



# Caribbean Quarterly

A Journal of Caribbean Culture

ISSN: 0008-6495 (Print) 2470-6302 (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rcbq20>

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To cite this article: Sophie Maríñez (2019) The Drake's Pub's Wall, Caribbean Quarterly, 65:1, 158-160

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00086495.2019.1565229>



Published online: 05 Feb 2019.



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## The Drake's Pub's Wall

SOPHIE MARÍÑEZ

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Whenever I return, laughter breaks out  
 on the Drake's Pub's Wall.  
 A guy buys a drink from John the owner,  
 A girl smokes a joint in the apartment upstairs,  
 and someone else yet lights a cigarette,  
 and gazes across the plaza,  
 at the Alcazar, Columbus's house.

Some nights I sit on this low wall across the pub,  
 a thirty-inch wide structure, seventy-feet long,  
 made of rocks from the sea,  
 standing between the pub and the plaza,  
 as if a short remnant of protection  
 against filibusters and pirates,  
 bearers of the English name.

And on you, my dear Drake's Wall,  
 I lie down, gaze at the blazing moon,  
 and dream with the myriad stars.  
 Amid this lair's bohemian air,  
 my friends and I listen  
 to Hendrix, Zeppelin and Floyd,  
 we fantasise and cheer,  
 fix the world,  
 and revel in the freedom

our fathers and mothers  
had just landed us.

Those were the eighties in Santo Domingo.  
A dictator had long been killed  
and his successor sent away;  
some of us had known the colour of a gun,  
but to most, treason had not yet grown  
into hollow trees filled with torn-up ghosts.

This is where artists lived,  
and musicians hung  
with poets, actors, and all those  
who gave a damn.  
This is where Manuel, the book-lover,  
Mary, the mad painter,  
Carmen and Esther, the carpenter girls,  
Osito, the sweet mellow guy,  
and Oscar, the brilliant Chilean kid,  
partied with me till we all went home.

This is where Juan the artist with a magic name  
kissed the girls, unleashed his genius,  
and became a darling of galleries in Paris,  
while others, like Tony,  
laid out the garbage from our sea  
for everyone to see in faraway lands.

This is where Luis the musician  
hung out with the *chicas rocapiedra*  
and laughed at the shit  
*los jevitos* threw at him  
– for being black,  
for hanging chains on his waist,  
for composing Dominican rock,  
and teaching us to never eat *pendejá*.

So, whenever I return to you,  
my dear Drake's Wall,  
though greed has razed you down,  
planted 'tropical' trees,  
filled the space with tables and waiters,  
and called it *Plaza de España*,  
for *jevitos* and tourists,  
whenever I return, I still see you,  
my dear Drake's Wall,  
despite the splendour  
of your tragic absence. ☐☐