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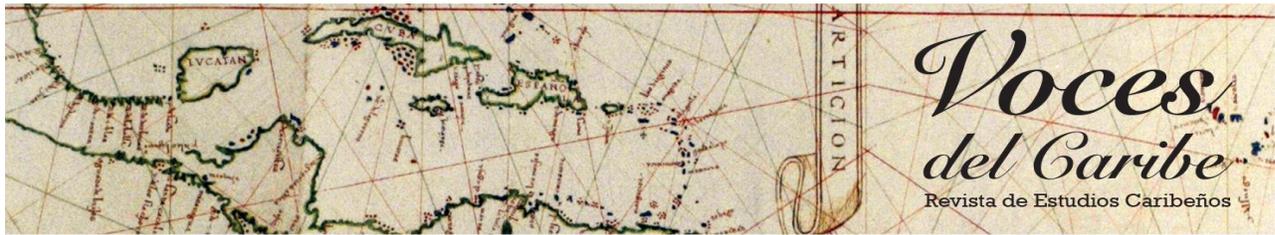
Intersections of Urban Violence in the Dominican novel *Cóctel con frenesí*

- “In a truly global world, the renunciation of violent reprisal is bound to become, in a more and more obvious way, the indispensable condition of our survival.” –René Girard

In Latin American literature, urban novels or city texts reflect the social practices of a society and many times offer a critique of the social injustices that exist within a specific culture. According to geographer David Harvey, “Cities are sites of conflict based on race, ideology and gender” (227). A form of conflict that is visible in cities is violence, which can be defined as a social pathology¹ Violence is represented in literary texts and more specifically in urban novels because a city is a place where violence is enacted and reproduced in different spaces. A text that exemplifies this is the Dominican novel *Cóctel con frenesí* (2003) by author Emilia Pereyra¹. Violence is central to the story because it reflects social, economic and gender

¹ Emilia Pereyra (Azua, 1963) is a Dominican author and journalist who has written the novels *El crimen verde* (1994) *Cenizas del querer* (1998) *El grito del tambor* (2013) and *¡Oh Dios!* (2016). Pereyra has also published short stories that have been translated and included in different anthologies. She worked in the Dominican newspapers *El Caribe*, *El Nuevo Diario*, *Ultima Hora* y *Hoy* and is a member of the Academia Dominicana de la Lengua.



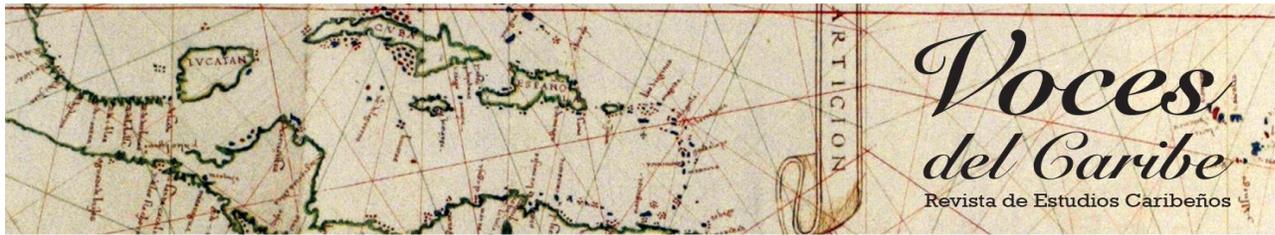


inequality in the Dominican Republic. In this novel, the city of Santo Domingo is characterized as a chaotic space full of injustice where the basic rights of citizens are violated.

Therefore, this essay will consider the representation of violence in the city. To illustrate how violence is enacted in various levels in this narrative, it is important to consider an intersectional approach. Feminist and social critic Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, points out that the theory of intersectionality allows us to study the overlapping intersecting social identities and related systems of oppression and discrimination. According to Crenshaw in her article, “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color”: “Race, gender, and other identity categories are most often treated in mainstream liberal discourse as intrinsically negative frameworks in which social power works to exclude or marginalize those who are different” (93). For Crenshaw, the focus on the intersections of race, gender and class highlight the need grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed. For that reason, analyzing violence through an intersectional approach by specifically focusing on class and gender in this text, will illustrate how violence and power are interconnected.

In order to display violence in this novel and demonstrate how social and economic inequality enables violence in the Dominican Republic, I will examine the different types of violence that exist in Santo Domingo by mainly focusing on violence that is performed in

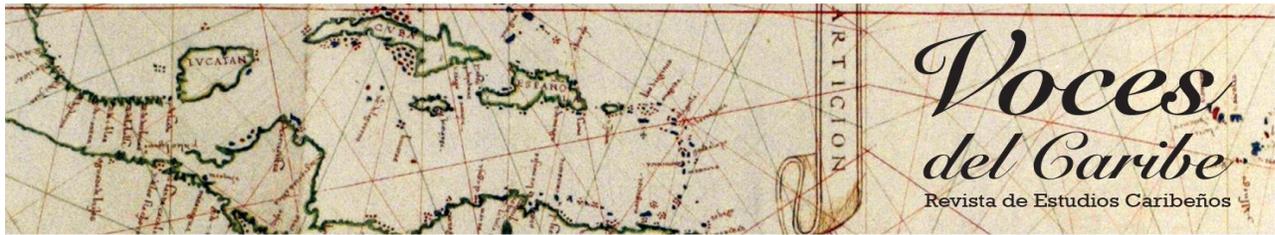




public and private spaces. Additionally, the evaluation of the main characters, Burundi and Chucha, will illustrate gender relations and display gendered violence in Dominican society. Ultimately, by situating the novel in an urban context, it is evident that the theme of violence is used by the author in order to provide a critique and understanding of power relations among the State and society. Violence therefore is promoted and perpetuated through gender inequality in the Dominican Republic.

