PLURIVERS

Plurivers #1 — Décoloniser le changement climatique

# Plotting Survival (to live in the hurricane's path)

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*I am a grandchild and scholar of the Caribbean. Born in Bristol (UK), I have known Dominica, an Eastern Caribbean island of some 63,000 people, for a lifetime and have undertaken research there for a decade. Trained in Anthropology (to research human worlds), my work centers small manifestations of big public questions that echo across the Atlantic. My PhD work tracked my grandfather's return path to Dominica where I researched Caribbean fatherhood. Later, I examined the hauntings of slavery in Bristol, a historic city of slavers, shipping, and merchants. I now work at the University of Bristol, first funded by two of the city's wealthy merchant families, Wills and Frys, who processed "New World" tobacco and cocoa. Migrating to Britain in the 1950s, my grandfather became a security guard at Frys Chocolate factory, whilst my grandmother briefly worked at Wills Imperial Tobacco. I descend from this Black Atlantic traffic in commodities and those who produced them. My research shifted again when Tropical Storm Erika (2015) and Hurricane Maria (2017) traveled over that same Atlantic, visiting devastation on Dominica. Post-Maria, the government vowed to create "the first climate resilient nation on earth," attracting international support to "climate proof" infrastructure, housing, tourism facilities, and disaster response systems. In 2019, I co-established Surviving Storms (2019–23, https://survivingstorms .com), a research project aiming to map how people had survived these and earlier storms (such as David in 1979 and others during the colonial period). We asked what hurricane survival and repair might mean for Dominican residents. A collaborative commitment to undertake research with local colleagues, students, and organizations sits at the heart of this work.*

1 * This article is an early version of the introduction to my forthcoming monograph, provisionally titled *Plotting Survival: To Live in the Hurricane's Path*.

2 Find the storm's swirling core, and understand

3 — Derek Walcott[1]

4 This essay attempts to understand how residents of the Eastern Caribbean island of Waitikubuli,[2] otherwise known as Dominica, who inhabit an animate, 751-km$^3$ landmass of high volcanic mountains, dense rainforests, rushing rivers, and unstable soils contend with cyclones that have the power to spin their worlds into disarray. Storms that bring pain and loss. That bring regrowth and new beginnings. These vast meteorological phenomena, with an average diameter of 500km, bring heavy rains, flash floods, high seas, and winds as fast as 265km per hour.

[1]Derek Walcott, "The Hurricane," in *In a Green Night: Poems, 1948–1960* (London: Cape, 1969). Cited in Sharae Deckard, "The Political Ecology of Storms in Caribbean Literature," in *The Caribbean: Aesthetics, World-Ecology, Politics*, ed. Chris Campbell and Michael Niblett (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2016), 25–45, at 25.

[2]In the Kalinago language, the noun *Waitikubuli* means "tall is her body." This is how the island's Indigenous people knew their home when in 1493 Columbus named it for the Sunday ("Domingo") on which he happened to sail past her. (Domingo would become "Dominique" to her French, then "Dominica" to her English, colonizers.)

[3]Though a video of this interview is in the public domain, I have intentionally anonymized all parties to protect the parents' identities here and limit the sense of returning to their trauma long after the 2021 video was released.

5 Collective lessons from the Surviving Storms research project have prompted me to consider how Dominica's Afro-creole and Kalinago communities have devised patterns of survival in relation to their animate land, sea and sky, which come alive during storm events. I also explore the long processes of repair that unfold in the storms' wake. Dominicans face seasonal storms that are carried nearly 5,000km to the Caribbean by the Atlantic trade winds from Western Africa (lands from which most islanders' ancestors were trafficked). What emerges is an ethic of survival in response to catastrophe that is historically tied to another kind of survival: surviving the catastrophic conditions of the plantation system, brought by Europeans to the Antilles as they moved with those very same trade winds.

6 In what follows I sketch out an ethics and practice of survival using archival examples, ethnographic accounts, and oral histories gathered during the Surviving Storms project. I pull from across the project to introduce *survival plots*, an organizing concept that gives name to a survival praxis that has become visible to me. It refers to the storytelling, everyday patterns of worldmaking, and insurgent acts that make post-hurricane and plantation life livable in the Antilles. *Survival plots* speaks to a place-based, cosmologically grounded, and autonomously Caribbean art of survival. Below, I work through the many meanings of the English noun "plot" (as place, or patch of ground; as story; as secret scheme) and verb "to plot" (to make a place; to storytell; to scheme; to plan) to show how each is animated by Dominican survivals. I begin by offering three plots that demonstrate this polysemy.

## Plot I — Towards Safer Ground

7 On September 18, 2017, Hurricane Maria brought torrents of rain, wind, and surging seas to Dominica. Four years on, a mother and father sit on their front step.[4] The river rushes beneath a bridge next to their bayside home, weaving its way towards the Caribbean Sea. Maria brought pain and loss to this mother and father. That night the river raged, carrying logs and branches from the interior. It covered roads and moved vehicles. Debris accumulated beneath the bridge and, with nowhere to pass, the river breached its banks and entered their home. With their children they ran outside and upstairs, towards safety. But amidst the commotion, two of their children were taken by the floodwaters.

8 Four years later, in 2021, the international news crews and NGOs have long departed from Dominica. A citizen journalist who rose to prominence for her ground-level documentation of post-Maria life visits the mother and father to check on their wellbeing during hurricane season. Asked how she is keeping, the mother replies:

> 9 Today, specifically, is not easy. Because I lost two of them… right here… So, it's kind of difficult. But I'm trying my best not to relive the sad situation over and over, seeing that I'm in the same space. So, we have to move on. We have other children, so we have to move on. One way or the other.

10 Both parents live with physical injuries from trying to rescue their children. The family still lives in the same place. They are returned to the trauma of that night it each time thunder claps, rain rattles their roof, or the river "rolls" (grinding large river stones). "Some of my children doesn't sleep," she tells the journalist, "like we living the same thing over."

11 At the start of the 2021 season, the father cut back thick elephant grass beneath the bridge to reduce the chance of debris accumulating in the river's mouth and flooding their yard. "The river is a dangerous place to be at the moment, so we just need to come out dere," he tells the journalist, aware that September (alongside August) is the most active month of the hurricane season.

[4] An everyday mesolect in the island's complex linguistic intersystem, with its English vocabulary and Afro-Creole syntax, punctuated by francophone *Kweyol* phrases.

12 Ultimately, what they hope for is a safe portion of land where they can live, build, and grow. "We don't need no house," he begins,

> 13 it not to say we don't want a house, you know. But, for me and my family, and how I raise and thing, *a piece of land* for me, and *I build a house* to comfort my family. So, I seeing it! We sit down there together, we decide on how we building our house, and we do our thing, as a family…

14 The father is a construction worker, the mother a full-time parent and craft artist. With no savings to buy land and no stable employment for a mortgage, they hope that the government or someone with land will assist them. However, without guarantee of outside help, they do their best to support each other, strengthen their home, and pray for providence: "we just holding our little end, until Father God do something for us."

15 Listening again to the interview on the journalist's social media channel, I hear the father say something that echoes in my thoughts: "Four years later! Four years later, we here, doing the same…, trying to leave/live. Trying, you know, trying to leave/live." Spoken in Dominican English,[5] both verbs, "live" and "leave," are homonyms—they sound near identical. And in the father's pronouncement, perhaps with intention, words, sounds, and meanings merge. Thus, to *leave* and dwell on safer ground also bears the promise of a more secure life: to *live* though storms to come.

