From the *novela de la caña* to Junot Díaz's "cake-eater": World-Literature, the World Food System and the Dominican Republic

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Abstract: Sugar's relation to literary, and more broadly cultural, aesthetics is well studied. For good reasons, much of this existing scholarship focuses on aesthetics in relation to colonial plantations and their lasting legacies. Yet, while the *longue durée* of capitalism continues to be indispensible for an analysis of the role of sugar, significant changes occurred from the 1870s onwards, which laid the foundations for today's highly uneven, globalised world food system. It is in this context that Dominican and Dominican-American literary aesthetics are particularly revealing, as they register the impact of the rapid integration of the Dominican Republic into the world market through the sugar industry. As I argue, while the political ecology fuelling the foundational romance *Enriquillo* by Manuel de Jesús Galván (1882) is consciously repressed in the service of producing a national fantasy, the "critical irrealist" aesthetics of Ramón Marrero Arristy's *Over* (1939) possess at least some disruptive potential. It is in this context that Junot Díaz's insistent focus on style, genre and aesthetics take on their full significance, placing *The brief wondrous life of Oscar Wao* (2007) at the vanguard of thinking around the "worlding" of literary studies as well as about the role of cultural production in what the environmental historian Jason W. Moore calls the capitalist "world-ecology."

Keywords: Junot Díaz; world-literature; Ramón Marrero Aristy; saccharine irrealism; Caribbean literature; Dominican Republic; literature and food.

The contemporary world food system is suspended, as Raj Patel illustrates in *Stuffed and Starved* (2007), between the poles of hunger and obesity in a continuum of poverty.[ii] While starvation is readily understood as having little to do with individual choice, it needs to be stressed that obesity rates are also shaped by factors such as class, ethnicity and location, and are inscribed into a highly uneven capitalist world-system of cores and peripheries, locked into a relation of increasing inequality. Within this context, the role of sugar was in

many ways paradigmatic: as one of the original exports of the Americas, it brought wealth to the colonial centres, and human and extra-human devastation to the colonies; it was from the start profoundly imbricated in the increasing mediation of food-getting via the money economy; the rise in its consumption over the centuries has been phenomenal, due to its being the "cheapest, the most addictive, and the most profitable of food inputs" (Albritton 2010: 7). I am here particularly interested in the period that saw the emergence of a more integrated world food system: over the last decades of the nineteenth century, a dramatic dietetic revolution increased sugar consumption in the industrial core countries, including in the United States, where per capita sugar consumption "increased 211 percent in the period 1870 - 1930" (Ayala 1999: 28). In the same period but on the economic periphery of the global economy, the Dominican Republic was radically transformed and "modernized" by the sugar industry, which - as elsewhere in the Caribbean previously - translated into the brutal exploitation of land and labour (including deforestation, increased land concentration, the displacement and proletarianization of scores of farmers, and the super-exploitation of labourers from the West Indies and Haiti).

Sugar's relation to literary, and more broadly cultural, aesthetics is well studied.[iii] For good reasons, much of this existing scholarship focuses on aesthetics in relation to colonial plantations and their lasting legacies. In this article, however, I want to focus on saccharine aesthetics in the age of an increasingly integrated world food system, shaped by a number of world-historical changes, including the second industrial revolution fuelled by coal and oil, the emergence of US imperialism and the corporate revolution of US capital. While the *longue durée* of capitalism continues to be indispensible for an analysis of the role of sugar, significant changes occurred from the 1870s onwards, which laid the foundations for today's highly uneven, globalised world food system. Consider, then, the following two literary examples, both of which are centrally concerned with the political ecology of sugar as well as its cultural registrations. In Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007), the tragicomic Dominican-American Oscar is an "overweight frea[k]", a "*cake eater*", whose body is shaped by a world food system, in which the urban majority has no access to land and lives on processed, sugar-laced foods (15; 17). In Ramón Marrero Aristy's *Over* (first published in 1939), an archetypal *novela de la caña* [sugarcane novel], on the other hand, we are presented with the starved (and mostly migrant) workers on a US-run sugar plantation in the Dominican Republic in the 1930s.[iv]

Comparing these aesthetic registrations of sugar, this article situates itself within current efforts to recalibrate the field of postcolonial studies as the study of "world-literature"

as championed by the Warwick Research Collective (Deckard 2015). It aims to bring out what it would mean to read cultural production with a focus on the changing contexts of the production of food and its consumption in an ever more tightly globalized world in which food-getting is increasingly mediated by financial transactions and detached from locality. What do the characters eat? Who produces their food? And in what ways does the production and consumption of food in an uneven world-system relate to aesthetics? Sugar provides an ideal case study, because of its fundamental role in the rise of capitalist world-ecology, as well as the drastic transformations that sugar consumption and production undergo from the 1870s onwards. Further, Dominican, and Dominican-American, literary aesthetics - from the foundational romance *Enriquillo* by Manuel de Jesús Galván (1882), to the sugar cane novels of the first half of the twentieth century, to the migrant literature written from the US Diaspora - are particularly revealing in this context, as they register the impact of the rapid integration into the world market through the sugar industry. Yet, the extent to which such "registration" leads to explicit critical engagement differs drastically: while the political ecology fuelling the foundational romance *Enriquillo* by Manuel de Jesús Galván (1882) is consciously repressed in the service of producing a national fantasy, the "critical irrealist" aesthetics of Ramón Marrero Arristy's *Over* (1939) possess at least some disruptive potential (Löwy 2010: 211). As I argue, Junot Díaz's insistent focus on questions of style, genre and aesthetics take on their full significance within this context, placing his text at the vanguard of thinking around the "worlding" of literary studies as well as about the role of cultural production in the capitalist "world-ecology" (Moore 2015).