Everyday life in the Dominican Republic is full of acts of violence both at the collective and individual levels. Various factors contribute to the presence of violence in daily life. In the article “Violence in Dominican Society” (2010) published in the Dominican newspaper *Hoy* lists reasons for this violence. In the Dominican Republic, physical, verbal and psychological violence is used to manage conflict among parents, children and other family members. Similarly, a man’s masculinity is reaffirmed at times, through the violence he uses against women. It is because of this that the construction of masculinity in the Dominican Republic is embedded in violence. Violence is also prevalent in this country because different power structures within the State use violence through various institutions. For example, the police and the military use violence against citizens that break the law and provide a model for society to perpetuate it. Consequently, the lack of security felt among citizens because of theft,





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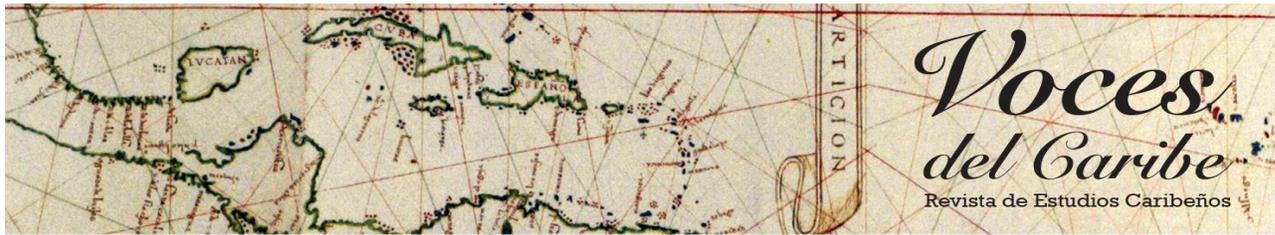
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burglary and other crimes, generates fear and distrust towards the State, forcing many to take justice into their own hands.

In *Cóctel con frenesí* violence is seen through various levels of the text. The main type of violence seen in this novel is Structural violence. This type of violence describes the social arrangements that put populations and individuals in harm's way. It is structural because it is embedded in the political and economic organization of the social world. Similarly, structural violence is often economically driven and these processes and forces conspire to constrain individual and collective agency. Structural violence can also be categorized by geographic locale (urban versus rural). In this novel, the first act of violence (which is gender based) is enacted in a rural space (the countryside) but is heightened in the city. Although structural violence can be invisible at times, it can also include social and domestic violence. Social violence occurs between individuals that are not related and is seen in public spaces. Whereas domestic violence occurs between individuals that are related (spouse, girlfriend, family) and is mostly seen in private spaces. Thus, this novel navigates the conflict between the individual and collective society and the violence that is produced between them.

In addition to structural violence, the Dominican Republic is a nation where violence against women is rampant and on the rise. An article in the British newspaper The Guardian entitled, "The Dominican Republic's epidemic of domestic violence" (2010) calls attention to

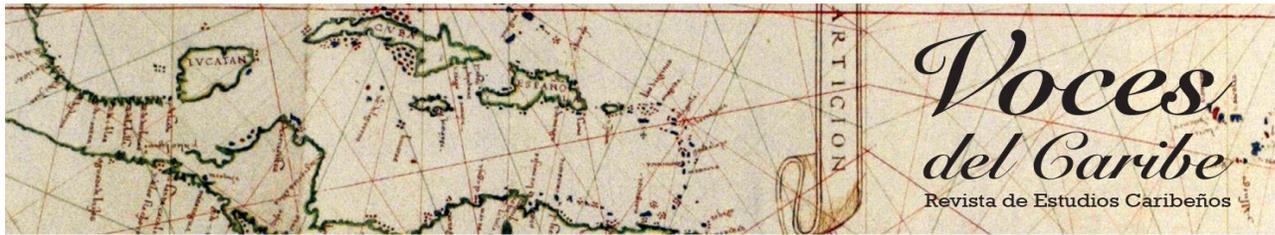




the fact that violence against women is exacerbated by machismo, misogyny and the subjugation of women being embedded in the culture. Women are vulnerable to violence because of their social and economic status in society. The article states that:” Economic disparity puts women in a vulnerable position because it renders them powerless and, in an abusive situation, complicates the process of leaving” (Lugo 1). According to Dominican author Jeanette Miller, gendered violence is a recurring theme in Dominican literature: “La violencia de género en la literatura es una proyección de la misma vida, de una cotidianidad pautada por distintas formas de abuso; desde el físico hasta el psicológico, y todo esto como producto de una base cultural, entendida la cultura como unas formas y hábitos de comportamientos que vienen de atrás” (1). This quote demonstrates that the theme of violence within Dominican literature is a projection of what happens in everyday life. Now that we are aware of the types of violence that occur in the Dominican Republic, it is crucial to identify what role urbanism and cities play within violence.

In the introduction of *Encounters with Violence in Latin America* (2003), urban violence is described as having particular characteristics that tend to link crime with poverty. Gender based violence such as murder, assaults and rape are often more common in urban centers (8). Rodrigo Soares claims that within cities, violence levels vary according to socio-economic groups and across time and space. “Violence is often geographically concentrated in poor,

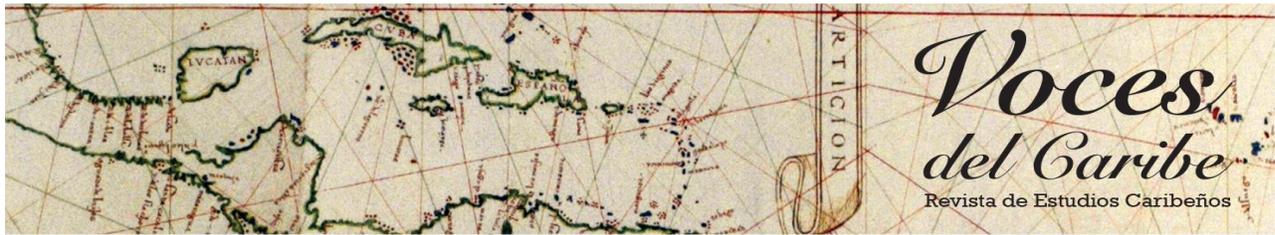




marginalized informal settlements, located on the peripheries of cities in areas lacking resources to control it” (2). In addition, a report commissioned by the World Bank entitled “Violence in the City” (2011), affirms that urban violence has increased because of urbanization in the last decade, and that some cities, especially in Latin America, are struggling with high levels of violence that undermine the very foundations of the economic and social development of the entire population” (2). According to anthropologist Oscar Lewis, the psychological inability of some individuals to cope with economic instability causes them to commit acts of violence. Therefore, violence can be rooted in inequality and poverty considering that it allows for the conditions of the urban poor to heighten the potential for violence. In *Cóctel con frenesí* structural violence is intensified by poverty, social inequality and gender relations.

