thinking and that of womanist and Latina thinkers to get at that hope expressed in concrete commitments linked to lofty expectations. The "revolving door" provides an image of ongoing transformation "that connects the past with the present, and both with the future" (173).

In an essay written after an earthquake devastated El Salvador, Jon Sobrino described it as an X-ray that revealed the inner workings of the country. Using that metaphor, I would like to say that Teresa Delgado has done a great service as a kind of radiologist. She has scanned the evidence found in the literary works of Puerto Rican authors and has provided a powerful diagnosis. Anyone wishing to learn more about the Puerto Rican, and particularly diasporic, soul would do well to read this book. Yet, that is only one of its gifts. Delgado's engagement with the Christian theological tradition suggests many "therapies" for this patient. The first course of treatment is to do away with distortions of Christianity that have justified the colonial domination of the island and its people. On this point, Delgado is at her strongest. Any decolonial thinker who dismisses Christianity as too embedded in coloniality to be helpful will have to reckon with this book.

Of course, the negative therapy should lead to a positive one. Though there are encouraging moments in the book, this is one area that I hope Delgado develops in her future work. Further engagement with theologies working from marginal spaces can provide positive utopic images that foster hope. Moreover, to borrow Gutiérrez's phrase, a theology that critically reflects on the praxis of post-Maria Puerto Rico in light of the word of God will ensure that any utopic vision is grounded in real solidarity. In this way, while Delgado's negative method provides much prophecy in this book, further elaboration of her insights will be able to make substantial truth claims about the nature of and steps toward freedom.

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AUTHOR'S RESPONSE

Since June 1, 2018, the Puerto Rican community—island and diaspora—has been in a collective state of nervous anticipation of another hurricane season,[29] and most recently reminded of (as if we could ever forget) the

[29] I begin with a word of gratitude to the editors of *Horizons* for devoting this symposium to my book and, in doing so, demonstrating an act of solidarity with the Puerto Rican community on the first anniversary of Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

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devastation faced by so many, confirmed by a new official death toll of 2,975.[30] Nearly 3,000 of our *gente* perished during Hurricanes Irma and Maria, and in the profound neglect of their aftermath. The enormity of that fact cannot be overstated and underscores the necessity of shouting out—*un grito duro*—the importance of our lives with the belief that when the world ignores our cries, God hears us.

I am honored to have my book reflected upon by scholars whose work I respect and admire: María Teresa Dávila, Melissa Pagán, Nancy Pineda-Madrid, and Michael Lee. Their insights, reflections, and critique have given me much to consider to flesh out the nuances of a Puerto Rican decolonial theology; I offer my commentary in the order of the perspectives presented, lifting up the inflection points that continue our ongoing dialogue *en conjunto*.

Response to Dávila: Our Stories Matter

On August 11, 2018, I had the privilege of being invited to a performance of *West Side Story* at the Glimmerglass Festival in Cooperstown, New York.[31] As I watched a 2018 dramatization of this 1957 musical, having deconstructed the lyrics of "America" at the 2017 meeting of the American Academy of Religion,[32] I became unexpectedly emotional. Why was there so much fascination with this story, told through the music, lyrics, and choreography of three men (four if you consider Shakespeare) who were not Puerto Rican? Is this story our own? Has it become our own by default? And is this the only story that the standing-room-only audience of predominantly white upstate New Yorkers will ever know of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans still, even now, in post–Hurricane Maria 2018?

As noted by Dávila, imaginations ran wild in the aftermath of the hurricane, as did mine as I watched the performance, and all were based on fear. The kind of imagination needed for the full flourishing of the Puerto Rican community cannot be based on fear but on a promise of that which extends beyond what the eyes can see. Indeed, imagination is a radical act

[30] Sheri Fink, "Nearly a Year after Hurricane Maria, Puerto Rico Revises Death Toll to 2,975," *New York Times*, August 28, 2018.

[31] https://glimmerglass.org/events/west-side-story/. I wrote an essay for the 2018 Glimmerglass Festival program book that contextualized the play, using the lyrics of "America" as a starting point to deconstruct the false imaginary that has been ascribed to the Puerto Rican experience since the musical's debut in 1957.