World-Literature, Saccharine Aesthetics and the Dominican Republic

> There is a country
> in the world
> [...][s]ituated
> in an improbable archipelago
> of sugar and alcohol.
> Pedro Mir, 1949

Changes in food-getting over the last five hundred years have been remarkable: local nutrient cycles were disrupted and increasingly linked into a globalising capitalist world-ecology.[v] The mono-cultural production of certain crops, such as sugar, played a central role in this world-historical process: as one of the original global export commodities of the Americas, sugar is the fruit of genocide and conquest, of the horrors of the trade of humans across the Atlantic and of their dehumanizing enslavement on the plantations. Sugar's circulation is "deeply structured by global capitalism" (Richardson 2015:9); it enabled these brutally exploitative global divisions of labour, pioneered unsustainable development by exhausting de-forested Caribbean soils, and financed the industrial revolution of the European core. Its legacies - including structural racism, uneven development and environmental degradation - are acutely felt through to the present day. Further, sugar was inscribed in world-historical dietetic revolutions, gradually turning into a staple food and functioning as significant energy source that lowered systemic reproduction costs, that is, food prices for the working classes. Indeed, as Mintz observed, the "profound changes in dietary and consumption patterns in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe were not random or fortuitous, but the direct consequences of the same momentum that created a world economy" (1986: 158). Grasping the role of sugar within the history of capitalism and its imbrication in systemic racialization, gendering and environmental degradation necessitates a conceptualization of capitalism that goes beyond a focus on the commodification and exploitation of labour-power. "The relations necessary to accumulate abstract social labour [value] are - *necessarily* - more expansive, in scale, scope, speed, and intensity", writes the environmental historian Jason Moore (2015: 53). Capitalist value relations depend not only on the exploitation of commodified labour-time; more importantly, they depend on the appropriation of the unpaid (and under-paid) work and energy of human and extra-human natures, on "a rising stream of low-cost food, labour-power, energy, and raw materials to the factory gates" (ibid).

Further, while the *longue durée* of historical capitalism is central to an understanding of the history of sugar, it is also important to take account of fundamental shifts that re-organized global world-ecology. Most importantly, the fossil-fuelled emergence of monopoly capitalism out of the signal crisis of capitalism in the late nineteenth century was tied in with the emergence of a more integrated world food system during the same period. Preceding the full-blown imperial expansion of the US into the Caribbean was a corporate revolution led by the sugar refiners. Initially imitating the re-organization of the petroleum industry by forming the Sugar Trust in 1887, the sugar refiners were soon at the forefront of a "historical

transformation in the structure of capitalist property" (Ayala 1999: 23), as the Sugar Trust changed into a holding company after the passing in 1890 of the Sherman Antitrust Act in congress. This was key to an unprecedented horizontal integration and also to increasing vertical integration with the "American Sugar Kingdom" after the Spanish-American War in 1898. The sugar plantations, or *centrales*, of the twentieth century are thus clearly different to the *ingenios* of preceding centuries, as they relied on "free" labour, increased mechanization, electrification, the use of steam and fossil fuel power, and the imperialist monopolization of lands and profits. Further, as a result of increased industrialization and urbanization (which necessitated the provision of fast energy to the growing urban proletariat), sugar consolidated itself as a staple food of the emergent world food system.

Sugar - and saccharine aesthetics - offer an interesting way into the debates around the "worlding" of comparative literary studies, which have emerged out of the crisis felt within the field with particular virulence since the early 2000s. I here take my cue from the work done by materialist critics, who have sought to reposition the "world" in world literature as referring to the capitalist world-system. The world-literary text, in this view, would register "modernity under the sign of combined and uneven development" (Deckard 2015: 17). This registration tendentially occurs through irrealist aesthetics - including the gothic, monstrous, marvellous or fantastic - as it responds to largely invisible and hard-to-grasp forces of global capitalism and its impact on, and destruction of, local life-worlds.[vi] "Saccharine-irrealism" constructs its monsters out of the disavowed processes of capitalist world-ecology, arising out of exploitation (of commodified labour) and appropriation (of gendered and racialized labour, as well as extra-human nature) (Niblett 2015: 277). From the perspective of consumption, the gothic topos of "blood sugar" of the 1790s, for instance, was animated by a desire to de-fetishize this commodity.[vii] From the perspective of plantation societies, on the other hand, sugar's pivotal role in shaping entire societies, cultures, and ecologies around its production had long been inescapable, producing as Sylvia Wynter has noted "a change of such world historical magnitude, that we are all, without exception, still "enchanted", imprisoned, deformed and schizophrenic in its bewitched reality" (1971 95).[viii]

One does not have to search long to come across "saccharine-irrealism" of the Dominican variety. Most famously, Pedro Mir in his poem "Hay un país en este mundo" [There is a country in this world] from 1949 evokes a sense of "improbability" that has become a structure of feeling linked to the region's domination by export commodities: the island is situated, he writes, in an "improbable archipelago / of sugar and alcohol" (851). As the poem goes on to explore, everything - from infrastructure (railroads), to the extra-human

environments, to the human bodies (the "limbs of the simplest man"), to structures of feeling ("the boundless fury and hatred") - "belong to the company" (Mir 2000: 854). In Mir's poem, the saccharine irrealism produced by this domination of dead labour over living labour soon turns towards monstrous and gothic imagery:

> This is a country unworthy of being called a country.
> Call it a tomb, coffin, hole or sepulcher.
> It is true that I kiss it and that it kisses me
> and that its kiss tastes of nothing but blood. (ibid: 855-6)

The images of death and burial, of living death, of blood and implied vampirism/ cannibalism, are all heavily over-determined. Mir's poem clearly carries denunciatory overtones vis-à-vis the brutal dictatorship of Trujillo, who, at the end of the forties, was in the process of extending his control over the economy to the US dominated sugar industry. Yet, they echo simultaneously a longer history of saccharine gothic and, more specifically, register the US dominated expansion of commodity relations, as well the acts of appropriation on which the latter rely (including primitive accumulation, the further entrenchment of patriarchal relations and racist labour regimes that rely on the recruitment of Haitian labour). Not surprisingly, then, the lines also resound with Karl Marx's well-known description of capital as "dripping from head to toe [...] with blood and dirt." Capital, he also writes, is "dead labour which, vampire-like, lives only by sucking living labour" - an apt description, even if anachronistically employed, for monopoly capitalism (Marx 1990: 926; 342).

Dominican history of sugar production is simultaneously inscribed in the *longue durée* of capitalism, as well as being fundamentally altered by the transformation at the end of the nineteenth century. Sugar cane first arrived in the Caribbean in the island of Hispaniola, brought by Christopher Columbus on his second voyage in 1493. While the first sugar boom occurred in the sixteenth century, by the nineteenth century (and its complicated and protracted birth as a nation-state), the Dominican Republic was a "society of petty commodity producers and subsistence farmers," only weakly integrated into the world-system and producing sugar only for local consumption (Ayala 1999: 193). Propelled by a combination of external and internal factors, the sugar revolution rapidly began to transform the country from the mid 1870s onwards, powered by the technology of the steam-powered Cuban mills and financed by mostly foreign investment. While the consequences for many farming communities were devastating, these changes were welcomed by the national elites:

the liberal government of the early 1880s, for instance, offered incentives to planters, such as tax exemptions, low export duties, and tariff protections. Sugar was associated with signs of "progress", including railroads, electrification, and steam power; in the discourse of the contemporary governing elite, "sugar stood for modernization, for the triumph of human ingenuity over nature, for civilization" (Martínez-Vergne 2005: 9; 43).