This novel tells the story of Burundi, a homeless man who flees the countryside to the city of Santo Domingo after murdering his wife. In the city, Burundi seeks refuge from his violent past, but instead, finds himself in an environment that reproduces violence. The structure of the novel allows for a complete description of society within a city because individual characters are blended with a collective. The novel begins and ends at noon which makes the narration cyclical. The main story of Burundi is alternated with short stories of other Dominicans that live on the island and in the diaspora. These collective stories reveal the daily

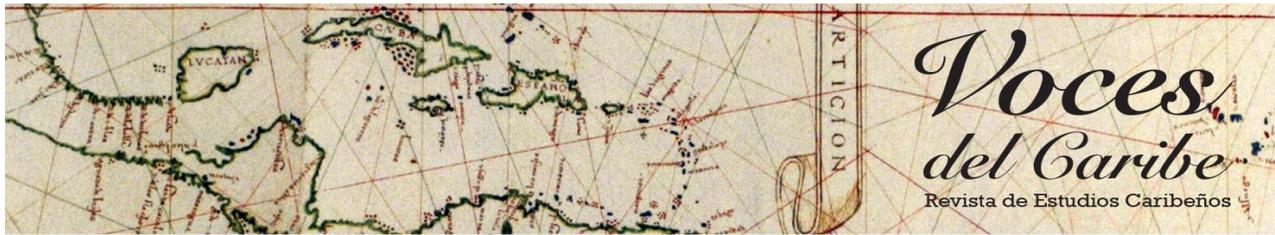




life situations of people. The characters come from different backgrounds, professions, races and ages. According to critic Sara Rosell, this creates a “mosaic of the city” (84). Each short story is entitled with italics that consist of one word. For example: *Doblez* (Double), *Hoguera* (Fire), *Oposición* (Opposition), *Resignación* (Resignation), *Despedida* (Farewell), *Desliz* (Error), *Hostilidad* (Hostility), *Sequía* (Drought). The titles of these stories correspond with Burundi’s narrative. As a result, these stories seem to resemble ingredients for a cocktail that are intertwined. For this reason, the structure of the novel allows for the representation of different voices in the city and various forms of violence in the city.

The city that is represented in *Cóctel con frenesí* is Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic which is the center of economic, social and cultural power. This city is characterized as being spatially fragmented. Urban sociologist Haroldo Dilla Alfonso describes Santo Domingo as: “En realidad es una ciudad esquizofrénica, bipolar, con una modernidad epidérmica e insuficiente, atada a (y lastrada por) la depauperación social y el deterioro ambiental” (21). The urban schizophrenia that distinguishes this city is due to the unsteady and rapid process of urbanization. The city is organized in different areas that reflect the social stratification of society. In Santo Domingo, different social classes coexist even though they are economically and racially segregated. The upper middle class neighborhoods are equipped with services such as paved streets, schools, supermarkets, running water, private hospitals and



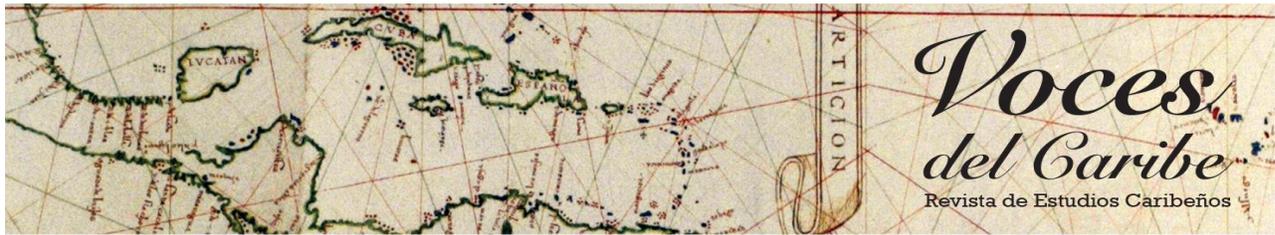


electricity, whereas the lower class or poorer neighborhoods have scarce services unpaved streets, few schools, no hospitals, water or electricity. Moreover, urban stratification establishes a fragmented society and exclusion of people in the city.

In “Social Exclusion and Space” (1998) Ali Madanipour asserts that social exclusion in the city is based on three main factors: lack of employment, lack of political representation and marginalization within a cultural and discursive context. (187). The exclusion of certain groups or people in the city is based on classifications between race, class, and gender as well as nationality, religion and sexual orientation. “The division of social life into public and private spheres means drawing boundaries around some spatial and temporal domain that excludes others” (189).

In *Cóctel con frenesí* Santo Domingo is represented throughout the text in diverse urban settings. The author uses a rich poetic language to describe the violent environment with its different movements, sounds, smells and darkness. At the beginning of the text the city is described as a nauseating lake. “Santo Domingo era un lago nauseabundo” (8). Describing the city as a nauseating lake allows the reader to experience Santo Domingo through the point of view of the main character Burundi, who embodies what Walter Benjamin refers to as a



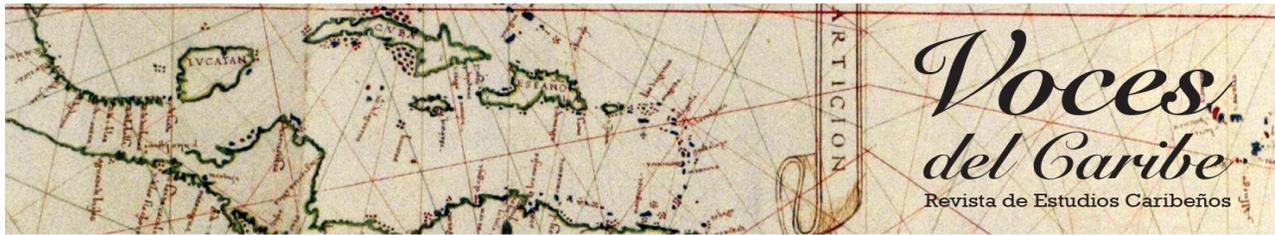


*flaneur*². Burundi is an “expert observer of the urban scene, translating the chaotic fragmentary city into an understandable and familiar space” (Benjamin 6).

