

1 This is one common spelling, but many transliteral variants exist, including furican, haurachan, herycano, hurachano, juracán, jurakán, etc. The word first appeared in English in the works of William Shakespeare as "hurricano." The exact origins of the term "hurricane" remain uncertain. Many argue it comes from a transliteration of the Indigenous god's name. Others argue that it traces to Spanish and Latin words like penetrate (horador) and furious winds (ventus forens).

tioned earlier. Tufiño's descending nude, and likely male, storm god more closely resembles a Judeo-Christian or Greco-Roman interpretation of God, as in the *Elohim creating Adam* (see picture reproduction here: https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/blake-elohim-creating-adam-n05055) of romantic artist William Blake in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was in Blake's era that modern meteorology took shape in Europe. Instruments like the thermometer and barometer became more common, as the weather became a popular topic among educated gentry. This is a fact reflected in the many evocations of climate in art, poetry, and writing from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, most famously encapsulated in Immanuel Kant's writings on the sublime (Busch 2007, Vine 2002). Indigenous Caribbean depictions of Hurakán in stone and clay displayed a profound interest and knowledge of weather, too, many hundreds of years before romantics like Blake and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe began exploring the topic of storms and their distressing results (Blumenberg 1979). Ancient artworks reflected an astute visual understanding of the rotation of winds and water according to earth's rotation and the magnetic poles, for example, better known as the Coriolis effect. According to the observations of French mathematician Gaspard Gustave de Coriolis in the late eighteenth century, storms always swirl counterclockwise in the northern hemisphere and clockwise in the southern. Indigenous artists, with only one known exception, depicted their storm god with similar widdershins prosthetics, matching the science of Caribbean hurricanes that form and spiral only counterclockwise between 8- and 20-degrees latitude.

Famed Cuban ethnographer Fernando Ortiz was among the first to discuss these enigmatic Indigenous objects in his book *El Huracán: Su mitología y sus símbolos*. The book appeared less than a decade after Ortiz coined the now widely used term "transculturation" – an influential if not controversial concept of cultural intermingling that sought to explain the African, European, Asian, and Indigenous origins of Cuban culture (Ortiz 1940). Expanding on his theories of transculturality, Ortiz suggested various cultural interpretations of the spiral-armed figures (fig. 4). They were symbols of a swirling dance; of fertility; of birth. He even wondered, anachronistically, if they could be a representation of Buddha and the divine cycle of life, death, and rebirth. The Cuban polymath ultimately decided that these figures encompassed all those elements (Ortiz 1947, 33-43). They were reifications of a sublime force better known as the Atlantic hurricane – a Caribbean agent *par excellence* of cultural and natural destruction, creation, and recreation.

Fig. 4: *Stone Idol (Showing Anthropomorphic Figure with Arms Surrounding a Central Head in Counterclockwise pattern)*, incised stone, date unknown. Courtesy of the Museo Provincial Bacardi Moreau, Santiago de Cuba, Cuba.

When these ceramic and stone objects first appeared, hurricanes could not be seen with a god's-eye view from airplanes and later satellites as we do today. The Indigenous peoples who made those works of art learned of the visuality of hurricanes through lived experience, as they gazed on cirrus clouds swirling in the sky and felt the terrible calm of the hurricane's eye. That understanding aboard the soon-to-be-wrecked ship (to return to our earlier discussion of metaphors) affected their aesthetic, social, political, and religious worlds. The winds that spiral

counterclockwise, and the calm eye that defines the center of the hurricane also represented a visual configuration of Indigenous concepts of space and time. For Indigenous groups in the greater Caribbean, the hurricane was not solely a force of destruction. It also offered creative potential and futurity. Indigenous peoples observed how the hurricane affected crops and new growth, as an integral part of a larger ecosystem. Those storms thus became part of the cultural and political economy of the Caribbean. Hurricanes dictated Antillean cuisine, including the reliance on ground crops and tubers like Yucca and Casaba. They also defined Indigenous architecture and urban space. A prime example can be seen in the use of natural materials like the strong bejuco climber vine. Spanish chronicler Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés noted how Arawacks used the bejuco for tying down the deep-driven columns of their homes and royal edifices, known as bohíos and caneyes (Oviedo y Valdés 1547, Tezanos Toral, 2021). The columns themselves were made of ausubo wood: a native Caribbean tree that the British later called ironwood to describe the tree's strength. Round structures of dwelling reflected broader Indigenous visual and spatial cultures (fig. 5). Taíno and pre-Taíno cities, towns, and communities were often oriented in a circular form around a ceiba tree or ancestral burial ground. Beyond ritual use, and perhaps as a signifier of a more egalitarian political order, the circular form also suggested an understanding of physical geometry in the face of natural hazards. Round or multi-sided homes are more resistant to hurricane-force winds, a fact of aerodynamics deployed by architectural firms today and presaged centuries ago in the visual and material cultures of Indigenous Caribbeans (South and Zweifel 2014).

