

## WALKING OUT ON LANGUAGE: VERBAL SPACES IN JUNOT DÍAZ'S "INVIERNO"

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### ABSTRACT:

Junot Díaz has gained much attention for his pervasive themes of social, cultural, and linguistic identity through his multilingual writing. In "Invierno," *This Is How You Lose Her* (2012), Díaz presents a crossing of spatial and verbal concepts that creates a system of isolation and oppression through a story of reclusion and imprisonment. This article places "Invierno" within a linguistic framework in which verbal, psychological, and physical categories involve movement, and thus, possess a spatial dimension. The multidisciplinary perspective from which this story is analyzed reveals the notion of imprisonment as a complex and dynamic interplay of the material and the immaterial, the physical, and the verbal. This analysis rests on Foucault's theories of knowledge and power, as well as on van Dijk and Fairclough's developments in critical discourse analysis, and de Certeau's concepts of language spaces.

### RESUMEN:

La prosa multilingüe de Junot Díaz se distingue por abordar temas de gran actualidad como el de la identidad plasmada en su dimensión social, cultural y lingüística. En su relato "Invierno" publicado en *This is How You Lose Her* (2012), Díaz fusiona conceptos verbales y espaciales que generan un sistema de aislamiento y opresión a través de una historia que versa sobre la reclusión y la soledad. Este artículo intenta situar "Invierno" en un marco lingüístico en el que las categorías verbales, psicológicas y físicas implican movimiento y, por tanto, poseen una dimensión espacial. Este estudio intenta demostrar que el concepto de reclusión tiene una naturaleza compleja y dinámica basada en la tensión de lo material y lo inmaterial, lo físico y lo verbal. Adopta un enfoque interdisciplinario que conjuga las teorías del conocimiento y del poder de Foucault con los supuestos teóricos del

análisis crítico del discurso de van Dijk y Fairclough, y con las nociones de de Certeau sobre el espacio lingüístico.

*The act of walking is to the urban system as the speech act is to language or of statements uttered. At the most elementary level, it has a triple "enunciative" function: it is a process of appropriation of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian (just as the speaker appropriates and takes on the language); it is a spatial acting-out of the place (just as speech act is an acoustic acting-out of language); and it implies relations among differentiated positions, that is among pragmatic "constructs" in the form of movements (just as verbal enunciation is an "allocation" "posits another opposite" the speaker and puts contracts between interlocutors into action. It thus seems possible to give a preliminary definition of walking as a space of enunciation.*

Michel de Certeau, "Spatial Practices"

In his *Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau establishes an intricate 'relationship between linguistic acts and spatial acts. He places an 'enunciatory' function on the act of walking as he equates the movement of the body with the movement of language. The correlation between the acting-out of place and the acting-out of language underlines the interconnectivity of the spatial and the verbal. The conjunction of these two concepts creates a compound term that I would like to tentatively call "linguistic/verbal spaces." In this article I attempt to use "Invierno" from *This is How You Lose Her* (2012) as a case in point to demonstrate the congruence of language and space. These two concepts, and their contribution to cultural and individual identities, are ever-present in Latino literature, and seem to play an important role in the conflicts of diaspora. However, the notion of applying spatial concepts to language has not yet received substantial focus, and at present, is a rather innovative approach. In "Invierno," Díaz creates a character who is denied language and at the same time is imprisoned within the space of the family apartment. It is my contention that the inflection of the verbal and the spatial is at the heart of Junot Díaz's writing, as well as of his particular allocation of spaces and languages. Díaz has quickly become a significant literary figure for his unique approach to fiction, and for his characteristic multilingualism that directly influences inter-social and cultural identities within his work. In his narratives, he plays with language in a way that specifically draws attention to the implications of language use, and language-related identity, for his characters. At times, he focuses on the ways in which personal stories and national histories are repressed in silence, and the way in which identity is formed through artistically filling in these gaps, and giving voice to a once muted history (Hanna 499-500). At other times, Díaz suspends untranslated Spanish within an English text, which alludes to the uncomfortable confine of his characters in a multi-cultural and multi-lingual space (Calvo Manzananas 109). Díaz confronts the realities of displacement with characters that are in conflict with traditional identities, and at the same time, pushes his

monolingual readers to witness “the process that immigrant and ethnic literatures undergo as they carve their niche in the host society” (Moreno 103).