In order to understand how violence is embodied in the city, it is important to define space within urbanism. Space can be defined as a physical place demarcated by activities that are performed by the people that occupy that it. Space can also be seen as constructed out of the multiplicity of social relations across all spatial scales. It is produced not only in the political and economic processes, but in the practices and power relations of everyday life including gender relations (Koskela 112). In *Cóctel con frenesí* there is a need to establish spaces within the city that take into consideration the people that are not visible to the rest of society. These heterogeneous spaces give voice to a population that is otherwise invisible to the rest of society. In the *Production of Space* (1991), Henri Lefebvre asserts that social space is where daily life and social order are created. Within social space, hierarchies between different social classes are inscribed because societies create their own space. In this novel, space can be divided between public and private. Public space is classified as a social

² *Flaneur* is the French word for walker, stroller and is associated with the man of leisure and the urban explorer. During the 19th century, the *flaneur* became an important literary figure of the time but was later reclaimed by Walter Benjamin during the 20th century to become the emblematic figure of the urban modern experience.

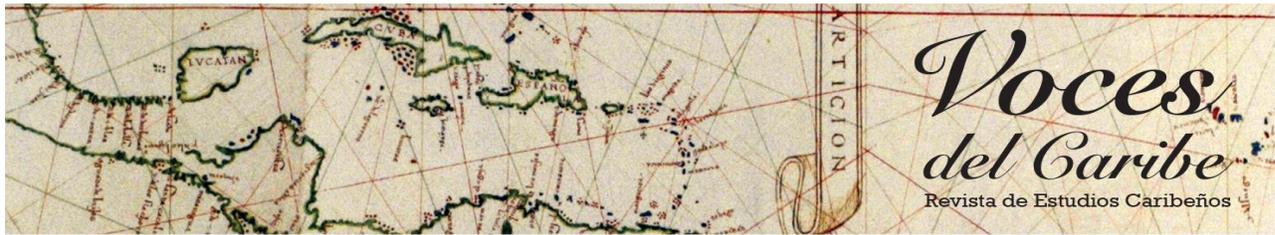




space that is generally open and accessible to all people and it includes roads, streets, parks, and squares. Private space is closed and is considered a social space like the home. Private space can also be psychological because it envelops the actions and conflicts of the characters. In both public and private spaces structural violence is embodied in the city and performed through the main characters of Burundi and Chucha.

The main character Burundi, is a man whose basic needs and desires are not met. He is described in the text as: “Era un hombre pequeño y esmirriado con los ojos pequeños, la nariz achatada, los labios gruesos y el pelo crespo. En suma era un hombrecito de apariencia normal. Anodino, amargado y arisco” (39). Burundi decides to leave the countryside for the city in order to flee from his violent past. “Un día decidió trasladarse a Santo Domingo y convertirse en un vendedor callejero. Su existencia no tenía sentido. Vivía porque carecía de valor para acabar con su infierno” (96). Upon his arrival in Santo Domingo, Burundi is living in an environment that perpetuates rivalry and conflict among all members of society. Violence is something that Burundi has experienced throughout his whole life, as a result of being beaten as a child by his grandmother. “Guardaba de ella malos recuerdos. Aún tenía en su cuerpo las huellas de los golpes que le propinaba cuando era niño y bien podía desde el más allá lastimarlo otra vez.” (46). The only way that Burundi resolves conflict in his life is through the physical

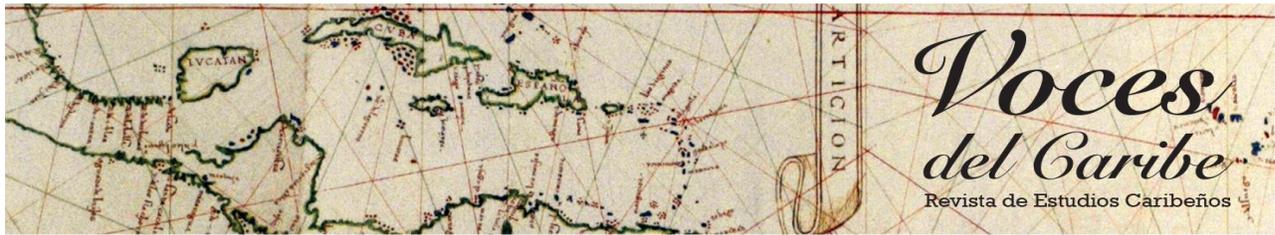




and verbal violence against women but subsequently he is also a victim of violence in the public spaces of Santo Domingo.

Violence is performed in public spaces by the police who represent the State. In a powerful scene at the beginning of the novel, Burundi is walking in the Zona Colonial and needs to use the bathroom, but he is denied entrance in the restaurants and bars because he is a homeless. “Sabía que nadie le permitiría entrar en el baño de una cafetería o un edificio” (20). Burundi decides to go to a public place (a plaza) and urinate on the statue of an important historical figure in Dominican history. “A las siete de la noche, Burundi se hallaba parado en las proximidades del parque Colón. La plaza estaba un poco iluminada... tuvo fuertes deseos de orinar. Se alivió. Cuando se cubría con el pantalón la mano pesada, fuerte y enérgica se posó con brusquedad sobre su hombro izquierdo” (20). As Burundi tries to explain to the police why he is urinating in a public park, the police inflict physical violence on him: “¡Hay que castigarlo! Es un bandido. Tiene que aprender. ¡Límpíame los zapatos sucios! ¡Perro, límpíame los zapatos! De repente, sintió un golpe y fue derribado por la bofetada. Ya en el suelo, la policía le pateó la espalda...” (22). The police believe that they have to punish Burundi because he is a vagabond and they force him to clean their shoes with his tongue. Burundi is treated like an animal by the police and they equate him to a dog. In this example, we see how violence is executed by the State. The police exert their power over Burundi because they are trying to



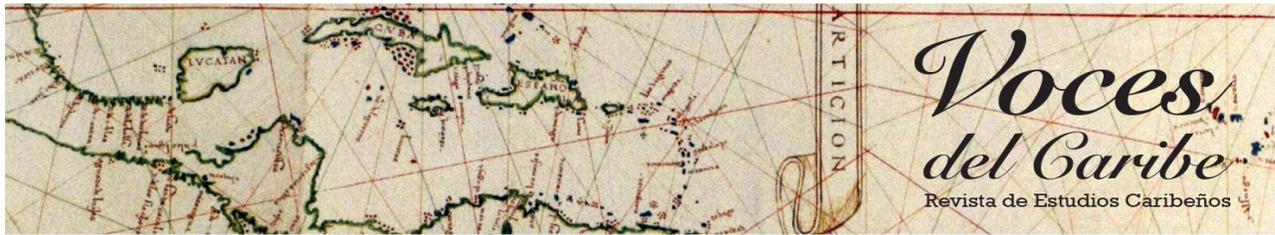


maintain order in public areas of the city. They see him as a threat to the social order of the city. Even though Burundi cannot use public bathrooms because of his status in society, he tries to break the social order by trying to use and claim the public space of Santo Domingo.