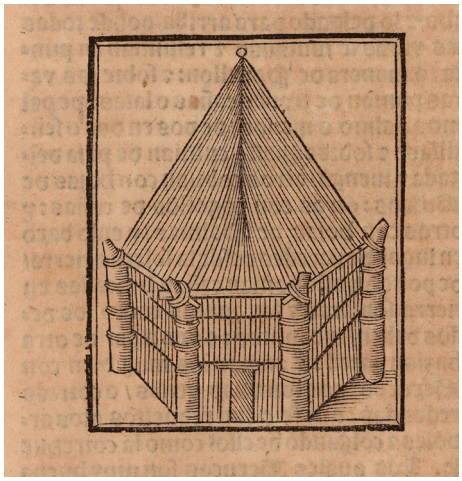

Fig. 5: W*oodcut of Indigenous Caribbean Dwellings.* Detail from Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, *Hystoria General de las Indias*, 1547, verso of leaf 58. ©John Carter Brown Library

A terrible and unheard of storm: Ecology, exploitation, and the colonial sturmwind

The Spanish and later colonists from other parts of Europe variously appropriated, burned, and destroyed Indigenous visual and material innovations after 1492. They also destroyed Indigenous communities and leaders like the cacica Anacaona – the Flowery Queen of Ayiti (now modern-day Haiti). White settler colonialists sought to impose their own visual order in the so-called new world. Spanish settlers clear-cut forests of powerful ausubo trees for their own constructions, including the fortified cities of La Habana and Porto Rico (now known as San Juan) and nearby sugar, coffee, indigo, and tobacco plantations – extractable resources in the colonial economy. Colonizers and colonized asymmetrically subverted one another's visual and material technologies, resulting in new American expressions.

Alongside new expressions, we see new visions of the *temporal* in Caribbean art history and political iconography. Quick to appropriate Indigenous material cultures, especially if gilded

and bejeweled, Europeans lacked the experience of Indigenous Caribbeans when it came to the dangers and possibilities of hurricanes. It is telling that one of the earliest known European depictions of a hurricane was made by an artist who never crossed the Atlantic. Belgian-born artist Theodor de Bry included the engraving *Ein schrecklich und unerhörtes Ungewitter/Horrenda et Inaudita Tempestas* (a terrible and unheard of storm) in one of his many illustrated books of the late sixteenth century (fig. 6). The print shows us a scene dominated by crashing waves, a sinking galleon, lightning bolts, and dark clouds radiating divine light. Spanish colonists gaze skyward in a penitent gesture in the foreground of the engraving. They flee along a rocky shoreline, strewn with discarded harquebuses. Half-nude Indigenous figures seek shelter under large stones in the background. The events in De Bry's detailed engraving match the accompanying text. A lengthy paragraph describes the horrendous storm, known as *Typhon* in Latin, *Sturmwind* in German, and *Huracán* in Spanish. The text describes massive infrastructural losses and a scene of horrors. "All were astonished by this unexpected evil, for death was before their eyes, the elements were confounded, the end was near, and all were panic-stricken" (Benzoni and De Bry 1597, 145). The final line of the text indicated that the colonizers still had much to learn from native inhabitants when it came to disaster readiness. "Hiding in caves," the text explains with dubious monikers, "the Indians escaped danger" (Mignolo 2011).

Fig. 6: Theodor de Bry, *Ein schrecklich und unerhörtes Ungewitter,* engraving, circa 1594, from Benzoni and De Bry, *America (Band 4)*. Image courtesy of the University of Heidelberg Digital Library. Available at https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.8296

Made in the safety of his printing studio with his sons in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, De Bry's print effectively demonstrated the many spiritual, political, and cultural valences of hurricanes in the early modern European imagination (Greenblatt 1991). The Atlantic hurricane was a largely unknown weather phenomenon in Europe until the sixteenth century. The strange and awesome storm represented, for many early Christian observers, a divine portent; perhaps, even, a punishment for sins. This was a propitious viewpoint when we consider how the cyclonic arms of the hurricane accompanied the catastrophes of the colonial period, a time-space marked by European conquest, the genocide of Indigenous communities, and the enslavement of peoples from West and Central Africa.

