DOOM PATTERNS

LATINX SPECULATIONS AND THE AESTHETICS OF VIOLENCE

MAIA GIL'ADÍ

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Para mi familia, DANIEL, PATRICIA, YAEL.

Que afortunada soy.

After great pain, a formal feeling comes—
—Emily Dickinson, “372”

This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.
—Walter Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History”

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* * *

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INTRODUCTION

The Reading Protocols of Latinx Speculative Fiction

The July 12, 2020, issue of the *New York Times Magazine* featured "The Decameron Project." Released during the first summer of the COVID-19 pandemic, the collection took the world-altering events as the impetus to consider the role of fiction in mediating our relationship to and understanding of the violent, traumatic, and fearful present. The project's subheading, written in chunky white letters, read, "When reality is surreal, only fiction can make sense of it." "The Decameron Project" presented reflections on the pandemic from twenty-nine writers from across the globe, concluding that fiction is not just one way but "the best way" to process grief and fear.[1]

The project's introductory essay, written by novelist Rivka Galchen, asks an old but still weighty question: "When there's a radical and true and important story happening at every moment, why turn to imagined tales?"[2] This is a question that *The Decameron* (composed between 1349 and 1353) famously poses, as it offers its readers escapist stories that take them out of the plague-stricken city

of Florence but ultimately return both characters and readers to what they had attempted to flee.[3] In this book, I reframe Galchen's question in a way I think is especially salient for people of color and minoritized subjects: Why do readers continue to turn to fiction that speculatively reimagines the historical past in all its violence and trauma? To put it another way: When violence is happening at every moment, why turn to speculative fiction?

Doom Patterns: Latinx Speculations and the Aesthetics of Violence proposes that the tropes of speculative fiction—the capacious term for genres that include anything from science fiction, fantasy, cyberpunk, and utopian, dystopian, and apocalyptic fiction to horror, alternative histories, and supernatural fiction and their vast array of subgenres—offer a singular and meaningful lens through which to examine historical violence and trauma, as well as their persistent haunting of the present. Through this lens, violence and trauma appear otherworldly. Consider, for instance, Michael Zapata's *The Lost Book of Adana Moreau* (2020), which, like *The Decameron*, centers disaster, attempts to escape disaster, and disaster's inevitable return. The novel tells the story of Adana Moreau, who leaves the Dominican Republic after the island's occupation by US forces in 1916. After marrying "the Pirate," she settles in New Orleans, has a child named Maxwell, and writes a science fiction novel titled *The Lost World*. Upon falling ill, Adana destroys the manuscript of the novel's sequel, *A Model Earth*, and then dies. Decades later, in Chicago, Saul Drower is cleaning his late grandfather's apartment when he discovers this "lost" manuscript and embarks on a journey to return it to Maxwell, tracking him down in New Orleans just as Hurricane Katrina strikes the city.[4] *The Lost Book* reimagines several moments of historical trauma and cataclysm through the lens of science fiction, considering the effects of events such as the American occupation of the Dominican Republic (1916–24), the Bolshevik Revolution (1917), the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (1947–), the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet and the thousands of "disappeared" during his regime (1973–90), Argentina's Dirty War (1976–83), and Hurricane Katrina (2005). These events are portrayed as part of a global network of unending violence with a deep influence on the present.

Before her death, Maxwell sits by Adana's bed as she describes the Dominican Republic and the islands of the Antilles, "which had been a stage setting for the Americas."[5] She also tells Maxwell that "beyond history or the mistakes of men, beyond time, which was a great and clever thief, beyond all of that, at the edge of the universe or maybe at the start and end of the universe, there was a soft murmur, a constant breath of beauty, a truth."[6] Adana presents time and history as forces in constant formation and deformation, a simultaneous

creation and destruction that assembles an ungraspable record. However, she argues, beyond these elements there is a beautiful truth. We never see this truth but glimpse faint traces of it as the novel navigates its various spaces and histories of disaster. Although *The Lost Book* is not technically speculative fiction, as everything that happens in its main plot could also happen in a "realist" novel, it uses the tropes and reading protocols of the genre to contend with the paradox of finding pleasure in historical violence and trauma.[7] The science fiction book-within-the-book foregrounds a speculative orientation that reveals the otherworldly nature of Latinx histories and identity formations and, most importantly, paints a vast global network centered on the otherworldly to help us think about the formation of race, ethnicity, and national belonging beyond our entrenched notions of *latinidad*.

Decades after Adana's death, as Saul and his friend Javier look for Maxwell, they meditate on the effects of history and the possibility of encapsulating them in language. Sitting in the wreckage of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina, the two men talk about Javier's work as an investigative journalist and his "*yearning for disaster*."[8] Disaster, Saul concludes, is the "infrastructure of the world," and it entices us to seek it out. In this reflection, he turns to writers of science fiction—"Isaac Asimov, Samuel R. Delany, Ursula K. Le Guin, William Gibson, and, now, even Adana Moreau"—as the "modern-day harbingers of disaster."[9] Saul and Javier finally point to the role of the reader in the propagation of disaster: "We are complicit in creating audiences with powerful addictions to disaster, to fear, self-righteousness, outrage, and vitriol."[10]

The juxtaposition of catastrophe with the pleasurable and fantastical worlds of science fiction is central to *Doom Patterns*. This book is about violence. Specifically, it puts the portrayal of violence in prose fiction into conversation with aesthetic pleasure as two forms of figuration that participate in the production of Latinx, multiethnic, and diasporic literature. To establish a dialogue between these two ostensibly incongruous forms, I use the methodologies of Latinx speculative fiction, which has taught me to read for elements in the text that lie hidden and to identify the excessive in what passes as mundane. The global literary networks built across the Caribbean, the American hemisphere, and beyond in *The Lost Book* point to a long history of violence that demands speculative fiction as a paradigm for reading this archive. They simultaneously signal the cyclical nature of violence in the Americas and the paradoxical readerly pleasure generated by fictional accounts of violence. The "*yearning for disaster*" and "addictions to disaster" of *The Lost Book* raise two central questions for *Doom Patterns*: How can the history of violence in the Americas be

rendered in language? And how can these depictions of historical violence be paradoxically pleasurable as well?

Doom Patterns takes as its premise that speculative fiction offers an essential vector for an examination of violence in Latinx, multiethnic, and diasporic writing. Speculative fiction crystallizes the otherworldly violence that forms and informs Latinx and other minoritized subjectivities. This book asks us to consider how the reading protocols of Latinx speculative fiction can illuminate elements in a text that otherwise would be difficult to recognize. At the same time, it offers a new lens for reading speculative fiction and a speculative lens for reading violence.

Examining the connection between portrayals of violence and speculative narrative form, this book shows how destruction is unearthed through what I call *doom patterns*, textual forms and narrative strategies such as thematic repetition, nonlinear narration, character fragmentation, unresolved plots, tropes, and archetypes that, in these literatures, consistently return readers to instances of destruction. Although this study is not comprehensive, doom patterns serve as a useful hermeneutic for thinking about depictions of violence across multiethnic literatures and the use of literary tropes in this archive and beyond. The powerful appeal of such doom patterns lies in their ability to establish alternative worlds or "elsewheres" in stories of colonization, slavery, and the trauma of US migration.[11] These worlds offer more capacious understandings of "minority literature"—a literature that is often read as emphasizing upward mobility and the celebration of hybridity—by revealing how imperial, racial, and ethno-national violence continually manifests itself in the present.[12]

This book is also about pleasure—pleasure in language, in reading, and, yes, in violence. Even as these doom patterns signal horrific violence, they unexpectedly feature many forms of pleasure: humor, narrative beauty, enticing plots, *rasquachismo*, inter/intratextual references, and sexual titillation.[13] I am interested in the paradox of portraying violence and historical trauma in modes that are aesthetically pleasing for public consumption and that continue to be rewarded in the literary market, academy, and literary prize circuit. At the heart of this study is the question of how we make sense of the apparent contradiction of portraying violence, destruction, pain, and trauma in narrative modes that elicit pleasure, awe, and enjoyment.

Reading through the lens of Latinx speculative fiction showcases how the past and various forms of historical trauma are reimagined, and how these reimaginings paradoxically offer the possibility of taking pleasure in reading about the end of the world. This book examines how minoritized subjectivity is constructed through repeating forms of violence—a hemispheric network

built around the cyclical remnants of historical trauma that become manifest in a text. *Doom Patterns* also develops a new way of thinking about the speculative by illustrating how excessive modes of narration reveal that ostensibly mundane violence is in fact otherworldly. Violence and speculative fiction offer an opportunity to investigate race, ethnicity, identity formations, and national belonging. The attempt to represent historical violence and trauma illustrates the impossibility of encapsulating this type of excess in language, triggering the text to break into doom patterns that cause the narrative to reproduce the violence it is trying to tell.

In this book, I approach Latinx speculative fiction as a paradigm for reading not in Latinx studies but *through* it. I read novels by Latinx authors that overtly signal *latinidad*: Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) and Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007). Although neither of these novels is typically classified as speculative fiction, I show how they exhibit the otherworldly, fantastical, and horrific through their representations of historical violence. I also analyze the Black American author Colson Whitehead's *Zone One* (2011) and the Asian American author Sesshu Foster's *Atomik Aztex* (2005). Both of these authors use tropes of genre fiction such as the zombie, time travel, and alternate histories, crystallizing matters of race and ethnicity through historical violence while also troubling the construction of literary fields based on identity. I examine the Latin American author Roberto Bolaño's *2666* (Spanish 2004, English 2008) to further destabilize definitions of *latinidad* while considering what the "hemispheric turn" in Latinx and American studies has meant for the analysis of literature that centralizes the United States in a hemispheric context.[14] Finally, I turn to the work of authors whom I read as Latinx even though they make no overt refence to *latinidad*—Carmen Maria Machado's *Her Body and Other Parties* (2017) and Hernan Diaz's *In the Distance* (2017). With this heterogeneous archive, I show not only how *latinidad* can be read within aesthetics and form but also how the reading protocols of Latinx speculative fiction illuminate global thematic literary networks around violence and the pleasure of its aesthetic representation.

My unruly archive emphasizes the forms of violence that are discursively shaped in the texts considered here and their significance in the creation of *latinidad* and multiethnic diasporic subjectivity. *Speculative fiction* is the most appropriate umbrella term for this work, one that allows me to include a wide variety of texts that might not otherwise be read together. The works in this assemblage rewrite colonial, imperial, and gendered historical violence. Most of them invoke conditions that run counter to existing epistemological possibilities (time travel, fat-ghosts, zombies) while also evoking real things that should

be impossible (femicides, enslavement, dictatorship, rape). In part, *Doom Patterns* argues that when we look at these elements side by side, we can discern that distinctive forms of violence in the present are haunting continuations of other histories, which in their repetition and excess become otherworldly. In effect, *Doom Patterns* redefines Latinx speculative fiction as a literary genre that, through its presentation of excess, offers an important paradigm for reading that shows how particular types of violence are otherworldly in nature.