The sugar revolution profoundly restructured Dominican ecology - the relations between land, livestock, people and capital. Since sugar necessitates the clearing of vast tracts of forests, entire peasant communities were displaced by the *centrales.* Yet, the separation of a potential workforce from the means of reproduction was not fully achieved, which meant that the *centrales* had to rely on imported labour. Given that many Dominicans still had access to land for the production of food (traditional plots of land called *conucos*), and were thus unwilling to work in the fields under the brutal conditions of the sugar industry, foreign labourers were contracted, predominantly from the West Indies at first, and from the first decade of the twentieth century onwards increasingly from Haiti, a trend consolidated by active recruitment after the beginning of the US occupation of the island (Martínez-Vergne 2005: 93). Further, the food production in the sugar growing areas was disrupted by the *centrales,* which led to increases in food prices, to the extent that "workers could barely pay for the limited foodstuffs available in the plantation stores" (Moya Pons 2007: 273); this was a structural tendency, first noticed in 1882 during the first sugar boom, and gradually worsening over time.

To return here to the question of the relation between the debates around world-literature and the history of saccharine aesthetics in the Dominican Republic, it must be noted that the profound entanglement of Dominican literature with the history of sugar is well documented (e.g. Sommer 1983). Indeed, one of the texts that is often seen as foundational for modern Dominican literary history is the exoticising indigenist fantasy formulated in *Enriquillo: Leyenda dominicana* (1882) by the liberal politician and writer Manuel Jesús de Galván. It was "almost immediately made required reading in Dominican public schools and has provided a narrative structure and cultural fixed ideas for generations of Dominican novelists to debate and reform" (Sommer 1983: xiv). It served to delineate an elite-driven modernizing Dominican nationalism that would exclude and marginalize the history of Africans and their descendents; it "would help readers find a common heritage shared by all Dominicans that would differentiate them ethnically, racially and culturally from the Haitians" (Stinchcomb 2004: 27). Its problematic (mis-)representation of the indigenous *cacique* Enriquillo and the social world around him thus excluded any traces of sugar and the

social order it produced, thus functioning as a foundational romance that offered a (now much critiqued) "ideological synthesis" between a paternalist Hispanism and a romanticized indigenism (Sommer 1982: 57). The ecology of the romance form was thus actively repressed.

Yet, by the time of the emergence of the regionalist *novela de la caña*, the romance is no longer sustainable, as it encounters obstacles to national self-determination in the form of the domination by imperialist monopoly capitalism. Beginning in 1900, the Dominican sugar industry was being taken over by US capital, which was able to fuel a process of land concentration and take advantage of economic crises and external debt.[ix] The relations between US capital and the Dominican sugar growing areas were structured by the typical centre-periphery dynamics: while a large percentage of cane and raw sugar was produced in the "American Sugar Kingdom", which offered fertile, exploitable lands and low labour costs, the more lucrative industrial process of refining was kept in the US (Ayala 63-64).[x] This uneven relation was reinforced by tariffs that would seek to keep out foreign refined sugar to protect the US refining industry (indeed, tariffs for raw sugar were much fought over, and continued to constitute a political tool during the Cold War). The US domination of the sugar industry was given a significant boost by military occupation (1916-24). The military government fundamentally had US economic interests at heart, shamelessly implementing policies and regulations beneficial to US investment, and enabling a phase of intense primitive accumulation and land grabbing (Hall 2000: 42; Cassá 1994: 223).[xi] The liberal fantasy of a world market regulating itself could not be further removed from reality, structured by a world-system that locks cores and peripheries together in increasingly unequal relations, installed and reinforced by military might. Instead, "highly organized capital came to reap the profits of colonial enterprise" (Ayala 199: 76).

"Es una fiebre, una locura": Monstrous Irrealism in *Over* (1939)

Marrero's *Over*, a novel told in three parts, explicitly critiques this context. Through the narrator-protagonist, who is expelled from his father's house and can only find work as a *bodeguero* [the keeper of the company shop] on a US owned sugar plantation, the novel offers a "metaphor for the Dominican people, who have lost their historical roots and travel alone through a hostile world, dominated by foreign economic powers and racist prejudices" (Baud 1999: 190, my translation). Set near San Pedro de Macorís, a town that had been transformed rapidly by the sugar revolution into an economic centre, *Over* depicts life in a

US dominated sugar enclave, in which all the best positions are occupied by North Americans and Europeans, while the Haitian and West Indian work-force is labouring under de-humanising and dangerous conditions, often fainting from lack of food. The lettered middle-class narrator is uncomfortably wedged between them, becoming complicit in a system based on structural racism, super-exploitation and deceit, and land monopolization - a system that he wants to denounce (while also casually displaying an unquestioned racism towards Haitians and accepting patriarchal relations as natural if disturbed by imperialism).[xii] In a novel marked by various formal, stylistic and ideological tensions, neither the romance and nor the *bildungsroman* form can provide adequate narrative containers and are displaced by the overbearing domination of sugar and monopoly capital. The plot therefore follows the alternating movement between zafra [harvest] and the "dead time" (Marrero 1940: 165; Sommer 1983: 133). Sugar emerges as the commodity that structures all life around its rhythms, sucking out the village's life forces.