These atrocities were depicted by De Bry, too, alongside imagery of new and unfamiliar weather events. De Bry's storm engraving, created circa 1594, formed part of a larger series

of books titled in English *The Collected Travels in East Indies and West Indies*. The series comprised a gathering of European accounts of the Americas (the Grands Voyages) as well as Africa and Asia (Petit Voyages) from the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Groesen 2008, Quilligan 2011). De Bry's hurricane engraving appears in Book Four of *Americae*, as an illustration for the travel accounts of Milanese trader Girolami Benzoni, who drew on the writings of Christopher Columbus. The book includes a visual narrative of bloody conflict. With a shrewd understanding of early modern cultural politics, De Bry designed the images to be read as impeaching toward either Catholics or "pagans," depending on whether the accompanying text was written in German for a Protestant audience (like De Bry himself) or in Latin for a Catholic reader. One print shows us Indigenous aggressors as they drown Spanish captives. They hoped to prove that the newcomers were not gods and could therefore die, the text explains. Another shows us Spanish soldiers razing Indigenous homes. They slaughter naked men in front of their equally nude wives and children. We see retribution, as an Indigenous leader oversees the gilding of a colonizer's throat. The penultimate engraving in the series displays a mass-suicide. Indigenous Caribbean bodies hang from trees in the background, as men and women leap from craggy cliffs. In the foreground, women and children lie dead along the shoreline. We see men as they stab themselves and their own children with a look of anguish. The caption explains: "Unable to suffer Spanish tyranny longer, the Indigenous people hung themselves" (fig. 7).

Fig. 7: Theodor de Bry, *Indianer können der Spanier Tyrannen nicht länger leiden*, engraving, circa 1594, from Benzoni and De Bry, *America (Band 4)*. Image courtesy of the University of Heidelberg Digital Library. Available at https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.8296

Fig. 8: Theodor de Bry, *Columbus straffet die auffrührische Spanier,* engraving, circa 1594, from Benzoni and De Bry, *America (Band 4)*. Image courtesy of the University of Heidelberg Digital Library. Available at https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.8296

The engraved image of Indigenous bodies hanging from trees mirrors that of Columbus executing seditionists earlier in the book. The caption explains how Columbus' harsh punishment

would earn him the hatred of his countrymen. This included the Benedictine order represented in the print by a single protesting priest (fig. 8). That same image is placed opposite of De Bry's hurricane engraving noted earlier. Juxtaposed, we see the struggle of maintaining order when faced with new and unforeseen threats from nature and society. As a political icon, the hurricane here becomes part of a chaotic cultural and natural landscape for European audiences. One with unforeseen bounties, shown in prints of flying fish and gold treasures laid at the feet of Spanish colonizers. As well as new threats to sovereign order: deadly hurricanes, Spanish seditionists, and Indigenous resistance.

Typhon coming on: Visualizing slavery, abolition, and revolution as tempest

The hurricane not only redefined the cultural politics of the Spanish Empire in the Americas and Caribbean during the colonial period. It had a wide-reaching effect on political iconographies throughout the world. Accounts and images like that of De Bry's inspired a new understanding of humanity's relationship with the natural world, which would have ramifications well into the modern and contemporary periods. It is worth dwelling on the multiple metaphoric, political, and artistic legacies of the Atlantic hurricane in the Americas, Caribbean, and Western discourse that also developed during and after the colonial period. From Latin American and Caribbean writers José Enrique Rodó to Aimé Césaire and Roberto Fernández Retamar—no fictional hurricane has gained more renown in the modern period than that of the British bard William Shakespeare (Rodó 1922, Césaire 1969, Retamar 1974). Shakespeare's early seventeenth-century play *The Tempest* begins like a sensational Elizabethan news report of a terrible storm. The 1709 illustrated cover of Nicholas Rowe's edited version of the play features an engraving very similar in style to that of Theodor de Bry's *Ungewitter* from over a hundred years prior (fig. 9) (Shakespeare and Rowe 1709). Designed by the French-born artist, François Boitard, and engraved by the British Elisha Kirkal, the image shows us a boat turned nearly vertical by large waves. Above, lightning crashes as demons fly. These latter figures again match the imagined "fauna" of the Americas (including mermaids and dogheaded men) first described by Columbus and later represented in other books by De Bry. In the background of the eighteenth-century print, we see a wand-wielding magician. This clue tells the viewer that this no natural storm, but rather a magical evocation. It is a human-made catastrophe.

Fig. 9: Elisha Kirkall after François Boitard, *Frontispiece to Nicolas Rowe's 1709 edition of William Shakespeare's The Tempest*, engraving, 1709. Image courtesy of the British Library.

In Shakespeare's story, an enchanted storm washes the protagonist Prospero and his daughter Miranda onto the

shores of an island somewhere off the coast of Africa or, many speculate, in the Caribbean. The island is inhabited by an androgynous spirit named Ariel and a deformed man-creature whom Prospero calls Caliban. These two figures famously serve as archetypes in various colonial, postcolonial, and decolonial constructions of identity in the Caribbean and Latin America. Ariel is the Eurocentric (and homoerotic) ideal of the American spirit, as formulated in the writings of the Uruguayan aesthete Rodó at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Caliban is the mixed-race and hyper-masculine revolutionary figure of America, following the 1970s tracts of Cuban revolutionary poet and idealogue Retamar.