Each chapter in *Doom Patterns* uses the reading protocols of Latinx literature and speculative fiction to expand both categories. As each chapter progresses, an unraveling of form, ethnicity, and race takes place, asking readers to look back to what came before—in terms of the chapters themselves but also outside the book and toward the histories and literatures that they invoke. I propose that when we read these works together, newly expansive notions of the speculative, race and ethnicity, and renderings of violence in literature can emerge. Moving from individual subject positions, *Doom Patterns* turns to the collective and relational, showcasing systemic forms of violence throughout various spaces, from the United States to the Caribbean to the US-Mexico border and beyond, exposing a vast thematic literary network and expanding well-established areas within Latinx studies. Each chapter is concerned with the remnants of history that record the many forms of violence that have been enacted on the landscape, the individual subject, and the community. The chapters move between conventional genre fiction and texts that exhibit the speculative through their excessive narrative forms and descriptions of violence. Through this movement, readers will grasp how the reading protocols of Latinx speculative fiction can produce new understandings of texts usually defined as realist. By the end of *Doom Patterns*, we will have returned full circle, or full circle in another dimension, to a speculative estrangement of *latinidad*. We will revisit the individual body, this time even further removed from established notions of Latinx subjectivity—an exercise that pushes the reading protocols of Latinx speculative fiction to their limit. This conclusion once again highlights networks of exchange and connected histories in and outside literature while questioning canon formations, definitions of genre, and modes of reading. The progression of this book's chapters performs the type of inquiry that I anticipate occurring more frequently in Latinx and multiethnic literary fields: a dismantling of generic boundaries and entrenched definitions of race, ethnicity, and nationhood that allows for a capacious understanding of interrelated thematic networks and histories.

What does this new paradigm for reading mean for Latinx literature or speculative fiction? One answer is that it may help illuminate the ubiquity of

violence in literature by writers who hail from different hemispheres and write in a variety of languages. The reading protocols of Latinx speculative fiction put this violence into relief by inviting us to examine the work of authors irrespective of their identities or the ways their work has been classified in the market. This methodology allows us to incorporate, for example, a writer like Bolaño within current understandings of Latinx literature by showing how his work participates in discourses of the border without belonging to the border itself, as my third chapter shows, or to see how depictions of sugar in a canonical Cuban American novel and Black American novel suggest that the violence of sugar's historical production veers dangerously close to horror, as I show in chapter 2. By reading through these lenses, we see not only the texts' doom patterns but also the significance of Latinx speculative fiction as a reading method.

Another answer can be found in the paradoxical conjunction of violence and pleasure that these texts display, which suggests critical reading practices that refuse the expectation of political remedy in Latinx and multiethnic literary studies. *Doom Patterns* is, in fact, as interested in breaking apart strict identity and field formations as it is in questioning the ethical imperative and the associated reading protocols in literary studies. Throughout this book, I ask, What happens when we do not require minoritized literature to be solely about identity formations, citizenship, exile, assimilation—in short, all the things typically ascribed to this literature? What can we learn about the formation of ethnicity, race, nationhood, and violence (and the formation of these categories *in* and *through* violence) by reading against the grain and putting books in uncomfortable juxtaposition with each other? In fact, the readers of this book should expect to be uncomfortable, not only with these pairings, but also with the violence these texts depict. Uncomfortable but also (I hope) intrigued, excited, and even pleased.

Latinx Speculative Fiction as a Reading Praxis

Latinx literary critics have begun to forge innovative and meaningful connections in Latinx literature across ethnic, national, and temporal boundaries.[15] I am motivated by the galvanizing possibility of connections among Latinx literary production, diasporic multiethnic literature, and criticism outside this field, such as Black and Caribbean studies, queer theory and disability studies, and speculative fiction studies. Accordingly, I have attempted to strengthen these links in the chapters that follow, drawing not only on Latinx studies and Latinx literary criticism but also on the work of anthropologists, geographers, political scientists, sociologists, Black studies and Asian American studies

scholars, posthumanists, and queer theorists. With this extensive group of interlocutors, I have tried to expand the interdisciplinary possibilities available to literary scholars while also highlighting the networks of violence and pleasure that my archive illustrates.

A prime example is Samuel Delany's essay "Generic Protocols" (1980), which clarifies the methodology of this book. In it, Delany argues that genres are constituted through a way of reading (a protocol). This "structuration of response potential" is constructed over time by a group of texts that produce readerly responses particular to that genre—for example, how we approach poetry differently than we do a crime novel or a cookbook.[16] A protocol of reading enables us to identify one generic convention within another—the poetic within a work of prose, the dramatic within poetry—and reinterpret the text according to a set of informal codes. A genre (a protocol of reading), then, is what allows us to perceive tropes and conventions in texts outside it: "The fact that each genre is a way—a protocol—of reading (formed over a historical period, certainly, by many texts), is what allows that protocol to be applied to any number of other texts as well as what prevents a genre from being defined simply by a description of the texts themselves."[17] *Doom Patterns* shows that implementing the reading protocols of Latinx speculative fiction allows us to interpret particular phrasings, images, sentence structures, or repeating themes in such a way that "at the level of the signified, they are clearly part of SF."[18] To apply these reading protocols to texts usually not classified in this way is to approach the text with an "active desire in mind" that shapes how the text is experienced; it is to identify the narrative patterns that spill out of the text and reveal the excessive remnants of history that mark the text with doom.[19]

For scholars like Jeremy Rosen, genre is the place where "form, history, and material and institutional relations converge" to fulfill social tastes and ideals.[20] For others, like Lauren Berlant, genres "provide an affective expectation of the experience of watching something unfold" and make breakage an important part of their conventions: "the threat that *x* might *not* happen (love in a love plot, poetic justice in a thriller, death in a tragedy) allows absorbing but not shocking anxieties to be stimulated and vanquished."[21] Repeating forms of rupture are a generic convention that the protocols of Latinx speculative fiction allow us to see. *Doom Patterns*, following Rosen's definition of genre, upholds form as the place where history becomes manifest. The breakages in the literature I examine perform their role in genre by illustrating the overpowering violence of history that these texts attempt to (impossibly) narrate. In this book, I have focused on those places where texts have pronounced the haunting remnants of history and where, by using Latinx speculative fiction's protocols

of reading, we can uncover these histories and the patterning effect they have not only in the text but also on the body.

In a posture of admiration for scholarship that centers systemic violence and oppression and their connection to haunting, ghosting, and silencing, throughout *Doom Patterns* I attend to the ways narrative form illuminates various configurations of violence, pleasure, and their concurrence. Inspired by Saidiya Hartman, I engage with "critical fabulation" as a "model for practice" throughout this book.[22] This model, Hartman explains, is the labor of writing against the limits of the archive while simultaneously performing the "impossibility of representing the lives of the captives precisely through the process of narration."[23] *Precisely* takes on a double meaning here, implying both the inability to be exact or accurate and the specific limitations of language and writing in representing particular forms of violence. The turn to fabulation/speculation, then, is an attempt to fill in the erasures and silences of the archive, which sets the limits on "what can be known, whose perspective matters, and who is endowed with the gravity and authority of historical actor."[24] José Esteban Muñoz similarly discusses the silencing of queerness by turning to ephemera and gesture to show how the queer can be evidenced and read.[25] Like critical fabulation, ephemera elide finitude and act as a surplus that allows us to see the "not-yet-conscious."[26] My archive, of course, is a different one. Unlike Hartman's characters, mine are mostly invented. I turn to fiction as a reflection and producer of the historical and political, and the texts in my archive illuminate repeating patterns of violence that excessively defy narration.

In many ways, the reading protocols of Latinx speculative fiction that reveal doom patterns in a text evince the ways the past continues to haunt the present—or remind us, as Kandice Chuh does, that we are within "crumpled time," which makes it impossible to contain violence within narrative form.[27] Doom patterns, in fact, enact Walter Benjamin's angel of history, which I use as an epigraph to open this book.[28] The violence and wreckages amassed via colonial, imperial, and capitalist histories pile in a critical mass while seemingly pushing us into a present and future that violently unfolds, albeit unseen. Like the angel, we cannot turn away from these violences, and our steps, like the language implemented within the texts I examine, propagate them in all their messy entanglements. The attempt to write and rewrite historical violence and its lingering trauma repeats it, unearthing violence in the text and re-creating it on the bodies of its characters.

Excess, failure, and haunting go hand in hand. Avery Gordon's trailblazing *Ghostly Matters* (1997) invokes haunting as a state in which unresolved social violence makes its presence known. Most importantly, haunting refuses the

assumption that the past has been laid to rest.[29] To study haunting, to contend with its significance for the formation of social life, is to fundamentally alter our understanding of the world and knowledge formations.[30] Writing with the ghost and recognizing hauntings for Gordon is also a process of seeing and being in excess: it is a process of "inarticulate experiences, of symptoms and screen memories, of spiraling affects, of more than one story at a time, of the traffic in domains of experiences that are anything but transparent and referential."[31] Following María del Pilar Blanco's notion of "ghost watching" means recognizing haunting not simply as a metaphorical representation but as a textual phenomenon that results from a crisis of perception. This phenomenon necessitates a transformation of craft and form—"actual presences that need to be reckoned with in a narrative"—and consequently marks what is ungraspable about the present and the effect the past has on it.[32] In the concluding notes of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer briefly offer a "Theory of Ghosts." Here they provocatively turn their attention to the way a society relates to its dead, stating, "Only the conscious horror of destruction creates the correct relationship with the dead: unity with them because we, like them, are the victims of the same condition and the same disappointed hope."[33] To underscore the formal tropes that exhume cataclysm is to contend with modernity's many violences, the complicated networks they have created, and the silences and gaps we can suppose but never know. The persistent haunting in Latinx speculative fiction exposes the "cracks" and "riggings," unearths that which was presumed to be buried, over and done with.[34] Gordon asks whether the analysis of hauntings will enable a more complex understanding of the "generative structures and moving parts of historically embedded social formations."[35] In response, I argue that writing with ghosts and illuminating the formal literary hauntings that the reading protocols of Latinx speculative fiction reveal facilitate a nuanced perception of the process by which violence sutures Latinx history and subjectivity. The doom patterns I analyze throughout this book expose the cracks and riggings, yes, but also draw us in, seduce us, and implicate us in the haunting through the aesthetic pleasure in which destruction is invoked.

Form, Violence, and Pleasure

Doom Patterns adopts a critical approach to the study of Latinx and diasporic literatures that helps us recognize and unravel the narrative dimensions of violence and trauma as constitutive forces for the construction of *latinidad* and

minoritized subjectivity writ large. *Doom, (n.): fate or destiny; unavoidable ill fortune*.[36] Related to the family of words: *cataclysm*, *destruction*, *ruin*, *tragedy*, *annihilation*. The portentous suggestion of catastrophe and finality also invokes religious transformation. As narrative devices, doom patterns play within the postmodern tradition while highlighting specific violent historical events and forms of historical trauma.[37] These literary devices do not simply signal a metaphysically anarchic and chaotic universe by using parody and satire but also inscribe the novels' plots within a network of the afterlives of historical violence. Doom patterns enable readers to contend with the meaning of race, ethnicity, and the haunting of violence in the contemporary, underscoring the relationship among history, form, and performances in language. *Doom, (n.): the Last Judgement, at the end of the world*.[38] The promise of something after the end, things revealed by the apocalypse, change.[39] From the ancient Greek *apocálypsis*, *apocalypse* refers to the exposure of something hidden. Yet what happens when the apocalypse continues to repeat itself, when it is not a final moment of deliverance that will lead to a future filled with emancipatory possibility? What does it mean to be marked by repeating doom/s, ill-fated, wrecked, ruined, cursed, destroyed? To be more precise, what does it mean to be marked by the present progressive state of always be*ing*, being *in doom*?

