Language, Power and Resistance: Re-Reading Fanon in a Trans-Caribbean Context

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In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon explores the dynamics of language as a practical way to understand the ill effects of colonialism and racism on society. This text also represents Fanon's most serious attempt to understand the Caribbean psyche in relation to a wider community suffering from a common colonial pathology. This article draws attention to the somewhat neglected discussion of the role of language in colonial dynamics, which, when addressed in the literature, is often narrowly focused in the philosophical or political realms. Much like the larger Caribbean context Fanon came from and knew, the idea of language has faded to the background in favor of foregrounding more "concrete" or "pressing" examples of colonial dominance. That is, language is perceived as only one of many symptoms of a larger colonial pathology, and not as a primary cause of structural oppression. Examined anew, with this alternative perspective on language as the foundation, *Black Skin, White Masks* now reveals a kind of hypocrisy in our approach to Fanon's work. Where some authors have criticized Fanon's ideas and their supposed reliance on violence, these same critics have themselves become complicit with the violence of colonial domination, both mental and physical, when they are ambiguous in their critique of the role of language in the colonial enterprise.

This essay provides a critical and pragmatic examination of our intellectual assumptions and biases about language, domination, and liberation in the context of contemporary transnational realities in the diaspora. I pursue this objective by envisioning language as the site of a power struggle that is not circumscribed by the Caribbean but very much exemplified by it. I argue that contemporary Caribbean writers living outside the region and generally identified as "other than" Caribbean—as if any ethnic or racial identities are final and conclusive—are challenging popular ideas about power, resistance and identity within and beyond their immediate communities. Some accomplish this by subversively declaring an(other) identity as does Haitian-born writer Dany Laferrière in his novel *Je suis un écrivain Japonais* (2005), while others explore the limits of narrative and theoretical discourse and its effects on the Caribbean subject as with Dominican author Junot Diaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2005). Few of these writers are concerned about the risk of following a new and uncharted path and, rather than playing it safe, create challenging new interpretive texts, as does Haitian-born Edwidge Danticat with *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work* (2010); or as Puerto Rican author Rafah Acevedo accomplishes with *Flor de Ciruelo* (*Novela China Tropical*) (2011) where he imagines a mischievous "academic chronicle" of a tropicalized Chinese erotic manuscript found in Puerto Rico. In all of these projects there is a newly emerging aesthetic consciousness with definite textual and thematic traits that can be understood as "Trans-Caribbean poetics."

The four main traits of Trans-Caribbean poetics: the rejection or mockery of Western narrative logo-centrism; the emphasis on the private lives of common characters; an awareness of the authorial role and its implications for those outside the intellectual sphere; and the inclusion of multiple strategies of discursive disruption akin to the reality of fragmentation, create an opportunity to reconsider Fanon's ideas about Caribbean subjects and their quest to reconstruct themselves in the context of the colonial relations of language and power.
Trans-Caribbean authors' literature provides a means for measuring the normative uses of language and cultural discourse in the Caribbean. Rather than viewing literature as an expression or reflection of much of Western culture marked by empty intellectualism and the lack of social commitment, Trans-Caribbean authors reveal and defy the patterns of structural oppression inherent in colonial contexts. In the Trans-Caribbean narratives typical of these writers, language is central in understanding the problematic relations between oppressors and oppressed. In their hands, fiction becomes a means to understand reality.

By following this line of reasoning I am able to review Fanon's ideas regarding the colonizer's use of language as a weapon for violence and oppression, and to connect this to the strategies of disruption used by Trans-Caribbean authors to empower the Caribbean subject and to redefine notions of cultural identity while resisting colonial imperatives. Such an analysis that contrasts the narrative works of Trans-Caribbean authors with the neo-colonial realities of the Caribbean, exemplified through its media and popular culture, provides the best strategy to engage with and reevaluate Fanon's concerns about the role of language in colonial conditions.