Rather than take sides in these formulations, *el temporal* as chronotope offers a vehicle for new ways of looking at the storm itself. The storm is a cultural and political force beyond identitarian binaries, which finds its expression in art and visual culture. Contemporary US-based artists of Cuban descent Ernesto Oroza and Gean Moreno suggested as much in their 2013 installation *Tabloid #26, Navidad en Kalahari (el continuo molecular)*. Their installation featured sculptural depictions of the *marabú* – an invasive rhizomatic fungus imported to Cuba from Africa through the traumas of the transatlantic slave trade (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 15). *Marabú* destroys plantation crops but, in so doing, it preserves wild forestland. Like the hurricane, the plant is both a destructive and creative force in Caribbean ecosystems, which the artists liken to the tempest as a cultural metaphor. It is a "concentrated and homogenous force that, indifferent, erases both Caliban and Ariel" (Price 2015, 214-216).

The hurricane itself is an indifferent force that transcends historic and cultural divisions of race, class, gender, and ethnicity. After the introduction of the slave trade in the colonial period, African descendants in the Caribbean, too, came to view the annual hurricane as both a natural and spiritual force. Religious affiliates of African-derived belief systems would represent the swirling winds of the hurricane in their whirling performances, as in those of Oyá – the orisha of wind – and Changó – the deity of storms and lightning. Hurricanes were a powerful embodiment of the Yoruban concept of aché – a spiritual energy to make things happens (Cartwright 2006, Hartman 2011).

Beyond destructive force, the storm also represented a generative possibility for enslaved peoples and colonial subjects. British, Spanish, Dutch, and French colonial powers feared the fallout of annual hurricanes (Morgan et al. 2022). Hurricanes weakened the plantation economy. Storms destroyed crops and subsequent floods bred pests. The precarious moments before and after each storm presented opportunities for those that hoped to overturn the status quo, like the revolutionaries that fought for sovereignty in the United States and later Haiti. The deadly hurricane of 1780, for example, considered the most fatal in human history, sunk whole fleets of French and British ships deployed to either aid or thwart the American Revolution (1765-1791) (Mulcahy 2008, Johnson 2011). Those devastating scenes of ships lost to the hurricane of 1780 were a common theme of British maritime art, as witnessed in the early prints of Valentine Green after William Elliot. The image of the wrecked ship was a powerful metaphor for the declining British colonies and the existential crisis that the American Revolution represented. No recorded hurricane would have similar effects on the Haitian

Fig. 10: Valentine Green after William Elliot, *To Sir Peter Parker.... Egmont Robt Fanshawe Esqr, Commander, when dismasted in the Great Hurricane October 11th, 1780 near the Island St Lucia*, engraving, 1784. Courtesy of the British Museum.

Revolution (1791-1804) (fig. 10). Yet, retellings of the first and only successful slave revolt in world history often began with a Caribbean storm. Bois Caïman was believed to be the first major meeting of enslaved Africans and freedmen (*affranchis*) that precipitated the Haitian Revolution. The gathering likely coincided with a vodou ritual, August 14, 1791. During that highly visual rite a pact was formed in blood with the sacrifice of a black pig to the Haitian deity (*loa*) Erzili Dantor. Days later, the enslaved peoples of Haiti revolted against their white oppressors, setting ablaze the northern plains of Haiti. Scholars debate when, where, and whether the event occurred. But it is of interest to our study that early French and Haitian chroniclers suggested that the ceremony happened on a dark and stormy night (Dubois 2004, 100-101, Dumesle 1824, 85-90, Gastine 1819, 104-106). Revolution often coincides with the rise of a tropical storm.

Caribbean storms, both fictitious and historical, have the potential to overturn the world order. Hurricanes reveal ongoing social inequities. Such was the role of the hurricane in abolitionist literature and art. A somewhat more ambiguous case in point can be found in James Mallord William Turner's painting *The Slave Ship* of 1840 (fig. 11). Originally titled, *Slavers Throwing overboard the Dead and Dying—Typhon coming on*, Turner's painting was likely based on popular accounts of the Liverpool slave ship known as the *Zong* (Boime 1990, May 2014, McCoubrey 1998). The horrendous story goes that the captain of the ship had 132 enslaved Africans thrown overboard in 1781. The enslavers could only collect insurance in case of lives lost at sea. Turner's aestheticization of abolitionist literature was met with a mixture of praise and disdain, from John Ruskin's indulgent formalism to Mark Twain's biting cynicism. The painting shows us a brilliant crimson and yellow sky juxtaposed with the prostheses of enslaved African peoples drowning in ochre waves. The painting places the viewer as the spectator, set safely on the shore, who sees dangers that they cannot (and perhaps will not) seek to mitigate. It remains ambiguous whether Turner's painting encourages or discourages political action. The artist presents the hurricane and slavery as a singular event. Together, they represent destructive force of nature and culture, the dangers and consequences of capitalism, whose human costs are sometimes as much

Fig. 11: J.M.W. Turner, *Slave Ship* (Slavers Throwing overboard the Dead and Dying—Typhon coming on), oil on canvas, 1840. Courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

concealed as they are highlighted by the aestheticization of artists, critics, and art historians (Frost 2010).

