

DOMINICANIDAD IN CONTRA (DICTION): MARGINALITY, MIGRATION
AND THE NARRATION OF A DOMINICAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

by

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A la memoria de mi abuela Altagracia Franjul y mi madrina
Yolanda Mármol, gracias por enseñarme a portarme mal.

For Yoni, for the many lives shared and the many more to come.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| DEDICATION..... | ii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... | iii |
| LIST OF FIGURES..... | vi |
| ABSTRACT..... | vii |
| INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| CHAPTER I. BLACK MONSTERS AND WHITE VIRGINS: | |
| A NARRATION OF THE DOMINICAN NATION..... | 18 |
| Racial Narratives and National Myths..... | 25 |
| Politics and Race: Rescuing the Galindo Virgins | 32 |
| The Transcendence of the Myth: The 20th Century Aftermath..... | 42 |
| CHAPTER II. OF BANDITS AND <i>PUTAS</i> : | |
| U.S. IMPERIALISM AND THE IMAGINING OF <i>AFRO-DOMINICANIDAD</i> | 47 |
| Olivorio Mateo: Death and Birth of God..... | 49 |
| The Haitian Connection..... | 60 |
| A Rhythm of Resistance..... | 65 |
| Embodying the Water Saints: A Woman's Narration..... | 72 |
| Sexscape. Exoticism and Social Control..... | 77 |
| CHAPTER III. REFRAMING THE PAST THROUGH FICTION: | |
| A LITERARY HISTORY OF THE 1937 HAITIAN MASSACRE..... | 89 |
| Guilt, Trauma and the Narratives of the Nation..... | 90 |
| Viewing the Haitian Massacre from the Outside..... | 116 |
| CHAPTER IV. PERFORMING RESISTANCE: | |
| THE DOMINCANYORK NARRATION OF <i>DOMINICANIDAD</i> | 133 |
| Staging Migration, Performing Language..... | 136 |
| Black Skin, Indian Mask. Báez's Performance of Race..... | 141 |
| Staging History: The Dominicansyork Rejection..... | 149 |
| CONCLUSION..... | 158 |
| SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY..... | 161 |

LIST OF FIGURES

1. *“Duarte, Padre del Racismo”*3
2. Body of Olivorio Mateo as exposed in front of the San Juan City Hall.....54
3. *La Cruz Vestida*, Photo of a cross “dressed” for a ceremony69
4. *Spiritual Bliss*. A woman mounted by a spirit.....72
5. *Dulce Despojo*. Woman performing a cleansing ritual.....88
6. *Dominicanish*, performance 2005 , New York City.....136
7. *Dominicanish*, Dance Theater Presentation 2000.....139
8. “Bindi” photograph by Lu Sánchez.....146

ABSTRACT

DOMINICANIDAD IN CONTRA (DICTION):
MARGINALITY, MIGRATION, AND THE NARRATION OF A DOMINICAN
NATIONAL IDENTITY

by

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Through a close reading of various historical and fictional texts, *Dominicanidad in Contra (Diction)* proposes an analysis of Haiti and the United States as two important *psychological borders* that have informed the process of imagining *Dominicanidad*. It departs from four key events that have shaped the contradictory narration of nation: (1) The Galindo murders in 1822; (2) The first United States military intervention of the Dominican Republic (1916-24); (3) The 1937 massacre of ethnic Haitians in the northern borderlands during the Trujillo Regime; and (4) The “democratization period” that began after the War of 1965 and which resulted in the massive migration of Dominicans to New York City. My project analyzes Dominican national narration as a *contra (diction)*, insisting on

the complexity of experiences that informed and defined how the nation was written

Chapter 1 explores the constitution of the national discourse as anti-Haitian, anti-black and Hispanophile. The chapter puts into dialogue two fictional narratives: Cesar Nicolás Penson's "Las Vírgenes de Galindo" and Max Henríquez Ureña's *La conspiración de Los Alcarrizos*, with official documentations regarding the murders— court transcripts, witness testimonies, newspaper articles—. Chapter 2 revisits the first U.S. military intervention (1916-24) by analyzing the emergence and persecution of a peasant religious leader, Olivorio Mateo and his followers, and the sexual oppression of women by U.S. marines as seen through Nelly Rosario's *Song of the Water Saints*. Chapter 3 analyzes four representations of the 1937 Massacre: Juan Bosch's "Luis Pié," Freddy Prestol Castillo's *El Masacre se pasa a pie*, Jacques Stephen Alexis's *Compère Général Soleil*, and Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones*. The final chapter focuses on Dominican identity discourses as produced by the U.S. Diaspora in Josefina Báez's performance *Dominicanish*.