In *Over*, the national romance has been rendered inadequate by foreign domination (its patriarchal and racialized underpinnings, however, are left largely intact). The mechanisms of the romance plot are evoked rather mechanically at the beginning of part two, but then quickly discarded: his love interest - "una indiecita" whose father is an independent *bodeguero* - represents the hope for a national synthesis that would be grounded in a Dominican racial identity and national sovereignty through small-scale plots and commerce.[xiii] Yet, ominously, the subsequent chapter starts with the suicide of a married *bodeguero* working for the central, and by the end part two, his wife returns from the central's hospital after the death of their unborn child. As has been pointed out, Marrero's explicit critique as voiced through his character is not a radical critique of capitalism, but demonstrates support of small commerce, which is suffocated by the monopolization of food by the sugar industry.[xiv] Further, a notable, and much commented on, omission of the novel is its lack of any commentary on the brutal dictatorship of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo (infamous for its censorship and murderous persecution of opposition). Many critical responses to *Over* are shaped by the fact that thanks to its publication, Marrero joined the group of intellectuals who helped to consolidate the *trujillato* through its mythification and had a very successful career until his assassination in 1959 (Serrata 2009: 109).[xv] Indeed, the novel was (at least briefly) co-opted to justify the ecology of dictatorship - expanding dictatorial capitalist hoarding to the sugar industry in the name of "nationalism." One of the most pressing debates, then, has revolved around the question of whether the novel implicitly exonerates the brutal dictator, or whether it indicts him through the metaphor of the father abandoning his

son (Sommer 1983: 125; Serrata 2009: 111). While the novel's main attack is explicitly focused on US monopoly capital (hence allowing for its uncomfortable co-optation), I agree with Serrata that there is much in the novel that possesses critical charge. Yet, I see this as located not so much in an allegorical, covert critique of Trujillo, but rather in its style. Regardless of authorial intention and the author's political affiliations, the most subversive aspects are not related to explicit politics, but rather its employment of an at times pronounced monstrous irrealism that, as I will argue, has subversive potential.

Indeed, even the critique directed specifically at US monopoly capitalism in places threatens to turn into something more radical. One of the one-dimensional villains of the novel, Mr Robinson, is the "symbol par excellence of Anglo-Imperialists" (McDonald 1997: 38). The name is here presumably not insignificant: in Hispanic intellectual discourse on both sides of the Atlantic, Robinson Crusoe had figured as critique of the "progressive technological and economic ideals of an increasingly secularized Anglo-American empire" since the events of 1898, which were represented as an encounter between Don Quixote, symbolizing "the archaic, spiritual, moral, and civilizing ideals of the Spanish Empire", and "his Anglo-Saxon nemesis" (Britt 2005: 2). In *Over,* Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, an archetypal sovereign subject of capitalist modernity who subjugates extra-human nature to his will, is exposed as a rapacious capitalist imperialist, who in a dependent economy can extract wealth under conditions impossible in his own country. Mr Panza, as he is nicknamed, is described as enormous and obese, contrasting with the workers on the plantation, who are often reduced to the single physical sensation of hunger. Access to food, in this context, is tied to economic wealth: "his stomach grows, his bank account grows" (62, all translations are my own). His body turns into a symbol for the core's "fattening up" at the expense of the periphery. The structural racism of this imperial world-order, a legacy of colonialism, is emphasized throughout, through an insistent emphasis on Mr Panza's blue eyes and his overtly racist attitudes. Equally, the predatory relation of US capital to Dominican environments is highlighted early on in the novel through its descriptions of the threatening presence of the "immense chimneys" of the now steam-powered sugar industry, rising to the sky as if to "stea[l] the clouds" (27).

To return to the formal tensions, the gestures toward the *bildungsroman* form are displaced by the allegorical story of the subjugation of an economically dependent society to sugar, which is also the subjugation to the law of value. At the start of the novel, Daniel Comprés, the narrator and aspiring writer, is expelled from a less firmly capitalized patriarchal village economy, and sucked up in the "vortex" of the profit-driven monopolistic

sugar industry (84). Rejected by his father and by society at large, everything seems "strange", as the community ties dissolve in an atmosphere dominated "by talk of the price of sugar" (7; 17). While the Cibao - associated with smaller-sized tobacco holdings and "national character"- is briefly evoked as alternative, it is the dream-like houses of the company prove irresistible, evocative as they are of the "heteropatriarchal dream of domestic bliss" (Martínez-Vergne 2005: xiii; Reyes-Santos 2015: 88). This, then, is the story of the protagonist's proletarianization, allegorising the region's rapid insertion into the world market. While Daniel's tale is set during a slightly later stage - after the depression of the sugar prices on the market - he meets characters who remember, and testify to, the transformation of farmers into "braceros [day labourers]" (84), as well as the promise of sugar wealth at a time "when money ran down the streets" (33), when people left everything behind to "enter into this vortex" (84) (presumably referring to the years of the first World War, when sugar prices shot up, culminating in the "danza de los millones" of 1920). The complete subjugation to value relations is symbolically and literally rendered explicit in the general absence of names, as everyone and everything, villages and people, are numbered to "save" [literally translated: "shorten/condense"] time (31). From his entry into the service of the sugar company, his labour-power is insured - monetarized - by a company oversees; Daniel is transformed into a commodity, only to be expelled at the end of the novel as waste.

While it is true that as Sommer notes, the plot is structured by the rhythms of sugar, there is something else at work; it is a more invisible force that has re-organized ecology and thus enabled the emergence of sugar as a commodity produced on a large scale. This is, of course, what is in the novel referred to as the practice of *over*. As the narrator notes:

> "The *over* [in English in the original] swallowed your life [...] everything that is yours - conscience [or consciousness], body, heart - belonged to the monster that smother men in the agony of over [or more]" (210).

The over here emerges as a vampiric force, taking over his body, his affective life, and his conscience - or perhaps, more disturbingly, his consciousness (the Spanish term "conciencia" can refer to either). This monstrous description is much more disturbing than the narrator's attempts to explain "over" as a sort of surplus profit extracted through corruption, made possible by the monopolization of food, necessities and healthcare; indeed, a monopoly that allows for a whole "network of distinct forms of robbery, deceit, and illegal and racketeer administration" (Pimentel 1986: 189, my translation). The description of the reign of "over"

as seen in the passage above goes beyond corruption, pointing towards the "monstrosity" of the imposition of value relations under the conditions of peripheral and dependent capitalism. This "over" feeds on both the *exploitation* of value-producing human labour-power and the *appropriation* of fertile soils.[xvi] The domination of "over" thus turns into the "reign of the absurd and the alienation of human sensibility and will" (Pimentel 1986: 19/4).

In the novel, a monstrous irrealism, which includes images of cannibalism, zombi-ism and death-in-life, most frequently emerges in relation to the exploitation of commodified labour-power (value).[xvii] The representation of the workers suggests that "over" (or surplus value) is produced by the labourers themselves, whose time, being, and life-force is exploited. They are thus cannibalized: "The monster swallows more men every day [...] their blood runs down the channels: it is gold, it is profit, it is over! [...] and of the men if your land there only remains bagasse" (223). This image of implied cannibalism linked to the extraction of gold has easily traceable roots in the conquest period - a link that the novel makes explicitly in relation to its description of systemic racism as well as its observations of the differential treatment of workers. Indeed, while all workers are described as "flesh" that belongs to of the plantation (96), the dehumanising treatment of the Haitian workers, in particular, is reminiscent of times of slavery, as their lives are constantly put at serious risk, like for instance during their transport as "human cargo" to the Dominican Republic and their "herd[ing]" like "cattle" by the company police armed with machetes and guns (80).