Throughout the text, we see how the State continuously uses psychological violence against Burundi because they do not accept him as a productive member of society and continuously reject him. Burundi undergoes economic discrimination (because he is unemployed) and cultural exclusion (because he is marginalized from the dominant culture). He is seen as something that is disposable and throughout the narration, he becomes aware of how society views and rejects him because of his social and economic status. Burundi maintains and asserts power through violence but is barred and pushed out of his society and not even considered a citizen. For this reason, Burundi perpetuates violence because his desires are not met.

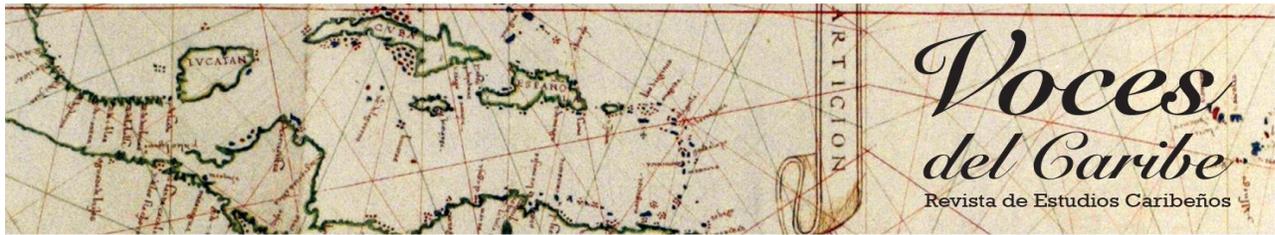
In Santo Domingo, Burundi tries to destabilize social order in the city, by trying to claim public space as his own as he spends his days walking through the streets of the city looking for work and observing everyday violence in the city. “Burundi observaba con atención, las caras furiosas, los ojos brillantes y los puños cerrados golpeando pómulos y pechos. Uno tenía la mejilla partida y el otro presentaba dificultad para patear” (120). Everywhere he walks, Burundi cannot escape the violence, he sees it in the face of children,





between men and women and becomes a victim himself. The marginalization, exclusion and discrimination that he feels in the city eventually drive Burundi mad. For days he wanders the main avenues and parks eventually ending up in the periphery. Burundi is filled with so much guilt and shame and feels completely alienated by everyone and everything and in the private space of his home he faces psychological violence. Throughout the novel, Burundi maintains an internal conflict of hatred, disillusion and frustration in the private space of his mind. This is a result of the environment conditioning Burundi's thoughts and interactions and the people that surround him both on the streets and in his home. It is only in the privacy of his shack that Burundi can find refuge and peace from the structural violence of the city. "Allí al menos, podía encontrar soledad. Esas paredes débiles y levantadas con cartones y hojalatas, estaban impregnadas por la humedad, las sombras, tragedias y nostalgias, pero lo protegían de sus semejantes" (11). In the private space, Burundi can keep maintain the secret of his past hidden but in Santo Domingo he is constantly tormented. Burundi's mental state worsens when he meets Chucha. The narrator describes Burundi's psychological state: "Su mente era una maraña" (17). Burundi's biggest fear is that Chucha will abandon him: "¡Cómo lo aprisionaba esa implacable sensación de abandono! ¡No soportaba más!" (88). After Chucha leaves him, Burundi decides to destroy the shack by burning it down. "Con la moribunda claridad, desapareció por un enredo de cañadas y callejones. Atrás las llamas y las lamentaciones. Atrás





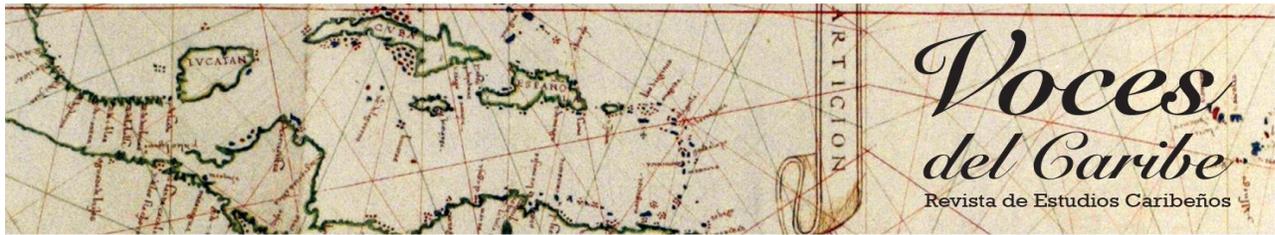
las cubetas de agua cayendo sobre el fuego” (100). Now Burundi’s psychological state of mind has transgressed to the public space of the city where he believes he can find peace. But the street torments and consumes him: “la calle lo atormentaba” (102).

The psychological violence that Burundi inflicts upon himself leads him to make a decision. He decides to live on the street, but his mental and physical health continues to decline. His attitude changes and he is filled with hatred for everyone and everything.

“Detestaba el aire, los vehículos que transitaban por las cercanías a gran velocidad y las gruesas siluetas que cada mañana hacían ejercicios enfundadas en sudadores. Odiaba ese sol inmenso, pleno que precipitaba sus rayos implacables sobre su piel. No obstante, no tenía escapatoria” (103). In his desperate attempt to find peace and freedom, Burundi leaves the streets of Santo Domingo and heads to the dumpster in the outskirts of the city. “Había llegado a ese lugar sin saber a que había ido. Simplemente sus pasos lo condujeron allí. Basura y más basura.

Montañas, mares inmensos de desperdicios, latas viejas, periódicos amarillentos y cáscaras de fruta, donde navegaban niños, una piara, perros realengos, ratas y adultos de apariencia miserable” (126). The dumpster represents Burundi’s physical and mental space as the city slowly pushes him out and how it allegorically represents the accumulation of violence that is never-ending.