Taking a neo-formalist approach, Ramón Saldívar identifies a new stage in the history of the novel, terming some of the texts I examine "speculative realism" and explaining how fiction by contemporary multiethnic authors is in dialogue with postmodern literary aesthetics, with a difference.[40] Saldívar notes that the rise of postmodernism and ethnic fiction in the postwar era must be examined through their shared "aesthetic matrix," which allows us to see how both were shaped by the same institutional histories and practices of creativity. In this dialogic context, it is no surprise that minoritized authors found postmodernism inhospitable.[41] One reason for this inhospitality is what Saldívar characterizes as the unrelentingly sardonic, cynical, and pessimistic narcissism in postmodern fiction "about the possibility of redemptive futures, progressive arcs of history, and utopian solutions to the disasters occasioned in the name of enlightenment."[42] While multiethnic writers still make use of postmodern aesthetics, Saldívar argues, they turn to a variety of genres to consider the meaning of race, ethnicity, and social justice today.

The authors I analyze in *Doom Patterns* push postmodern aesthetics to their limits and extend their work beyond this mode through their attention to and reimagination of the historical past. Theorists of postmodernism and its attendant aesthetic forms, most notably Fredric Jameson, have argued that postmodern

play evacuates violence and its legacies from literature and culture, creating a depthlessness that discourages a hermeneutic relation to the object and thus forecloses a reader's connection to historical and political interpretation.[43] But the turn to surface and the decorative with which Jameson is concerned in fact does not exorcise history from the object; rather, it transfers its manifestation onto narrative form. More recent valuations of surface by scholars like Stephen Best, Heather Love, Sharon Marcus, Uri McMillan, José Esteban Muñoz, Anne Anlin Cheng, and Amber Jamilla Musser provide useful interdisciplinary interpretive strategies for reading texts.[44] Surface, as McMillan posits, conceals nothing and insists on being seen. Foremost for our purposes, surface produces excessive meaning; narrative form thus excessively circulates violence in the aesthetic. This emphasis on surface illustrates the relationship among form, reading, affect, and the body, acknowledging "perception as a bodily experience as much as an intellectual one."[45] As Linda Hutcheon, Cheng, and Musser argue, surface troubles the ideas of transparency, authenticity, and objectivity, further confounding distinctions between decorative surplus and what is "proper" to the thing.[46] Jameson's concern about surface reading and ahistorical inclinations that postmodern texts invite is countered by scholars like Hutcheon, who suggests that the postmodern novel, or what she calls "historiographic metafiction," captures the postmodern experience and its relationship to the past by emulating this experience through a text's formal choices. The reflexivity about the construction of knowledge, Hutcheon goes on to argue, shows postmodern fiction to be "resolutely historical, and inescapably political," precisely because of its intertextuality—the "presence of the past"—as well as its demarginalization and destabilization of the literary through its confrontation with the historical.[47]

The texts I examine illustrate how postmodern metafictional play is tinged with the violence of history for racialized and minoritized peoples. Fragmentation, nonlinear narration, multivocal perspectives, and narrative approximations all lead readers again and again to violence, destruction, and death. These literary modes, moreover, illustrate a textual excess that spills over onto itself: each work attempts to narrate violence, yet, unable to encapsulate it, is forced to break—the violence it struggles to describe is so extreme, excessive, and repeating that it creates textual eruptions that return readers again and again to moments of destruction. Narrative excess, the too-muchness I identify, maintains a close association with abjection, failure, and what can be seen as messy and dirty. Bucking literary conventions, the texts in my archive characterize a disobedient surplus that reimagines and rewrites stories of violence, and offer new ways of seeing formations such as race, gender, citizenship, and nationhood.[48]

Excess is understood throughout this book as a register in the texts that comes to define violence and historical trauma. Colonial, imperial, ethnoracial, and gendered violence lies at the center of my archive. Because these violences cannot be contained within traditional narrative forms, the authors turn to excessive narration in an (impossible) attempt to tell a story that struggles to be conveyed in language. In this impossibility, postmodern aesthetics also falls short as a literary mode for telling these stories of violence, and the authors I examine, among others, draw on various traditions, including postmodernism, magical realism, and social realism, to reimagine the past. Extending Saldívar's investigation of this new stage in the history of the novel, I show how texts engage in what Berlant calls "genre flailing": a "mode of crisis management that arises after an object, or object world, becomes disturbed in a way that intrudes on one's confidence about how to move in it."[49] Flailing is not failing, of course, but it signals how violence pushes narrative toward a variety of structures, forms, traditions, and tropes that will always be in surplus. Unlike Saldívar, however, I focus on how the historical violence the narratives are attempting to tell drives the formal breakages in a text. Instead of signaling political remedy, the elsewheres these texts propose reveal the haunting remnants of violence and its repetition in form.

I focus on prose fiction, primarily in the form of the novel. The novel, even in the postmodern moment, is considered a work that displays complexity, chronicling sequential and usually interrelated events and deploying in-depth characterization. These elements allow us to see how thematic trends develop in a protracted fashion, how narratives attempt to represent historical violence yet break, and, ultimately, how novels use their world-building to actively engage and implicate the reader in the paradoxical interplay of violence and aesthetic pleasure.

My theorization cannot fully express the magnitude of the violence these texts attempt to describe. The word *violence* is inevitably an intellectualization that takes us away from the sadism, destruction, cruelty, pain, and carnage the narrative describes and performs. Yet what other word can be used to illustrate the extreme and excessive forces behind colonization, slavery, dictatorship, exile? I follow Elaine Scarry's work on the impossibility of expression in the face of trauma and pain, but I focus on violence and its aftermath in both individual and communal terms as they are manifested in narrative form.[50] Grappling with the elsewheres revealed through Latinx speculative fiction's reading protocols is not only about reimagining the historical past and possible futures. It is also about imagining alternative historiographies and undoing the common ethico-political implications that underwrite reading practices within Latinx studies.

To identify doom patterns, then, is to recognize the many ways violence blueprints itself on the text, as a discursive scaffold that is also bound to its construction as an aesthetic object, with all that implies—the beautiful, decorative, appealing, and pleasurable. *Pattern, (n.): a model, example, or copy*.[51] That which is repeated, a prototype, blueprint, archetype. *Pattern, (v.): to order or arrange; to design or organize for a specific purpose*.[52] To pattern, to shape, to arrange, to decorate or design. Speech patterns, fashion templates, architectural patterns, tessellations, fractals, spatiotemporal patterns. To pattern, to shape, to model is to construct imaginative worlds. To pattern doom intimates its continued repetition as a model to be followed—the action of arranging and the arrangement itself. Doom's finality cannot describe the continued horror and violence in the Latinx past and present. Aesthetics, defined broadly as the artistic rendition of the world and the judgment of this composition according to notions (among other things) of the beautiful, ugly, and humorous, is a crucial site for understanding historical violence and its haunting traces. Aesthetic practices shape how we perceive the world, understand history, and handle social relations and culture.[53] As Michel-Rolph Trouillot has shown, literature and culture are apertures for grasping nationhood and citizenship, acting as their constant referents.[54] Yogita Goyal similarly argues that "history repeats itself as form" to dispute assumptions about the opposition between form and history, form and politics, and form and identity.[55]

Latinx speculative fiction interweaves histories and geographies in an effort to construct an archive with cataclysmic violence at its center, which constitutes the foundation for the close readings and historical materialist contextualizations I offer in this book. The incomplete and deformed—the ghostly, haunted, monstrous, excessive—breaks and deforms form. My readings center narrative form, showing how formal devices and tropes unpack the remnants of violence and their repeating histories into the present. I focus on the formal elements of fiction to excavate the methods through which they conceptualize historical violence and its afterlives. I am particularly interested in the form of violence and the violence of form, following Jennifer Harford Vargas's analysis of the dictatorship novel in Latinx literature.[56] My socioformal analysis that uses Latinx speculative fiction as a reading praxis for texts outside this canon treats the "ideology of form" as world-building within the novel itself but also as imparting meaning in our world. For the purposes of this book, I also understand this ideology to be writing grammars of repeating dooms that pattern themselves throughout the text and return readers again and again to moments of cataclysm.[57] My position throughout this book—a stance that others have taken before me—is that literature is both an object and a mode of inquiry and,

as such, presents a unique way to understand and represent violence, through which we can demand a more nuanced approach to its investigation.

My study of narrative form recognizes the significance of this category, which developed in the Enlightenment and was assigned a distinct value and place in culture as a special object of analysis. When I speak of aesthetics, I am not making a claim about universality, and I am cognizant of the white supremacist forces through which notions of aesthetics emerged and through which the hierarchization of ideas and modes of representation is established and maintained.[58] Yet, like Chuh, Goyal, Vargas, and others, I believe that turning to form and genre offers an important entry point for examining how the aesthetic is entrenched in the history of modern thought and the contradictions of modernity. Aesthetics indicates the relationship between the senses and the formation of structures of value that reflect political ideologies, relations of power, and forms of knowledge.[59] This field, then, can be understood as integral to the production of difference, as Chuh argues, and one of this book's tasks is to highlight and investigate the subjugated forms and ways of knowing that have persisted as fundamental to current estimations of aesthetics.[60]

This development in aesthetic inquiry is essential in *Doom Patterns* for three reasons. First, it recognizes the significance of the text as a discrete creation that can be read, examined, and appraised—in other words, it underscores the literariness of literature. Second, it explains why work by minoritized people has often been studied through the lens of the political and not credited with the artistry intrinsically ascribed to Anglo-American texts, a move that calls attention to the art object and its position in the literary market. Lastly, to examine minoritized literature for its literariness—as an aesthetic object—necessarily calls attention to its formal qualities as opposed to those of other forms of documentation (social sciences, public policy and gray papers, anthropology) that might treat similar subject matter but use other generic conventions to circulate knowledge. I focus on aesthetics because I am primarily interested in the difficulty of pinning a definition down, and so this focus constitutes a point of departure rather than a conclusion. The ambiguity of the term also evokes the diverse forms of affect usually attributed to aesthetics: disgust, pain, horror, fear.

The aesthetics of violence—seen in the various doom patterns examined in this book—signals this mode of analyzing the formal elements of the text through the lens of Latinx speculative fiction. The fictions in my study focus on how narrative form attempts to reimagine and fictionalize histories of systemic violence, their material repercussions for individuals and their communities, and the ideologies that accompany these types of oppression. By this

I mean that literary portrayals expose distinctive yet intersecting histories of violence and trauma (conquest and settler colonialism, expansionism and imperialism, dictatorship and exile, slavery), the effects of this history on the body (gendered and sexual violence, physical violence, racism, addiction to sugar and sex, Indigenous genocide), and their conceptual justification (misogyny, ableism, homophobia, heterosexism, upward mobility, eugenics). This list of forms of violence is not comprehensive, and as *Doom Patterns* reminds us in every chapter, the violence inflicted on minoritized peoples in the Americas has always been excessive and cannot be encapsulated in narrative form or even cataloged into distinct categories. The types of violence I examine are extreme and messy and become even more complicated when imbricated with aesthetic pleasure. Throughout, I address calamities that are long-lasting, though they are sometimes perceived to have dissipated. They vary from the sensationally visible to the kind of violence Rob Nixon designates as "slow": "a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive."[61] What is most important, for both Nixon and me, is the way these calamities and their repercussions play out across diverse temporal scales. While Nixon's investigation of slow violence highlights solely those forms that happen faintly over time and space, I am concerned with the haunting reminders and remainders of historical forms of spectacular violence that accrue over time, lingering in a protracted manner into the present. Doom patterns facilitate a new understanding of violence as that which overflows boundaries—geographic, temporal, and narratological—by unearthing the ongoing repercussions of spectacular historical events.