Huracán del Norte: Non-ethics and disaster politics in the industrial age

Major hurricanes helped topple political regimes. Yet, a Caribbean storm could just as easily present a moment for those with political power in the world's socio-racial hierarchy to cement their hold. The deadliest effects of hurricanes were most often felt by the most vulnerable of populations, particularly Black and Brown communities in the greater Caribbean. The terrible costs of the hurricane at the turn of the twentieth century were hinted at in the paintings of Winslow Homer, for example. Images like the *Gulf Stream* or *After the Hurricane, Bahamas* utilized the hurricane as a cultural metaphor for the dangers that Black men face in the United States and worldwide (fig. 12) (Staiti 2001). Homer's paintings appeared during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period that witnessed a series of deadly storms. First there was San Ciriaco in 1899. This occurred less than a year after the United States took possession of Puerto Rico from Spain after the War of 1898 (known tellingly in the US as the Spanish-American War and in Cuba as the War of Independence) (Hartman 2021, Rosario Rivera 2000, Schwartz 1992). The storm presented US officials with an opportunity to cement a burgeoning US insular empire's political status, quite literally, through the reconstruction of roads, homes, and buildings with reinforced concrete.

Fig. 12: Winslow Homer, *The Gulf Stream*, oil on canvas, 1899. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

A year later, in 1900, came the deadly Galveston Hurricane. Just as San Ciriaco offered US imperialists a chance to bulwark their power, the storm of Galveston, Texas opened opportunities for white supremacists to reassert their authority in the Southern United States after the Civil War. White vigilantes used the storm as an opportunity to kill Black men, whom they accused of looting. Journalist Murat Halstead depicted these scenes of violence in stylized detail in his book of 1900, *Galveston, the Horrors of a Stricken City* (Halstead 1900, Horowitz 2015). The cover of his book shows a Black man shot in the back in the rubble of the storm's aftermath. Disturbing echoes of Galveston's horrors occurred after Katrina struck New Orleans in 2005, too. In both cases, news agencies began reporting widespread rumors of looting, murder, and rape, which were used as justification for extreme violence. Although separated by nearly one hundred years, these two "natural disasters" were also cultural catastrophes for Black communities and communities of color in the greater Caribbean, whether in acts of violence or in state negligence.

Another example can be seen in the mass grave site of African Americans and Black Bahamians in Palm Beach that followed the deadly hurricane of 1928, which went unmarked and

largely unknown up until 2002. Thousands lost their lives in the storm of '28 when flood waters breached the small dikes around Lake Okeechobee. Bodies of white and Black victims were buried and burned in masse, largely by Black men who had been conscripted into labor against their will after the storm. This was described eloquently by author Zora Neale Hurston, and confirmed by archival record (Hurston 1991, 204, Archives of the West Palm Beach Historical Society). Here we witness the "non-ethics" of disaster response, to borrow from Puerto Rican philosopher Nelson Maldonado-Torres, which would reveal the colonial underpinning of modern state-sponsored responses to hurricanes (Maldonado-Torres 2007). The history of forced Black labor and white violence toward Black bodies after major hurricanes in the US informs the racial justice themes of Winslow Homer's earlier paintings, too – hinting at the natural and cultural disasters that would continue to place the Black body in crisis for centuries (Tedeschi 2007).

During the same period as major storms like San Felipe II and Okeechobee, between the 1920s and 1940s, the entire world was in crisis with the traumas of World War I, the Great Depression, and eventually the rise of Nazism and the start of World War II. This period also witnessed the worst storms in Caribbean history, due to major shifts in climate caused by El Niño-Southern Oscillation weather effects. The most devastating storms of the twentieth century presented unique political opportunities across multiple cultural sectors. US imperial officials, Caribbean despots, and local politicians alike used architecture and visual propaganda to restore, reshape, and control cities affected by the worst hurricanes of the period. Those historic storms destroyed and then, through public art and architecture, recast the modern cities of the Caribbean. Evidence here includes neoclassical and fascistic monuments built by dictators like Gerardo Machado after the hurricane of 1926 in Cuba; and Rafael Leonidas Trujillo's rechristening of Santo Domingo as Ciudad Trujillo after hurricane San Zenon in the Dominican Republic in 1930. Or the concrete public works (capitol buildings, insane asylums, and prisons) brought to fruition by the US colonial government in Puerto Rico after San Felipe II in 1928 (Anderson 2011, Derby 2009, Hartman 2019, Schwartz 2015); and the new building codes and British and French colonial structures that followed in the wake of hurricanes in the Bahamas and Guadeloupe, respectively (Comptabilité du Cyclone de 1928, Neely 2013, 119).