[32] As referenced by María Teresa Dávila in her essay and for which she served as moderator.

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of faith.[33] The imagination of our narrative matters: at a moment when narratives that perpetuate a lie and those that get to the truth are being contested, it matters who tells the story and to whose benefit the story is being told. Our stories may be the only way our faith in a decolonial future we cannot see is actualized.

I am particularly grateful for Dávila's keen perception around questions of gender and coloniality. I will leave the labeling of my work as *mujerista* theology to others, but I am indebted to the work of *mujerista* theologians for whom *lo cotidiano*—the everyday life experience—is the starting point for any theological discourse. I hint at this later in the book as I offer the *mulatizaje* of my Latina womanist leanings, paying closer attention to the contours of race that have been silenced and marginalized within Puerto Rican stories and histories. Our racial story must matter as a central element of our theologizing. As a Roman Catholic theologian, I take very seriously the critique offered by Bryan N. Massingale and M. Shawn Copeland that Roman Catholic theological discourse has not attended adequately to white supremacy and racial hierarchies and, in that lack, has perpetuated both in our Roman Catholic church and theology.[34]

The story of conquest and colonization, as Dávila notes, is intimately tied up with gender. I agree wholeheartedly when she states that "the study of the gendered nature of coloniality and conquest reveals for us … that the turning into no ones of the colonial subject is not gender neutral, but bears the weight of the dynamics of gender violence, in their domestic, social, and political spheres." The story of violence and the evangelization of the Americas has been told,[35] but its connection to gender is more recently being made apparent with the voices of feminist, womanist, and *mujerista* theologians/ethicists coming to the fore.[36] More work needs to be done to make this connection explicit, and I am heeding that call in a manuscript in progress on a decolonial Catholic sexual ethic, from the place and space of the "no one" as the best of witnesses.

[33] Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (NRSV).

[34] See Bryan N. Massingale, *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2010); M. Shawn Copeland, ed., *Uncommon Faithfulness: The Black Catholic Experience* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009).

[35] Luís N. Rivera Pagán, *Evangelizacion y violencia: La conquista de América* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Editorial CEMI, 1991).

[36] See Nantawan B. Lewis and Marie M. Fortune, eds., *Remembering Conquest: Feminist/Womanist Perspectives on Religion, Colonization, and Sexual Violence* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

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The place of "no one and everyone at once" is echoed in a traditional bomba —an Afro–Puerto Rican music style—that I found myself singing in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria with my imagination running wild about loved ones in Puerto Rico: "Campo yo vivo triste / y cada día sufriendo más / Ay Dios, que será de mí / si no bailo esta bomba yo voy a morir."[37] The being, survival, and salvation of the Puerto Rican community cannot be separated from the being, survival, and salvation of the land; by expressing oneself through the body, through dance, one is connected to the land and one's very existence. Thus, to theologize in a Puerto Rican decolonial key, post-Hurricane Maria, we must attend to the ways we can imagine gender, racial, and earth justice, aspiring toward, as Dávila notes, "the liberation of a *mañana* that is to come."

Response to Pagán: Our Cries Matter

I dedicated *A Puerto Rican Decolonial Theology* "to all Boricúas—from every time and every place—who, in one way or another, have inspired me by living into freedom regardless of political status or personal circumstances, standing with beauty and grace when the world has said we are nothing more than colonial subjects. This book is my love letter to you" (vi). Pagán rightly notes that it is also a lament—*un grito*—that shouts to the ends of the earth on behalf of an enduring love for the Puerto Rican community. Her analysis of a "hermeneutics of *el grito*" referenced here and given fuller treatment in her powerful essay "Cultivating a Hermeneutics of *El Grito* in the Eye of the Storm" suggests the moral responsibility of the Puerto Rican community to

> break through colonial ways of knowing that ground so much of our thinking about the human person in relation to one another and in relation to God. In the context of the indifference to suffering and violence produced at the colonial difference/indifference, as evidenced by the phenomenology of the cry, the past and present sufferings of our people must become the

[37] Campo yo vivo triste
Cada día sufriendo más
Ay dios que será de mí
Si no bailo esta bomba
Me voy a morir

My land/earth, I live with sadness
and every day I suffer more
Oh God, what shall you have me do
If I don't dance this bomba
I will surely die

Campo yo te llevo
En mis recuerdos
Como el perfume lleva la flor
Sueno con tus valles tus montañas
Campo de Puerto Rico
Te llevo en mi corazón

My land/earth, I carry you
in my memories
as the fragrance carries the flower
I dream with your valleys, your mountains
My land of Puerto Rico
I carry you in my heart
(Classic bomba; my trans.)