As a "Caribbean son" Fanon was acutely aware of the role language in maintaining systemic structures of oppression, violence and exclusion. Not only did he undertake a significant effort to make his readers aware of the socio-historical and psychological circumstances of the colonial subject, he also asserted in Black Skin, White Masks, that language "means above all assuming a culture and bearing the weight of civilization."¹ Fanon further explains that the possession of language implies empowerment as it confirms peoples' cultural adequacy. Later, in The Wretched of the Earth, he explains how language becomes a weapon used by the oppressor to dehumanize the oppressed:

> When the colonist speaks of the colonized he uses zoological terms. Allusion is made to the slithery movements of the yellow race, the odors from the "native" quarters, to the hordes, the stink, the swarming, the seething, and the gesticulations. In his endeavors at description and finding the right word, the colonist refers constancy to the bestiary. The European seldom has a problem with figures of speech.²

Throughout Wretched, his most influential work, Fanon makes a point of asserting the real implications language has for the oppressed and colonized. Paradoxically, and even after Fanon's indictment, the politics of language in the Caribbean are rarely evaluated outside of a purely literary context. Literature was often deployed to deflect attention away from the importance of language in influencing perceptions of cultural identity while it simultaneously served to suppress criticism from those opposed to its restrictive aspects. For many scholars in the Caribbean, language became a matter of form and fiction rather than meaning and truth. Furthermore, the belief that literature is detached from the socioeconomic and political realities of the region was entrenched in educational practices that privileged technical skills over critical knowledge. Ultimately this had, and continues to have, a very detrimental effect, as Caribbean educational systems produced technically proficient graduates who were more interested in supporting the intellectual status quo than they were in attacking its explicit practices of intellectual indoctrination.
Despite these challenges language remains a site of cultural struggle in the Caribbean. Whether it is the legacy of the colonizers, the weapon of the oppressed or neither, language still finds, using Fanon's words: "safe haven in a refuge of smoldering emotions." However, ongoing ideological battles over notions of the foreign and the national serve to deny the transnational movements, interactions and social realities typical and constituent of Trans-Caribbean poetics. When reduced to these dynamics, language becomes a problematic legacy of colonialism. In the Spanish and French colonies, for example, government-sponsored institutions standardized language as a way to facilitate the colonial enterprise. Language academies such as La Real Academia Española de la Lengua and L'Académie Française, imposed new aesthetic standards, enforced through grammars and dictionaries, to which the new colonies were to adjust and be measured against. Language became embedded with notions of purity that denied and rejected the multilingual and multimodal literacies of Caribbean peoples.

This was true even when there were no government-sponsored institutions to speak for Caribbean communities, as in the case of the English colonies. Language was already codified in favor of those in power and in prejudice of those who were not. In "The Tempest," published around 1610, William Shakespeare demonstrates common attitudes towards language as a symbol of power, when Caliban curses Prospero: "You taught me language; and my profit on't is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you. For learning me your language." (I.ii. 363-365). Most scholars agree that the quote exemplifies the problematic relationship between colonizer and colonized, in which language becomes the sign of an imposed aesthetic. One cannot overlook that Caliban is an anagram for cannibal, a term that was forever linked to Caribbean natives through the Cannibal Law. Michael Palencia-Roth explains the law as the legal provision that allowed Spaniards to enslave, transport and arbitrarily sell all natives that posed resistance towards colonial dominance, henceforth identified as cannibals (from Canibales, the Spanish name for the Carib people, a West Indies tribe formerly well known for their practice of cannibalism). The Cannibal Law, like language itself, provided the means by which to classify and oppress the Caribbean people, as language was used to define and be defined by or for others.