Adding to these images of cannibalism/vampirism are those of zombie-ism. The workers are described as an "ill-smelling mob in rags - with a hunger that never leaves them - on the way to the harvest, like a procession of *beings without a soul*" (my emphasis, 95). The descriptions here resemble Haitian tales of the zombie workers on the US sugar companies (such as HASCO), which were popularized in the United States in the late twenties and thirties. Just as across the border in the Dominican Republic, the (often equally Haitian) workers are turned into "*mere bodies,* unthinking and exploitable collections of flesh, blood and muscle tissue" (McNally 2011: 4). As I have argued elsewhere (Oloff 2012), zombie figures are ecological in that they turn on the alienation of the proletarianized workforce from the land they inhabit. As the former small-scale peasants are no longer able to grow their own food, hunger emerges as a constant feature of an integrated world food system, despite the equally constant claims that the industrialization of agriculture will solve food insecurities.[xviii] The eventual emergence of the ever-hungry zombie horde in US cinema is, from this perspective, not surprising.

Given the centrality of fossil fuels in all of this, it is striking that Marrero insistently emphasizes the unevenness of access to their benefits: fossil-fuel powered modernity individualizes some (foreign) imperialists, while transforming the majority (of Dominican, Haitian and West Indian workers) into a stratified mass of commodified labourers. Monstrous irrealist imagery thus also revolves around chimneys, locomotives and railways, praised as a sign of "progress" by Galván's contemporaries. The locomotive, which serves the *central* is described as a "monster of iron", as "a beast" that transports the masses of workers, "vomiting" them out again at their destination (82). The machine is fetishistically ascribed agency, subduing both the land that trembles and the workers who are transformed into the machine's excretions. Automobiles, on the other hand, fulfil a slightly different role: symbolic of fossil-fuelled modernization, they serve to individualize and empower the *central*'s foreign managers - including Mister Baumer, who is described as "a god who dominates the motor" (30).[xix] Automobiles are not accessible to Haitian or West Indian workers, and only barely to the Dominican protagonist (who incurs debts because of having to use them to visit his wife in hospital). Throughout, they are linked to images of implied violence to land and people, as encapsulated in the image of the car carrying Daniel to his future job down a lane that is like a "scar on the stomach of the cane fields" (30).

Further, Marrero implicitly reflects on how this affects narrative form. As the narrator is transported to his bodega in the back of a car like a commodity, he daydreams as follows: "The hunger and the monotonous snoring of the machine make me fall asleep, and what I know of the big company passes through my mind like a motion film [cinta cinematográfica]" (28). Hunger and the noises of car are here firmly tied together through the syntax, providing the context for the reflection. Indeed, film is of course itself a product of fossil-fuelled modernity: film stock (made of oil) would not exist without it. The mention of film does thus not seem coincidental - indeed, the local cinema is mentioned early on in the novel, just after he overhears talk of sugar prices in the park. In terms of local history, it is noteworthy that film (often imported) was "not initially seen as an art for the people; quite the contrary, it was quickly claimed by the upper crust" (Derby 2009: 32). This elite status raised interesting questions in relation to cinematic style: indeed, a local romantic feature film made in 1923 was criticized for being too "realist" in its inclusion of the working classes, rather than focusing on ""true beauty"' (quoted in Derby 2009: 33). Is his work - a work of "harsh realism" (Alcántara 1984: 56) - perhaps also too realist, then, too? And how is the narrator positioned in relation to the many anonymous subjects of his novel? Yet, cinematic realism itself is of course an illusion, produced by a trick of the eye and the fast moving the reel

[cinta]; "cinema's realism is its magic, and its magic is its realism" (Marcus 2010: 196). The question of style in relation to film is thus complex and problematizes the very nature of the "real." To be sure, *Over* does not offer a head-on engagement with these questions, but its realist textual politics are more complex than some critics have allowed for.

Fukú Americanus, Triffids and 'Dreamshit'

If questions of representation, form and style are more complex in the *novela de la caña* than sometimes acknowledged, in Díaz's novel they are at the very forefront and explicitly addressed throughout. Further, the role of sugar and its relation to genre and style is central. Oscar's life is shaped by his own, and his family's, relations to sugar, something emphasized by the role cane fields play in the novel, as well as by Oscar's physical proportions. The appearances of the saccharine monstrous arguably invite us to read both the characters' lives and the novel's irrealist aesthetics within the broader framework of the capitalist world-ecology and changing food regimes.

The saccharine monstrous emerges most obviously during scenes when Beli and Oscar are beaten up in the cane fields, becoming victims of the profoundly patriarchal and militarized political ecology of sugar. None of Oscar's Dominican family is directly connected to sugar production, and it is this indirect relation that heightens the irrealism of the scenes. In a scene that takes place in 1961 (on the day of Trujillo's assassination), the cane stalks acquire a monstrous autonomy and seek to prevent Beli from escaping, "slash[ing] at her palms, jabb[ing] into her flanks and claw[ing] her thighs" (150) (a sexualized image that signposts the cane fields as the historic site of sexual violence and rape).[xx] The violence is echoed in the scene of Oscar's death in the cane fields, taking place over three decades later, as the stalks are heard "clack-clack-clacking against each other like triffids" (320), in a reference to the post-apocalyptic Cold War novel, *The Day of the Triffids* (1951), by John Wyndham. The aggressive and zombie-esque triffids - which in Wyndham's text are the result of Russian science experiments and potentially profitable as a source of edible oil - are the paranoid Cold War product of anxieties around food in the context of an increasing industrialization of agriculture.