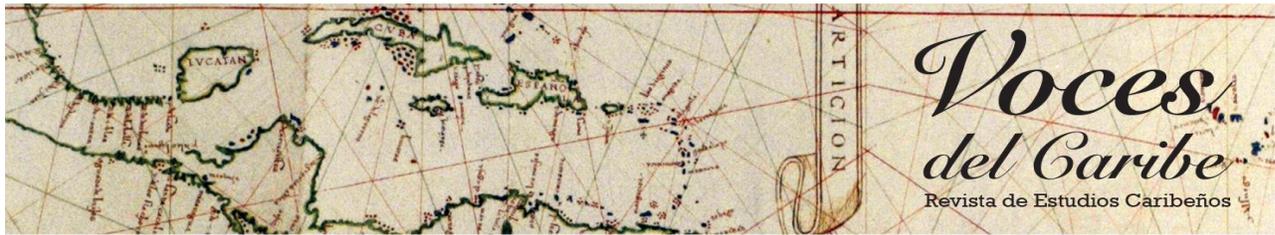




Burundi reflects on his life while he is walking through the dumpster and he decides that no one would touch or speak to him. He walks towards the pier (the farthest point from the center of the city) and throws himself into the ocean. “No pensó nada, Sólo el final, cuando comenzó a rodar y su cuerpo estaba al borde de las rocas salpicadas por el agua salada, emergió la imagen de Chucha y pronunció su nombre. Después cayó como un bulto pesado sobre la masa grisácea. Un sonido. Un golpe. Luego la nada. Sólo el líquido en movimiento. Las olas espumosas” (134). In this climactic ending to the novel, Burundi’s suicide is not a spectacle because even though it takes place in a public place, it does not affect the city or its inhabitants. No one even seems to notice. “Ni un sonido provocado por las llantas. Ni una voz. Ni unos pasos corriendo hacia el acantilado. Las palmeras se mecieron. El sol continuó reinando en lo alto, con resplandores nuevos y la mágica intensidad caribeña. La ciudad se queda en silencio y la gente sigue su camino sin importarle nada” (133). In this final scene, the city continues as the inhabitants of Santo Domingo continue their daily routine without caring about Burundi’s death. Consequently, suicide and acts of violence seem so common and familiar that society is apathetic towards people they do not consider to be a part of society.

The character of Chucha is also important in the novel because her relationship with Burundi represents gender relations and gendered violence in the Dominican Republic. The relationship between these two characters reinforces subordination and inequality, even though

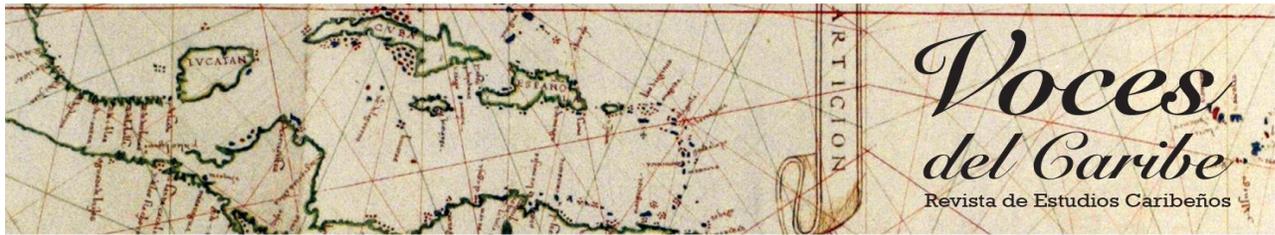




the novel places them at the same level. Burundi exercises power over and carries out physical and psychological violence against Chucha in the private space of the home. The shack where they live is described as: “Fuera de esas paredes delgadas y maltrechas, del techo tizado, de las rendijas tapadas con papel periódico, no había nada. Chucha hacía esfuerzos para no hablar. Trataba de permanecer calladas porque había observado que Burundi se enervaba cuando escuchaba su voz”(56). In this quote, we notice how Burundi silences Chucha through psychological and physical violence within the space of the home. If Chucha speaks, her voice will provoke a violent reaction from Burundi since she reminds him of the wife he killed.

In her article, “Gendered Exclusions: Women’s fear of violence and changing relations to space” (1999) Hille Koskela states that the majority of crimes of violence are committed within the confines of home and many women experience more fear in private spaces. (118). The home or the shack where Burundi and Chucha live represent the private space where gendered violence will occur. As Sibley affirms in *Geographies of Exclusion. Society and Difference* the home is, in many ways, an important context for the exercise of power: in relation to power and exclusion, public and private space can be seen as ‘reciprocally conditioned’ (77). At the same time violence in private space is often invisible, and is sometimes regarded as a non-political private matter but it can occur in both rural and urban



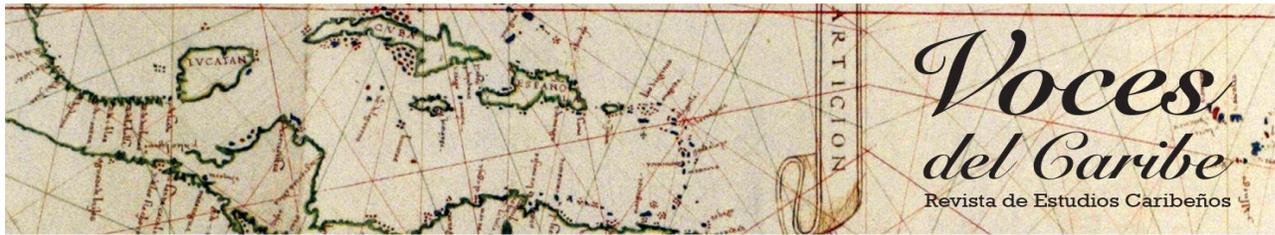


spaces. The threat of violence in private space can seriously shape women's experiences of space and place in general (Pain 1997).

Chucha, just like Burundi, has moved to the Santo Domingo looking for a better life. At fourteen, she decides to leave the countryside, where she has spent her childhood poor and physically and verbally abused by her aunt. “Histórica, la tía la maldijo y la golpeó. Chucha recibió los correazos y las bofetadas sin llorar” (67). Chucha believes that by starting over in Santo Domingo, she will be able to escape the violence that surrounds her.