The many forms of ongoing historical violence also reflect the uneven configurations they can take as they are organized through and around heteropatriarchal ideologies foundational to the nation-state. The texts that comprise *Doom Patterns* indicate this discrepancy, focusing on violence—systemic, physical, psychological—that is performed on women and their bodies. One only need look to film and television—not only fictional—for confirmation of the many ways women continue to experience too many forms of violence, from the most miniscule to larger kinds of systemic oppression that attempt to regulate and subjugate their bodies. And yet the texts I examine are not about resistance to violence or about political repair as a response to violence. The tendency in the field has been to read Latinx literature using what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls a "reparative reading" that moves away from a "hermeneutics of suspicion" and the privileging of paranoia to expose systemic oppression.[62] Effectively, Latinx literary and cultural studies has been organized around oppositional and overt drives for political amelioration, stemming in part from moments of disrup-

tion and revolt.[63] *Doom Patterns* shows, however, that representations of violence and pleasure go hand in hand and, in fact, that pleasure is not achieved in spite of or after violence but often through it. This reading practice offers an alternative to using literature as a tool for political remedy and reveals how texts reproduce violence even as they attempt to depict historical trauma.

In these texts, the fictionalization of pain and destruction paradoxically foregrounds the pleasure in humor, narrative beauty, and the grotesque that can be found in reading about cataclysm and destruction. As a paradigm for reading, then, Latinx speculative fiction illustrates the fundamental role of violence both within and outside Latinx literature, a paradigm that concomitantly shows how *latinidad* has been constructed through and around violence. The aestheticization of violence translates violence from the real, perhaps providing another form of pleasure for readers who can see themselves at a remove from the acts being described. Doom patterns and the elsewheres they create highlight not only the foundational role of violence in the histories of minoritized peoples in the Americas but the central role violence plays in narrating their stories.

Violence in this estimation is a ludic and nonteleological formation that invites us to read for something other than amelioration, remedy, and resistance. Consider a canonical text in Latinx letters, Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987), in which Anzaldúa describes the border as "*una herida abierta*" (an open wound), "where the Third World grates against the first and bleeds. And before a scab forms it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country—a border culture."[64] Her description of this space can, of course, be taken metaphorically, yet treating Latinx speculative fiction (a genre in which Anzaldúa also wrote) as a paradigm for reading allows us to see the otherworldly in this description as well: the violence of the border past and present creates such rifts that it anthropomorphizes the land in an unending cycle of pain and fashions a science-fictional landscape and a new type of alien species in border culture. A more recent example can be found in Justin Torres's *We the Animals* (2011), a bildungsroman about three young brothers of white and Puerto Rican parentage as they navigate their life in rural upstate New York, and the nameless protagonist's exploration of his queerness and breaking away from his family. At the novel's culmination, the protagonist's family finds his journals, in which is written "a catalog of imagined perversions, a violent pornography with myself at the center, with myself obliterated."[65] These writings indeed undo the self: the protagonist, sent to a psychiatric hospital, describes himself as fully animal, sleeping with peacocks and lions, dreaming of the day when he can walk upright.[66] Like Anzaldúa's depiction of

the border, Torres's text can be read metaphorically: he feels *like* an animal but has not actually transformed into one. But what if he has? The trauma *We the Animals*' protagonist experiences is so extreme—a violence that cannot be extricated from race, colonization, diaspora, poverty, and their intersection with his queerness—that it translates in the text into a loss of human subjectivity.

Doom patterns signal the interruption of violence within the text but always in the interest, as Robert Appelbaum maintains, "of something which is non-fictional in origin."[67] Much as violence is ubiquitous in Latinx literature, violence underlies constructions of *latinidad*. As B. V. Olguín's *Violentologies* (2021) shows, Latinx studies and *latinidad* have a presumed counterhegemonic position.[68] The reification of this mode of resistance obfuscates the "salience of violence in Latina/o theories of being and knowing."[69] *Salience* is crucial to Olguín's methodology and to my implementation of Latinx speculative fiction's reading protocols. The term denotes standing out, protruding, and being conspicuous, but as Mark Jerng argues, salience also changes our sense of the world through the noticing and pointing out of what might not be visible but nevertheless is taking place.[70] Olguín's inquiry into the fundamental nature of violence for the proliferation of *latinidades* expands on voices such as Nelson Maldonado Torres, Edmundo O'Gorman, Walter Mignolo, and Aníbal Quijano and Immanuel Wallerstein, all of whom in one way or another position the "invention" of the Americas as happening through violence.[71] Most fundamental for the argument of my book is Olguín's demonstration of the ways Latinx history *is* violence and as such is central to our understanding of Latinx identity past and present.[72] In a similar vein, but with more geographic specificity, Nicole Guidotti-Hernández considers violence as constitutive of the American borderlands.[73] Her work, of course, follows Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*, and as I show in chapter 3, this region continues to be marked by the haunting effects of colonial, imperial, and necropolitical violence. Guidotti-Hernández surveys what she calls "quotidian and yet spectacular" violence, a designation that invokes the physical scope and reach of violence while intimating the affective and psychic response it engenders.[74] The mundanity of violence juxtaposed with its "spectacular" nature also suggests that which is stunning, extravagant, and dramatic in its execution—with all the connections to performance and ornamentation this word calls forth. It is a violence *so* extreme, *so* repeated, and *so* commonplace and expected that it must be described as spectacular. Paradoxically, the commonplace nature of violence does not soften its spectacular and extreme nature. *Doom Patterns* underscores this paradox by showing how violence is deceivingly mundane in its cyclical repetition and haunting nature, which effectively underscores the power and enormous

reach of violence. *Spectacular* and *speculative*, of course, have the same etymological root—*spectāre* (to watch), from *specere* (to look at)—which showcases the relationship between that which is re/imagined and its dramatic, aestheticized renderings. *Doom Patterns* sustains the correlation among the otherworldly, the excessive, the violent, and the aesthetic that these rooted words suggest, offering a reading practice that is an alternative to those that uphold depictions of violence as tools for political and other remedies.

The texts I examine, however, do not callously portray or celebrate violence, even as they perform the pleasure derived from its aestheticization. *Doom Patterns* recognizes violence as an ever-present and integral force for Latinx literature, speculative fiction, and minoritized subjectivity. I show that violence is fundamental to our understanding of history and minoritized subjectivity and that violence acts as an animating force for the field's genesis and growth. By reading through the lens of Latinx speculative fiction, I question the presupposition that literature promotes empathy, altruism, and social justice.[75] Complicating the conjecture of the "use of history as rescue," I attempt to show how in the reimagination of the past, Latinx literature and the doom patterns and elsewheres it formulates continue to underscore the "excessive recursiveness" of violence, to use Guidotti-Hernández's terminology, and the pleasure in reading about violence and destruction.[76] Along these lines, I hope this book will encourage work that looks outside binary models into the messy spaces that emerge in discussions of violence, historical trauma in the Americas, race, ethnicity, gender, diaspora, migration/emigration/immigration, nationhood, and genre. This is not to say that *Doom Patterns* offers a prescriptive mode of reading; instead, it asks whether and how our reading practices participate in the reproduction of very particular forms of interpreting *latinidad*, speculative fiction, and Latinx and multiethnic literature, and in the reception of this literature in the market.

Doom Patterns demonstrates how the tropes of Latinx speculative fiction can reveal important dimensions of race, ethnicity, and nationhood that tend to be obscured in analyses of realist fiction. Naturalism and realism, as Muñoz argues, "falter in their attempt to depict or describe the brownness of the world," because their attempts at mimetic representation will always be incomplete but do not acknowledge their incompleteness.[77] Placing *latinidad* at the center of discussions about speculative fiction enhances our understanding of the genre. Yet, contrary to the long-standing tendency to read a utopian spirit within Latinx speculative fiction, I argue that the salient violence on the level of content is performed and repeated on the level of form. To pattern is to speculate. *Speculate, (v.i.): to meditate or ponder*.[78] From the Latin *specere*, to see,

look, behold what is before oneself. To see what has already taken place and what might happen in the future. *Speculate, (v.t.): to wonder, to theorize*.[79] To visualize, envision, invent, imagine, but also to reckon with and expect. The speculative fashions repeating narrative patterns of destruction, which I stitch together here. The aestheticization in Latinx speculative fiction repeats violence as it attempts to narrate it, creating breakages in the text that return us to apocalypse.

Central to this analysis is the understanding that apocalypses have already happened, continue to happen, and have real effects for Latinx and other minoritized populations. The apocalypse in this context relates to its biblical meaning of the end of the world and to the meaning of the ancient Greek term *apocálypsis*, which refers to the exposure of something hidden. As a reading protocol, Latinx speculative fiction reveals the cataclysmic effects of, among other things, colonialism, enslavement, imperialism, dictatorship, and exile, and the cyclical haunting of eschaton into the present. Cataclysm's disruption would seem to provide the opportunity to do away with the old world and create what Slavoj Žižek calls "emancipatory subjectivity."[80] Žižek's four horsemen imbue the apocalypse with redemptive potential, a teleological narrative that culminates in liberation. James Berger similarly describes the apocalyptic event as that which must clarify and illuminate "the true nature of what has been brought to end."[81] However, as he explains, the apocalypse in its most radical form has not occurred—we would have no means of recognizing it or recording it if it had. Similarly, Edward Said invokes "beginnings" as a formal organizing principle that gives a sense of order and continuity (teleology), albeit falsely. Beginnings function as historical architecture that "compensates us for the tumbling disorder of brute reality that will not settle down" and, in fact, always implies the end.[82] The apocalypse in my estimation occurs in the form of transformative and cataclysmic events—1492 and the modern/colonial divide, the Spanish conquest of the Aztec empire, for example—and their symbolic representation. In this sense, the apocalypse creates a new understanding of the world and the cyclical nature of violence. Yet, as Berger explains, postapocalyptic discourse attempts to represent the unrepresentable: "Post-apocalyptic representation . . . often takes place at a site of conjunction between [what *cannot* be said] and [what *must not* be said]—a site where language stops, both for reasons of internal logic and of social prohibition."[83]

While the text re-creates the many forms of violence it is narrating, it also produces many pleasures, which I group into three types: the paratextual, textual, and metatextual. My analysis shows how excessive violence is interlinked

with unwieldy pleasure in reading about destruction and in tapping into literary worlds outside the text. This pleasure is experienced by characters within the text and, I hope, by the readers of *Doom Patterns*. In writing this book, I have allowed myself at times to emulate the unruly and extensive violence and pleasures of the works I analyze. This choice illustrates—like the many types of violence these texts expose and investigate—that pleasure is excessive, slippery, and disruptive. Pleasure can be found paratextually, for example, in a work's intertextuality, heteroglossia, lyrical prose or "writerliness," humor, or enticing and seductive plotlines; textually, in characters who enjoy having sex, eating, working, killing zombies, cheating, hitting a cabbie; and metatextually, through the pride a reader takes in finishing an epic novel like *2666*, understanding the plot of a difficult book like *Atomik Aztex*, reading about "authentic" Latinxs in *Oscar Wao*, or even enjoying the visibility and representation that *Oscar Wao* or García's novel seem to offer within the market and the academy. Pleasure, of course, can also be experienced in the horrific and grotesque; the frustration of reading multilingual, metareferential, labyrinthian texts; the voyeurism and titillation of reading depictions of sexual violence; and the stimulation of reading about worlds and times outside the realm of possibility in this one.