INTRODUCTION

The question of Dominican identity has dominated current intellectual debates in the island as well as in the diaspora. Scholars such as Silvio Torres-Saillant, Ginetta Candelario, and Roberto Cassá have been concerned with how race, gender, and ideas of border crossing and migration can shape the way Dominicans view themselves in relation to their nation(s). Over the last few years, however, this topic has transcended the academic sphere, gaining significant visibility in the mainstream media.¹ In the summer of 2007 for instance, important diasporic Dominican scholars found themselves in the middle of a major controversy after being misquoted in an article entitled “Black Denial” published in the *Miami Herald*. The article, which was part of the journal’s series *Afro-Latin Americans*, argued that the practice of hair- straightening, which is popular among Dominican women, was proof of the population’s: “historical rejection of all things black which makes the one-drop rule work backwards, so that to have one drop of white blood makes even the darkest Dominican feel like

¹ Although the (Diasporic) coverage of issues related to Dominicans is much more common in U.S. and Puerto Rican media, there has been a significant growth in interests regarding issues of *Dominicanidad* in Europe, especially in Spain and Italy, where a new diasporic Dominican community is emerging. One important example of this growth can be located in the 1996 victory of Denny Méndez in the Miss Italy pageant. The coronation of this Dominican immigrant exploded in a major controversy and scandal after two of the judges argued that a black woman could not represent Italian beauty. See article “First Black Miss Italy Picked Amidst Two Judges’ Disapproval” in *Jet Magazine* (and Omar de Giorgi, *Denny Méndez*.

she or he is other than black” (*Herald* 2007).² A couple of weeks after the publication of “Black Denial” another controversy emerged when a flyer with a picture of Juan Pablo Duarte—the most celebrated Dominican independence leader—with the words ‘Padre del Racismo’ [Father of Racism] written across the page and the caption ‘Juan Pinga Duarte’ [Juan Dick Duarte] appeared posted all over the #1 train, which goes from downtown Manhattan to Washington Heights—the largest Dominican neighborhood in the United States. The flyer was part of a publicity campaign for the upcoming release of a film about Dominican independence from Haiti. The producer, Taína Mirabal, stated that her film seeks to open eyes and make people understand that “nuestra historia ha sido escrita por las mismas personas que cometieron genocidio en contra de los indios y que esclavizaron a los africanos” [our history has been written by the same people who committed genocide against the native peoples and who enslaved the Africans.]³ The flyer, as well as the film, created a heated

² Francis Robles, the author of “Black Denial,” conducted a series of interviews in Dominican hair salons and visited various Dominican scholars from the island as well as the diaspora. Ramona Hernández, director of the Dominican Studies Institute in New York and Ginetta Candelario, Professor of Women’s Studies at Smith College were quoted in the article asserting the author’s thesis regarding Dominican’s ‘black denial’ as evidenced in hair-straightening practices. Both scholars however, insisted that they had been misquoted and they that they disagreed with the simplicity of Robles’s argument. They wrote letters to the editor that were never published by the *Herald* but which have appeared in various blogs. Ramona Hernández’s letter stated that “The portrayal of the views attributed to me in your article of June 13, “Black Denial,” is utterly false, and absolutely opposed not only to what I believe, but also to what I have dedicated my professional life to changing.” See “Open Letter to the Editor” by Ramona Hernández in *Dominican Republic News and Reports* (New York, June 2007).

³ Taína Mirabal is a Latina film producer from Los Angeles, California. Her first film *Father of Racism* examines the life of Juan Pablo Duarte, the founder of the Dominican Republic. Mirabal’s film alleges that Duarte was a white supremacist whose independence movement was actually a racial separation movement and whose secret society—*La Trinitaria*—a link to the KKK. The allegations made in Mirabal’s film created a series of controversies that were

debate among Dominicans and *Dominican Yorkers* in which even the heirs of *el patricio* stepped into public light to defend the image of the father of the nation. Many Dominicans protested and some even demanded that the U.S. conduct an investigation as they consider the flyer to represent: “a critical offense to the Dominican people” (*The New York Times*, Sept 2nd, 2007).