Alone in the city, Chucha is mesmerized and at the same time frightened by the urban space that surrounds her. In the city, Chucha experiences increased feelings of fear and vulnerability because she is in a new environment. “El conductor la dejó en el centro de Santo Domingo. Y de pronto, Chucha se encontró en medio de las luces, de los desconocidos que iban y venían, de la ciudad bulliciosa, y abigarrada, iluminada por cientos de bombillas” (68). Chucha tries to work as hard as she can to make ends meet but does not have sufficient money to survive and she sleeps on the street. This causes Chucha to feel vulnerable and unsafe on the street. “Those who suffer the most oppression—who most often feel marginalized and helpless—are the ones who are most afraid” (Koskela 118). However, Chucha is determined to make it in the city and never go back to her violent past. “Chucha no podía volver atrás. Nadie reparaba en su figura delgada, recortada contra los graffitis” (69). Even



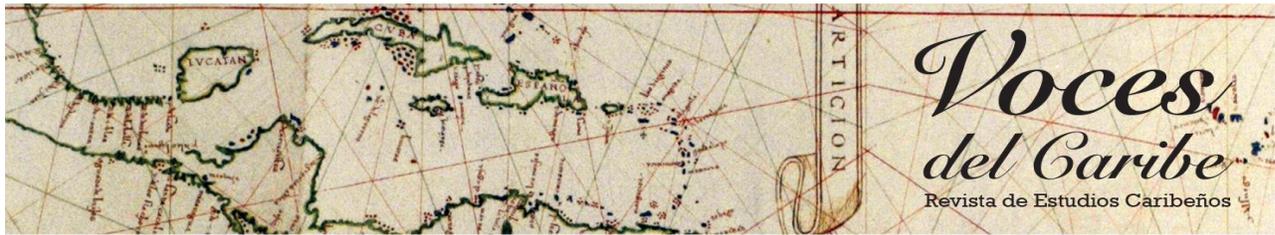


though Chucha has hope of a better life in the city, she does not realize that Santo Domingo is a place where violence is reproduced and that Burundi will pose a threat to her.

Chucha spends her days in public parks and streets selling flowers to the tourists that visit the Zona Colonial. It is here in this public space where Burundi and Chucha meet one night. After seeing Chucha, Burundi feels melancholic and nostalgic because Chucha reminds him of his wife. Chucha is described as being Burundi's equal because she understands him and has similar life experiences. "Había un punto de identificación entre ellos, una similitud. Se movían en la misma zona. Él, con sus baratijas; ella, con sus flores" (72). The affinity between Burundi and Chucha is based on the fact that both come to the city to erase their violent past and begin a new life. Chucha and Burundi have an immediate connection and Chucha no longer feels alone or unsafe in the city now that she has met Burundi.

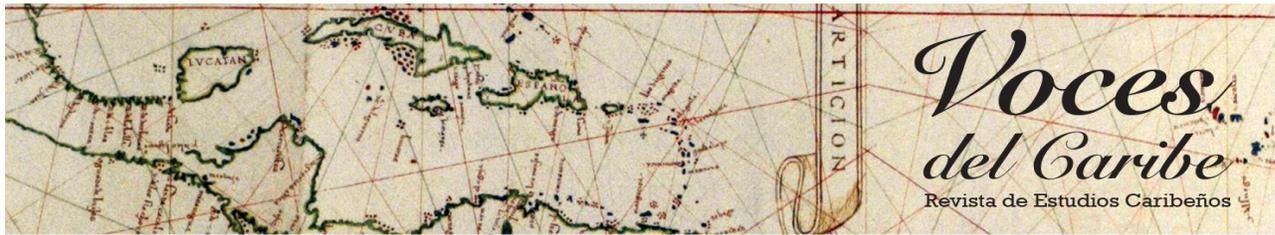
In *Cóctel con frenesí*, gender violence is inflicted in private spaces by the main character, Burundi. Domestic violence also known as intimate partner violence is violence by a spouse or partner in an intimate relationship. This type of violence can include physical, emotional, economic and sexual abuse. Before arriving to Santo Domingo, Burundi murders his wife because he finds her with another man. "La agarró por el cuello y la golpeó con el puño mil veces. Aterrada, ella vio la hoja metálica, lanzó alaridos, pidió clemencia, pero Burundi no escuchaba. Solo reconstruyó su sonrisa hipócrita, su cara engañosa, su voz falaz.





¡Maldita! Grito y abrió sus carnes hasta que ella se desplomo” (94). In his relationship with Chucha, Burundi reproduces acts of violence from his past relationship. He copes with his rage and dissatisfaction with his life by beating Chucha. His beatings and insults seem automatic and calculated. “Sin pensarlo, la empujó y escuchó el chirrido de la madera rozando con el pequeño muro de cemento. De sopetón Burundi la agarró y le torció el brazo. Ella no pudo esquivar los puñetazos lanzados con energía contra su rostro.” (59). Throughout their relationship, Chucha continues to tolerate Burundi’s violence but one day she decides it is time for her to leave. “Estaba decidida a marcharse. Tan fuerte era su voluntad, tan intensa su cólera que rompió la puerta al salir. Cuando Burundi se percató de que se iba, se incorporó de manera violenta y la sujetó por el brazo, pero ella se zafó y echó a correr” (82). Once Chucha leaves, Burundi becomes obsessed and looks for her throughout the city. Now without a home, Chucha is left to wander the streets of Santo Domingo and becomes more vulnerable to sexual violence from other men. In one scene, fearing for her life she says: “¡Váyanse, malditos, lárguense, déjenme sola! Luego fue quebrada por el terror y disuelta por los aires de la madrugada. ¡Putas, putas! vocearon” (111). The six men that confront her on the street verbally attack her by calling Chucha a whore. Eventually they rip her clothes, expose her naked body and gang rape her. Chucha is traumatized from this event and never recuperates spending the rest of her days enduring violence from everyone that surrounds her in different places throughout the city. As



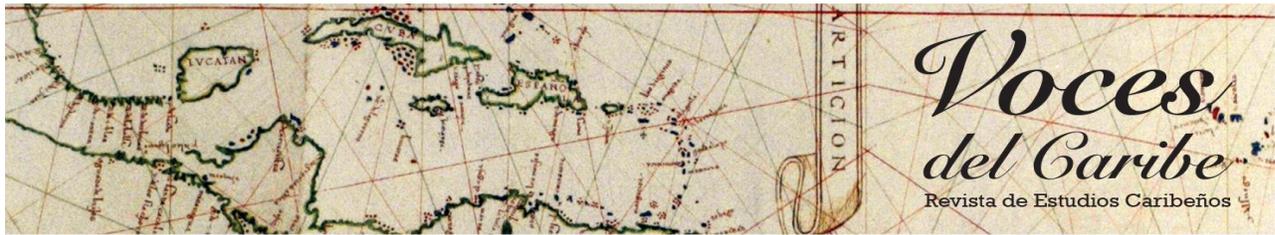


a result of being alone and unprotected in Chucha is killed in front of a store in Santo Domingo. Burundi discovers her lifeless body as he walks on the street one day and sees a crowd emerge. “Temblando entre la gente llena de estupor, entre el publica de bocas abiertas, alcanzo a ver a una mujer lastimada... Chucha era esa mujer ensangrentada, casi inerte. Estaba sobre un lecho de vidrios rotos. A su lado, un ramo de azucenas y dos claveles deshojados.” (121). Chucha’s death is seen as a spectacle where the public just gazes at her dead body.