The persistence of language as a problematic and often dangerous colonial legacy transcends its use as a metaphor, as can be attested throughout Caribbean history. The most extreme case probably being the "Parsley Massacre" that took place on the Haitian-Dominican border during the dictatorial regimes of François Duvalier and Rafael Leónidas Trujillo. In October 1937 the Dominican Republic's dictator, Rafael Leónidas Trujillo, ordered the killings of all Haitians within Dominican borders after accusing them of thievery. People responded to his call, and over the span of five days, Dominican troops, civilians and local authorities killed people of Haitian or suspected Haitian heritage by whatever means at hand: guns, machetes, clubs and knives. To ascertain nationality/ethnic origin, the victimizers would hold up a sprig of parsley and ask for its name. Those who could not pronounce the Spanish word perejil became immediate targets of the vicious mobs. Many scholars estimate there were approximately 30,000 direct victims of these events.

In 1937 the linguistic differences among the Spanish perejil, the Creole pe'sil and the bastardized Spanish pewhi were enough to define what is considered local and legitimate (perejil) and foreign and illegitimate (pe'sil or pewhi). The consequences were fatal for the Haitians. For the
Dominicans, in contrast, the memory of "The Parsley Massacre" is seen through linguistic practices that still justify the divide between both countries. If we were to see these events in light of Fanon's ideas, we would be able to ascertain the dichotomy between oppressed/colonized and oppressors/colonizers. After all, the details, gravity and range of the killings were belittled and obscured by the Dominican and Haitian governments of the time, both highly authoritarian and dictatorial in nature. What makes this example stand out, however, is how easy it is to reproduce the blueprint of colonial relations within other contexts. As Michelle Wucker asserts in her essay *The River Massacre: The Real and Imagined Borders of Hispamola* it was through the discursive practices, realized through the language test, that Dominicans reassured themselves that "only Haitians were killed" and therefore "that the line was clearly drawn between those who were meant to live and die." Although the Parsley Massacre happened when Fanon was twelve years old, its importance for understanding his later ideas transcends time as it demonstrates how the Caribbean subject replicated and deployed the colonial model to oppress other Caribbean subjects.

Fanon's work emerged at a time when the world's most powerful nations refused to see or acknowledge their responsibility for the violent nature of the colonial order. He explained in intricate detail how the colonial model worked from a social, political and economic standpoint, as well as how the people affected by its forces reacted. But, even though the world has changed significantly since the publication of *The Wretched of the Earth's* critique of colonialism and imperialism, and few in positions of power would admit to colonial or imperial agendas, practices of cultural exclusion replicating colonial structures of oppression remain in place, hidden under a veneer of legality and political correctness. It is precisely because the world has changed that it remains essential to understand the new colonial dynamics as expressed through language and literature. Hence, overlooking the formal, thematic and discursive aspects of language and literature implicates us in the institutional practices of cultural disenfranchisement associated with the new colonial order.

The Trans-Caribbean is defined by its people rather than by geographical or national boundaries. It is a response by Caribbean authors who seek to define practices of colonialism embedded in different political realities. Trans-Caribbean authors reveal how the unacknowledged longing for narratives of purity, consolation and national cohesion help manage a dual discourse of Caribbean identity that simultaneously asserts cultural and linguistic diversity while blaming "the foreign other" if such diversity can't be achieved.

Decades after the dictatorial regime of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, the power structure he replicated can be identified by those who were victimized by it. In the introduction to her memoir, Bélgica Adela "Dedé" Mirabal, the sole survivor of the Mirabal Sisters explains how: "after his death, Trujillo was kept alive by many of his followers, during the long years of corruption and democratic dictatorship that followed, and in the misfortunes that continue to plague our (Dominican) history." In an unrelated interview conducted by the Haitian writer Edwidge Danticat, Junot Díaz, the Dominican author who won the Pulitzer Prize in 2008 for his novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, mentions how "what he [Trujillo wrote about the Haitian community still moves the fucking pueblo."