## Plot II — Jenny's Journey

16 In archival materials documenting the Maroon Trials of Dominica (1813—14),[6] there is reference to a woman known only as Jenny, who had been enslaved on the Hillsborough sugar plantation (one of the larger and most brutal English-owned estates, situated midway up Dominica's west coast). Sometime during the 1813 hurricane season, Jenny sustained an injury to her leg. She was issued a pass from the plantation manager and embarked on the eight-mile walk south to receive medical attention in the capital, Roseau.

17 As fate would have it, upon her arrival in town a terrible Hurricane hit Dominica. In fact, two hurricanes made landfall that summer: the "overwhelming hurricane" of July 28, as the governor of the day referred to it, and the "destructive deluge"[7] that came almost a month later, on August 25, a hurricane of torrential rains that "swept through the debris of the previous disaster, bringing down landslides, blocking rivers and causing widespread flooding."[8] The archival records do not state which storm met Jenny in Roseau, but whichever it was, she was caught up in the mêlée that temporarily upended this small plantation society. And here she was led towards a temporary freedom. Jenny stated that in the hurricane's immediate aftermath, unable to receive treatment in town, she began returning north to Hillsborough to have her pass renewed, before swiftly returning to Roseau for medical help. Yet on her way she met a man who offered to take her to the eastern settlement of Castle Bruce (accessed via the mountainous interior) to finally "get her leg cured."[9] However, Jenny claims he led her off into the high *mornes* of Dominica's

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[5] A story gathered as part of the Surviving Storms past workstream, which employed both a Dominican (Kaila-Ann Guiste) and British (Anouk Whiting-Ferrolho) intern to scour each country's national archives and available secondary source materials for historical records of storms and survivals. Jenny's story emerges from Patullo's collation of primary source materials from the Maroon Trials of Dominica (1813—14), held at the British National Archives. Polly Pattullo, *Your Time Is Done Now: The Maroon Trials of Dominica, 1813—1814* (London/Trafalgar: Papillote Press, 2015).

[6] Patullo, *Your Time Is Done Now,* 115.

[7] Lennox Honychurch, *In the Forests of Freedom: The Fighting Maroons of Dominica* (London and Trafalgar: Papillote Press, 2017), 171.

[8] Patullo, *Your Time Is Done Now*, 75—76. Perhaps he possessed knowledge of local "bush" medicine, or the spiritual powers of the *Gardé Zaffé* ("seer of affairs," an obeahman/spiritual worker), with which to heal her leg.

[9] In collaboration with the I Have a Right Foundation (https://ihavearight.org), Dominica Women Farmers' Oral History workstream is part of Surviving Storms and led by Dominican sociologist Cecilia Green (https://survivingstorms.com/tag/farmers/)



Figure 1: Hillsboro Employees c. 1896–97. Unnamed female workers, perhaps relatives/descendants of Jenny, 84 years on. Greg family papers, Cambridge Commonwealth Collection. Y307H/61 https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/PH-Y-00307-H/36 voir l'original

dense central rainforest. Here she dwelt for several months in a maroon camp, amongst fellow women, men, and children who had created a collective world, in refuge from enslavement.

18 Eventually, Jenny was captured when a group of rangers (enslaved people promised freedom for killing maroon chiefs), guides (enslaved people who knew the forests), and pioneers (planters) who were searching for maroons sighted a boy harvesting wild yams at the camp's edge. The boy raised the alarm but was caught along with Jenny and several children and women from the camp. Others escaped into the wilds. Each of those captured would appear in the sham court of bloodthirsty Governor Ainslie, who waged a genocidal war against Dominica's maroons (1813–14). All captives were "tried," typically by military commission, without a jury or representation. Many were sentenced to death. Jenny escaped with her life but was returned to Hillsborough, bondage, and whatever punishment awaited her. Her courageous journey into freedom's forests had ended abruptly. However, it was the confluence of the hurricane's tumult, timing, and Jenny's bravery that enabled her to seize the moment, refuse captivity, and plot a path towards the refuge of Waitikubuli's mountains.

## Plot III — Planning and Planting

19 "I am a retired nurse and always a farmer," declares Judith, her abundant backyard garden framing her smile as it slopes away behind her towards Dominica's northeastern Atlantic coast. She is in conversation with two teenagers from a local girls' rights group who are undertaking an oral history project amongst women farmers in their area.[10] Nurse Judith, as she is respectfully known by her community, relates memories of farming, nursing, and motherhood throughout her 63 years of life. Born and raised in the farming village of Calibishie, her biography entwines various ecologies of care: the continuous work of nurturing plant, animal, and human life. Tianna interviews Judith, while Sydney videos their conversation, occasionally pitching in with questions. They are interested in how Judith and fellow members of their farmers' collective (The Northeast Women in Agriculture Movement) have had their farming impacted by hurricanes.

[10]Here Judith refuses the crude calculation of catastrophe. The loss was great, evident, and felt. And with no farmers' insurance upon which to claim, to tally it would have painfully numericized that which was already known yet changed nothing.

They also want to know how she envisions the future of Caribbean women's farming in our warming world.

20 "The loss sometimes with the farmers can be great," she asserts, citing intensified droughts during the *ka wem* (dry season, April—May) and stronger, less predictable storms during the hurricane season that follows (June—November) as evidence of the reality of climate change. She speaks of rains that wash away crops, bring landslides that destroy provision gardens, and, in the event of category 5 Hurricane Maria, razed the island's forests and farms to the ground. After Maria, she remembers: "my house was uncovered [...] my roof everything was upside down." And like so many Dominicans who live in two-story concrete homes and lost wooden roofs to the storm, Judith had to condemn her upper floor and lived downstairs for a year, until her roof was repaired. Of her garden—where she grows "ground provisions" (sweet potatoes, dasheen, tania, yam plantain, *green fig/*banana, and cassava), cucumbers, avocado, guava, breadfruit, and other tree crops—she says the destruction was near complete. "I don't want to count the loss!"[11]

21 And yet, two days after Maria, she tells Tiana, "I had to pick up everything." Not yet retired, Nurse Judith returned to work. "My health center was at the back of my vehicle." Her jeep became a mobile clinic from which she administered medicines, dressed injuries, and gave injections ("get up in the night in the dark... to give people injection, right here at my home!"). But throughout this time, much as it had been throughout the previous 35 years of her nursing career, "my little agricultural plot"—her provision garden, on a ridge just a short drive from her home—was never far from her thoughts. This plot and her backyard garden had helped Judith to "relieve my home budget" and meet her family's needs throughout her working life.[12] This was a hard-won right her ancestors had fought for post-Emancipation: to gain access to land, control their labor, and hence secure their subsistence.[13] And in times of more acute need, like the immediate wake of a storm, she returned again to the soil to ensure her family's survival.

22 "When everybody crying and running around looking for galvanize" to patch up their roofs, she tells the girls, who listen on intently, she and her son "just sat down and we say, 'you know what we need to put up a plan... we have to go back on the farm'." They recruited people from the village to help them cut back fallen trees and branches by cutlass and chainsaw, and to clear the strewn debris by hand. They began re-planting their ground provisions. "We salvaged what [tools] we had, and we could get back to work [...] and we kept our farm up. It was very challenging, but we did it." At home, she retrieved the solar shower heater that Maria's winds had pulled from her roof and dumped in her yard, the plastic guttering dragged from her roof, and her washing machine, somehow washed from her open porch into the valley below, and she filled them with "dirt." In these recovered vessels she grew lettuce, *cive* (spring onion), seasoning peppers and parsley, which she would go on to share with neighbors, sell, and use in her own cooking. So, during the difficult days and months that tailed Maria, Judith returned to her land and a practical art of subsistence that she had cultivated throughout her life.