In “Invierno,” the crossing-over of the spatial and the verbal serves as a centering point for a systematic oppression of the characters within the story, and encrypts themes of migration and language acquisition on a broader scale. This paper argues that the verbal, psychological, and physical are agencies of power that all involve movement, and therefore are each able to occupy space. The multidisciplinary framework applied to the story reveals the notion of imprisonment as a complex and dynamic interplay of the material and the immaterial, the physical and the verbal. The framework reveals the fusion, or the crossing, of physical and linguistic spatial concepts that are seemingly on different planes. The space occupied is that of a ‘prison,’ which is maintained by physical force, natural boundaries, and linguistic oppression. These elements ultimately work together with paradoxical results that, in turn, lead to a final resolution, a resolution that seems to ‘free’ the characters from their prison. This analysis consists of a close reading of the text, and rests on theoretical frameworks such as Foucault’s notions of knowledge and power (1972, 1984, 1986), on van Dijk’s (1993, 1997, 2001) and Fairclough’s (1989, 2010) developments on critical discourse analysis and on the roles of social schemata, power and society, and also concepts of language spaces developed by de Certeau (1984).

## TANGIBLE SPACES

*There are not family type relationships and then, over and above them, mechanisms of power; there are not sexual relationships with, in addition, mechanisms of power alongside or above them. Mechanisms of power are an intrinsic part of all these relations and, in a circular way, are both their effect and cause.*

Michel Foucault “Security, territory and population”

The creation and the maintenance of the tangible spaces in “Invierno” are rooted in the concept of knowledge and power. Access to, and control over, knowledge confers the capacity to suppress others. Díaz’s story, narrated from the perspective of Yuniór, traces the first few months of his family’s move from the Dominican Republic to the U.S. in the middle of a harsh winter. The previously absent father brings his family to the new country in what a reader would at first assume to be a narrative of new-found freedom in a new land, but that quickly unfolds into a story of oppression and isolation.

The first space that Yuniór and his family experience upon arrival is that of the family apartment. Instead of being a refuge in an unfamiliar land, it rapidly mutates into a prison guarded by various types of wardens. In “Invierno,” in addition to the family home, the tangible spaces are delineated by the manmade and natural borders of the immediate environment. There are two wardens of these spaces who

ensure that the family is kept in their place. The first is ‘nature,’ which is personified through harsh weather conditions: a dominating force that is granted power through its uncontrollable properties. The ‘winter’ is also a typical symbol assigned to the U.S. in much of Latino writing and, in the story, serves to highlight the struggles of displacement and oppression in the new space. The second warden is the father, who maintains confinement through physical, linguistic and psychological oppression. In “Invierno,” the father plays the role of a key-holder of each of the different layers of tangible and intangible spaces. He is one and the same with the prison, as he is lord of the home that he transforms into a guarded compound. The outer border of what will become the family’s prison, and the warden-like power that the father possesses, is presented in the first lines of the story:

From the top of Westminster, our main strip, you could see the thinnest sliver of ocean cresting the horizon to the east. My father had been shown that sight—the management showed everyone—but as he drove us in from JFK he didn’t stop to point it out. The ocean might have made us feel better considering what else there was to see. (121)

The opening paragraph to “Invierno” is imbued with a foreshadowing of events, and sets a foundation of displacement and power dynamics, a precedence of confinement and loss of control. Díaz begins his story by highlighting an emotional extraction from the Caribbean. The sea that Yunior is not shown is a pervasive symbol in Latino literature, and in Caribbean culture, is a particularly unifying body and representative of home. The father dictates what his family can see as it is the father who has had full access to ‘seeing’ and ‘knowing’. He plays warden over the family keeping them from viewing the sea, which is the only entity that connects the family back to their origins. Michel de Certeau, in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, describes power relations of society with an analogy that unfolds the voyeuristic motives behind city planning and the construction of skyscrapers. He states that the desire to ‘see’ is the desire to ‘know’ and is the “exaltation of a scopic and gnostic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to [the] lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more” (92). De Certeau, as will be discussed in more depth later, is equating the infrastructure of the city to the human interactions and communication methods of those that inhabit the space. Knowledge correlates to power through a visual notion and, therefore, the lack of seeing is equated to ignorance as powerlessness. De Certeau criticizes the powerful by assigning them a view-seeking Icarian fate, and poetically creates an academic argument of the distinction between strategies and tactics. A strategy is described as relating to a previously established, or constructed space. It is a static and concrete top-down perspective of the powerful. Tactics here are the practices of daily life that interact and engage with the structure. They involve movement, negotiation, and manipulation of space. Tactics are methods of those who struggle to gain control in a confined situation (Massey 46). De Certeau’s