In Puerto Rico, where I currently reside, there was a long public-service campaign in the mid-
1990s to encourage the correct use of the Spanish language. Under the slogan, *idioma defectuoso, pensamiento defectuoso* (defective language, defective thought), and sponsored by a well-recognized private university, the campaign consisted initially of three television spots of sixty seconds each that reunited some of the most popular Puerto Rican figures of that time, including writers, television and radio personalities, top musicians, bankers and news broadcasters. The spot encouraged the audience to speak Spanish "right and with pride" and ends with the words "*El idioma es la sangre del espíritu*" (language is the blood of the soul). The ad emphasizes the formal and technical aspects of Spanish language and ties it to being a "true" Puerto Rican. The public figures that appear in the spot condemn the use of loan words from English in common conversations, and as such English becomes a threat to "pure" Puerto Rican culture, an idea that disenfranchises the majority of Puerto Ricans on the island and is extrapolated to Puerto Ricans born and raised in the US.

The campaign's architect, Luis López Nieves, has further confirmed this idea on several occasions. López Nieves, a popular Puerto Rican writer in his own right and a professor of Spanish, is adamant when defining linguistic practices as a key constituent of cultural identity:

*Déjame aclararte algo que no sé cuan claro esté. Los puertorriqueños (y demás hispanos) que han emigrado a EE. UU. Son 'minorías' en ese país. Pero nosotros los puertorriqueños de la isla, no somos emigrantes ni minoría. Somos una colonia intervenida militarmente, y aquí somos mayoría.*

[Let me make something clear. Puerto Ricans (and other Hispanics) that have migrated to the US are "minorities" in that country. But us, Puerto Ricans in the island, we are not immigrants or minorities. We are a military occupied colony and here we are the majority.]

López Nieves then proceeds to categorize Puerto Ricans in the US, claiming that there are two types: those who get out of the ghetto and those who remain there: "Puerto Ricans who get out of the ghetto lose their Puerto Rican-ness by assimilating to American culture, while those who stay (in the ghetto) only want out." Later on, he adds that Spanglish Literature is an abomination that glorifies poverty and the ghetto, both of which need to be eradicated from the face of the earth. Despite these comments, López Nieves reluctantly acknowledges that most Puerto Ricans in the island practice code-switching and use loan words:

*Me preguntan sobre el status del español en Puerto Rico. El español en nuestro país está sólido. Yo lo que creo es que hay mucho chango, mucho estúpido, que piensa que hablar salpicando la conversación con palabras en inglés lo hace ver más culto o inteligente, cuando realmente lo que se percibe es que son más ignorantes [...] Quién los mezcla, sin saber que idioma está hablando, demuestra que no conoce bien ninguno de los dos idiomas, y tiene defecto mental. Es un gago intelectual.*

[People ask me about the status of the Spanish language in Puerto Rico. Spanish is a sound language in our country. What I think is that there are many lazy, stupid people who think that using English words in their conversation would make them appear more educated or intelligent, when in reality they appear more ignorant [...] whoever code-switches without knowing which
language he or she speaks, shows that he or she does not know well neither and proves mental incapacity. [The code-switcher] is an intellectual stutterer.] 14

Research has shown that López Nieves's attitude towards code-switching and the inability to speak Spanish is common among islanders

...who strongly feel that if one loses the Spanish language then one loses the culture and is no longer a Puerto Rican, but something else that bears a negative connotation—a Nuyorican; in these instances whether one comes or not from New York is irrelevant. 15

Similar research has demonstrated that code-switching has its own syntax and grammar, 16 is not limited to a particular socio-economical context 17 and that code-switchers have the ability to switch situationally with ease. 18 Furthermore, if we consider that for the first time there were fewer Puerto Ricans living on the island (3.8 million) than in the continental US (4.6 million), 19 the negative connotations exemplified through López Nieves's comments become dangerous as they culturally disenfranchise the majority of the Puerto Rican community as a result of his ideas on linguistic purity.

Behavior towards cultural disenfranchisement attached to language crosses the national thresholds of the Caribbean. For a long time at the University of Illinois, where I studied, there were two different Puerto Rican students' organizations. The main difference between the two? One was composed of Puerto Rican Spanish speakers from the island, while members in the other organization were mostly English speakers born or raised in the US. The Spanish speaking group had an "international group status" that granted their members access to activities that the "domestic status group" rarely, if ever, were invited to within a larger community of international students. Likewise, the English speaking group with "domestic status" had more alliances with organizations concerned with social activism on campus, issues that were deemed "foreign" among the Spanish-speaking group.