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[11]This is a common pattern amongst Dominican smallholders (famously documented by Trouillot), whose subsistence plot secures life against erratic boom and bust cycles of monocrop exports. Growing up before the decline of bananas (during the late 90s to early 2000s) when Calibishie was "banana country," Judith could be described as a "banana child" whose work on a farm would help to fund her education and support her social mobility towards becoming a nurse (though she continued to rely on farming to supplement her salary). See Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Peasants and Capital: Dominica in the World Economy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).

[12]Michel-Rolph Trouillot, "Discourses of Rule and the Acknowledgment of the Peasantry in Dominica, WI, 1838—1928," *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 4 (1989): 704—18; Honeychurch, *In the Forests of Freedom*, 204.

[13]Kamau Brathwaite offers cosmology as way of fathoming the cultural-spiritual-historic undercurrents and roots that animate and anchor Caribbean life worlds. Kamau Brathwaite, "Note(s) on Caribbean Cosmology," *River City* 16, no. 2 (1996): 1—17. My thinking of survival in relation to cosmology also speaks to Vizenor's Native North American conception of "survivance": as cosmologically rich "ventures of imagination," "survivance stories," and "individual visions" that help to sustain and remake Indigenous worlds amidst ongoing colonial catastrophe. Gerald Robert Vizenor. *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 168.



Figure 2: Still from: Surviving Storms the CCC project, "Judith Peters | Dominica Women Farmer's Oral History Project | Calibishie," YouTube, July 2022, https://youtu.be/wthObbgghKE voir l'original

23 I call them *survival plots*, these ways of narrating, sustaining, securing, and (re) envisioning life in the hurricane's wake. I have introduced three overlapping kinds of plot: as ground, as covert scheme, as plan. First, we looked to grieving parents who live at a perilous point where river and sea meet. Parents seeking a plot of land on higher ground, a place to build a family home and a new beginning. Then the journey of Jenny, an enslaved woman, who flees a plantation amidst the turbulence of a nineteenth-century hurricane. Jenny plots a path of self-possession and fleeting freedom into Dominica's forested interior. Third, a nurse and farmer's swift return to her hillside garden and house yard, planting provisions, vegetables, and seasonings to ensure her family's subsistence in the wake of a hurricane that damaged her home and razed her crops to the ground. In calling these varied ways of securing life in the face of hurricanes *survival plots*, I am trying to suggest that there is something powerful, even cosmological, that holds such patterns of Caribbean survival together.[14] I am proposing *survival plotting* then as an exploratory framing, born of Caribbean thought and experience, that seeks to understand the deep cultural currents that have enabled the peoples of the archipelago to weather recuring catastrophes. In Dominica, this rugged, untamable land of my maternal ancestors, I am concerned with how a popular survival praxis has emerged and how this has enabled the island's Black and Indigenous inhabitants to live through storms past, as well as enabling them to face those that will surely come.

24 The three plots sketched out above emerged during the Surviving Storms project (2019–23) that sought to understand, document, and share Dominican patterns of hurricane survival with local, regional, and diasporic publics. The project was public facing, multimodal (sound, visual, map-based), and transdisciplinary (intersecting Sociology, Anthropology, Architecture, Art, History, and Earth Sciences). We secured funding from the UK government's Global Challenges Research Fund, which uses international aid money to generate research that supports UN Development Goals. Our aim was to repurpose such "aid," often presented as a benevolent gift, to do reparative work in a former British colony. Working from Britain—first at Goldsmiths University in southeast London, then Bristol; two places that grew rich and industrialized through West Indian sugar and slavery—we considered the role that a high-emission country like Britain, that had historically deposited enslaved people in the path of hurricanes today intensified by planetary warming, must play in supporting research that promotes Caribbean survival and repair. As I think back across the arc of the project it becomes apparent that this work not

[14]Cecilia Green, "A Recalcitrant Plantation Colony: Dominica, 1880–1946," *New West Indian Guide* 73, nos. 3–4 (1999): 43–71.

only shares a gathering of valuable practices and experiences, but also proposes a method for doing disaster research guided by social and planetary sensitivity. A mode of social study that is oriented towards ground-level co-research, attentive to ecology and place.

25 In what remains of this article, I will (a) consider the relationship between hurricane and plantation, the creative survivals their catastrophic convergence birthed; (b) elaborate on the idea of the *plot* as a theoretical groundwork for grasping such survivals; and (c) close with a tentative consideration of the planetary significance of all this plotting. But first, I will briefly locate Dominica and attempt to situate my analysis in historical and topographic terms.

## Waitikubuli. Groundwork

26 Waitikubuli (Dominica) was the last Caribbean island to be colonized by a European power. Owing to its mountainous and densely forested topography, its volcanic landslide-prone soils, and its many rivers that flood with heavy rains, the island's "recalcitrant" landscape resisted the proliferation of large plantations.[15] Between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, as Europe's plantation machinery cranked into gear across the region, Waitikibuli became an ecological fortress from which Amerindians, fleeing other islands, resisted European incursion.[16] Likewise, Waitikibuli became home to maroons and refugees fleeing bondage on the neighboring isles of Martinique and Guadeloupe, and a motley of French woodcutters, missionaries, and small planters settled there too. It is in the shadow of the plantation world that this creolizing society emerged. These early Dominicans (for this was now Dominica or Domnik, in Kweyol) survived by the land and sea, without yet a brutal statecraft to suppress African, Indigenous, and subaltern European cosmologies and all that will have grown between them.

27 Here, a relation to the landscape and a spirit of autonomy was established that both the spread of small-scale French plantation slavery from the early 1700s and British wholesale surveying of lands and establishment of a plantation colony from the 1760s would not undo. The abundance of land enabled independent cultivation by enslaved peoples on their provision grounds: marginal, steep plots of land at the plantation's edge, where these "proto peasants" grew food (at permitted times) for subsistence and sale domestically. Such economic activities (labor and marketing) afforded some potential economic self-sufficiency amidst the brutal exploitation of chattel enslavement. Likewise, the abundance of steep rainforested peaks and high ridges kept open the possibility of "flight to the mountains" for Kalinago who resisting settler expansion, or African and Creole slaves who refused bondage, electing to flee to maroons' camps amongst the dense vegetation of the island's high interior.[17]

28 These experiences of living in relation to the elements, not always bound to the most punitive circumscriptions of daily life—including being able to express Afro-Creole ritual and spiritual practices (outlawed by the British much later, in the late eighteenth century)[18]—likely opened the way for Dominica's modern cosmological foundations to grow. Particularly given that all this was unfolding in varied degrees of contact and collaboration with the lifeworlds of Dominica's Kalinago inhabitants, whom the island had been all but left to; first *de facto*, and then *de jure* under the Anglo-French treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748 (that is, until the British colonized the island 15 years later). The everyday activities of sustaining life—farming, fishing, interisland trade, constructing homes and boats, and cutting wood—demanded knowledge of the climate, sea, plants, and soils. The sharing of Kalinago-African-Creole knowledge of planetary patterns likely emerged: cycles of the seasons and the growing and waning moon; how to navigate on water by boat by reading sea currents, winds, and stars; tracking and hunting marine and forest

[15]Lennox Honychurch, *The Dominica Story: A History of the Island*, 3rd ed. (London: MacMillan, 1995).

[16]Trouillot, *Peasants and Capital*, 28.

[17]Danielle N. Boaz, "Obeah, Vagrancy, and the Boundaries of Religious Freedom," *Journal of Law and Religion* 32, no. 3 (2017), 429.