The saccharine monstrous also manifests itself at the locus of consumption (and destination of Dominican migration) through Oscar's body: "The fat! The miles of stretch marks! The tumescent horribleness of his proportions!" (29). While in *Over*, the overweight body of Mr Robinson was presented as symbolic of monopolist hoarding, Oscar's body is

invested with different meaning in a context where the lack of access to a healthy diet is compensated by a reliance on an addictive, cheap, sugar-laced diet consumed in an urbanized setting. In Yunior's narrativization, Oscar is relentlessly referred to as an "overweight frea[k]" (15), a "cake-eater", a "gordo asceroso" [fat disgusting person] (17), and his "monstro-ness" is emphasized (176). Of course, the "monstrous" here arises partly from Yunior's (hetero-) normalising narrative, into which Oscar can only "fit" once he has slimmed down and lost his virginity. Yet, there is something else at work here too: while Yunior tends to blame Oscar for his lack of motivation, the novel overall takes care to situate Oscar's body within a context marked by class, race, gender, and structural as well as physical violence (his mother is an immigrant single parent working several jobs, while his sister is doing the domestic labour in the home). Further, this is clearly situated by Díaz within a world food system in which American "Dunkin' Donuts," full of processed sugar, and "mind-boggling poverty" are part of the same logic and can exist side by side (277).

It is, then, through evocations of the saccharine monstrous that the novel develops a complex understanding of the role of food, and more broadly, capitalist world-ecology, structured around the axes of racism and sexism, and shaped by the histories of colonialism and imperialism. Most importantly, it engages with the various cultural imaginaries that register the disavowed processes of the capitalist world-ecology - hence the novel's insistent engagement with the foundational romance, the genre of sci-fi, fantasy, comic books and saccharine monstrous irrealism. Through Oscar, ingesting food (of the Dunkin' Donut rather than the organic kind) is metaphorically linked to uncritical consumption of genre literature (16-7). In interviews, Diaz has consistently highlighted the fact that sci-fi, fantasy and other genre and monstrous narratives are the product of a world-order marked by colonialism, white supremacy and patriarchy:

> alien invasions, natives, slavery, colonies, genocide, racial system, savages, technological superiority, forerunner races and the ruins they leave behind, travel between worlds, breeding programs, superpowered whites, mechanized regimes that work humans to death, human/alien hybrids, lost worlds—all have their roots in the traumas of colonialism. (2015: 101).

These narratives, then, are an integral part of the capitalist world-ecology, often participating in naturalizing its ideologies. However, as Diaz's novel amply demonstrates, in their style and form, they also carry subversive potential. Indeed, that it is a combined and uneven

modernity that gives rise to these is explicitly thematized in the novel, including in the following description of the cane fields in the sixties: "the urban dropped off, as precipitous as a beat, one second you were deep in the twentieth century (well, the twentieth century of the Third World) and the next you'd find yourself plunged 180 years into rolling fields of cane. The transition between these states was some real-time machine-type shit" (146). The uneven development of the landscape gives rise to the subjective experienced of temporal dislocations, a sci-fi-esque irrealism - a style not unrelated, then, to marvellous realism.

Further, the novel links the consumption of food to that of women: Oscar's bullies draw on these long-standing metaphorical connections, accusing Oscar of not being able to "eat toto" (180). Yet, while Oscar may indeed to a certain extent be unable to fully participate in the patriarchal order due to his outsider status, he has certainly imbibed patriarchal narratives of courtship as well as having assimilated the hetero-patriarchal power relations on which they are based - even if perhaps to a lesser extent than Yunior. Indeed, Yunior is actively engaged in shaping the narrative's rather abrupt ending in part three in accordance with heteronormative formal conventions: "Oscar's final transformation from virgin to Dominican man is part of the foundational logic driving the novel, a consolidating impulse that aligns it with the nationalist novels of Sommer's study" (Machado 2011: 526). The diasporic Oscar is shoehorned into the formal logic that arose in conjunction with sugar-powered modernization in the Dominican Republic. Yet, unlike in *Over*, a *romance manqué* that continues to embrace the form's underlying patriarchal logic, the narrator's (and other characters') ideological contradictions are continually highlighted in the novel. From Oscar's sexist statements about girls to Yunior's claims of being reformed despite seeing several women at the same time, the novel overall makes it abundantly clear that they are not always able to extricate themselves from what they partially recognize as "dreamshit" (87).

Despite the novel's often quite flamboyant self-awareness, a recent critical approach claims that *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* feeds "into an appetite for stories that feature a quintessential Latin American dictator, an irrational, passion-driven strongman and his violent and sexual excesses" (Horn: 127). While Maja Horn offers an important analysis of cultural narratives of "tropicalization" in relation to the *trujillato*, her reading of Díaz's text is arguably off the mark. She bases her assessment in part on the exoticising reception of the novel by US critics as voiced in newspapers and blurbs - on its consumption and consecration in the marketplace, in other words. Yet, what this reading fails to acknowledge is the specificity of the work of art as opposed to other narrative forms. Díaz, not unlike other critically aware writers who are "consumed" globally, finds "a way of registering [his] own

sociological positio[n]" through his deliberate exaggeration of the tropicalization, as well as through its various formal and stylistic excesses; it thus manages to re-politicize "metropolitan expectations of cultural otherness" (Mukherjee 2010: 8). Indeed, the novel self-consciously highlights the fact that the trope of the hyper-sexed Caribbean dictator is "one of those easy stories" (244).

Further, one might say that the figure of Yunior stages in exaggerated form the uneasy position of the tropicalized writer in the marketplace. Yunior, as has been pointed out by several critics, perpetuates many of the problematic gender norms enshrined in national and diasporic identities that the *trujillato* helped to reinforce (as Horn demonstrates). Yet, Yunior also sets out to critique persistent narrative paradigms that isolate Trujillo from the larger world-historical context. In relation to the family history offered by the Leons, he notes in a footnote: "there are other beginnings certainly, better ones, to be sure - if you ask me I would have started when the Spaniards "discovered" the New World - or when the US invaded Santo Domingo in 1916 - but if this the opening that the Leons chose for themselves, then who am I to question their historiography?" (211 footnote). Of course, the reader cannot fail to notice that the narrator's arrangement of the text does precisely that, since the novel overall begins with his reflections on the *fukú americanus*, which "came first from Africa, carried in the screams of the enslaved", transforming Hispaniola into its "Kilometer Zero, its port of entry" (1; 2). The trope of the fukú highlights the centrality of the Americas, the trans-Atlantic slave trade, and the process of primitive accumulation to the global world order that arose out of the destruction of previous life-worlds.[xxi] It also immediately sets up the connection to the *trujillato*; as Yunior puts it, Trujillo was either "the Curse's servant or its master, its agent or its principal" (2-3), "making ill monopolies out of every slice of the national patrimony" (2). Or, as one historian phrases it in a less imaginative register, he was "the personification of the accumulation of capital" (Cassá 1994: 261). The history of Trujillo's ascent to power, emerging out of the ranks of the US military, was profoundly interrelated with the story of sugar, something again highlighted by Yunior in his description of Trujillo as "act[ing] like it [the country] was his own plantation" (225). While the sugar industry had initially constituted a challenge to Trujillo's absolute power over the economy, the relations between the dictator and the US dominated sugar industry were of mutual support, as he had much to gain from the sugar industry. Thus, his economic policies, far from steering towards lessening the mono-cultural dependence on sugar, intensified it (Hall 2000: 19). When Trujillo eventually began to extend his economic control to the sugar industry starting the late 1940s, this did not lessen the political support of the US, who saw

him as an ally in the fight against Communism. Sugar tariffs thus became a political bargaining tool of the Cold War.