concepts of 'seeing' and 'knowing' also hover over the relationships between space and its inhabitants in Díaz's story in that Yuniór's father is in control of what the family is able to see. He was granted the privilege to see the ocean, yet he denies his family the same opportunity. His denial of de Certeau's 'viewpoint' to his family is the first step he takes to ensure their ignorance, and to solidify his control over them. He is creating another type of boundary of oppression around his wife and children. The inability to see what is in the immediate environment around the home—the ignorance that comes from blindness—acts as a metaphysical moat around the prison of the home. The opening paragraph, however, is only the beginning of what will develop into a complex and systematic control over knowledge on the part of the father.

In Díaz's story, the knowledge/power tandem is played out on a microcosmic level where the father emerges as the power-figure, who not only forces physical restrictions on his sons, but also regulates their access to knowledge. He inhibits their source of power and, in effect, renders them dependent on him, which in turn reinforces his position. A deeper correlation of knowledge and power is seen in Michel Foucault's arguments when he describes power as an agency which is all-pervasive, and claims that the relationship between power and knowledge is complementary. His theories focus on the psychology of society in relation to hierarchies and social systems. His contention is that knowledge is the agency that moves, places, or displaces group members amongst each other. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault states that: "there is no power relation without the correlative constricting of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (27). His claims rest on the notion that Power is generated in relation to the other; one member has power when the other lacks, and knowledge acquired through this power, in turn, maintains this distinction. Therefore, Knowledge and Ignorance are actions, they are what push and pull societal members.

Upon arrival to the home, the father shows the family "how to flush the toilets, run the sinks, and start the shower" (Díaz 122). He spends a "great deal of his home time downstairs with his books or in front of the TV" (125). The behaviors of the father might seem quite practical as the family would need to understand how the basic mechanisms of the home function since they will be living there. However, this section subtly sets up a contrast of knowledge and ignorance, it sets a precedence of what is to come. When young Yuniór cannot master the skill of tying his shoes, his father berates him and emphasizes his ignorance: "I met some dumb men in the Guardia, Papi said, but every single one of them could tie his motherfucking shoes" (126). The father also physically oppresses his keep with corporal punishment and intimidation. None of the members of the family are allowed outside, disobedience is not tolerated, and infractions are met with "whole afternoons on Punishment Row" where the children are forced into solitary

confinement, or worse, “forced to kneel down on the cutting side of a coconut grater” only to be let up when they are “bleeding and whimpering” (130). Later, further images of organized incarceration are developed when Yunior is forced to have his head shaved by his father. In part, the head-shaving episode highlights issues of identity, and distancing of multi-racial heritage, commonly featured in Latino writing. Yunior’s “pelo malo” is a physical reminder of his African heritage, something that is often rejected in traditional Dominican identity, and is a common theme in diasporic literature. This scene may be interpreted as a tactic of racial distancing in which Yunior is engaged in a conflict of identity, yet is not granted a choice in his struggle. Yunior is experiencing a loss of control, and laments “I watched the clippers plow through my hair, watched my scalp appear, tender and defenseless. [...] I was sick to my stomach; I didn’t want him to shave it but what could I have said to my father?” (128) From another perspective, the episode is a mark of humiliation and subordination. It is an automatic manifestation of imprisonment, and is a type of psychological influence that reinforces the physical abuse of power.