As consumers of literature, we must consider why and how particular histories of violence become entertainment. For example, why are stories of women's experiences of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse so predominant in literature, television, and film? One answer might be that women experience an inordinate amount of violence in the world. But we know this fact already. As readers and viewers, why do we continue to seek out these forms of entertainment, and what does it mean for us that we find enjoyment in these forms? How do we come to terms with the aestheticization of horrific events that take place in our world? Production and consumption are always interrelated, and pleasure in the aesthetics of violence considers the fundamental relationship between the text and its reader. Reading is a meaning-making "event" that occurs between the reader and the text.[84] Literature as "event" depends on the close attention to structure, form, syntax, and other linguistic and literary qualities in the text that transform a sentence from an object into "something that *happens* to, and with the participation of the reader."[85] Instead of asking what a sentence means, we might more usefully ask what the structure and form of the sentence *do*.[86]

Any pleasure derived from these texts is, of course, subjective. Not all readers will receive the many forms of violence reimagined in these texts in the same way, and some will even believe that no pleasure can be found in them.

Certain moments in this book will duplicate narrative violence that is difficult to read, while also showing how this violence is depicted in language that is beautiful or entertaining or enjoyable or thrilling. This endeavor is problematic at best. There are no easy solutions to the violence these speculative fictions reveal, and my reproduction of specific passages gets to the heart of my argument by showing that any attempt to represent violence in language ends up on some level replicating it. The pleasure I identify in Latinx speculative fiction's portrayals of violence highlights the beauty found in the art object that unsettlingly transforms violence into aesthetically pleasing texts for the enjoyment and consumption of the public. The market success, response from the award circuit, and position within the academy of many of the books examined here underscore this enjoyment. Pleasure works differently across spaces, structures, institutions, and individuals, and my position throughout *Doom Patterns* is that the texts analyzed herein act as representative case studies for how violence happens concomitantly with the humorous, with expert writing or beautiful prose, or with an entertaining plot.

Speculative Imaginaries, Violent Futures

In "*Sleep Dealer* and the Promise of Latino Futurity," Lázaro Lima argues that Latinx literature lacks a science fiction tradition, unlike the Black or Asian American traditions, which have notable figures like Octavia Butler, Samuel Delany, S. P. Somtows, and Laurence Yep at the helm. (A more updated version of this list would include figures like Colson Whitehead, N. K. Jemisin, Nalo Hopkinson, Rivers Solomon, Charles Yu, Ling Ma, and Ken Liu). Lima contends that this tradition is absent in part because Latinx literature is primarily concerned with history and the past. This argument assumes that science fiction is mainly oriented to the future. Scholars of the genre, however, remind us that it is as much about restructuring our experience of the past and present as it is about imagining possible futures.[87] Lima's concern about the lack of a Latinx science fiction tradition can be extended to the more comprehensive category of speculative fiction. The capacious quality of this last term frees and complicates it, much as *latinidad* is complicated by its own sweeping range.

Speculative fiction and speculative fiction studies, stereotypically male and white-dominated fields, have traditionally elided work by writers of color. Latinx literary studies has also typically overlooked speculative fiction in favor of work that seems to represent the Latinx experience more accurately in stories of immigration, assimilation, resistance, and so on. That said, these areas have seen

dramatic shifts, unexpected expansions, and exciting developments in recent years. I build on the work of scholars like andré carrington, Mark Jerng, Isiah Lavender III, Catherine Sue Ramírez, Lysa Rivera, Darieck Scott, and Sami Schalk, among others, who have demonstrated the essential role of race in the study of genre and genre fiction.[88] Their work has enabled more nuanced readings of the racial implications of literary texts and shown how attention to race and ethnicity can unearth ideologies and histories of violence within a text. For example, as I argue in chapter 2, the birthday cake and portrayals of sugar consumption in *Zone One* crystallize the violent history of transatlantic slavery, addiction, and monstrosity within the novel. In this book, therefore, an analysis of violence illuminates issues of race, ethnicity, and historical trauma that might otherwise be obscured at the same time that it demonstrates how speculative tropes can be read through this excess.

Doom Patterns uses Latinx speculative fiction as a reading protocol for analyzing literature by writers from diverse backgrounds because of its ability to unveil the ethno-racial, historical, and speculative where they might otherwise go unnoticed. The question of what constitutes Latinx speculative fiction has guided scholarship in the past decade, most of which focuses on science fiction, as the field has attempted to establish itself within Latinx studies.[89] Matthew David Goodwin proposes that Latinx science fiction is still in the "recovery period," "meaning that at least for the present time, there needs to be a focused attention on the group to bring to light works that have not received critical analysis."[90] Latinx studies scholarship that focuses on Latinx speculative fiction, including my own, agrees with Goodwin's point that we "need the category to see what has been missed."[91] Yet we can see in novels like *Dreaming in Cuban* and *Oscar Wao* that the historical violence and trauma at the center of these works reveal speculative elements. That is, the historical violence and trauma in their plots force the texts into excessive formal elements that allow us to redefine them as speculative fiction. In this way, recovery work involves mining the texts at the heart of what we call the Latinx literary canon for speculative elements that have been overlooked. If Latinx speculative fiction, as scholars of the genre maintain, is about reckoning with the past, and texts within the canon that are not considered speculative fiction are also concerned with the remnants of history, then we can use Latinx speculative fiction's reading protocols to discover elements of the genre within these texts as well.[92]

Latinx speculative fiction operates in three distinct but at times intersecting ways. First, it uses all the literary devices we typically associate with genre fiction—ghosts, monsters, time travel, alternative worlds and histories, intergalactic

travel. Second, it invokes the historical past by revealing the otherworldly nature of this history and of the formation of Latinx subjectivity. This second Latinx speculative fiction modality exposes unearthly dimensions within texts that are usually read as realist. Lastly, contemporary Latinx texts expose the speculative nature of *latinidad* and of the term itself. Ultimately, all three capacities of Latinx speculative fiction show Latinx subjectivity to be a speculative endeavor that necessitates the language of horror, fantasy, science fiction, and utopian and dystopian fiction—in short, the language of the speculative—to describe it. Catherine Sue Ramírez's examination of "Chicanafuturism" has begun this work and prompted scholars to reclaim texts that are not conventionally included within the generic parameters of speculative fiction. Ramírez theorizes that speculative fiction can be defined through its aesthetics of disrecognition and estrangement, making the histories of "many communities of color in the United States, and of the colonized and diasporic peoples of the (aptly called) 'New World'" something akin to science fiction plots.[93] Ernest Hogan similarly describes being Chicano as a "science fiction state of being," and in her analysis of "Latinofuturism," Cathryn Merla-Watson shows that horror fiction is a particularly salient genre for Latinx storytelling that, as in Ramírez's argument, illuminates how "horror and terror have been endemic to and have textured Latina/o lived experience"—graphic violence both banal and apocalyptic that is the stuff of horror.[94]

Speculative fiction, therefore, is a significant place to look for the haunting remnants of colonial, imperial, and ethno-racial violence. Genre fiction enables new modes of thinking and seeing the world and, for the purposes of my study, is particularly important for the ways we see and talk about the construction of race, gender, ethnicity, and nationhood. Scholars such as Aimee Bahng, Jerng, Dorinne Kondo, Merla-Watson and Olguín, and Joy Sanchez-Taylor, among others, have shown that race and ethnicity are central to the speculative. Equally important, they argue, is recognizing the centrality of the speculative for race-making.[95] Indeed, a significant branch of academic criticism published on speculative fiction, especially speculative fiction by people of color, focuses on questions of emancipation, resistance, and political repair. Recent work in the field has made arguments like Saldívar's, wherein he positions the "post-race novel" and "speculative realism" as establishing a "new imaginary" that foregrounds an ethico-moral imperative for disrupting social hierarchies and enabling a different orientation to our current conditions.[96] The groundbreaking anthology *Altermundos* (2017), edited by Merla-Watson and Olguín, expanded speculative fiction scholarship by focusing on the contribution of Latinx authors and thinkers to genre fiction and speculative fiction studies. Preceded by two

important dossiers in *Aztlán*, also edited by Merla-Watson and Olguín, that focused on speculative fiction, *Altermundos* continues the editors' project of correcting the representational aporia in speculative fiction, an imperative I take seriously throughout these pages.[97] The work highlighted in these dossiers and in *Altermundos* challenges the misconception that Latinx speculative fiction does not exist while expanding and remapping generic boundaries to allow for a more nuanced understanding of speculative fiction, *latinidad*, and Latinx letters within genre fiction.[98]

Yet recall that part of this book's claim is that it is impossible to think of Latinx identity and *latinidad* without turning to the speculative and that being Latinx is itself a fantastical form of being—a speculative incarnation that is prompted by many forms of historical violence that continue into the present. Mariachis on Mars, Hogan explains, come naturally to him, as do the zombies, Aztex time travelers, and fat-ghosts that populate this book. Hogan associates perceptions of *latinidad* with that which transforms the "natural" into the fantastic: "Even when I try to write mainstream, or even nonfiction, it's seen as fantastic."[99] Self-perception and reception of Latinx identity are translated as otherworldly. Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* similarly turns to the "alien" to describe the subjectivity generated on the US-Mexico border, a space of exchange, struggle, ambiguity, violence, and complexity. Alien consciousness, indeed, is part of the aftermath of the history of struggle on the borderlands.[100] While all the texts examined throughout *Doom Patterns* might not be recognized as traditional speculative fiction, I show that through narrative excess and literary tropes, they harbor the speculative, revealing the otherworldliness of Latinx subjectivity as well as the cyclical repetition of violence. Depictions of violence in speculative modes invite readers to question the ideologies undergirding race, ethnicity, gender, and citizenship and the historical events and traumas that have formed them. What brought me to speculative fiction is an intriguing trend in Latinx literature that centers the excessive and violent. In this book, I show how Latinx speculative fiction represents violence as intrinsic to *latinidad*—it is at once so fundamental and abundant in Latinx history and identity formations that it is also mundane, while its excess defines and translates it as otherworldly. Something that is essential to this trend is the reproduction of violence through aesthetic forms that are pleasurable. The texts I have gathered here act as primary interlocutors in the project of showing the many facets of doom patterns and the violent histories they invoke, interlocutors that offer avenues for further exploration of pleasure, narrative patterns, and modes of reading.