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> locus of our work as theologians, ethicists, and educators. Naming the importance of a hermeneutics of *el grito* reminds us of the history of … global coloniality that continue[s] to relegate subjects to a subhuman status. It challenges us to listen and recognize how our current categories inhibit rather than facilitate liberative possibilities.[38]

Pagán's incisive analysis challenges me to articulate more clearly the centering of emancipation as a constitutive element of a Puerto Rican decolonial theology. It is not merely a semantic preference but one that emerges from my interpretation of how the liberation project within theology has become fused with the colonial project. In other words, since liberation theologies were first articulated, something has happened to the volume of what were once prophetic voices crying out in the wilderness. After the publication of many books on liberation theology, has our world become more liberated? Are our churches more attuned to the cries of the least of these? I would argue that the "liberation theologies" enshrined in institutions of church and academy have become the "current categories [that] inhibit rather than facilitate liberative possibilities."[39] Even with the best of intentions, the theorizing of liberation has become disconnected from its praxis. My centering of emancipation with the logics of decoloniality is my humble effort to disrupt the narrative of theology by reclaiming the imaginaries of freedom from enslavement. Here, again, I am attending to the silences around racial hierarchies and white supremacy embedded in the logic of coloniality that emancipation language seeks to unearth.

I am also challenged by Pagán's question posed from the destructive floodwaters of Hurricane Maria. Using Ferré's *House on the Lagoon*, Puerto Rico was razed and will never be as before; she asks, "I wonder what we collectively might be able to imagine for a new, decolonized future for Puerto Rico, ripe with freedom and love?" With almost 3,000 dead, vulture capitalists waiting in the wings to buy the island for pennies on the dollar,[40] and so many of our people forced to migrate, I too wonder what a new decolonized future will look like. This, in itself, is reason for ongoing lament. All I can say is that I have witnessed something remarkable: in the wake of this calamity, a collective imagination of Puerto Rican identity and hope is emerging in the collaborative efforts between the island and diasporic communities. There is a renewed recognition that we are one people and what we build will be based on our listening and attending to our own *gritos*. Something rises

[38] Pagán, "Puerto Rico Forum," 72.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Bill Moyers, "Venture Capitalists Circle above Puerto Rico Prey," Bill Moyers, September 30, 2017, https://billmoyers.com/story/vulture-capitalists-circle-puerto-rico-prey/.

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from the ashes, a resurrection moment that is not based on an external savior but on a belief in the power of God working with and through us to live into a future ripe with freedom and love. The praxis of our communal solidarity is what is being both imagined and realized in the space where the house on the lagoon once stood.

Response to Pineda-Madrid: Our History Matters

Nancy Pineda-Madrid asserts that "history, colonialism, and imagination each suggest spaces for conversation among Puerto Rican and Mexican American theologians." I respond with an emphatic *yes!* There is no way this project could have been imagined and initiated without the work of Virgilio Elizondo, María Pilar Aquino, and so many others whom I claim as theological forbearers. Their theological insights, in addition to the stories of Ana Castillo, Sandra Cisneros, and Rudolfo Anaya, illumined a path for me to excavate my own stories, learning that just because they were not readily available did not mean the stories did not exist. They needed to be drawn out from the silence and the shadows of forced amnesia.