It is in this context that we must read the cultural references to a long list of sci-fi, comic and genre texts produced during the Cold War. The episode "It's a good life" of *The Twilight Zone* (first aired in 1961), for instance, is referenced in relation to the description of the *trujillato*. Evoked to characterize the regime of Trujillo and its tight grip over the population, it raises questions about the type of apocalyptic scenarios and imaginative worlds produced in a Cold War context from a US perspective. In the episode, a six year-old boy isolates a small town called Peaksville from the surrounding world (making the latter disappear). He forces all inhabitants to acquiesce to his power by threatening to transform them into zombified creatures or jack-in-the-boxes, or by wishing them away into a cornfield. In Peaksville, cars - the hallmark of Fordist America - no longer work and the TV receives no outside signals. Once cut off, the village is beginning to run out of basic necessities (soap), luxury goods (whiskey), and the food supply is beginning to look insecure. Thus evocative of anxieties over Communist political power and infiltration, the episode also plays with anxieties about food and resource self-sufficiency as well as, more broadly, petro-modernity (the dramatic post-1945 growth of agriculture was due to fossil fuel inputs in the form of fertilisers and pesticides). As Albritton notes, "in the context of the cold war, self-sufficiency in food was considered a necessity, and at the same time surpluses in the form of food aid were used in some cases as an incentive to identify with the American camp" (58-9); dumping the farming surpluses at low prices had a highly destructive long-term impact on the recipient countries' local food production, creating dependency and thus new markets. Díaz, then, brings out some of the inconsistencies of these Cold War fears: the cultural references most capable of conveying the brutalities of the *trujillato* are home-grown in the US, who has long used food as a political tool. They register in displaced form its own destructive policies towards the periphery - from the dumping of surpluses as "food aid" to the propping up of dictators. The fantasy of "isolation" - also entertained by Abelard in his rumoured exposé (246) - is thus exposed as illusory and a product of Cold War politics.

Throughout the telling of the family's history, then, Díaz continually emphasizes the world-historical character of their plight, shaped both by the *longue durée* of capitalism and the context of US imperialism and the Cold War. Thus, Abelard's arrest by the Trujillo regime coincides with the atomic bombing of Japan, while his only surviving daughter Beli is referred to as the "Child of the Apocalypse", whose back bears "a world-scar like those of the hibakusha" (236; 251; 257). Further, it is notable that the saccharine monstrous in the cane

field episodes, evocative of course of the legacies of slavery, is also firmly inscribed in the context of US imperialism and the Cold War through its cultural references. The "Man without a Face" appears to both Beli and, decades later, to her son Oscar, as they become victims of violence associated with the political ecology of sugar. As Garland notes, the faceless man is associated both "with the hundreds of years of sugarcane slavery in Dominican history", as well as with the character of the vigilante superhero Rorschach from Alan Moore and Dave Gibbon's DC comic series *Watchmen* (1987) (Garland 2010: 122). Through Rorschach, "a radically right-wing superhero and champion of economic neoliberalism and social conservatism" (ibid, 123), Moore and Gibbon have problematized the superhero genre structured around simplistic cultural Cold War binaries. Grod, another character involved in the beating in the cane fields, stems precisely from these binaries: he recalls Gorilla Grodd, the villain who possesses the mind power of brainwashing and seeks to "infiltrate American society in order to conquer it and the rest of the world, leading an army of gorillas (Marxist guerillas anyone?)" (Wright 2012: 62).[xxii] Again, it is ironically a figure associated with the evils of Communism as represented in US comics that proves most apt to reflect on the persistence of the legacies of US imperialism.

While the novel places much emphasis on continuity and sugar's legacies, there are also pronounced aesthetic differences between the cane field scene in the sixties, and the final scene of Oscar's death in the nineties. Whereas the scene of Beli's kidnapping is close to "magical realism" in style and tone and served to highlight the political ecology of sugar underpinning the *trujillato*, in the description of the latter, this "magic" gives way to an even more intangible phantasmagoria (which is usually explained through references to Yunior's role in shaping the narrative). Indeed, the scene stands out due to its remarkable brevity and a certain hollowness or weightlessness - qualities that might be related to the decline of the sugar economy in the Dominican Republic after 1976, despite the persistence of the long-term legacies of the sugar industry (Gregory 2007: 22).[xxiii] Thus, one might say that while the legacies of US imperialism and the Cold become visible in Yunior's narrative through the engagement with comic book and sci-fi irrealism, the more recent age of the neoliberal food regime, which manifests itself in the "monstrosity" of consumption in an urbanized setting, remains difficult to grasp. It is this cognitive difficulty that is brilliantly highlighted by Díaz through Yunior's somewhat forced attempt to offer a swift narrative and stylistic resolution. The increasing levels of monstrous irrealism register, then, not only the continuing violence of the political ecology of sugar, but also the heightening levels of fetishism masking the growing inequalities in the increasingly de-localized world food system.

To conclude, then, I would like to come back to the question of food in relation to world-literature. Food, and particularly sugar, offers a way into thinking about the way in which cultures of food and capitalist world-ecology are co-constitutive. Food cuts across and destabilizes Cartesian divides between "Nature" and "Culture," enabling us to think of cultural phenomena as environment-making processes. Cultures of food clearly extend beyond eating, but what about the specificity of a work of art in this context? This is where Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* has much to offer. Díaz insistently poses the question of criticality in relation to the position of a given cultural text within the larger horizon of the capitalist world-ecology. Are these cultural texts co-constitutive of dominant ecologies or do they set out to engage critically with them? Can literary texts have a distancing effect and thus enable a denaturalization of, for instance, the cultural ideology of sugar (Niblett 2015: 269)? Some texts - such as *Enriquillo* - aimed to reinforce the dominant ecological regime, while for the twenty-first critical reader, it renders visible the ideology of the time. If these works of art can be successful at holding a mirror to ideologies, it is in part because their "raw" materials - form and style - have sprung from historically specific ecologies.