The Otherworldliness of *Latinidad*: Notes on Terminology

This book is about excess that extends beyond the content of the text. To speak of Latinx literature or *latinidad* is to confront a definitional surplus that exceeds categorization. In *On Latinidad* (2007), for example, Marta Caminero-Santangelo reviews the complexity of defining a pan-Latinx identity or a *latinidad* that bridges transethnic, transracial, transnational, and transclass identities. Many Latinx scholars, like Caminero-Santangelo, have investigated the usefulness of the term *latinidad* in spite of, or because of, its excessive impossibility, while others have called for its cancellation.[101] I use the terms *Latinx* and *latinidad* in this book because of their impossibility and speculative enterprise, while acknowledging that they allow for a potentially whitewashing shorthand. In using these terms, I also gesture to the intersecting and bifurcating histories that formed and continue to form Latinx and diasporic literature. Carmen Lamas's *The Latino Continuum and the Nineteenth-Century Americas* (2021) proposes a different deployment of the term *Latino*, arguing for it as a continuum established in and beyond space and time. She suggests that "Latino" identity is neither wholly Latin American nor US American, nor is it simply transnational. Instead, Lamas argues that *latinidad* is a "sort of identity that simultaneously occupies multiple spatialities while inhabiting and crossing diverse temporal moments."[102] This excess and this speculation are central to *Doom Patterns*' investigation. As a reading praxis, Latinx speculative fiction offers a way to bypass national identifications in order to encounter intra-Latinx and intra-ethno-racial networks that enable alternative scales for reading the larger systems of oppression in the present and across time—systems that might seem phantasmal but have real, haunting effects on people's lives.[103]

Debates over the term—*Latino* and its iterations, *Latino/a*, *Latin@*, *Latinx*, and now more and more *Latine*—highlight its political utility as a "strategic coalitional orientation," even as the term's obfuscation of difference has been underscored.[104] In particular, the substitution of the *x* for the *o*, *a/o*, and @ in recent years has caused a great deal of debate both within and outside academia. Online articles with titles such as "Why I Chose to Not Be Latinx," "Why I Embrace the Term Latinx," and "What's the Right Way to Pronounce Latinx?" demonstrate the anxiety and confusion the *x* brings with it.[105] Yet the uneasiness and difficulty the term presents are precisely why I have incorporated it into this project as a praxis for reading speculative fiction. As Renee Hudson argues, *latinidad* is speculative in nature: it encourages us to "turn to shared histories, affinities, and dreams while also creating a future for a *latini-*

dad that does not yet exist."[106] I propose that this theorization of *latinidad* as a speculative endeavor for the not-yet-here is expanded in Latinx speculative fiction, which underscores how the histories that form Latinx subjectivity seem taken out of science fiction, fantasy, and horror.

The continued speculation about the possibilities and complications presented by the *x* offers an important aperture for this project on the reading protocols of Latinx speculative fiction. Claudia Milian, for instance, regards the *x* as that which is lost in translation, presents difficulty for pronunciation and pluralization, and is always unstable: the *x* is "restive and hard to pin down and pushes against those things we thought we knew and understood."[107] The *x* offers the possibility of redefining the self, through such gestures as a return to the Indigenous or the underscoring of that which has been eternally lost—precisely the work of critical fabulation that frames this project. In the use of *Latinx* throughout this book, I recognize the term's disruption of gender binaries and heteronormative definitions, even in those texts that precede the use of the term or those that do not necessarily highlight what are commonly thought of as "queer topics." *Doom Patterns* points to the excessiveness and the speculative in being Latino/a/@/x. The *x* acts as a consistent reminder and remainder of the histories of violence that are exposed through narrative doom patterns in Latinx fiction. The incongruency ascribed to *Latinx* is precisely why the term is so useful for describing what it means to originate from and reside with the histories of colonial, imperial, racial, and gendered violence, and at their intersection. Antonio Viego, for example, ties the use of the *x* to violence and trauma, stating that the letter "cannot be made to make sense and it dissembles attempts at fixed meaning; it is the trauma that cannot be delivered in speech."[108] The *x* makes visible that which "we must bear" but which "cannot be borne," signaling violent histories that exceed understanding and narrative interpretation.[109]

As the mathematical symbol for the unknown variable—that which must be solved—the *x* in *Latinx* describes a condition of being more than, unknown, extreme. Adding the *x* also provocatively gives the term the look and sound of the inhuman, posthuman, and robotic. Attending to the complications in pronunciation and the impossible labeling task the term has been assigned, I situate the *x* within larger narratives of violence that remain unsayable, recursive, and intimately tied in the Latinx imaginary to the speculative language of the otherworldly. *X* demarcates the attempt to capture violence through language that always falls short of doing so. The texts examined in *Doom Patterns*, like the *x* in *Latinx*, turn "toward a void, an unknown, a wrestling with plurality, vectors of multi-intentionality."[110] *Latinx* provides an entry into the

histories of violence I investigate. Far from a transparent, objective description for a knowable identity, the term acts as a mediator among notions of race, ethnicity, and nationhood and bodies within the United States and the American hemisphere.

The Chapters

This book examines works published since the beginning of the 1990s—the decade during which what we now call *Latinx literature* gained larger market recognition and solidified as an academic field. The 1990s was a foundational decade for literature by this heterogeneous minoritized ethno-racial group. The decade saw an explosion of publications by Latinx authors, especially women, including García's *Dreaming in Cuban*, Julia Alvarez's *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* (1991) and *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994), Ana Castillo's *So Far from God* (1993), Sandra Cisneros's *Woman Hollering Creek* (1991), and Helena María Viramontes's *Under the Feet of Jesus* (1995). It was also during the 1990s that the Latinx canon emerged and that this literature began to be anthologized.[111] While this decade is fundamental to contemporary understandings of the field, I recognize the long history of Latinx letters within what is now the United States and the continued shifts in definition within literary and ethnic categories. The 1990s is noteworthy for symbolic reasons as well, if we consider that the year in which García's first novel was published marked the five-hundred-year anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Americas and the cataclysmic event that established what Mignolo calls the "modern/colonial" world system.[112] The colonial period is important for the foundation of *latinidad* and its haunting history that continues into the present, in literature's thematics and elsewhere. In fact, the books I examine in *Doom Patterns* manifest a sense of belatedness, or a participation in slow violence that addresses specific historical moments that took place years, decades, and sometimes centuries in the past: Bolaño's posthumously published *2666* considers the violent ripple effects of the 1994 signing of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA); Whitehead's *Zone One* (published in 2011) focuses on the world-changing effects of 9/11 and the magnitude of terrorism in the American zeitgeist, considering this threat against the backdrop of Barack Obama's presidency and the "postracial" society it promised to inaugurate; and although Machado's 2017 collection, *Her Body and Other Parties*, does not directly address the election of Donald Trump in 2016, it is difficult to read the text without thinking of the cruelty of "grab them by the pussy" and the increased violence against women that attended the rise of Trump.

In all this, *Doom Patterns* tracks how Latinx literature and Latinx studies becomes a field that represented a recognizable demographic in the 1990s while exploring how this legibility seems to be dissolving from within. One of the key issues that propelled the writing of this book is the perception that the field tends to imagine a unified *latinidad*. In response, this book offers alternative avenues of relation. The texts in my study, spanning 1992–2020, are organized around the thematic juxtaposition of doom patterns such as sugar, archival and textual silences, blood, and the corpse. What better model for reading juxtaposition than speculative fiction, which inherently relies on this method to tell stories about alternate histories or fantastical worlds that resonate because of their contrast with our own?

Doom Patterns opens with a central but controversial figure within Latinx letters, Junot Díaz. One of the most renowned Latinx authors of our contemporary moment and the recipient of numerous prestigious awards, Díaz epitomizes literary excellence, fiction's ethico-political imperatives, and the "authentic" depiction of Afro-Latinx life in the United States. His fiction navigates the unstable line between the worlds of "high art" and popular mass-market fiction and focuses on immigration and the legacies of colonialism and dictatorship as it affects the Dominican diaspora. In chapter 1, "Doom Patterning the Postcolony and the New Caribbean Mythology," I argue that the notion of "fukú americanus" that opens *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* defines the Caribbean as a postapocalyptic space created through anathema that produces otherworldly bodies. Generated by Columbus's arrival in the "New World," this curse organizes Díaz's oeuvre, and the narrative strategies of his primary narrator, Yunior, define apocalyptic violence as ongoing from 1492 to the present in colonial, postcolonial, dictatorial, and diasporic forms. Expanding common readings of fukú, I show that the curse is a tangible narrative entity that animates chronic hauntings in the Americas while also eliciting many forms of pleasure. In this chapter, I also examine how Díaz's essay "The Silence" (2018)—a nonfiction account of sexual abuse and its long-lasting effects in his life and fiction—and the sexual misconduct allegations that followed complicate common readings of his work as decolonial fiction.

Doom Patterns remains in the Caribbean for a moment longer, moving from the Dominican Republic and its diaspora to Cuba and Cuban America. Chapter 2 juxtaposes the enjoyment in the monstrous with the violence inflicted on the individual body while showing how the tropes of speculative fiction reveal the ethno-racial. In "Sweet Apocalypse: Sugar and Monstrosity at the End of the World," I offer a comparative analysis of depictions of sugar production and consumption that show how sugar is both sweet and violent. Consuming it gives

pleasure, but it also makes bodies grotesque and calls up colonial and dictatorial pasts. Reading Cristina García's *Dreaming in Cuban* alongside Colson Whitehead's *Zone One*, I show how sugar activates apocalyptic destruction: its consumption creates zombies, monsters always coated in the history of sugar production, transatlantic slavery, and the fear of the colonial masters' return. This chapter's comparative analysis of Latinx and African American novels reveals an otherwise unexplored thematic relationship between García's post–Cold War novel, on the threshold of a derelict Cuba after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and Whitehead's post-9/11 novel, invested in the wreckage of New York City after the fall of the Twin Towers. Depictions of sugar paint a picture of violence in the Caribbean as excessive and otherworldly, allowing us to read *Dreaming in Cuban* as a work of speculative fiction. This reading also makes it possible to read *Zone One* as Afro-Caribbean and to use the tropes within Whitehead's novel to illuminate the horrific elements in *Dreaming in Cuban*. Finally, reading these books together illustrates the importance of reading across ethno-racial fields and shows how the speculative can begin to disentangle portrayals of minoritized identity in literature.

Considered one of the most influential Latin American writers of his generation, Chilean-born Roberto Bolaño exemplifies celebrity status in English-language "world literature," even as he derided the literary mainstream while his works became canonical. My third chapter, "Approximation, Horror, and the Grotesque on the US-Mexico Border," turns to fragmentation, interrupted similes, and women's dead bodies to show how they reveal the otherworldly horror of the US-Mexico border and the ongoing nature of imperial, colonial, and gendered violence in this space. Focusing on Bolaño's posthumous novel, *2666*, I show how the conventions of genre fiction such as horror and the crime novel expose the otherworldliness of a particular historical destruction: the sexual assault and murder of hundreds of women in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico. Bolaño's novel instrumentalizes the figure of women's corpses to produce grotesque excitement in repeated sexual violence, voyeuristic pleasure in reading about this violence from a safe distance, and satisfaction in the accomplishment of finishing this massive tome of labyrinthian stories. In tension with the redemptive politics of Chicanx border studies and Chicana feminism, the novel imagines this subject through literary fragmentation—the repeated use of similes, for example—to underscore its desire but inability to describe the horror of the corpse or the borderlands that produce it.