The force of nature is an additional oppressor, one that represents another plane of space but on a different hierarchical level. For the immigrant, the weather appears as an insurmountable force which is unforgiving; an intolerable cold that permeates through the house and creates an invisible border pushing the family further into the prison of the home and keeps them disconnected from the outside. Yunior describes the area surrounding his house where the grass “poked out of the snow in dead tufts” (121). One of the first images that is presented is that of almost a barbed-wire of dead grass that threatens a trespasser. It is a force that affects the children, the “spiky sunflowers in need of light” (123), most of all. It also provides an image of the snow—the winter—as something that kills the green of life. As mentioned previously, the winter is a common symbol of the U.S., and in this story, alludes to the angst of displacement from the Dominican Republic and loss of freedom in the new land. Nature here is also another sort of warden; winter is deadening, it is a confining force that destroys vitality, and induces fear: “I was watching the snow sift over itself, terrified, and my brother was cracking his knuckles. This was our first day in the States. The world was frozen solid” (121).

Further themes of integration and rejection of heritage can be seen in the father’s tolerance of the cold, as he is seemingly unaffected by the winter. The father has become accustomed to the U.S., a fact that places him at the top of de Certeau’s skyscrapers, looking down from a position of power. For the father, nature does not act as the same symbolic oppressor as it does to his family. He is able to wear short-sleeved shirts in the dead of winter, and is allowed easy passage in and out of the home and through the winter with freedom. While the temperatures force the family deeper into their prison, the father is not restricted by the cold. On the drive to the barber’s, before Yunior has his head shaved, he is concerned about driving

conditions and asks: “Aren’t there accidents like with rain?” To which his father responds, “Not with me driving” (127). To the family, the snow is restrictive, yet to the father, it is a symbol of absolute power, and is an icon of forceful authority, to which he has access and in which he can move about effortlessly. Yuniors father not only has freedom of will, he is free to move within and outside of the physical prison he has created, and his authority seems to be supported by the force of nature.

## INTANGIBLE SPACES

*You at once appreciate the source of my sufferings, the place of my passions, my desires, my prayers, the vocation of my hopes, since this language runs right across them all. But I am wrong, wrong to speak of a crossing and a place. For it is on the shores of the French language, uniquely, and neither inside nor outside it, on the unplaceable line of its coast that, since forever, and lastingly [à demeure], I wonder if one can love, enjoy oneself [jouir], pray, die from pain, or just die, plain and simple, in another language or without telling anyone about it, without even speaking at all.*

Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other*

This section shifts focus from tangible spaces, and the maintenance of physical boundaries, to an intangible linguistic space. I argue that the second plane of spaces—the linguistic space—is in fact the most powerful entity. In the story, the intangible is more oppressive, and yet more freeing, than any of the physical elements in the system, the father being the only one at liberty to roam in and out of this realm. Linguistic space, as mentioned in the introduction, is a topic that is theoretically underdeveloped at this time. Just as Foucault’s theories have led way to the notion of ‘home as prison,’ I will rely on particular linguistic theories that inform the ‘language as space’ hypothesis. Foucauldian theory concerning power relations has richly influenced the work of critical discourse analysts Teun van Dijk and Norman Fairclough, and although these two scholars have different approaches to analyzing discourse, they both aim to place importance on language as action. In “Discourse as Social Interaction” (1997), van Dijk describes language interaction as the tool that aids the knowledge/power tandem and insists on the description of discourse as a “social action” (10). He states that: “In order to accomplish discourse as social action, we need to accomplish not only illocutionary acts (or speech acts) but also locutionary or graphical acts of actual speech or writing, as well as propositional acts such as meaning something when we speak or write” (10). Van Dijk then concludes that since social discourse analysis defines text and talk as situated, discourse is described as taking place or as being accomplished in a social situation; he demands that discourse holds a physical place (11). Now, as discourse is situated in a social place, it is logical that, as it involves power dynamics, it would need some sort passage or access to this space. Concepts of language and power rest

on the notion that preferential access to public discourse is a vital power resource, and this access is managed in, sometimes, subtle ways that go beyond ‘ownership’ over discourse or access to discourse. Van Dijk develops this idea as well, and states that “the powerful have access to and control over not only scarce material resources but also symbolic ones, such as knowledge, education, fame, respect and indeed public discourse itself” (20). Norman Fairclough (2010) develops this notion even further in that he assigns a conceptual function to those who control this discursive access. The powerful enactors, according to Fairclough, are what can be described as “Gatekeepers,” that is, the one with power has control over the flux of knowledge and access to discourse (47). He states that positions in society are determined and sustained by the use of language and that language and society share an internal, dialectical relationship (23). For Fairclough, the idea of ‘power behind discourse’ is that the whole social order of discourse is constructed and maintained as a hidden effect of power, in that discourses depend on special knowledge and skills which have to be learned (19-68). The key issues here, and in corroboration with what we have seen from Foucault, is that discourse, along with the production and comprehension of rhetoric and argumentation, are all forms of social action. Discourse is always accomplished in a social situation and through dynamics of power and control.