Lastly, it seems to me that another question that *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* poses is the question of the "time" of world-literature: the novel offers a dual, consistently over-determined, horizon for its reflections on aesthetics - the *longue durée* of capitalism and the context of US imperial intervention in the Dominican Republic. WReC, on the other hand, have proposed the "two-hundred-plus years from the early nineteenth century or even the late eighteenth" as a time frame of world-literature (Deckard 2015: 51). However, if world-literature is literature that registers the capitalist world-system, would the origins of world-literature not need to be extended backwards to the sixteenth century, even if those origins would have to be thought of as uneven and occurring in spurts until reaching full "intensity" in the nineteenth century? While there are literary works from the early modern period that would rather self-evidently fit these categories - from Cervantes's *Don Quixote* (also referred to by WReC) to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* to Montaigne's "On cannibals" - such an optic also points to the need to think more expansively about the notion of literature so that it would be able to accommodate a variety of cultural texts - from the baroque, to accounts of the Spanish conquest from indigenous perspectives, to the appearance of monstrous narratives, many of which are reinvigorated during new rounds of primitive accumulation under neoliberalism.

[i] Email: k.d.oloff@dur.ac.uk
[ii] I would like to express my gratitude to two anonymous reviewers who offered insightful comments and productively engaged with the argument.
[iii] See for instance Carl Plasa, *Slaves to Sweetness: British and Caribbean Literatures of Sugar* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009); Keith A. Sandiford, *The Cultural Politics of Sugar: Caribbean Slavery and Narratives of Colonialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). One must also mention Mimi Sheller's *Consuming the Caribbean* (London: Routledge, 2003), which emphasises the global relations between "the suffering bodies of producers [and] the satiated bodies of consumers" (72), as well as their connection to monstrous imaginaries (including zombies and cannibals).
[iv] One may here note that the *novela de la caña* is a subset of the commodity novel, structured around a single export, which is discussed by Ericka Beckman in her important book, *Capital Fictions* (2013).
[v] As Jason W. Moore writes, capitalism is a world-ecology, "a way of organizing nature" (2015: 2).
[vi] Irrealism, in Michael Löwy's definition, describes "the absence of realism rather than an opposition to it." Further, while concepts of realism and irrealism 'should be considered as "ideal-types" [...] in contradistinction to empirical literary texts, which tend to be an "impure" combination of both realism and irrealism" (2010: 213).
[vii] See Timothy Morton, (2006). *The Poetics of Spice: Romantic Consumerism and the Exotic*. Cambridge University Press.
[viii] As Michael Niblett observes, Wynter implies that fictional registrations of sugar are likely to "demonstrate a structural *tendency* toward incorporating elements of the irreal" (2015: 278).
[ix] Dominican foreign debt was transferred from European to American bankers as a result of the intervention of US marines in 1905 (Ayala 1999: 187).
[x] Further replicating this core-periphery dynamic *within* the Dominican Republic, the *centrales* were based on the separation of the industrial aspects of the labour (milling and processing cane) from the agrarian ones, fulfilled mostly by local producers (Ayala 1999: 21).
[xi] These radical socio-ecological changes - and particularly the loss of forests - were bemoaned in literary texts such as Francisco Eugenio Moscoso Puello's *Cañas y Bueyes* (1936).
[xii] For a detailed analysis of the novel's denunciation of structural racism, which has its roots in the colonial period, see McDonald (1991).
[xiii] As Reyes-Santos explains, the term "*indio* (Indian) and its variations (*indio claro, oscuro,* etc.) were used to indicate the racial mixture of Dominicans" (85), with the aim of differentiating Dominicans from Haitians. See also Néstor E. Rodríguez, *Escrituras de desencuentro en la República Dominicana*. Mexico City: Siglo XXI, 2005.
[xiv] As Baud notes, the system of vouchers and the monopoly of the sugar industry had become symbols of foreign exploitation (1999: 194).
[xv] In 1949, Marrero authored a right-wing hagiography of the dictator. In it, he associates Trujillo with progress and modernization, and blames the massacre of 1937 on the supposedly marauding Haitians, illegally "penetrating" Dominican territory.
[xvi] As Moore writes, "capitalism depends on a repertoire of strategies for *appropriating* the unpaid work/energy of humans and the rest of nature outside the commodity system. [...] Every act of exploitation (of commodified labor-power) therefore depends on an even greater act of appropriation(of unpaid work/energy)." (2015: 54).
[xvii] One here must note that the notable blind spot of the novel is gendered housework - not-value under capitalism - which is presented as part of the naturalized patriarchal order, undermined by the foreign domination.
[xviii] Pedro Mir advances this line of argument in relation the Dominican Republic, writing that the hunger only became a central feature of poverty when the masses no longer had access to communal lands and *conucos* (1987: 208-9).
[xix] Indeed, the association of the plantation manager and the car is a common trope of Caribbean literature more generally.
[xx] Symbolically, the date of 1961 (and Beli's subsequent emigration) also signals the beginning of a period of massive emigration (of which Oscar is the symbolic child). While political oppression played a very significant role in mass emigration, this emigration also needs to be read within the context of economic development, and processes of mechanization and deruralization, which created an army of (structurally redundant) surplus labourers who could not be re-absorbed by the system (Hernández 2002). Emigration thus also "provided a pipeline through which the country could systematically eliminate unwanted and unneeded surplus laborers" (ibid 2002, 8).
[xxi] See also José David Saldívar (2011). "Conjectures on "Americanity" and Junot Díaz's "fukú americanus" In *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao.*" *The Global South*. 5: 1. pp. 120-136.

[xxii] His partner, Salomon Grundy, on the other hand, is a DC comics zombie super-villain, who made his first appearance in 1944; as a zombie revenant, he is firmly associated with US imperial expansion into the Caribbean and more specifically, Haiti.

[xxiii] Indeed, by the mid-seventies the Dominican Republic had shifted "from production that was mainly oriented to traditional products (coffee, sugar, tobacco, and cocoa) to production oriented to the development of free-trade zones (FTZ), tourism, and the cultivation of nontraditional agrarian products" (Hernández 2002: 63).

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