My attention shifts toward "Greater Mexico"—the idea that Mexican nations have always continued to exist in the US territorial space—in chapter 4,

"Rekonkista: Brownface, Time Travel, and Cyberfascism in 'Greater Mexico.'" I discuss how Sesshu Foster's novel *Atomik Aztex* reimagines the historical cataclysm of the Spanish conquest of Mexico by resorting to the tropes of science fiction—particularly time travel—and in so doing exhibits what I call a "Latinxface" performance that revises both minstrelsy traditions and our expectations for justice-imagining works of art. I show how this Asian American novel unsettles key Chicanx concepts like Indigenous identity, ancestry, and nationhood to reveal that Los Angeles never stopped being Mexico. Collapsing the Chicano Movement's employment of a pre-Columbian homeland (Aztlán), *Atomik Aztex* advances my book's overarching argument by showcasing the cyclical repetition of violence and the pleasure in reading about it, in this case in the frustration the text produces alongside its humor and reinvention of Latinx history. Bolaño's and Foster's complicated and unstable relationships to Latinx narrative and *latinidad* signal the messy and slippery position they occupy while allowing me to expand the boundaries of the field and their genres.

Doom Patterns culminates with an investigation of the singular that reflects on the individual body and the effects of history on it. Chapter 5, "Her Body, Our Horror: Self-Abnegation; or, On Silence, Refusal, and Becoming the Un/Self," examines short stories from Carmen Maria Machado's collection *Her Body and Other Parties* (2017) to argue that the female body is presented as a speculative arena through which self-abnegation and refusal are explored in relation to hunger and desire. I use the place of Machado in Latinx literature to consider my own position in the field—as a woman, as someone who has battled with what it means to be fat in Western culture, as someone who has experienced sexual violence, as an immigrant, as Latinx. Latinx scholars have shown an affective attachment to reading Machado as a Latinx author, although her work evinces no overt signs of race and ethnicity, either Latinx or white. Imagining Machado's work as Latinx positions *latinidad* as a speculative endeavor that is outside the reach of language—unsayable and unknowable—even as it is happening through language. My examination of the speculative female body in Machado's work unearths unexpected narrative strategies, literary patterns, and networks. These networks are particularly significant in our contemporary moment, in which difficult conversations about sexual abuse and its intersection with race, ethnicity, and financial and institutional power dominate the zeitgeist.

In my coda, "Thinking from the Hole: *Latinidad* on the Edge," *Doom Patterns* returns to the dissipation of ethno-racial markers in Latinx literature. I consider Hernan Diaz's novel *In the Distance* (2017) as a Latinx novel in disguise. Telling the story of a young Swedish immigrant who attempts to make

his way to New York from California in the mid-nineteenth century, Diaz's novel presents the American landscape as marked by otherworldly possibility and danger. Invested in reinvestigating notions of "foreign/ness," "citizenship," and "nation," *In the Distance* is imbued with proto-Latinxness yet is even further removed from an ascription to brownness than Machado is. By "unbinding literature" from the parameters that govern the field, Diaz's novel confirms *latinidad* as a speculative generic mode.[113]

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1. Caitlin Roper, "Preface," in *New York Times Magazine*, "Decameron Project," ix.

2. Rivka Galchen, "Introduction," in *New York Times Magazine*, "Decameron Project," xv.

3. Boccaccio, *Decameron*.

4. I say "lost" here because the manuscript that Adana destroys is retold by Maxwell to Saul's grandfather when they meet as teenagers in Chicago. Saul's grandfather in turn transcribes the book and ostensibly rewrites (and therefore "re-finds") the novel.

5. Zapata, *Lost Book*, 48. This is also how the Dominican Republic is framed in Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007), which establishes the island as the catalyst for the modern/colonial divide and which I explore in chapter 1.

6. Zapata, *Lost Book*, 48.

7. Throughout this book, I use the term *realist* to refer to traditional narrative forms that are distinct from genre fiction and the fantastic, not necessarily to realism as a literary movement.

8. Zapata, *Lost Book*, 167 (emphasis in original).

9. Zapata, *Lost Book*, 167.

10. Zapata, *Lost Book*, 169.

11. My definition of *elsewheres* differs from that of Paula Moya and Lesley Larkin, who define them as "alternative worlds . . . that facilitate the development of more racially just and life-affirming selves and ways of living." "Decolonial Virtues," 228. Yomaira Figueroa-Vásquez similarly presents "worlds/otherwise" to consider ruptures across modernity and coloniality that contain possibilities for the future and are "part and parcel of a reparation of the imagination." *Decolonizing Diasporas*, 148. As I explain in this introduction and throughout *Doom Patterns*, *elsewheres* designates alternative worlds that are created by narrative strategies that return readers again and again to historical violence and destruction.

12. In *Race and Upward Mobility*, Elda María Román shows the various strategies Mexican Americans and African Americans use to negotiate US power relations and the constraints of neoliberal capitalism that compel them to align with white middle-classness.

13. *Rasquachismo* is a theory developed by Tomás Ybarra-Frausto to describe "an underdog perspective," a view from "*los de abajo*" (from below) and which uses elements of "hybridization, juxtaposition, and integration" as a means of resistance. Ybarra-Frausto, "Rasquachismo," 85–90.

14. Renee Hudson's *Latinx Revolutionary Horizons* also destabilizes *latinidad* by proposing a historicized sense of the term to argue for its political abilities in-the-making.

15. I have been greatly inspired in particular by Machado Sáez, *Market Aesthetics*; Rohrleitner, *Transnational Latinidades*; Lamas, *Latino Continuum*; Harford Vargas, *Forms of Dictatorship*; and Hudson, *Latinx Revolutionary Horizons*.

16. Delany, "Generic Protocols," 176.

17. Delany, "Generic Protocols," 177.

18. Delany, "Generic Protocols," 177.

19. Sperling, "How to Read."

20. Rosen, *Minor Characters*, 22.

21. Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 6 (emphasis in original); and Berlant, *Female Complaint*, 19.

22. Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 14.

23. Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 11. Nicole Guidotti-Hernández similarly takes up the silencing of racialized and sexualized subjects from the archives of the American borderlands. *Unspeakable Violence*, 4–6. Dixa Ramírez proposes the concept of "ghosting" for thinking about how colonial, imperial, and nationalist forms of power are enacted. See D. Ramírez, *Colonial Phantoms*. Anne McClintock turns to "imperial ghosting" to speak of the erasure that takes place through US imperialism. See McClintock, "Imperial Ghosting." See also Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*; Taylor, *Archive and the Repertoire*; and Bergland, *National Uncanny*.

24. Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments*, xiii.

25. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 65–81.

26. Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*, 3. Guidotti-Hernández examines the meaning found in the "unspeakable" and "the utterance" as a reminder of violence's foundational role in the formation of national histories and subjectivities that are usually elided. *Unspeakable Violence*, 5–7.

27. Chuh, *Difference Aesthetics Makes*, 20. Wai Chee Dimock similarly uses the concept of "deep time" to thread previously unimagined kinship networks, routes of transit, and attachment relations. See Dimock, *Through Other Continents*, 3–4.

28. See Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 257–58.

29. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, xvi.

30. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 7.

31. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 25.

32. Del Pilar Blanco, *Ghost-Watching American Modernity*, 8. Mary Pat Brady's *Extinct Lands/Temporal Geographies* similarly turns to literature to explore the changing and haunted spaces of the US borderlands.

33. Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 215.

34. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, xvi. See also Holland, *Raising the Dead*.

35. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 25.

36. Dictionary.com, s.v. "doom (*n.*)," accessed April 1, 2024, https://www.dictionary.com/browse/doom.

37. Postmodern aesthetics have been most importantly theorized by Linda Hutcheon, Fredric Jameson, and Jean-François Lyotard. The work of Robert Elliot Fox, Henry Louis Gates Jr., and Madhu Dubey has greatly informed my thinking about the specificity and difference in postmodern aesthetics in works by people of color. See Fox, *Conscientious Sorcerers*; Gates, *Signifying Monkey*; Dubey, "Contemporary African American Fiction"; and Dubey, *Signs and Cities*.

38. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "doom (n.)," accessed April, 11, 2024, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/doom_n?tab=meaning_and_use#6132789.

39. See Kermode, *Sense of an Ending*.

40. Saldívar has presented this argument in "Imagining Cultures," "The Second Elevation of the Novel," and "The Other Side of History, the Other Side of Fiction."

41. R. Saldívar, "Other Side of History," 158.

42. R. Saldívar, "Speculative Realism," 519.

43. Jameson, *Postmodernism*. His exploration of Vincent van Gogh's and Andy Warhol's paintings of shoes (6–16) is particularly demonstrative of this point. Terry Eagleton also takes this view of postmodernism in "Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism."

44. Marcus, Love, and Best, "Building a Better Description"; Cheng, *Second Skin*; McMillan, "Introduction"; Muñoz, "From Surface to Depth"; and Musser, *Sensual Excess*.

45. McMillan, "Introduction," 5. Kadji Amin, Amber Jamilla Musser, and Roy Pérez show how form operates beneath the surface of the visual, to account for the affective and sensuous. See Amin, Musser, and Pérez, "Queer Form." To the affective and sensuous, I would also add the historical as it makes itself manifest in form.

46. Musser, *Sensual Excess*, 49; Hutcheon, *Poetics of Postmodernism*, 50; Cheng, *Second Skin*, 9-10.

47. Hutcheon, *Poetics of Postmodernism*, 4.

48. In my analysis of excessive forms and aesthetics, I draw on the work of Jack Halberstam's *Skin Shows*, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions*, Jillian Hernandez's *Aesthetics of Excess*, Deborah Vargas's "Ruminations on *Lo Sucio*," and Leticia Alvarado's *Abject Performances*.

49. Berlant, "Genre Flailing," 157.

50. Scarry, *Body in Pain*.

51. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v., "pattern (n.)," accessed April 11, 2024, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/pattern_n?tab=meaning_and_use#31803324.

52. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v., "pattern (v.)," accessed April 11, 2024, https://www.oed.com/dictionary/pattern_v?tab=meaning_and_use#31807458.

53. Scholars have turned to the literary for its particular use for exploring the world. Gordon argues that literary fiction illuminates, through imaginative design, what cannot be accessed with the rules and methods of professionalized social sciences. *Ghostly Matters*, 25. See also Levine, *Forms*.

54. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 24. See also Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

55. Goyal, *Runaway Genres*, 31, 30. The politics of artistic practice has been debated by theorists and artists, who interrogate the relationship among cultural production, society,

history, and politics. The debates among Ernst Bloch, George Lukács, Bertolt Brecht, Walter Benjamin, and Theodor Adorno in the 1930s illustrate differing views of what they considered the committed artist's responsibility and function in creating works of art for the transformation of society, and the importance of artistic form—expressionism, abstraction, naturalism, and so on—and modes of production in this endeavor. See Adorno et al., *Aesthetics and Politics*.

56. Harford Vargas, *Forms of Dictatorship*.

57. Scholars have shown the importance of formal analysis and the relation of the literary to the sociohistorical. See Harford Vargas, *Forms of Dictatorship*; Woloch, *One vs. the Many*; Moya, *Social Imperative*; and Levine, "Strategic Formalism."

58. See Chuh, *Difference Aesthetics Makes*, 3–4, 21. See also Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, 8–9.

59. Chuh, *Difference Aesthetics Makes*, 18–21; and Welsch, *Undoing Aesthetics*, 8.

60. Chuh investigates how aesthetics have been formed through subjugated ways of knowing and offers new avenues for examining what she calls "illiberal" humanism. *Difference Aesthetics Makes*, 6–7. See also Felski, *Hooked*.