[18]Honychurch, *Forests of Freedom*, 1.

life; anticipating the weather by observing the sky and sensing the atmosphere; reading the temperament of rivers with the coming of heavy rains. All of this knowledge sustained human life and established ecological relationships to the island itself.

29 Dominican historian Lennox Honychurch, drawing on Haitian historian Jean Casimir, concludes of the present-day traces of such a history that Dominica, unlike its neighbors, "shows the effects not so much of a plantation society but of a Maroon society," adding that "a late and weak plantation system [...] resulted in a less colonized and thus less regimented and more open modern society."[19] Profound cosmological connections to earth, sea, and sky will have taken root in this world, enabling the island's inhabitants to sustain life through turbulence and in calm. This spirit persisted into the British plantation society project (1763 to the mid-twentieth century), into Kalinago establishment of a semi-autonomous territory (1903), into the naturalist philosophies of Dreads in 1970s who rejected a neocolonial "Babylon system" that dominated Dominica's twentieth-century society and sought freedom (like their maroon predecessors) in the mountainous "Zion" (forest gardens),[20] and it carries through to the wider post-emancipation peasant society that had emerged as laborers left the estates of former captors, developing traditions of hillside smallholder farming and attachments to "family land" that persist today. Together, these patterns make Dominica, for all its imports, one of the most food-secure Caribbean islands, with one of the most democratic land ownership distributions in the region.[21]

30 This sense of the land giving security has carried the population through many economic storms that have visited the island's shores. Dominica's small plantations and family farms have long been vulnerable to external shocks. Coffee, cocoa, sugar, citrus, and bananas: each oriented towards distant metropolitan markets, moved through cycles of boom and bust. Yet throughout these histories, and with the decline of bananas at the turn of the millennium, farmers growing crops for local, regional, and international markets did so in the confidence that they could always "eat their *fig*," as one of Haitian anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot's interlocutors once put it concerning the use value of bananas in their green starchy form.[22] This staple was often turned to in times of hardship, when there was no export market in their yellow form. The green *fig*, an abundant ground provision, stands as symbol of the array of subsistence crops planted alongside cash crops for household consumption, signifying the basic security the land affords. Today, beyond those who farm full time, every Dominican family will have members who work a back yard or hillside garden to meet or supplement household food needs. With low average wages and relatively high food prices, families often cultivate both subsistence and cash crops alongside professional jobs, seasonal overseas work, a pension, a trade, or day laboring. This common pattern of shifting between occupations promotes economic security and keeps precarity at bay.[23] Hence, *Apwe bodye se la te* ("After God, the soil") reads the national motto. Or, to express it from the ground up, as sung by farmer and Calypsonian, Mighty Soul (of Marigot, northeast Dominica): "The soil is enough." For it is in relation to the soil (as well as the sea and forest) that Dominicans creatively "cultivated a set of ecological priorities" that have helped them to weather many storms.[24]

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[19] *Ibid.*, 206–07.

[20] Lennox Honychurch, "Slave Valleys, Peasant Ridges: Topogr*aphy, Colour and Land Settlement on Dominica,"* Proceedings of the University of the West Indies Dominica Country Conference, Roseau, Dominica, 2001, https://www.open.uwi.edu/sites/default/files/bnccde/dominica/conference/papers/Honychurch.html

[21] Trouillot, *Peasants and Capital*, 135.

[22] "Occupational flexibility": "people tend to grab opportunities for cash as they appear." Trouillot, *Peasants and Capital*, 49.

[23] Mark Hauser, *Mapping Water in Dominica* (Washington: U Washington Press, 2021), 194, https://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/47757

[24] Derek Walcott, *The Antilles* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1992).

## Hurricane. Plantation. Catastrophe

31 There is a creative and vital piecing-together of cultural fragments that inaugurates modern Caribbean life.[25] This occurs in the face of a foundational catastrophe that begins with the wind, then the plantation. And this creative impulse to piece together, ever in relation to the land, has been crucial to surviving plantations, hurricanes, and their afterlives. Permit me to expound, then elaborate on how these survival plots take hold in Dominica.

32 The modern Caribbean begins of catastrophe.[26] Particularly for Taino, Arawak, Kalinago, and African peoples. These beginnings are many: the arrival of Columbus' caravel; European settlement, native genocide (disease, war, massacre, overwork), and dispossession of lands; the importation of the monocrop plantation; the European kidnap, passage, and transplantation of African human beings to work these plantations; the abuses of indenture that preceded and followed enslavement. With each recurrence along the archipelago, we find repeating memories of world-shifting and world-ending catastrophe alongside profound human survivals and beginnings—collective patterns of life-making under intense pressures. Throughout history, echoes of catastrophe recur and revisit the region like the cyclical bands of the hurricane, circling back, again and again. Whether the result of storms themselves, volcanic eruptions, or earthquakes (felt most by those living in perilous locations or unable to inhabit secure dwellings) or whether turbulence brought by imperial design (occupations, export monocrop crises, debt, industrial and military contaminations, coups, or the spectacular and everyday violence of (neo)colonial and (post)plantation life), catastrophes reiterate their way through the region's past and present. *Survival plotting* then is concerned with the human propensity to make life from and despite all of this. To make a world at the plantation's edges, often against all odds. I am interested here in how the people of the Caribbean Sea and a supposedly "small island" within it build lives that defiantly stride towards contingent tomorrows.

33 The plantation assemblage around which these extractive European experiment-societies came to be organized, from the sixteenth century onwards, forms a central scene of catastrophic beginning. The plantation represents a space of human "thingification,"[27] deforestation, and biodiversity loss; of stolen land and labor; of inordinate modes of violence, coercion, and forced dependency. Crucially, I want to think of how this plantation machinery, along with all this catastrophe, was set in motion by the wind. Easterlies (winds from the east) blow westwards across Africa, the vast continent of human beginnings, as they move out to sea from the coastline of Senegal, Gambia, and Guinea. Traveling over water, these gusts became known as the Trade Winds by fourteenth- and fifteenth-century European traders and cosmographers who sought to map the world and harness their power for mercantile opportunity.[28] These prevailing winds propelled westbound ships in an age of sail, exploration, trade, and, eventually, territorial claims. These easterly winds carried Columbus' caravel from the Canary Islands across the Atlantic towards a region he and fellow Europeans misnamed the *West* Indies while in search of Asiatic worlds, The Caribbean ("lands of the *Caribe*": a misappropriation of the name Kalinago people's Indigenous enemies had given them, *caribe*, "a hurtful, harmful nation"),[29] or Antilles (from *Antillia*, "land of the other," an imagined site of Iberian maritime mythology). Columbus'

[25] Joyelle McSweeney, "Poetics, Revelations, and Catastrophes: An Interview with Kamau Brathwaite," *Rain Taxi* (2005), https://www.raintaxi.com/poetics-revelations-and-catastrophes-an-interview-with-kamau-brathwaite/

[26] Concerning plantation assemblages, see Antonio Benítez Rojo and James Maraniss, "The Repeating Island," *New England Review and Bread Loaf Quarterly* 7, no. 4 (1985); regarding "thingification," as an attempt to transform human beings and labor into objects of capital, see Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review, 2000 [1955]), 42; and Sylvia Wynter, *Black Metamorphosis: New Natives in a New World* (unpublished manuscript c. 1970), 49.

[27] Felipe Fernández-Armesto, *Pathfinders: A Global History of Exploration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 164–65.

[28] Douglas Taylor, "Kinship and social structure of the island Carib," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 2, no. 2 (1946), 181.