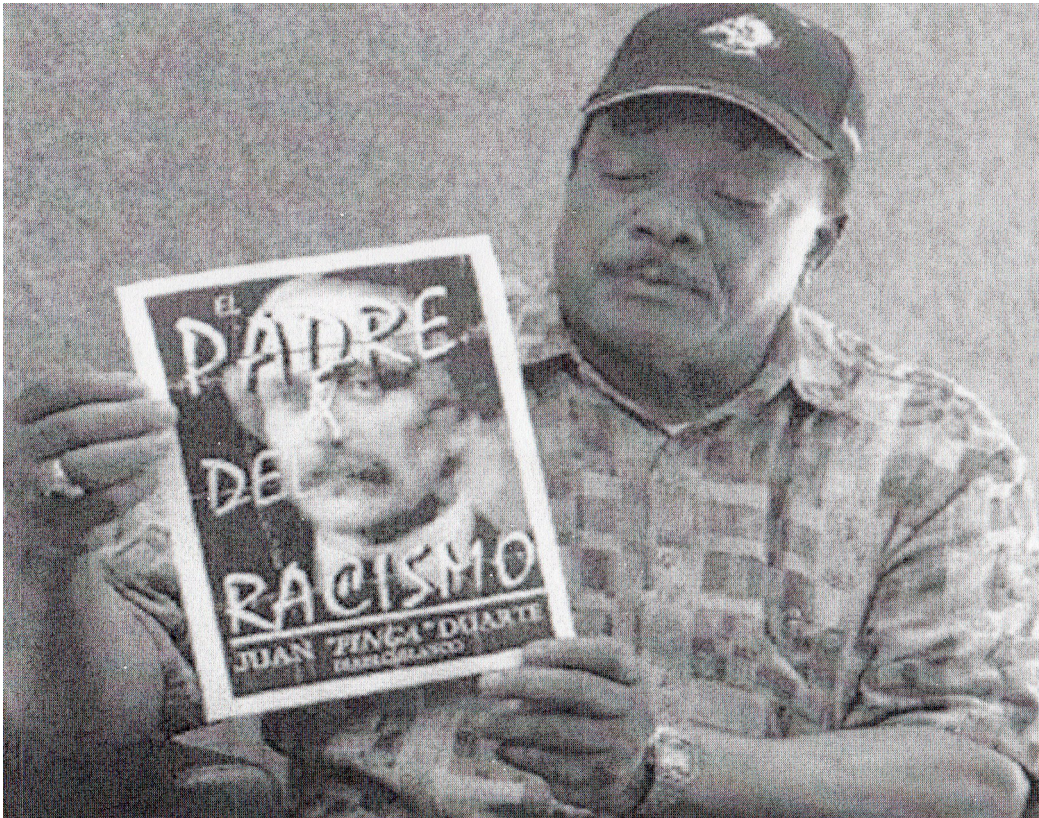


Figure 1: “Duarte Padre del Racismo”⁴

The *Herald* article and the Duarte flyer raised concerns regarding how scholars, writers, and cultural producers understand and disseminate information

highlighted in many newspapers, and blogs through the fall of 2007. See *El Diario La Prensa*, August 31, 2007 and *The New York Times*, September 2nd, 2007.

⁴ This is a photo of the flier that circulated in Washington Heights late summer of 2007. The caption reads “Juan Pinga Duarte”. Photo courtesy of *El Nacional*.

regarding socio-political and historical processes and their effects on communities. The controversy that arose following the aforementioned publications serves as evidence of the difficulty that Dominicans are undergoing in establishing a process of democratic, critical self-assessment and of the fact that scholarly, cultural, and journalistic attempts to incite a dialogue in which public concerns can be evaluated and changed may backfire, creating a conflicting situation in which all such attempts could be thwarted. In order to avoid these harms, the need for an inclusive, multi-disciplinary dialogue that respects the specificity of the Dominican historical experiences, and that does not reproduce the very structures of power, which many of us are seeking to deconstruct, becomes urgent. It is with this purpose and in this spirit that I offer my dissertation.

Through a close reading of various historical and fictional texts, *Dominicanidad in Contra (Diction)* proposes an analysis of Haiti and the United States as two important *psychological borders* that have informed the process of imagining *Dominicanidad*. My analysis departs from four key historical events that have shaped the contradictory narration of nation: (1) The 1822 murders of the Andújar Family better known as the Galindo Virgins; (2) The first United States military intervention of the Dominican Republic (1916-24); (3) The 1937 massacre of ethnic Haitians in the Dominican northern borderlands during the Trujillo Regime; and (4) The “democratization period” that began after the Civil War of 1965 and which resulted in the massive migration of Dominicans to New York City. My work engages contemporary texts that examine the

aforementioned historical events in addition to historical and fictional texts published during the periods in which the events took place, offering a counterpunctual analysis of *Dominicanidad*.