In “Invierno,” Yunior’s father has certainly been described as an abusive tyrant, but what is never mentioned in the story is any case of physical abuse towards the mother. The oppression that the mother suffers is an acute restriction of language; she is systematically forced into isolation by the stripping of her language use. Within this system, there are two types of linguistic isolation on the part of the mother, the first being imposed by her sons, and the second by her husband. Yunior describes his mother’s persona in the Dominican Republic as the “authority on the Island” (132), and as a woman who was “not easily cowed” (138). In the U.S., however, her authority and spirit quickly diminishes. The first act of separation is an act of disobedience from her two sons who undermine her authority, who ignore her requests and commands, and who refuse to even reply when asked by their mother to do something. Moreover, when the mother attempts to learn English from TV programs along with her sons, she is systematically excluded from the lessons: “Each word my brother and I learned we passed between ourselves, repeating over and over, and when Mami asked us to show her how to say it, we shook our heads and said, Don’t worry about it” (124). And although she attempted to learn the words on her own, “[...] she never could duplicate them. Her lips seemed to tug apart even the simplest vowels” (124). Despite her efforts to engage in the English language with her sons, eventually they ceased to speak with her altogether: “She had no friends, no neighbors to visit. You should talk to me, she said, but we told her to wait for Papi to get home” (124).

The linguistic isolation that the mother suffers from her sons touches on two areas of interest. The first is that it demonstrates a general type of confinement. As stated previously, she is never physically restricted from leaving the house. However, her prison is that of psychological and linguistic restriction, a different type of power dynamic and that occupies a different plane of space. In one way, the direct refusal of the sons to engage with their mother in English demonstrates the desire to gain power in a powerless situation. The sons are engaging a mechanism of control in the only way they are able to. They do not have the power to go against the authority of their father, but they do have the ability to exercise power over someone else. It is a type of tactic used to gain what little control they are able to in the given situation. It is also a clear marking of the sons' attempt to integrate into their father's world. And, it is an example of hegemonic thought in that the children are mimicking a behavior and an ideology that strengthens the father's control over his family members. Furthermore, her sons' intentional separation from her may be seen as a type of disassociation that does not necessarily imply a desire to isolate the mother, but rather an attempt for her sons to create a 'space' of their own. By rejecting their mother's linguistic space, they are in turn gaining independence and creating a new, and separate, linguistic space of their own. In "Spatial Practices," de Certeau integrates Freudian notions into his spatial analysis, and argues that it is through displacement that a child can find a place. That is, he finds his identity in detaching himself from his mother, which in fact was his first place: "this departure of the mother (sometimes she disappears by herself, sometimes the child makes her disappear) constitutes localization and exteriority against the background of absence" (109).

What de Certeau is recounting through Freudian notions, is the ability to manipulate spatial concepts and boundaries by means of making "oneself disappear (insofar as one considers oneself identical with that object)" (109). That is, if the child identifies himself with his mother (or her language), and is able to detach himself from her (linguistically), he is exercising a freedom to make a new identity and spatial reality for himself. In the case of Yunior and his brother, this displacement is a coping mechanism for their experience in their own physical imprisonment. It is another way for them to gain power in a powerless situation. Moreover, as de Certeau also comments, this displacement from the biological mother might also serve as a metaphor for a displacement of the "mother-land" (109) in that, as the children were stripped from their place in the Dominican Republic, this may be a way to claim soil in the new land through displacement of the old. From a gender-lens, the Dominican Republic can be seen as the land of the female, under her rule, and the United States, under the law and authority of the father, the land of the male.

Along the same vein of linguistic restriction, we see the father's direct and systematic abuse of power by controlling linguistic access, and belittling his wife.