Theological amnesia, fed by historical amnesia, has deadly consequences, as Pineda-Madrid so accurately notes. This was made excruciatingly clear to me this past April when I received a notice from a colleague announcing an invitation to a former Texas Ranger and current border consultant to offer a keynote address at Iona.[41] How was it that, in 2018, a Catholic college whose mission fosters "intellectual inquiry, community engagement, and an appreciation for diversity" would either not be aware of the fraught history of the Texas Rangers or, worse yet, not seem to care?[42] In my response, I noted my disappointment with the invitation; yet, hoping that the speaker's presence would provoke a teachable moment about the forgotten history of lynching perpetrated by the Texas Rangers and civilian vigilantes, I provided a link to a few resources that I thought would be helpful toward that end.[43] Unfortunately, that information was not provided to students (to my knowledge), and no other faculty came forward to share my concerns publicly.

If, as Pineda-Madrid states, "Puerto Rican history has been erased from the Puerto Rican collective consciousness[, and] the same is true for the

[41] This colleague (who will go unnamed) serves at the rank of full professor.

[42] The Iona College mission statement is found at https://www.iona.edu/about/history-mission/mission-vision-values.aspx.

[43] See Rebecca Onion, "America's Lost History of Border Violence," *Slate*, May 5, 2016, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/history/2016/05/texas_finally_begins_to_grapple_with_its_ugly_history_of_border_violence.html; Carrigan and Webb, *Forgotten Dead*.

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Chicanx/Mexican American people," I would contend that neither has ever made it to the collective consciousness of the dominant culture in the United States. As a result, many in this country are completely ignorant of how the current climate of xenophobic mania against our neighbors to the south has tremendous precedent, and they are equally ignorant of the manner in which this racism is woven into the fabric of the colonial project that is los Estados Unidos. As theologians, ethicists, and educators, using Pagán's phrase, we have a moral responsibility to know just as much about the histories of colonization experienced by others, or, as Pineda-Madrid warns, "we are more prone to being turned against other communities of color to disastrous effect for us all."

Turning against each other comes in many forms, not the least of which is the negation of our colonized histories and the stories of our resistance. In the words of Oscar López Rivera, Puerto Rican independence activist and prisoner of thirty-five years, "spiritcide" is the killing of the imagination. He found a way to resist the attempt to kill his imaginative spirit by painting while imprisoned.[44] During an interview in October 2017, López Rivera was asked about the political status of Puerto Rico; he responded:

> Well, I believe, as a Puerto Rican, that the majority of Puerto Ricans want to be Puerto Ricans. …I think that there are times … when people think, "Well, oh, we are blessed with the relationship with the United States." But … the end result will not be that, we can see. … So I can anticipate that Puerto Ricans will not be better off by the annexation of the United States of Puerto Rico. I also know for a fact that once any nation or any people lose their identity, their culture, their language, their way of life, their lifestyles, that they are a little dehumanized. …I see a big, big, big problem if Puerto Rico is to be annexed. But I believe … the overwhelming majority of Puerto Rico wants to be Puerto Ricans.[45]

If "salvation while always personal is also always social" (Pineda-Madrid), then it will have something to do with the ability to dream, to imagine, new ways of being in the world. And that new way of being in the world cannot be imagined without being in community and in communion with each other and our planet, knowing our histories and stories intimately as the way to both preserve and animate the spirit for its flourishing.

[44] Jorge Juan Rodríguez V, in a conversation about the different ways we, as Puerto Ricans, actualize "freedom," September 8, 2018.

[45] "Freed Puerto Rican Political Prisoner Oscar López Rivera on U.S. Colonialism after Hurricane María," Democracy Now! October 18, 2017, https://www.democracynow.org/2017/10/18/freed_puerto_rican_political_prisoner_oscar.

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Response to Lee: Our Freedom Matters

"Though the Puerto Rican reality is complex and often difficult, we must find freedom in and among ourselves."[46] The simplicity of this statement defies the contested relationship that all Puerto Ricans—island or diaspora—have with the discourse on political status. Arguments have raged in every Puerto Rican family I know, including my own, regarding the three political options that are typically placed before us—independence, statehood, commonwealth/status quo—as if these were the only possibilities available, and as if the Puerto Rican people had any real say in the matter.