[29] Fernández-Armesto, *Pathfinders*.

caravel also rode these winds during his second voyage in 1493, arriving first in Dominica, "discovering" the most direct path across the Atlantic by sail.[30]

34 Barbadian poet Kamau Brathwaite would later rename these winds the "Slave Trade Winds," rethinking the kidnap, trafficking, and transplantation of people in meteorological terms. And during the June to November hurricane season these winds often carry easterly Waves, weather disturbances that, upon leaving the West-African mainland and meeting the warm Atlantic waters around Cape Verde, can form into seasonal storms. These storms continue westwards, sometimes becoming organized into cyclones—tropical storms or hurricanes—on route to the Caribbean. In thinking this coming together of wind and Man,[31] Brathwaite speaks of the enslaved becoming "the labor at the edge of the hurricane," carried by the same winds that carry storms towards the Antilles.[32] This human and meteorological relation—this mercantile "convenience"—structures the beginnings of the modern Caribbean and sets the world's racial capitalist ecology into violent motion.[33] The coalescence brings a certain chaos—hurricane and plantation—that radically reorders Antillean worlds.

## Plot

35 Given the catastrophic confluence of hurricane and plantation in the emergence of the modern Caribbean, I propose the *plot*—provision ground, counter plantation ethos, and practice—as a conceptual space where this gathering of fragments emerges. As anthropologist Sidney Mintz reminds us, provision grounds were ambivalent sites: of planter pragmatism (to reproduce the plantation system), sanctioned in response to the requirement to feed a labor force (where imported foods fluctuated in availability and price); and at the same time spaces of "resistance" for the enslaved, counterpoint to the alienation of self from the fruits of one's labor, spaces of potential economic and spiritual autonomy.[34]

36 In a widely cited essay, Jamaican philosopher Sylvia Wynter elaborates "plot" as a historico-philosophical concept. Wynter identifies tensions between the plantation system, "a system, owned and dominated by external forces," and "what we shall call the plot system, the Indigenous, autochthonous system" of African Caribbean peoples.[35] It is from this latter space that Caribbean worlds were to be re-written in African Caribbean terms. For here, Wynter insists, "the land remained the Earth," not property; and justice was not abstract or defined by planter priorities ("the rights of property") but was concerned with "the needs of the people who form the community."[36] As she elaborates in her unpublished manuscript, *Black Metamorphosis*:

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[30] I capitalize "Man" here to evoke Wynter's theorization of the European post-Enlightenment bourgeoise *Man* as an overrepresented genre of the human being that emerged in the wake of such western journeys and all they would give way to. Sylvia Wynter, "Unsettling the coloniality of being/power/truth/freedom: Towards the human, after man, its overrepresentation—An argument," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 3 (2003): 257–337.

[31] Kamau Brathwaite, *Roots* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 261.

[32] I argue that "racial capitalist ecology" is a more precise and anti-colonial analytic than the now hegemonic "Anthropocene." "Racial capitalist ecology" fuses elements of Jason Moore's "world capitalist ecology" with Françoise Vergès' "racial Capitalocene." See Jason W. Moore, "The Capitalocene, Part I: On the Nature and Origins of our Ecological Crisis," *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 44, no. 3 (2017): 594–630; Françoise Vergès, "Racial Capitalocene" in *Futures of Black Radicalism*, ed. Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin (New York: Verso, 2017): 72–82.

[33] Sydney Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations* (New York: Columbia, University Press, 1989 [1974]), 132–33. See too, critiques of the romanticization of the provision ground in: Deborah Thomas, *Political Life in the Wake of the Plantation: Sovereignty, Witnessing, Repair* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 8–9; Kaneesha Cherelle Parsard, "Siphon, or What Was the Plot? Revisiting Sylvia Wynter's 'Novel and History, Plot and Plantation'," *Representations*, 162, no. 1 (2023): 56–64; and McKittrick's caution against a reading of plot that "hastily celebrates subaltern resistance": Katherine McKittrick, "Plantation futures," *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 17, no. 3 (42) (2013), 10.

[34] Sylvia Wynter, "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation," *Savacou*, no. 51 (1971). See also Sidney Mintz's argument that the plot is "the ideal antithesis to the plantation," small-scale, self-sufficient agriculture (or better, horticulture)." Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations*, 132. Indeed, most Dominican farms are today referred to as one's "garden" or "Zion" (from the biblical Eden and Mount Zion) owing to their high mountainside locations, beauty, and promise as plantation counterpoint.

[35] Wynter, "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation," 96.

[36] Wynter, *Black Metamorphosis*, 53.

37 The plot was the slave's area of escape from the plantation. It was an area of experience which reinvented and therefore perpetuated an alternative world view, an alternative consciousness to that of the plantation. This world view was marginalized by the plantation but never destroyed.[37]

38 Some 30 years of deep thought later, in 2000, she adds that this consciousness persists into the twenty-first century:

39 That plot, that slave plot on which the slave grew food for his/her subsistence, carried over a millennially other conception of the human to that of Man's[38][...] And it is out of that plot that the new and now planetary-wide [...] humanism of our times is emerging.[39]

40 An autochthonous, alternative consciousness, in which the ground remains the earth/soil/*la té* (contra property) and justice concerns human needs (contra serving capital). Wynter's plot is a life space induced from complex and varied histories. Born of modern catastrophe —European imperial transplantation, expropriation, and degradation—Wynter's plot offers a powerful groundwork for narrating Caribbean worlds as well as realizing our regenerative and creative potential as a species. That is, for comprehending human worldmaking despite racial capitalist ecology's catastrophic effects.

41 For Brathwaite, *plot/ground/grounn* also hosts autonomous Afro-Caribbean realities that reside beyond plantation dependencies and logics ("thingification," calculation, and so on). These are sites of Caribbean cosmological practice: naval string burial at birth; communing with ancestors, spirits, gods, nature, and one-another; growing one's food; devising radical plots or revolts; and burying those who pass on to the afterworld. These are sites of collective self-making, where worlds can be envisioned otherwise. Locations (amongst others: forest, river, sea, sky) in and with which Caribbean peoples would, as Martinican poet Édouard Glissant puts it years later, enter "relational complicity with the new earth and sea and cosmos."[40] Reading across Wynter, Brathwaite and Glissant, I think of *survival plotting* as the outcome of such a relational complicity with the planet, in the face of a deleterious racial capitalist ecology. Given all we know of Dominica's history of its late and incomplete plantation system, of the maroons who expanded their plotting to forest encampments, of the autonomous presence of Indigenous Kalinago farmers and those peasants who worked hard to gain access to lands, we might see Dominica itself as a more of a plot than plantation space.

42 *Survival plotting*, then, gathers and gives name to a survival ethic and set of practices I have watched unfold in Dominica as people rebuild, move on from, and creatively recenter their worlds in the long aftermath of recent storms (Hurricane Maria, 2017; Tropical Storm Erika, 2015; Hurricane David, 1979). Dominican poet Celia Sorhaindo, whose *Guabancex* collection meditates on the world-upending power of Maria, refers to this as a "hurricane praxis."[41] *Guabancex* centers the living texture, emotional ambivalences, and spiritual responses to the storm. Sorhaindo reflects carefully on this word *praxis*—theory in living action—as an alternative to orthodox disaster research that is often "detached from the people" being discussed, shrouded in "very academic language, clinical statistics, and numbers" and often lacking a "connecting human element." Instead, she states:

[37] See footnote 30.

[38] Wynter in David Scott, "The re-enchantment of humanism: An interview with Sylvia Wynter," *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 17, no. 8 (120) (2000), 135.

[39] Édouard Glissant, "Creolisation and the Americas," *Caribbean Quarterly* 57, no. 1 (2011), 12.