The political forces, whether US capitalists or local caudillos, that drove those post-disaster building projects would no less threaten the region's most vulnerable populations for generations to come. Puerto Rican printmaker Carlos Raquel Rivera thus justly represented one such storm in his mid-century linocut *Huracán del norte*, (Northern Hurricane), as a visible metaphor for the ruinous effects of US-style capitalism (fig. 13). Like the

Fig. 13: Carlos Raquel Rivera, *Huracán del Norte*, linocut, 1955. Courtesy of the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña Collection.

Greco-Roman storm god representations of fellow Puerto Rican printmaker Rafael Tufiño, Raquel Rivera's engraving shows us a nude deity in an awkward spread-legged flight. This time, however, the storm god's head is an empty eyed skull, reminiscent of the satiric calaveras of Mexican printmaker José Guadalupe Posada. The moribund figure holds out a torn bag in his right hand, which spills US dollars and coins. An array of victims and collaborators follow behind him, evidently ensnared in his windy wake and set over a backdrop of waving, partially unfurled flags. An iconic nude woman hangs from his neck. Behind the personified storm, a man in sunglasses holds a briefcase in one hand. Above him, a businessman has lassoed the bony hurricane's bag of cash. A worker in overalls holds onto the skeleton's torn money bag for dear life, as wealth flows beyond his reach. Dollars and coins rain onto a Puerto Rican shantytown. The crisp lines of the central figure and the town make the political satire of the image clear. While dynamic diagonal lines, deep cut into the linoleum of the artist's matrix, show how cultural disasters mirror the violence and chaos of natural ones. This hurricane may blow north to south, and west to east, but its effects are no less deadly (Rivera-Santana 2020, 6).

Confronting eco-trauma: Hurricanes as cultural metaphor in contemporary art

The political messages of Caribbean artists in the 1950s foreground the cultural politics of artists working on issues of coloniality, eco-trauma, and climate disaster in the region today. Representations of the hurricane echo and morph in the time-space of climate ruin. The recent works of Teresita Fernández offer a case in point (fig. 14) (Fernández and Yerebakan 2021). Fernández's massive mosaic mural, titled *Caribbean Cosmos*, features a highly modern, satellite image of a hurricane. Yet, its title hints at older models of visualizing cosmology dating back to the stoneworks of Indigenous Caribbeans. The US-based artist of Cuban descent shows us a very specific image familiar to those who experienced the worst of the hurricane season of 2017. Three swirling cyclones over Caribbean waters. The western most one settles over Texas. The center one swirls off the littorals of Florida and Cuba. The last approaches menacingly toward Puerto Rico, as it brings destruction down over Guadeloupe and the lower Antilles. These were the triplet hurricanes of 2017: Harvey, Irma, and María. Each wreaked havoc over wide geographic areas, from the Leeward islands and upper Antilles to the US Gulf Coast.

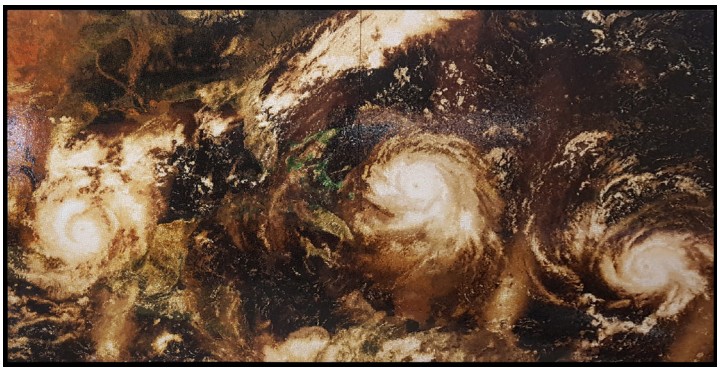

Fig. 14: Teresita Fernández, *Caribbean Cosmos*, glazed ceramic, 2020. Private Collection. Courtesy of the artist and Lehmann Maupin.

Fernández's image embodies the multiple chronotopes of the Caribbean hurricane in art and political iconographies. On one hand, we see a modern satellite image, likely to appear on any standard google image search for

"hurricanes." On the other hand, we encounter an ur-icon of Caribbean cosmology, embodied in the swirling arm bands of Hurakán. Unlike the personified storm gods featured in the 1950s linocuts of Tufiño and Raquel Rivera, the faceless terror of De Bry's sixteenth-century engravings, or the sinking boats and suffering Black bodies of Turner and Homer's industrial age art, Fernández's image replicates the form of the hurricane itself. In this way, we could place the image more in line with the phenomenal observations of ancient Caribbeans. It is a representation of human and non-human assemblages. While the work's grand scale nods at the modernist muralist techniques employed by artists like Tufiño, Fernández achieves a much deeper level of intimacy, through her ingenious and time-intensive use of mosaic. The artist turns a removed, machine's eye view of meteorology and cartography into an engrossing human experience. The eye flashes over polychromatic tesserae. We see a constellation of ocean green, blood red, and shimmering yellow, which are echoed in the materiality of the mosaic itself, pieces of modeled earth saturated in liquid glaze and fired in high heat. When close, the individual mottled glass pieces create a chaotic dance with the viewer's own reflection. While at a distance, the ceramic tiles coalesce into the geologic gestalt of iconic hurricanes over the Caribbean. The final effect is grand on scale like the murals of the 1950s; but intimate and estranged like the view of the google user searching through a sea of images, whose own image is reflected in the black mirror of the screen. Throughout, weaving these visual chronotopes together, we have the hurricane and its spectators – a cultural icon embodied in the multiple *temporales* of Caribbean art history, dating back to the earliest human civilizations and reaching forward into our present-day state of entropy.