The power dimensions are important in this point of the analysis, as it will create a sense of the ‘linguistic prison’ to which the mother is subject to in “Invierno.” In terms of power dynamics, van Dijk as well as Fairclough develop a foundation of the idea of language as power. Van Dijk states that “[m]uch power in society [...] is not coercive, but rather mental. Instead of controlling the activities of others directly by bodily force, we control the mental basis of all action” (17). The father does not physically restrict his wife from leaving the house as he does his sons, but rather isolates her from speaking to the outside world. He restricts her speech, and therefore restricts her passage in and out of occupied space. Power dynamics in discourse rely upon the concept of *access*, that is, the discourse community is made up of those who are able to access it, and the most powerful in said communities are those who control the access gate. Concepts of language and power rest on the notion that preferential access to public discourse is a vital power resource, and this access is managed in sometimes subtle ways that go beyond ‘ownership’ over discourse or access to discourse. The powerful enactors, according to Fairclough (2010), are what can be described as “Gatekeepers,” that is, the one with power has control over the flux of knowledge and access to discourse (47). He states that positions in society are determined and sustained by the use of language and that language and society share an internal, dialectical relationship; “[l]anguage is a part of society; linguistic phenomena *are* social phenomena [...] and social phenomena *are* (in part) linguistic phenomena” (23). For Fairclough, the idea of ‘power behind discourse’ is that the whole social order of discourse is put together and held together as a hidden effect of power in that discourses depend on special knowledge and skills which have to be learned (19-68).

In “Invierno,” the sons limit the mother’s access to language in a way which may allow for their escape and for the creation of a *new space*. The father, however, also limits her linguistic freedom, but in a way that asserts dominance and control over her. He uses his *gatekeeper* status to silence her, and in the end is successful. Díaz exemplifies the ideas of a typical immigrant struggle to learn the dominant language, and in doing so, pays special attention to the notions of language control. The Spanish speaking family is unable to communicate outside their home, Yuniór encounters problems on the few occasions that he is able to leave the house undetected, and the mother is increasingly becoming subdued due to her inability to communicate: “She was depressed and sad and missed her father and her friends, our neighbors [...] no one had told her that she would have to spend the rest of her natural life snowbound with her children” (138). On one occasion, when she attempted to try to speak English with her husband, he replies “I can’t understand a word you’re saying [...]. It’s best if I take care of the English. It’s a difficult language to master, he said, first in Spanish and then in English. Mami didn’t say another word” (124). This is a crucial encounter as the power dynamics are firmly established. It is the father who has access to linguistic knowledge in both Spanish

and English, which he asserts by demonstrating his abilities in both languages. He has access to the outside world, and to the language both within and outside of the home. He, in essence, has created a linguistic prison for his wife and has systematically denied her access to the double-discourse community in which they live.

## BLENDDED SPACES

*Walking, which alternately follows a path and has followers, creates a mobile organicity in the environment, a sequence of phatic topoi. And if it is true that the phatic function, which is an effort to ensure communication, is already characteristic of the language of talking birds, just as it constitutes the “first verbal function acquired by children,” it is not surprising that it also gambols, goes on all fours, dances, and walks about, with a light or heavy step, like a series of “hellos” in an echoing labyrinth, anterior or parallel to informative speech.*

Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*

This section joins the two concepts of tangible and intangible spaces on an overlapping sphere as an attempt to interpret the resolution of the story, the so-called symbolic ‘prison break’ of Yuniór and his family. Foucault provided notions of knowledge and power as an agency that moves. Van Dijk and Fairclough have focused on discourse, related to knowledge and power, as a social actor, given it a space, and finally a guardian of that space. In order to demonstrate more concretely what may be called a linguistic space, I will turn to de Certeau and his theories that correlate pedestrian acts—the act of walking—with speech acts. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, he argues that: “The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered” (97). De Cereau’s places an ‘enunciatory’ function upon the act of walking. He states that it is a process of “*appropriation* of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian (just as the speaker appropriates and takes on the language); it is a spatial acting-out of the place (just as the speech act is an acoustic acting-out of language); and it implies *relations* among differentiated positions” (97-98). With this analogy, De Certeau is making a spatial connection between the movement of the body, and the movement that comes from speech, and therefore is able to claim that it is possible to provide a definition of walking as a space of enunciation (97-99). That is, if movements are verbal, and speech acts constitute movement, then speech and movement occupy a similar, if not the same, space.