[40] Celia A Sorhaindo, *Guabancex* (Trafalgar, Dominica: Papillote Press, 2020).

[41] Andy Caul, "An Interview with Celia Sorhaindo: Hurricane PraXis," *Acalabash Caribbean Poetry Portfolio*, no. 14 (2021), https://acalabash.com/an-interview-with-celia-sorhaindo-hurricane-praxis/

43 my use of the word "praxis" was deliberate: to emphasise [that] I didn't want this creative depiction of the [hurricane] experiences to be just another abstract, disconnected, academic exercise. I wanted to show the complex, diverse and nuanced day-to-day human experiences of that time; that I had also lived through [...] the complex mix of emotions which included hope, resiliency, despair, and desperation [...] the human reality [...] that hopefully everyone could identify with and "feel", not just intellectualise about.[42]

44 Likewise, the intention of *survival plotting* is to center human experience; build research practices that reflect real, complex lives and ecologies; and to devise open and collaborative methods. To this end I propose four kinds of survival plot.

### 1. Plot as Place; as Ground

45 Plot. *Noun*. A small piece of ground of defined shape.

46 Plot as place-based patterns of survival. Plot as site, literal or imagined, that one knows intimately. Here we might think of the opening examples of the parents who envision a home on safer, higher ground, or the security offered by Nurse Judith's provision garden. We might consider survivals that are anchored in relation to knowledge of a specific locale, topographic feature, or site of memory. A mother, for example, interviewed by Surviving Storms student-researchers about her experiences of Hurricane Maria, recalled raising the alarm that the nearby river was flooding. She sensed the river would soon inundate her yard and home not because she could hear its heavy roar (it had been roaring for hours), or because she could see it in the darkness, but because she recognized the scent of the river flooding, the smell of its fluvial churn. She immediately moved with her children to safer ground, perhaps saving their lives. Knowledge of and relation to place (including sensorial knowledge) form a central dimension of the practice of hurricane survivals. And in instances where a severe storm renders a place painfully unrecognizable, a regrowing landscape may also form part of the process of human-ecological repair. For instance, when I interviewed a cousin of mine, a mother of two who lives in southwest Dominica, she recalled how the island's regrowth soothed the hot, dusty, debris-clearing days that followed Maria: "The plants around the house started growing first. The trees by the bay [...] those that were still standing [...] the green leaves started sprouting [...] it's this bright green! They tell you that green is the color of hope."[43] She drew courage and strength from her island growing green again.

47 The sense of plot as ground; and surviving through a sense, knowledge, or restoration of place, leads us back to Glissant's invocation of Caribbean social worlds established *in relation* to island ecologies. Emphasizing this relation in a poem called "Dreamed land, real country" (which speaks of hardships and storms in Martinique), Glissant summons this notion of plot as place/ground. He calls on his community

48 To experience the landscape passionately...

49 To know what it signifies in us.

50 To carry this clear knowledge to the earth.[44]

### 2. Plot as Storytelling; Evocation; Re-centering Worlds

51 Plot. *Noun*. A set of events in a story.

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[42]Cited in Adom Philogene Heron, "Surviving Maria from Dominica: Memory, Displacement and Bittersweet Beginnings," *Transforming Anthropology*26, no. 2 (2018), 130.

[43]Édouard Glissant, "Dreamed land, real country" in *Poetic Intention* (New York: Nightboat, 2010), 228.

[44]Nigel Rapport, "The Narrative as Fieldwork Technique: Processual Ethnography for a World in Motion," in Vered Amit, ed., *Constructing the Field* (London: Routledge, 2003), 79–103.

52 "In a world in motion, narratives provide a place cognitively to reside and make sense, a place to continue to be," writes philosopher and anthropologist Nigel Rapport, evoking the social power of stories to anchor us in everchanging worlds.[45] Amidst catastrophe, storytelling affords "the possibility of teasing coherence from chaos; redrawing a sense of place amidst displacement; [and] a method of orientation" towards uncertain futures.[46] This is particularly true of Caribbean oral traditions, which emerge, Wynter reminds us, from beneath plantation/colonial logics that see island lives and histories as fictions: "written, dominated, controlled by forces external to" themselves.[47] To speak the world on one's own terms, then, emerges "first as an act of survival," Glissant writes.[48] Hence, storytelling is primarily an act of self-possession. An orienting mode of sociality. A "centering" practice.[49] Speaking the world on one's own terms counters past and present disaster colonialities (or what Martinican political scientist Malcom Ferdinand calls "the colonial hurricane")[50]—disaster narratives laid out by colonial governors, northern news crews, NGOs, and researchers who arrive in disaster's wake with ready tropes and plotlines (war metaphors, captioned scenes of despair, death tolling, privileging of capital, moral outrage at "looting," and so on).

53 Patterns of storytelling, sometimes spoken plainly, sometimes symbolically evoked (in parable, opaque, and concealed form), allow survivors to share both profound and mundane human experiences of a world-altering event. They function to unburden one's chest, offering a sense of "heartease."[51] And with this a convivial path through catastrophe: living on together in all the messiness of post-disaster life; knowing oneself "as part and as crowd, in an unknown that does not terrify."[52] One must only look to the list of the most popular Dominican calypsos released the year after a major storm (for instance in 2018, after Maria: *De Lootahs*, King Dice; *Release Supplies*, Sye; *Relief*, Jaydee; *Roofless*, Sye; *My Country Still Nice*, Chris B; *Curfew Pass*, Jaydee). Songs that deliver timely, provocative, resonant, and comical commentaries on the hurricane's socio-political debris are the most popular (sung aloud, heard in the streets and on passing vehicle radios).[53] And so, through tales, proverbs, and lyrics, the Caribbean "[wo]man-of-words"[54] becomes a "*djobbeur* of the collective soul," a caretaker of sorts, as Glissant puts it. The storyteller helps to sustain the communal spirit. And, for Glissant, survival, subsistence, and the oral tradition inhabit a shared world of meaning.[55] Indeed, in the aftermath of Maria, with no electricity or internet and little external distraction, sharing experiences, "kicksing off" ("running jokes"), and exchanging memories afforded some psychic relief. And, in the storm's longer afterlife, as Kaila, a student-researcher who interviewed fellow Maria survivors with Surviving Storms reflected: "there is great value in letting Dominicans tell their own story [to] process it in their head and let it come out in words. I feel like until they voice that for themselves, it's not

[45]Philogene Heron, "Surviving Maria from Dominica," 126.

[46]Wynter, "Novel and History, Plot and Plantation," 98.

[47]Édouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 69.

[48]As Baker argues, the entire modern history of Dominica has concerned tensions between attempts to locally center Dominican worlds, resources and meanings, and external colonial/metropolitan orderings that have "peripheralized" Dominica, bringing turbulence and entropy to the island. See Patrick L. Baker, *Centring the Periphery: Chaos, Order and the Ethnohistory of Dominica* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1994), 12–16.

[49]Malcom Ferdinand, *Decolonial Ecology: Thinking from the Caribbean World* (London: Polity, 2021), 65–74.

[50]"Heartease" is that concerned with healing, a kind of spiritual-poetic deliverance from trauma, violence or daily "sufferation." See Lorna Goodison, *Heartease* (London: New Beacon, 1988).

[51]Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 9.

[52]See "Carnival 2018 Calypsos," *Dominica News Online*, 2018, https://dominicanewsonline.com/news/carnival-2018-calypsos; and for regional context see Joshua Jelly-Schapiro, "Listen to the Storm Songs of the Caribbean," *New York Times*, September 28, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/28/opinion/caribbean-hurricane-songs.html

[53]To cite Roger Abrahams' classic study, whilst recognizing the part of women in constituting such orality. Roger Abrahams, *The Man-of-Words in the West Indies: Performance and the Emergence of Creole Culture* (Baltimore: JHU Press, 1983).