Lee's reflection picks up on the ambiguities of the status question, although he notes that "there is a subtle thread running through the book that political independence is the only acceptable decolonial option." If that thread is evident in the book, then I was unsuccessful in my very intentional effort *not* to succumb to the three-headed monster of the status question. In fact, my own straddling of the ambiguous space where Puerto Ricans are "everyone and no one at once" is even more pronounced since September 20, 2017. Indeed, the stories upon which this decolonial theology is grounded beg not to be forced into a corner. The works of Santiago and Ferré make this point most clearly: the ending of their stories leaves us yearning for greater finality and prescription, but they refuse to offer cheap satisfaction in this regard. Perhaps as women writers, they know better.

Here is where I found Morse to be helpful as an interlocutor. Similar to the way Karl Barth figured into the initial writings of James Cone, while acknowledging that engagement as far from perfect, Morse's methodology of "testing the spirits"—taking nothing at face value, especially our theological claims—found a useful place in my own thinking and as a corollary to the decolonial methodology of Mignolo, Grosfoguel, and others. As I wrote,

> Morse's methodology—drawing out the rejected belief behind the accepted belief—parallels my own … of drawing out the silence behind the dominant speech, as well as the decolonial methodology of affirming "the epistemically disavowed colonial subjects" of Western modernity. … It maintains an element of suspicion toward tendencies to interpret the Christian tradition with "naïve dogmatism," and a critical eye toward expectations to comply unquestioningly with such dogmatism, much like the colonial power in relation to its subjects. Both Morse's and Mignolo's hermeneutic urge us to take a second look at those elements of our belief systems that we've taken as universally true for all—or "zero-point epistemology" in Mignolo's words—in order to discover another side of that belief which has suppressed any and all challenges to its hegemony. (87–88)

[46] Jorge Juan Rodríguez V, "Foreword: Puerto Rican Backpacks and Living Room Dreams," in Delgado, *A Puerto Rican Decolonial Theology*, ix.

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I am most grateful for Lee's insight regarding trans and queer theologies as dialogue partners to advance a more robust Puerto Rican decolonial theology, as it challenges me to consider nonbinary thinking such as has been articulated by Marcella Althaus Reid and, more recently, Thelathia Nikki Young and Robyn Henderson Espinoza.[47] Again, my work in progress in the area of developing a decolonial Catholic sexual ethic seeks to expand upon these themes.

I am also challenged by Lee's assertion that the later work of Gustavo Gutiérrez offers a more thorough treatment of suffering and salvation with which to place in dialogue the narratives of Puerto Rican brokenness. I most certainly agree that we do not need any more broken bodies to find redemption, in the Puerto Rican community or anywhere. My hope is that this work proves to be a fertile point of departure for scholars such as Yara González Justiniano as she examines the realities of suffering and the practices of hope in Puerto Rico.[48]

If, prior to Hurricanes Irma and Maria, this project fell short in terms of "substantial truth claims about the nature of and steps toward freedom" (Lee), it would be even further from that goal today. Truth be told, this Puerto Rican has very little to say prescriptively about the steps that need to be taken for freedom to be actualized. But I know this: our freedom will be actualized, in whatever political manifestation that takes, only when our stories, cries, and history are heard by our own Puerto Rican community, from within those spaces between "torture and resistance" of the Boricúa borderlands. "We might have to sit in the valley of the dry bones for a while before life can be breathed into them,"[49] but we do so while picking up the pieces ravaged by the storm, in solidarity with each other, and with faith that God will put her Spirit in us and we will live, and she will settle us in our own land.[50]

[47] See Marcella Althaus-Reid, *The Queer God* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Thelathia "Nikki" Young, *Black Queer Ethics, Family, and Philosophical Imagination* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016); Young, "Queering the Human Situation," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 28, no. 1 (2012): 126–31; https://irobyn.com/.

[48] Yara González-Justiniano, ABD, Boston University School of Theology, is completing her doctoral dissertation, "Hope in Practice: Public Presence of the Church in Puerto Rico," anticipated May 2019.

[49] Jorge Juan Rodríguez V, conversation, September 8, 2018.

[50] Ezekiel 37:14 (NRSV).

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