In integrating the abovementioned approaches, it is now possible to assert that psychological, physical and verbal planes are all agencies of power, that involve the keeping and sharing of knowledge, and that *move*. There is now a notion of tangible and intangible spaces that can be manipulated, changed, guarded and occupied, or not. This intersection, or overlapping, of different planes of physical,

psychological and verbal space is the axis that guides the analysis of “Invierno.” The interplay of these spatial concepts in Díaz’s story reveals a type of oppression instigated by the displacement of the migrant and maintained by a control of each of the planes of space. Díaz’s characters find themselves in the various prisons of each spatial plane, and through a subtle fusion of all three, finally are ‘liberated’.

If for de Certeau, walking is talking, then I would claim that in Díaz’s story, the ability to walk is analogous to the ability to talk. That is, I am now claiming that the physical prison of the home, and the linguistic prison that the characters are subject to, are on the same plane and that the ability to walk away from the prison is essentially what gives the characters a ‘voice’. There is a triad of elements of space and power dimensions that include the “home as prison,” “nature as an adversary,” and finally the concept of a “linguistic prison,” all elements working against Yuniór’s family members, with the father primarily acting as warden or *gatekeeper*. This correlation of ‘walking and talking’ fuses two tangible and intangible spaces, and creates a new type of location. At this point in the story, the three notions of space now become a blended space: what was once a two-dimensional plane becomes a compound notion. The figure who is most severely confined, the mother, is precisely the one who leads herself, and her sons, to liberation: she, in the end, is able to use the blended space in her favor and *walk out* of her prison.

At the end of the story, Yuniór’s father is caught in a snowstorm and is unable to come home to the family. This is the same snow that was never restrictive to him throughout the narrative. Now, however, the father no longer lives in symbiosis with the winter. It is the first time he is powerless and is unable to complete his task as warden. The two boys are frightened of the power and the uncertainty that the storm brings: “Radio WADO recommended spare blankets, water, flashlights, and food. We had none of these things. What happens if we get buried, I asked. Will we die? Will they have to save us in boats? [...] I don’t know, Rafa said. I don’t know anything about snow” (143). With the father absent, and no one to keep the family confined in the home, the only adversary left is nature. Despite this, “Invierno” ends with the mother walking out into the snowstorm with her two sons, all of them finally acting together; all three of them walking out into ‘freedom.’

In conjunction with the larger story of Yuniór and his family throughout Díaz’s narratives, the family is not completely free. However, the resolution of “Invierno” alludes to a symbolic freedom and a partial reversion of power dynamics, and serves as liberation on a micro-level. Their stepping outside marks subversion in the role of nature as well as a reversion of power roles within the family. As the family is able to walk out into the winter, it no longer oppresses. It allows them to roam free, while keeping their warden confined in another place. That is, walking out into the snowstorm becomes a symbolic act. Nature is not a barrier but rather a

means that allows the movement to the outside world, enabling the family to reject the dominance of the figurehead. The winter was once something that kept them inside of a place, but now has trapped and confined the father. As a result, the mother is finally able to see the sea and regains some of the power she has lost by leaving the island. The act of walking is the freeing element and moment of illumination in the story. It is a propositional act, in that, it states the rejection of oppression, and changes the rules of access. Díaz's story gestates the themes of knowledge, power, and imprisonment through the depiction of a family trapped in a multidimensional prison that finally transcends tangible and intangible spaces. The most powerful of these elements is the inability to communicate due to the restrictions within the 'language space'; a space that at one point is crippling and muting, but that in the end allows for freedom and renewal. In de Certeau's 'walking and talking' correlation, he states that in linking linguistic acts with footsteps,

[T]hese words operate in the name of an emptying-out and a wearing-away of their primary role. They become liberated spaced that can become occupied. A rich indetermination gives them, by means of a semantic rarefication, the function of articulating a second, poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal, forbidden or permitted meaning. (105)

In "Invierno," the family is able to make their final statement and defy their authority. Tangible spaces are now able to be traversed, and occupied, or not. The space that was once gated and guarded is now opened and allows for repossession. The family is now able to articulate the "poetic geography": they can verbalize space, and 'spatialize' language. The space that was once assigned "forbidden and permitted meaning" is now a space that is open for interpretation and a mapping-out of a new reality.

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