[54]Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 69.

[55]Cited in Adom Philogene Heron and Schuyler Esprit, "Pedagogies of Survival: Research, Disaster and Repair in Dominica" in Ronald Cummings, Patricia Noxolo, and Kevon Rhiney, eds., *The Routledge Reader in Caribbean Studies* (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

the same…"[56]

### 3. Plot as Scheming; Planning

54 Plot. *Noun*. A secret, plan, formulated scheme.

55 How might freedom schemes murmur in reply to the hurricane's roar? How are plans devised and plotted out in a bid to secure life before, amidst, or after a storm's landfall? Think here of Jenny who attempted to escape enslavement by improvising a plot to get free amidst the chaos of an 1813 hurricane. Historical records indicate that flights of *maronnage* may have increased with the landfall of devastating storms.[57] When the plantation order is temporarily upended, those held in bondage may seize upon the breach, and in a collaboration between meteorology and human ecology make for the high *mornes* in greater numbers. Where hardship befell plantations, provision grounds were destroyed, and labor and living conditions declined, so enslaved people entered closer clandestine relation with maroons—whether exchanging goods, information, or joining their camps.[58] Cultural studies scholar Shalini Puri observes that hurricanes and other environmental shocks (earthquakes and volcanic eruptions) are powerful historical forces that enable humans to radically reshape or shift locations within a socio–political order.[59] The hurricane impels rebellions and autonomous planning, whether writ large and small.

56 In the Caribbean there is no uprising, no plot greater than the Haitian revolution, which begins —many forget—with an Atlantic storm. "On the night of the 22nd [August 1791] a tropical storm raged, with lightning and gusts of wind and heavy showers of rain," writes CLR James in *The Black Jacobins*, of the powerful forces that moved through the much-fabled *Bwa Caïman* scene. Here, revolutionary leaders and maroons are understood to have assembled in the thick forests of the Morne Rouge, a mountain in northern Haiti, with Vodoun *oungan* (priest) Dutty Bookman and *mambo* (priestess) Cécile Fatiman leading a rite that would give spiritual inspiration to those assembled. Bookman is believed to have pronounced (in *Kweyol*):

> 57 The god who created the sun which gives us light, who rouses the waves and rules the storm, though hidden in the clouds, he watches us. He sees all that the white man does. The god of the white man inspires him with crime, but our god calls upon us to do good works […] He will direct our arms and aid us. Throw away the symbol of the god of the whites […] and listen to the voice of liberty, which speaks in the hearts of us all.[60]

58 Drawing courage from the divine power of *bondyé*—the almighty who created the sun, stirs the seas, and directs the storm—the enslaved were called towards their revolutionary self–emancipation. This was "the impending storm"[61] that French abolitionists had warned of. In Bwa Caïman, as contemporary Haitian poet and scholar, Ezili Dante, suggests, the Vodoun *lwa* (deity) *Agaou* (god of thunder, rain, lightning, wind, storm, and earthquakes) was roused, helping to set eighteenth-century Haiti into revolutionary motion.[62] There is a sense then of African Caribbean peoples drawing on their animist Afro-creole ontologies to plot *with* the

[56] As Vaz argues, citing the 1813 storm through which Jenny escaped as an example of this. Neil Vaz, "Dominica's Neg Mawon: Maroonage, Diaspora, and Trans-Atlantic Networks, 1763–1814" (Doctoral Thesis, Howard University, 2016), 190.

[57] *Ibid*.

[58] Shalini Puri, "Hurricane" in *The Grenada Revolution in the Caribbean Present: Operation Urgent Memory* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 206–24.

[59] C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd Edition (New York: Random House 1989 [1938]), 87.

[60] Guillaume Raynal, 1780, in Jack Censer and Lynn Hunt, *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: Exploring the French Revolution* (College Park: Penn State Press, 2001), 119.

[61] Ezili Dantò, *Seremoni Bwa Kayiman*: part one, 2011, https://margueritelaurent.com/writings/bwakayiman.html

[62] Susan Campbell, "Defending Aboriginal Sovereignty: The 1930 'Carib War' in Waitukubuli (Dominica)," *Proceedings of the University of the West Indies Dominica Country Conference*, Roseau, Dominica, 2001, https://www.open.uwi.edu/sites/default/files/bnccde/dominica/conference/papers/CampbellS.html

hurricane, inviting its sacred power to help them strike down their tormenters. African Caribbean cosmologies enabled enslaved humans to draw on the spiritual power of the hurricane as they engaged in every day and exceptional counter-plantation plots.

59 We can look to the early twentieth century and Dominica's Indigenous Kalinago people to locate other such survival schemes. Take, for instance, Kalinago seafarers who sailed north by dugout canoe for Guadeloupe (as their ancestors always had) to trade and procure needed supplies in the wake of a 1930 hurricane that destroyed homes and provision gardens. In response to British colonial police attempts to enter the "Carib Reserve" (now Kalinago Territory) and seize the "smuggled" "contraband," the Indigenous inhabitants arose to defend their sovereignty (against a slow genocide that had brought their community to the brink of extinction). They defended their right to move across an ancient inter-island highway, to enable their survival where no hurricane relief had come from the colonial state. This turbulent series of events, which begins with the hurricane, would be known locally as the "second Kalinago war."[63] Together these historic examples of counter-plantation and anti-colonial schemes encourage us to consider how the hurricane awakens and sharpens Afro-Indigenous survival schemes. "The wind carries many secrets," instructs reggae artist Protoje;[64] and thus, *plot as scheming* speaks to those who have listened for cues leading them towards freedoms, a better life or sense of security in the hurricane's wake.

### 4. Plot as Method; Plotting Together

60 Plot. *Noun*. From *Complot*.

61 Sixteenth-century Old French for "combined plan,"
an etymological tributary to the English *plot*.

62 There is an intentional sociality to the way the Surviving Storms project has attempted to cooperatively study place-based survival practices and schemes. Our collaborative method might be seen as a kind of *plotting together*: collectively generating, gathering, archiving, and sharing knowledge with and amongst hurricane survivors; reflecting on the practice of sustaining life and envisioning the future on an island already being impacted by our planet's warming (Atlantic weather systems that are becoming more intense and less predictable; heating seas intensifying the cyclone's power and the many hazards it brings). There is, it seems, an existential necessity to this work of co-conspiring towards survival (not necessarily in research, but in community members sharing knowledge to help each other anticipate and adapt to future crises). Indeed, the international system of climate governance is not often concerned with locally situated (even subjugated) survival knowledges and practices. It tends, instead, to reproduce models of conspicuous donor-led development and ongoing relations of North-South structural dependency.[65] So, to collectively learn from the past, reflect in the present, and envision more secure futures—on Caribbean and Dominican terms—represents a vital collective practice.

63 Our method of collaborative research grounds itself with people, ecology and place, drawing on "multimodal" methods.[66] In other words, co-created research—with students, elders, architects, sociologists, anthropologists, earth scientists, artists, and so on—that uses video, maps, and sound to create materials that do not simply re-present but intervene in existing Caribbean media worlds. This co-produced work participates in the mediascapes of the peoples of the region (via YouTube, Facebook, radio, a project website, Instagram, as well as online news and print

[63]Protoje, *Incient Stepping*, 2022, https://protoje.lnk.to/IncientStepping

[64]Adam Grydehøj and Ilan Kelman, "Reflections on Conspicuous Sustainability: Creating Small Island Dependent States (SIDS) Through Ostentatious Development Assistance (ODA)?" *Geoforum* 116 (2020): 90–97.