López Nieves uses Spanish to define Puerto Ricans against their "foreign other" (the United States) and to urge that they resist colonial domination by the giant to the north. In doing so, he essentializes Puerto Rican culture and replicates and deploys mechanisms of hegemonic power and control inherited from the Spanish colonial government. What I call attention to, however, is how the practices he so strongly condemns, which emerge when two or more languages interact (a phenomenon linguists identify as "language contact") are all common linguistic practices in the Caribbean and essential to this region's development.

This leads us to another important and parallel discussion. Many linguists, especially those who work with Creole languages, are debating whether the term "contact languages" is, in fact, racist as it asserts the lexical, syntactical and historical ties between languages used by entire speech communities and their former colonizers. The shadow of authenticity predates every discussion related to language practices in the Caribbean. This means that identity and power may become embedded within different linguistic practices characteristic of a specific community, to the detriment of a larger, perhaps the majority, community of individuals who then become
disenfranchised because their multicultural literacies and realities are not framed within recognized linguistic forms.

Maryse Condé questions a similar ideological approach in a provocative essay published in 1998, entitled "Créolité without the Creole Language?" In it she questions and denounces the Martinican school of Créolité whose writers, she feels, attempted to overturn the linguistic dominance of colonial powers but succeeded, instead, in essentializing and reducing Creole to a single national Caribbean identity. Condé proposes, as an alternative, to understand Creole identity as a de-centering strategy and historical reality that accounts for the cultural and national contributions of Caribbean subjects that speak, write and interact in languages other than the normative ones in their country of precedence.

Against a discourse that seems so intent on defining and claiming an identity through language, Trans-Caribbean poetics use narrative to make readers aware of the limits of language as well as the continuous processes of linguistic and cultural negotiation in the Caribbean. To disrupt language normativity Trans-Caribbean authors use code-switching, translation and literary gaps in their texts, and approach them from a practical and thematic standpoint.

In "My English," one of the essays included in Julia Alvarez's collection Something to Declare, a young Julia explains how English became the favored language whenever her parents didn't want her or her sisters to know something:

> Besides all these versions of Spanish, every once in a while another strange tongue emerged from my papi's mouth or my mami's lips. What I first recognized was not a language, but a tone of voice, serious, urgent, something important and top secret being said [...] From the beginning English was the sound of worry and secrets, the sound of being left out.

Instead of representing English as a "foreign" language, Alvarez asserts the communicative function of language, the urgency of the overall message and how both her parents use it as a code. In this sense English becomes a strategic codeswitching that emphasizes the skills of its users. English becomes a harder version of Spanish rather than its ideological or cultural opposite.

As in The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao, Junot Diaz alternates among a number of non-standard speech practices, such as "Ebonics, Spanglish, A-prefixing, New York Variety, Nerdboy talk, Latin and Dominican Campuno" As such, in Trans-Caribbean poetics, code-switching also refers to formal and informal registers, regions, countries, mediating genres and references such as footnotes. As Yunior, the main character in the story reminds us: "It sounds like the most unlikely load jiringonza on this side of La Sierra Madre. But one man’s jiringonza is another man's life."
Trans-Caribbean authors use translation to show the limits of language, as well as to confront the function of language with its formal aspects. In translation theory, linguistic translation and cultural translation correspond to two different ideals: fidelity and fluency. Fidelity refers to the accuracy to convey the meaning of the source text in the translation, while fluency refers to how the translated text answers to its socio-cultural context. Although these two ideals need not be mutually exclusive, one is often chosen over the other.