The multiple layers of storm imagery in Fernández's work speaks to the transcendence and ongoing threat of the hurricane in our current era. Storms are representative of centuries-old traumas caused by human exploitations and dating back at least to the colonial era. Teresita Fernández, in her interviews, calls this historic relationship between colonialism and natural exploitation an eco-trauma (Fernández and Isgro 2020; Fernández and Hartman 2022). Hurricanes that were once viewed by Indigenous and African diasporic peoples as spiritual energies and by European colonists as divine punishment for human sins, have again taken the form of arbitrator in human affairs. In the age of human-made climate change, super storms loom on the horizon, foretelling of a new era of storms, empires, and despots like that of the colonial era or, more recently, the US imperial age. Or perhaps they predict a new powerful force, hinted at in the art of Fernández and others, that could upend colonialism and the world order like the real and imagined storms of the 1700s.

Eco-trauma, like the trauma that effects the individual, is a society wide affliction that demands a compassionate response over multiple times and spaces. Contemporary art, inheriting earlier cultural valences of the hurricane, thus responds by gesturing at those radical decolonial solutions that our present climate crisis will require for healing. To return to our earlier discussion of the shipwreck and spectator, contemporary artists like Fernández gesture at the material ruins that may give us courage to begin anew. The art produced in protest of the United States failures after Hurricane María in 2017 is another prime example. Reports in 2021 by FEMA's Recovery Support Function Group indicated that Puerto Rico, four years after the

storm, had still only received 18 of the 90 billion dollars needed for full reconstruction – turning a natural disaster into an utterly cultural one. So too, Puerto Rican artists have sought to re-examine the multiple layers of disaster that preceded and followed the hurricane, including the culture-changing possibilities that the storm wagered. Decoloniality becomes a form of critical thinking made tangible in the "ugly" rusted sinks of Rafael Vargas Bernard's *Tenemos sed – We are thirsty*, for example, or the felled powerlines of Gabriella Torres-Ferrer's *Valora tu mentira americana (Value your American Lie)* (fig. 15) (Rivera-Santana 2020). These ephemeral objects made solid (and thus aesthetic) speak to the hurricane as a creative and destructive force, which reaches back and forth in human histories as it does in art history and cultural politics.

Fig. 15: Gabriela Torres-Ferrer, *Untitled (Valora tu mentira Americana)*, 2018. Hurricane ravaged wooden electric post with statehood propaganda. 116" x 118" x 122". Collection of César & Mima Reyes. Courtesy of the artist and Embajada, San Juan, Photo: Raquel Perez-Puig

In November 2022, the Whitney Museum displayed twenty artists in an exhibition titled *no existe un mundo poshuracán: Puerto Rican Art in the Wake of Hurricane María*. As the title suggests, the hurricane is not a contained time-space for these artists. Rather, the storm is pervasive and fundamental, in contemporary art as it has been throughout Caribbean art history. The hurricane may be a singular event, but it also effects Caribbean visual cultures across multiple times and spaces. Speaking to friends and neighbors of mine in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, one quickly sees the logic of that title. There is no post-hurricane world. The *temporal* is always-already here. Before the storm, Puerto Rico suffered a massive debt crisis, which the hurricane only exacerbated along with a history of over 500 years of colonial rule. Five years after the storm, the island continues to endure the threat of a global pandemic alongside the ongoing and increasing threat of annual storms. Yet, the community response to those disasters is far more resilient and complex than the dehumanizing depictions of the news media of a hopeless and helpless people. Again, as before, Puerto Ricans and the diaspora sing the plena *El Temporal*, so beautifully illustrated by the artist Tufiño over a half century earlier, as they seek out new solutions to very old problems.