As mentioned, Chucha’s move from the countryside to the city does not allow her to change her economic and social status; much less give her a chance of having a better quality of life. Therefore, the city of Santo Domingo becomes the space that Chucha eventually succumbs to the ultimate act of violence: murder. Chucha is killed in part because her life has no value and she has no sense of belonging in society. At the same time, we see how Chucha is silenced by the violence that is inflicted upon her by her family, her partner and her society. In this novel, she represents the many silent voices of women who experience gendered violence, unemployment and exclusion.

Both Burundi and Chucha believe that Santo Domingo will provide a change to the social and economic situation that they encounter because they consider the city to be a place full of opportunity, safety and acceptance. In spite of this belief, both characters end up encountering such diverse and complex forms of violence in Santo Domingo and end up dead.

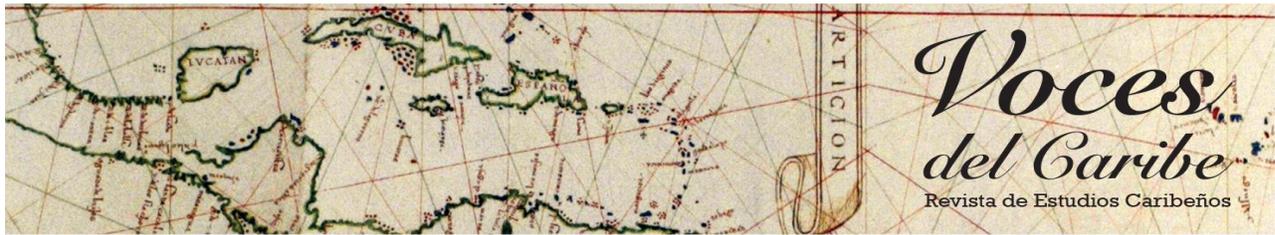




Neither of their deaths causes concern for the rest of society and it perpetuates a never-ending cycle of violence. The implications of gender relations are reinforced by the violence imposed and enforced by Burundi towards Chucha. In *Cóctel con frenesí* the author contemplates gender equality by placing Burundi and Chucha on the same level and succeeds given that both characters are persecuted by the structural violence of the city.

Cóctel con frenesí is an example of a contemporary postmodern narrative that situates the theme of violence in an urban context in order to identify how Structural violence is as a social pathology in the Dominican Republic. The author establishes a socio-economic and cultural problem within society by framing the narrative within an urban space in order to show that violence has become normalized, has no consequences and is an essential part of functioning society. Urban violence simply becomes a pattern that repeats itself in cyclical form throughout the different public and private spaces of the city. The city of Santo Domingo becomes a place where violence incites social, economic and gendered inequalities and emerges into a character in the novel. The spatial structure of the novel allows the reader to have different points of view both from the individual characters and the collective society. By focusing on the characterization of Burundi and Chucha the author identifies the social practices and gender relations that exist. Both Burundi and Chucha are crucial to the narration because they represent the silent and marginalized voices within Dominican society even





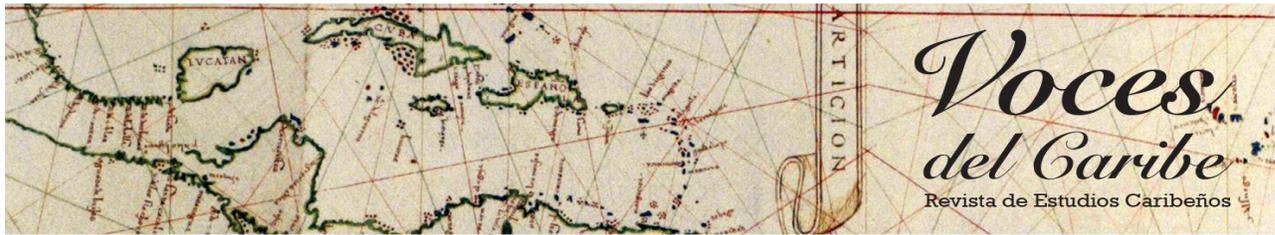
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though their lives end because of violence. Although the author presents a negative account of the city, I believe that she is providing readers with a clear vision of the social injustices and abuses of power that surround the social pathology that is violence. In conclusion, *Cóctel con frenesí* is a cultural product that can raise awareness and provide a space for dialogue and criticism on how the State ultimately exercises power through violence in order to control a society.

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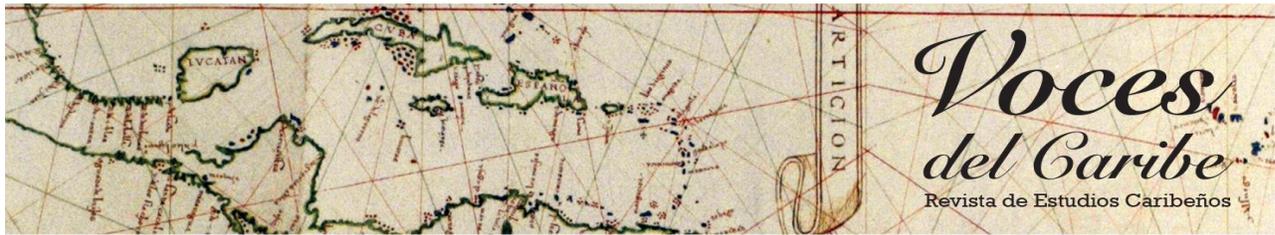
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¹ The concept of social pathology applies the medical metaphor of pathology to describe and explain social problems. From this perspective those individuals and groups who deviate from





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social norms, or institutions that do not fit with core social norms, are “sick” or pathologic and a risk to the society's “health.”