In Caribbean discourse there is a tendency to choose fidelity over fluency, and history over creation. Even St. Lucian poet Derek Walcott's 1992 Nobel speech refers to the fragments of an epic memory, a vase broken and reassembled by love. Fanon seems to refer to this when he writes about myths and epics of national liberation that rely on a central figure, the so-called "leader." In this context, and whether that figure wins or loses that struggle, there are but two options: a dignified death or a much-deserved victory. Since most of the official epics, myths and histories in the Caribbean were created by the colonizer/oppressor, it doesn't matter discursively which one of the endings the colonized experience, because they will always remain immersed in the oppressor's structure or way of doing things.

The title of Edwidge Danticat's book, *The Dew Breaker* (Knopf, 2004), is the English translation of the Creole expression *chouket laroze*, a term that refers to the paramilitary torture and death squads that emerged during the Duvaïers' dictatorial regimes. In an interview on the book, Danticat explained how she used the most serene sounding translation possible, demonstrating fidelity to the original Creole expression. She also took into account how the words "dew breaker" echoed the American expression "ball breaker," demonstrating fluency to her audience. For her, translation becomes a way to demonstrate the cultural negotiation process within a social, linguistic and cultural continuum, which in turn alleviates the hegemonic discursive implications embedded in any particular language.

The inclusion of gaps, or blacked-out text, is another device used by Trans-Caribbean authors that helps to transition from linguistic to visual disruptions in Caribbean cultural discourse. Popularly interpreted as the mark of what was or is still lost, gaps are also used by Trans-Caribbean authors to represent new spaces of creation. Caps are empowering when they emerge from the conscious decision of characters and authors to keep and build silences within their stories. For example, in *The Time of the Butterflies*, Julia Alvarez articulates her own interpretation of the Mirabal sisters' story. She portrays the individual and private lives of the four Mirabal sisters, through journals, fictional but possible historical documents, letters and the like. The idea is that there are multiple texts accounting for different versions of the same story.

In Maria Teresa Mirabal's version of the story, represented artistically through her personal journal, the gaps and silences increase as she becomes more involved in the struggle against Trujillo's dictatorship. The reader confronts these interruptions of the story in strides, as the text marks, in brackets, when there are pages missing or torn out. Sometimes Maria Teresa withholds the end of a sentence or ends with a question that is never answered. At one point in the story, Maria Teresa is jailed for her political activism. When she is in jail, the Organization of American States starts an investigation into human rights abuses by the Trujillo government. The reader is allowed a glimpse into the written testimony Maria Teresa gives to the organization, unbeknownst to the regime:
That's when Bug Eye slammed him with a fist, knocking him down. How dare scum dictate terms to the captain! Then all of them joined in kicking [REDACTED] until he was writhing in agony on the floor [...] Then Johnny asked me if I couldn't persuade [REDACTED]. After all, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] had all reconsidered.28

What is surprising about this example is that, by deliberately erasing names in her written testimony, Maria Teresa is actually subverting the traditional story of dictatorship. She is not being censored but exerts her right to remain silent. Not only is she controlling the tourist/colonial/ oppressive gaze, she is simultaneously encouraging alternative and creative interpretations of her experiences of dictatorship and oppression.

By including blank spaces or withholding information, Trans-Caribbean authors assert their right to represent themselves. This is a very graphic and assertive tactic that is nevertheless ignored in literary analysis, attributable, perhaps, to a form of resistance to these transgressive texts by Caribbean scholars. It is also important to note that Maria Teresa's silences, as evident in the excerpts, are very visual in the text as if to remind the reader that, in our search for what is lost, we scholars often ignore what is actually there. Other graphic means of disruption include font changes, textual images or the inclusion of images that challenge the visual practices of consumption in the Caribbean.