[65]See Eric Luke Lassiter, *The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography* (University of Chicago Press, 2022).

[66]See Ethiraj Gabriel Dattatreyan and Isaac Marrero-Guillamón, "Multimodal Anthropology and the Politics of Invention," *American Anthropologist*, 121, no. 1 (2019): 220–28.

media).[67] If Anthropology (which I am trained in) can be defined as a diverse conversation on being human, then the Surviving Storms project seeks to puncture the university's monopoly on such a conversation by raiding its methodological arsenal (of ethnographic/life writing tools: interviews, film, observation of the everyday, and so on). The aim of such theft is to shift Anthropology's orientation from the extraction of knowledge from communities to its circulation within them; to prompt, gather, and share survivor-guided conversations on questions of hurricane experience and recovery. The cogeneration and public mediation of such knowledge is imperative, for the outcomes of this work (on how we survive) must emerge from and sit within reach of those who live in the hurricane's path; those who contend with its effects. This is the intention of the Surviving Storms project; observers and participants must assess its effectiveness for themselves.

64 In summary, survival plots represent patterns of endurance that have emerged throughout the long durée of modern Antillean history. This history birthed a practical art of survival[68] that responds to colonial and natural vagaries and is sustained by everyday cosmologies that evolve into the present.

## Planetary Plotting

65 I am not suggesting that we look to survival plotting as an end point, reparative resolution, or pathway to save humanity from the many crises of our planetary conjuncture. The ground-level political ecology I have sketched out cannot not save us from worlds on the brink of ecological collapse. Rather, these place-based methods, patterns, and narratives invoke some of the ways in which Dominicans have attempted to secure their lives and, as singer Buju Banton put it, "rule their destiny"[69] amidst catastrophes they and their ancestral kin have lived. There is deep value, I have suggested, in carefully listening to, learning from, and thinking with those who have survived the brutal testing ground of racial capitalism and those who are now forced to try and live with its repeating ecological effects. Under the catastrophic conditions Caribbean forebears endured, a particular kind of humanism emerged, as Wynter has shown us. This humanism was carried forward, ever shifting, towards the present. Paul Gilroy (who is of Guyanese ancestry) later refers to it as a "planetary humanism"—a sense of common being that emerges from the "humanizing possibilities of conviviality and care."[70] Gilroy (like Wynter, WEB Du Bois, and others) locates a beginning for this humanism in the brutalities of enslavement, in Black Atlantic experiences of modernity. The planet features recursively in Gilroy's humanism as the conditions for our species to live well with each other (beyond racial, xenophobic, simplistic identifications) ever contingent upon us living well with land, sea, sky, and other beings.[71] Our collective survival demands the kind of humanism for which he has long been calling. In a 2019 lecture Gilroy reflected on the intervention of his path-breaking book, *The Black Atlantic*. He stated in retrospect:

66 The Black Atlantic traditions I have described were conditioned by the work of vindicating black humanity, but they were never reducible to that task [...] They have been enriched by exposure to cosmologies that do not consider individuality, subject formation, agency, temporality, property, or groupness in exclusively European terms. The resulting mix

[67] "Art must come out of catastrophe... a kind of radiance on the other end of the maelstrom." Brathwaite in McSweeney, "Poetics, revelations, and catastrophes."

[68] Buju Banton, "Destiny," *Inna Heights* (Kingston: Island Records, 1997).

[69] Paul Gilroy, "Never Again: Refusing Race and Salvaging the Human," Holberg Prize Lecture (June 4, 2019), https://www.newframe.com/long-read-refusing-race-and-salvaging-the-human/; Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).

[70] Katherine McKittrick, "Consent Not to Be a Single Being: Worlding through the Caribbean," Keynote Lecture, Tate Britain (December 1, 2021), *YouTube*, https://youtu.be/zxARZXhsvHM

[71] Paul Gilroy, "Never Again."

of resources furnishes us with a compass we can use to locate newer and better understanding of the human.[72]

67 This "mix of resources" (akin to Wynter's *plot*, Brathwaite's *cosmology*, and Glissant's *relation*) demonstrates "the mentality we need to cultivate in order to respond to the emergencies that await us."[73] During a conference keynote I attended two years later, Gilroy reflexively added: "In my own life, I'm coming to a much more determinedly local sense of dwelling and being in the world," embracing the partiality of location as "responsible and cosmopolitan gesture."[^74] We must begin somewhere.

68 To share a locally situated groundwork for living in our warming planet must not be seen as a matter of insular concern but may be read as planetary. ("Insular" in the Euro-American sense: evokes conditions of isolation, being held in place, parochialism; the opposite of the Antilles.) The modern Caribbean, an early site of world capitalism, is a deeply cosmopolitan region of limitless planet-wide connections by water, air, weather, image, and sound. Therefore, if we are to fathom our species' survival it seems apt to learn from Caribbean lives and practices.

69 The storying, plotting, and scheming I have shared presents survivals told in local and regional terms, told from specific locations, and practicing human relations to living worlds in quite particular ways. This suggests a method, of which we will find countless equivalences in countless other landscapes. But it is a method no less; a method through which to face the catastrophes of our time.

**Some recommended further reading:**


70 Hilary Beckles, "Irma-Maria: A reparations requiem for Caribbean poverty," *The Jamaica Observer*, October 9, 2017, https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/columns/irma-maria-a-reparations-requiem-for-caribbean-poverty/

71 Merle Collins, "Tout Moun ka Pléwé (Everybody Bawling)," *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 11, no. 1 (2007): 1–16

72 Daniel Maximin, *Les Fruits du cyclone, une géopoétique de la Caraïbe* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2006)

73 Keston Perry, "The New 'Bond-age', Climate Crisis and the Case for Climate Reparations: Unpicking Old/New Colonialities of Finance for Development within the SDG," *Geoforum* 126 (2021): 361–71

74 Leon Sealey-Huggins, "'1.5°C to Stay Alive': Climate Change, Imperialism and Justice for the Caribbean," *Third World Quarterly* 38, no. 11 (2017): 2444–63


*Hillsboro Employees* c. 1896–97.

Figure 3: *Hillsboro Employees* c. 1896–97.

Unnamed female workers, perhaps relatives/descendants of Jenny, 84 years on.

Figure 4: Unnamed female workers, perhaps relatives/descendants of Jenny, 84 years on.

Greg family papers, Cambridge Commonwealth Collection. Y307H/61 https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/PH-Y-00307-H/36

Figure 5: Greg family papers, Cambridge Commonwealth Collection. Y307H/61 https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/PH-Y-00307-H/36

[72] *Ibid*.

[73] Cited in Phoebe Braithwaite, "Artists and Writers Draw on 'Deep Imagination' to Stage a Counterpoint to COP26," *Art Review*, November 24, 2021, https://artreview.com/artists-and-writers-draw-on-deep-imagination-to-stage-a-counterpoint-to-cop26/

Still from: Surviving Storms the CCC project, "Judith Peters | Dominica Women Farmer's Oral History Project | Calibishie," *YouTube*, July 2022, https://youtu.be/wthObbgghKE?feature=shared

Figure 6: Still from: Surviving Storms the CCC project, "Judith Peters | Dominica Women Farmer's Oral History Project | Calibishie," *YouTube*, July 2022, https://youtu.be/wthObbgghKE?feature=shared

Version en ligne : https://plurivers.net/revue-plurivers-1/plotting-survival-to-live-in-the-hurricane-s-path.html

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