61. Nixon, *Slow Violence*, 3.

62. Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 1–37; and Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*. Rita Felski similarly decenters "critique" as a leading practice in literary studies. See Felski, *Limits of Critique*.

63. Robyn Wiegman's *Object Lessons* investigates identity-based fields in the academy as organized around questions of social justice. In Latinx literary and cultural studies, Raphael Dalleo and Elena Machado Sáez's *The Latino/a Canon and Post-Sixties Literature* argues that contemporary Latinx writers continue to formulate political projects that renew the tradition of the 1960s and 1970s, and Rafael Pérez-Torres's introduction to the "Latinx Temporality as a Time of Crisis" dossier for *Aztlán* questioned the institutionalization of Latinx and Chicanx studies and these fields' ability to serve as "agents of transformation." Pérez-Torres, "Introduction," 154. See also Olguín, *Violentologies*, 11; Rivero, "Hispanic Literature"; and J. Flores, *From Bomba to Hip-Hop*, 199–200. Marta Caminero-Santangelo notes that Latinx literary texts are assumed to advance a progressive ideology and that when they do not fit this mold, they are excluded from the field. Caminero-Santangelo, *On Latinidad*, 12.

64. Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, 25.

65. Torres, *We the Animals*, 116.

66. Torres, *We the Animals*, 125.

67. Appelbaum, *Aesthetics of Violence*, 13.

68. Olguín, *Violentologies*, 37.

69. Olguín, *Violentologies*, 12.

70. Jerng, *Racial Worldmaking*, 8.

71. Maldonado Torres, *Against War*; O'Gorman, *La invención de América*; Mignolo, *Idea of Latin America*; and Quijano and Wallerstein, "Americanity as a Concept."

72. Others who have focused on violence as fundamentally inscribed in Latinx subjectivity include Anzaldúa, Roberto Hernández (in *Coloniality of the US/Mexico Border*), and Guidotti-Hernández (in *Unspeakable Violence*). Violence is also central to many minoritized literatures and fields of study; see Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*.

73. Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence*. Monica Muñoz Martinez's *The Injustice Never Leaves You* similarly underscores the horror of anti-Mexican violence in the borderlands that undermines official narratives that would whitewash these stories of violence.

74. Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence*, 2.

75. See Pinto, *Infamous Bodies*, 7, 19; Goyal, *Runaway Genres*, 32–33; Keen, *Empathy and the Novel*; Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence*, 23–24; and Vogler, "Moral of the Story." In *Migrant Aesthetics*, Glenda Carpio makes the distinction between art that creates empathy and that which seeks "truthfulness," the latter being that which works toward political justice (9).

76. Pinto, *Infamous Bodies*, 22; and Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence*, 24.

77. Muñoz, *Sense of Brown*, 119.

78. *Merriam-Webster.com*, s.v., "speculate," accessed April 12, 2024, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/speculate.

79. *Merriam-Webster.com*, s.v., "speculate," accessed April 12, 2024, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/speculate.

80. Žižek, *Living in the End Times*, xii. See also Derrida, "Of an Apocalyptic Tone"; and Benjamin, "Theses."

81. Berger, *After the End*, 5.

82. Said, *Beginnings*, 41–42. Kyle Powys Whyte and Kim TallBear have shown how the apocalypse has already occurred for Indigenous peoples. See Whyte, "Our Ancestors' Dystopia Now"; and TallBear, "Indigenous Genocide and Reanimation."

83. Berger, *After the End*, 14.

84. Fish, "Literature in the Reader."

85. Fish, "Literature in the Reader," 125.

86. I am, of course, invoking Stanley Fish's renowned formulation of literature here.

87. Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*, xv–xvi; and Maguire, "Science Fiction."

88. carrington, *Speculative Blackness*; Jerng, *Racial Worldmaking*; Lavender, *Race*; C. Ramírez, "Cyborg Feminism"; Rivera, "Future Histories"; Schalk, *Bodyminds Reimagined*; and Darieck Scott, *Keeping It Unreal*.

89. Emily Maguire's survey of Latinx science fiction opens with the question, "Is there a Latino/a science fiction?" Maguire, "Science Fiction," 351. Christopher González begins his chapter for *Latinos and Narrative Media* (2013) with a similarly inclined question, "Why are there so few such works created by Latinos in the United States?" González, "Latino Sci-Fi," 211.

90. Goodwin, *Latinx Files*, 6.

91. Goodwin, *Latinx Files*, 6.

92. Latinx speculative fiction is in dialogue with Alejo Carpentier's notion of "lo real maravilloso" (the marvelous real). See Carpentier, *El reino de este mundo*. Gabriel García Márquez also presented Latin America's "outsized reality" in his Nobel acceptance speech, "The Solitude of Latin America." Other useful sources that consider the effects of history on genre are Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*; Gil'Adí and Mann, "New Suns"; and R. Saldívar, "Imagining Cultures."

93. C. Ramírez, "Cyborg Feminism," 396.

94. Hogan, "Chicanonautica Manifesto"; and Merla-Watson, "Latinofuturism." Linda Heidenreich, Luz María Gordillo, Amalia Ortíz, and Cynthia Saldívar Hull all propose that horror, the gothic, and the postapocalyptic are enduring truths of Latinx subjectivity. See Heidenreich, "Colonial Pasts, Utopian Futures"; Gordillo, "Contesting Monstrosity"; A. Ortiz, "Canción Cannibal Cabaret"; and C. Saldívar, "#rapetreesarereal."

95. Bahng, *Migrant Futures*; Jerng, *Racial Worldmaking*; Merla-Watson and Olguín, *Altermundos*; Sanchez Taylor, *Diverse Futures*; Kondo, *Worldmaking*; Dubey, "Octavia Butler's Novels"; Keeling, *Queer Times, Black Futures*; Gil'Adí, "Sugar Apocalypse"; Mann, "Pessimistic Futurism"; C. Ramírez, "Cyborg Feminism"; Schalk, *Bodyminds Reimagined*; and Michelle Wright, *Physics of Blackness*.

96. R. Saldívar, "Imagining Cultures," 1.

97. Merla-Watson and Olguín, *Altermundos*; Merla-Watson and Olguín, "Dossier: Latin@ Speculative Literature, Film, and Popular Culture"; and Merla-Watson and Olguín, "Dossier: From the Horrific to the Utopic."

98. In "The Law of Genre," Jacques Derrida shows how "genre" is always already announcing its "limit" and "contamination," and therefore exceeds classification and policing. Also see Goyal, *Runaway Genres*; and Goddu, *Gothic America*. Antecedents of contemporary Latinx speculative fiction can be seen in Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera*, Oscar "Zeta" Acosta's *The Revolt of the Cockroach People* (1973), and Ron Arias's *The Road to Tamazunchale* (1975).

99. Hogan, "Chicanonautica Manifesto," 131.

100. C. Ramírez, "Cyborg Feminism," 389.

101. On the usefulness of *latinidad*, see Milian, "Extremely Latin, XOXO"; Viego, "LatinX"; Aparicio, "Latinidad/es"; J. Rodríguez, "Latino/a/x"; R. Ortiz, *Latinx Literature Now*; Orchard, "Bruja Theory"; and Guzmán and León, "Cuts and Impressions." On the term's cancellation, see T. Flores, "'Latinidad Is Cancelled.'"

102. Lamas, *Latino Continuum*, 5. In *Cotton Mather's Spanish Lessons*, Kirsten Silva Gruesz illustrates how the entangled histories of the Americas in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries inform and develop contemporary understandings of literary history, space, the nation, race, racialization and its relationship to language, and *latinidad*. In this way, Gruesz, as Lamas does, exemplifies how what we now understand as Latinx and *latinidad* have a longer and more complicated history than imagined. Also see Cutler, "Latinx Historicisms."

103. Mary Pat Brady's *Scales of Captivity* describes how scalar ideologies order the world into social and nested hierarchies, producing a singular world order at the service of containment under colonial and capitalist structures of power.

104. Harford Vargas, *Forms of Dictatorship*, 25. On how the term whitewashes difference, see Gruesz, "Once and Future Latino," 117; Beltrán, *Trouble with Unity*, 6; R. Ortiz, *Latinx Literature Now*, xiii.

105. H. González, "Why I Chose"; Morales, "Why I Embrace"; and Staff, "What's the Right Way to Pronounce Latinx?"

106. Hudson, "Latinidad."

107. Milian, *LatinX*, 12.

108. Viego, "LatinX," 162. Alan Pelaez Lopez similarly argues that the *x* functions as a wound that marks the histories of settler colonialism, anti-Blackness, femicide, and inarticulation. See Pelaez Lopez, "X in Latinx."

109. Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 14.

110. Gómez-Barris and Fiol-Matta, "Introduction," 504.

111. Ellen McCracken investigates the important effect Latina writers had on American fiction in the past two decades of the twentieth century in *New Latina Narrative*. Dalleo and Machado Sáez's *The Latino/a Canon and the Emergence of Post-Sixties Literature* also considers the 1990s as instrumental for the construction of a Latinx canon and the incorporation of Latinx authors within the literary market.

112. Mignolo, *The Idea of Latin America*, xii–xiii; Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*, xxv, 3.

113. This phrase comes from Ralph Rodriguez's *Latinx Literature Unbound*.

CHAPTER 1. DOOM PATTERNING THE POSTCOLONY AND THE NEW CARIBBEAN MYTHOLOGY

A section of chapter 1 appeared as "'I Think about You, X—': Re-reading Junot Díaz after 'The Silence,'" *Latino Studies* 18, no. 4 (2020): 507–30.

1. Díaz, *This Is How You Lose Her*, 22.

2. Díaz, *This Is How*, 24.

3. Díaz, *This Is How*, 24.

4. My use of *repeatedly* is a reference to Antonio Benítez-Rojo's influential text *The Repeating Island*, in which he reorients Caribbean identity through a postmodern theorization of the "geographic accident" of the Antilles as a "historico-economic" geography of repeating histories and, in my estimation, repeating violences. See Benítez-Rojo, *Repeating Island*, 2, 9.

5. Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," 234.

6. Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," 236.

7. Hall, "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," 235.

8. Díaz's writing, and *Oscar Wao* in particular, has generated a large volume of scholarship. Most centers fukú as a metaphorical framework for thinking about the remainder of coloniality within the Americas, and specifically as embodied by Rafael Trujillo. It would be impossible to provide a comprehensive list of scholarship on Díaz's fiction, but the following thinkers have influenced and pushed my analysis of his work: Figueroa-Vásquez, *Decolonizing Diasporas*; Hanna, "Reassembling the Fragments"; Harford Vargas, *Forms of Dictatorship*; Irrizary, "This Is How You Lose It"; Lethabo King, *The Black Shoals*; Machado Sáez, *Market Aesthetics*; D. Ramírez, *Colonial Phantoms*; and R. Saldívar, "Imagining Cultures."

9. Yomaira Figueroa-Vásquez argues that *Oscar Wao* is narrated with a decolonial imperative in which legacies of violence (coloniality of power, gender, knowledge) are "countered and confronted." See Figueroa-Vásquez, *Decolonizing Diasporas*, 85-86.

10. Díaz, *This Is How*, 25.

11. Yunior is a creative writer who constantly reflects on his writerly process. The narrative act in Díaz's work is significant not only for its telling (in its aural and oral