The use of this last strategy is very much present in contemporary Caribbean discourses on controlling language and identity. If we were to read the script for Luis López Nieves's public service campaign "Defective Language, Defective Thought," we will find some rather curious instructions. The instructions ask participants to read the script according to their gender (cada uno leerá su parlamento de acuerdo a su género: masculino o femenino) and to place physical emphasis on their negative or positive remarks to language usage. Likewise, the script describes the ad as "successive identical shots from the waist up of the participants," who are instructed to say a few words in a quick dynamic manner. Thus, form becomes essential to conveying a message of identity, as everyone's role is clearly defined and standardized, while their responses are controlled and managed. The identical shots are a visual reminder of these ideas and the instructions to the participants.

We can also point to the use of a thematic approach to visual strategies of disruption. One of the stories included in Edwidge Danticat's book *Krik? Krak!* (Soho Press, 1995), entitled "Seeing Things Simply," suggests a relationship among Caribbean individuals based on internal and damaging patterns of visual consumption through the main character of the story. Princesse, a young Haitian girl who works as a model for Guadeloupean artist Catherine. The story explains how both women make private concessions and become part of a fetishized landscape to gain access and a voice in a civilized world: Princesse dares to model naked so that Catherine's paintings reach French galleries. Catherine secretly uses the large clunky boots of the artist she lived with in France to feel like an artist for a while. Catherine's interaction with Princesse follows a similar pattern: she hopes one day to "get Princesse to roam naked on the beach attempting to make love to the crest of an ocean wave," while Princesse dreams of becoming an artist like Catherine29
However, something changes when both women interact with each other. Catherine suddenly goes, without notice, to see the grave of a French artist, somehow marking "the death of the author," and on her return decides to give Princesse a small painting of herself. This small gesture grants Princesse the right to own the way she is represented. Princesse, in turn, discovers that what she wants is to leave something behind after she is gone, something unique to her. To do so. Princesse learns to see and create beyond restrictive patterns (forms) of consumption, drawing in the dust and "leaving the blank faces in the dirt for the next curious voyeur to add a stroke to." The story explains the anxiety of authorship Caribbean subjects have and how they allay those anxieties by not following the colonizer's model. The story also asks its readers to consider the damaging patterns of visual and cultural consumption. Danticat, much like Fanon, encourages us to change the dynamics of power. Even if we start with the colonist model we can change its form and make it our own.

When understood as a critical practice, Trans-Caribbean poetics provide a way to contextualize Fanon's concerns with language as a weapon for violence and oppression within a Caribbean space that has been defined for and by its inhabitants, rather than by geographical, racial, or national boundaries. Because Trans-Caribbean authors have developed a way to address both form and discourse, they are able to transcend the traditional or normative uses of each of these categories. In a Fanonian sense, they have developed a model that allows for the study of the many cultural and linguistic influences that inform and shape Caribbean discourse, which proves useful in analyzing other transnational expressions of oppression.

Endnotes
3. Ibid., 151.
7. The Mirabal Sisters: Bélgica Adela "Dedé" Mirabai, Patria Mercedes Mirabai, Maria Argentina Minerva Mirabal, and Antonia Maria Teresa Mirabal were four political dissidents who opposed the dictatorship of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo. The last three sisters were assassinated because of their political activism, and their deaths are considered to be a key in the deposing of Trujillo.
11. Ibid. My translation.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
17. Perez Casas, Marisol, "Codeswitching and Identity among Island Puerto Rican Bilinguals" (Doctoral Dissertation, Georgetown University, 2008).
22. The word *campuno* refers to the rural-urban *campesino* migrant.
23. *Jiringonza* or *jerigonza* (probably derived from the word gibberish or jargon) is a language game in which children add a "p" after each vowel of a word and repeat the vowel. The word *dedos* (fingers) changes to *depedopos.* In other versions of the game people use "chi," or "cuchi," etc. It works as a language code and as a form of entertainment.
danticat.
30. Ibid., 141.
31. "Jiringonza or jerigonza (probably derived from the word gibberish or jargon) is a language game in which children add a "p" after each vowel of a word and repeat the vowel. The word "dedos" (fingers) changes to "depedopos." In other versions of the game people use "chi," or "cuchi," etc. It works as a language code and as a form of entertainment.
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