The 1920s song asks: "What will become of Puerto Rico?" In the age of the global climate change, we might all ask together: "What will become of us?" It would be utopian to claim that art offers a tangible solution here. Yet, it would be equally short-sighted to ignore the iconicity of the hurricane as a set of affective images in global political culture. To pursue that line of thinking, I follow the anthropologist Hilda Llórens in her analysis of media images of Hurricane María and its aftermath. The anthropologist asks how images of the storm and its destructive wake operated. Were they compelling? Did they call for compassion? Or did they lead to apathy alongside moral and emotional amnesia? Reports on the hurricane's ruination focused on

the dynamics of power in Puerto Rico, implicitly drudging up over 500 years of colonial trauma (Lloréns 2018). The Puerto Rican people, according to media accounts, were literally powerless, without electrical power or political means. Images of felled powerlines and drowned streets thus became traumatic reminders of Puerto Rico's colonial status. Those images had varying affects. Media consumers in the mainland with no connection to Puerto Rico may have simply watched the hurricane from their homes (like a modern-day Lucretius standing safely on the shore looking at a distant shipwreck). The television bombarded viewers with images of suffering that also recalled old colonial-era stereotypes. Images of powerlessness engaged in tropes that desensitized viewers to the pain of Black and Brown communities seemingly far-removed from mainland concerns. Yet, for residents of Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rican diaspora, those same images recalled old wounds, reminders of the inequities suffered and endured for the past five centuries.

Set beside titles like "trail of death and destruction in the Caribbean," sensationalist photographs of homes destroyed, and streets flooded in Dominica, Guadeloupe, and Puerto Rico would make it seem to the US viewer that suffering was something that happens over there-then-to them rather than right here-now-to us. As writer Susan Sontag once put it, even while those photographic images disclose the suffering of others, they also "nourish belief in the inevitability of tragedy in the benighted or backward – that is, poor – parts of the world" (Sontag 2003, 71). Contemporary artists of the Caribbean, on the other hand, following in the long, spiraling history of hurricane images like that of Tufiño and Raquel Rivera, offer a related but distinct decolonial response to those media images and their political iconographies. These are not removed and voyeuristic depictions of pain and ruin. Rather, they offer competing images of the hurricane and its aftermath with a focus on distinct and generative possibilities. We could say that artworks like those of Fernández, Torres-Ferrer, and Vargas Bernard offer a reification of the hurricane as a metaphor for historic tragedies and an icon of radical futures. At its best, their art stabilizes the viewer's compassion in a bid to transform it into action – using old wreckage and debris to build a newer, stronger form. This is a gesture repeated over and again in Caribbean art, wherein the hurricane becomes a transregional icon for political action.

As cultural agents, hurricanes are seemingly without theoretical boundaries (hyper, multi, super, and trans). Contemporary philosopher Timothy Morton has called the hurricane a "hyperobject," a visible fragment of the mindboggling totality that is global climate change (Morton 2013). Anthropologists Hilda Lloréns, Jorge Duany, and others have argued that migrants from Puerto Rico and other parts of the Caribbean are in fact climate migrants, displaced by superstorms and other natural disasters ultimately caused by industrialized societies around the world (Lloréns 2018, Duany 2021, Bonilla et al. 2019). Scholar Dipesh Chakrabarty argues that to confront the challenges created by climate change we must attend equally to anti-colonial and postcolonial ontologies, expressed by writers like Frantz Fanon and Homi K. Bhabha, among others, as we also seek out fresh nonontological ways of thinking (Chakrabarty 2012, Fanon 1961). Building on that observation, we should also seek out new ways of representing and looking at adverse weather phenomena. By re-examining hurricanes as chronotopes in Caribbean art history, I hope to provide a path forward in that effort, shedding light on the

limits and possibilities of art as a means of responding to and mitigating the region's entwined histories of coloniality, decoloniality, environmental disaster, and cultural politics.

Unpacking the iconography of the hurricane throughout time and space, I want to suggest in closing, is a critical step toward confronting the social, economic, and emotional entanglements of coloniality and decoloniality in the age of climate ruin and historically. Alongside climate change, we continue to grapple with a host of entwined cultural disasters: forced migration, international politics, the haunting legacies of European and US colonialism. The artistic legacy of hurricanes is not epiphenomenal to those interwoven discourses, but rather central to confronting our shared crises. Nor are visual and material cultures epiphenomena of other prime movers like war, disease, or natural disasters. On the contrary, the history of art is central to discovering new ontological and nonontological views of hurricanes and their complex effects on theories of migration, transculturality, and decoloniality in the Caribbean context. Following the logics of Martinican poet Édouard Glissant, we could say that the hurricane is a traumatic but also generative element in the non-art history of the Caribbean's *chaos-monde* (Glissant 1997, Prieto 2011). *El temporal* exists in multiple times and spaces, and it produces multiple visual forms and responses. The art history of hurricanes reveals pathways for seeing the cultural life of natural disasters. Art also provides us with conditions of possibility for the hurricane in the Caribbean and worldwide. The hurricane's ultimate effects, history tells us, depends not only on humanity's material response, but also on the spiritual, aesthetic, political, and imaginary expressions witnessed in the diverse iconographies of Caribbean art. It is in those visual icons of hurricanes past and present, in the wreckage of old ships, that we find the courage to imagine new futures.

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