Two important terms frame my analysis: the idea of *Contra (diction)* and the metaphor of the *psychological borders*. The former refers to the complex social-political processes and opposing articulations that have shaped the various attempts to narrate *Dominicanidad* at important moments in Dominican history. I argue that *contra (diction)* finds its origins in the early intellectuals of the 19th century who struggle with their desire for freedom, their imagined mixed identity, and the need to insert the nation within the modern world, by gaining recognition from the imperial and colonial powers. *Contra (diction)*, however takes various forms throughout the 20th and 21st century, as other narrations of *Dominicanidad* emerged, proposing revisions of the official history.⁵ The term *psychological borders* serves as a metaphor of the intangibility and elusiveness of the divisions that emerged on the individual as well as the collective levels of the population. The term therefore suggests a re-vision not of the physical militarized frontiers that separate the two island-nations that inhabit Hispaniola or of the natural borders that disconnect the United States from the Dominican Republic, but of the series of loose articulations, discourses, traumas, myths, contradictions, and historical events that have informed the Dominican subject

⁵ Dominican literature, especially in the diaspora, exhibits a strong interest in important historical moments in the nation. These narratives, as seen in the case of *In the Time of the Butterflies* by Julia Álvarez and *Let it Rain Coffee* by Angie Cruz, insist on the importance of recasting history because it does not represent the view of the underprivileged, of women, and of marginalized groups. However, these texts rely highly on the very histories they are hoping to de-construct as evidence in the significant archival research for instance, therefore, becoming part of the narration of *contra (diction)*.

understanding of him or herself in relation to these two other nations. The growing migration of underprivileged Haitians to the Dominican Republic and of underprivileged Dominicans to the United States are key elements that serve as important subtexts to my study as I attempt to analyze how marginality is created in the process of nation narration through acts of disidentification and exclusion that are linked to tensions that exist between the literary and historical representations of Dominican history. For the purpose of this study, my work pays a closer look at issues of race and migration; a future revision however, hopes to engage a more in-depth analysis of gender and sexuality as two key factors that transverse throughout the national discourse of *Dominicanidad*.

Contemporary studies on questions of Dominican cultural history and national identities tend to focus on the Trujillo regime as the determining period in the formation of the national identity.⁶ In his recent study *Escrituras de desencuentro en la República Dominicana* (2005) for instance, Néstor Rodríguez analyzed the significant epistemic variables that have allowed for the emergence of a nationalist literature in the Dominican Republic, paying close attention to the relationship between literature and cultural history. He argues that literature can often serve as a space of ‘desencuentros’ or un-encounters from which counter narratives that destabilize the order of history can emerge (162). Rodríguez’s valuable study locates in the Trujillo regime the solidification of the exclusionary narrative of *Dominicanidad* while arguing that the recent U.S. diaspora offers a

⁶ Most contemporary studies on Dominican history and culture focus on Trujillo and narratives of the regime such as Joaquín Balaguer’s and Arturo Peña Batlle’s theories of race and border relations. See Ginetta Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears* (2007), and Eugenio Matibag, *Haitian-Dominican Counterpoint* (2007).

possibility for a critical interpellation of socio-historical processes. Although I agree with Rodríguez's argument that the 31-year dictatorship of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo decisively shaped the history, culture and politics of the island nation, my work insists on the importance of examining the roots and influences that induced the *Trujillista* narratives of *Dominicanidad*. In addition, my work complicates the role of the Dominican diaspora in current intellectual interpretations of *Dominicanidad* by examining the U.S. as an important socio-historical and psychological border that has been part of the contradictory narration of *Dominicanidad* since the emergence of the nation in the 19th century. The Dominican experience is therefore located within U.S. history, as part of larger concerns regarding issues imperialism, border control, race, and immigration.

Each of the texts I analyze in this study brings attention to the powerful history of imperialism, migration, racism, sexism, alienation, and border conflicts that have marked the narration of *Dominicanidad*. In addition, my analysis hopes to shed light on the non-traditional ways through which people who are often pushed to the margins of the nation have resisted, therefore offering an alternative narration of what could be (and is) another *Dominicanidad*. The role of the United States as an active player in the definition of Dominican racial paradigms at different historical moments and in the formation of the Dominican nation is a decisive element that transverses each of the chapters. In addition, the relationship between history and literature as two discursive fields that attempt to narrate the experience of Dominican identity and nationality is the

motor that moves some of the questions I seek to answer throughout my project. These questions are: (a) how is marginality defined for Dominicans and what are the specific moments in which these definitions have been constructed and deployed? (b) What has been the role of the United States in constructing, challenging or legitimating marginalization? And (c) What is the function of migration (within the island and to the United States) in the process of Dominican national identity formation?

In order to propose an informed and fruitful dialogue between literature and history, I analyze various historical documents such as military records, newspaper articles, government memos, and other documents pertinent to the four main periods that I propose as key to my study. With support from the Ford Foundation, I was able to devote 16 months to research in the Dominican National Archives in Santo Domingo under the guidance of historian Raymundo González, while also making several short research trips to the National Archives in Washington, D.C. and the Dominican Studies Institute in New York City. In addition to archival research and literary analysis, this project is framed around two types of theoretical texts: (a) those which look at the Caribbean and the Dominican Republic specifically and (b) current nationalism, race and ethnicity theories. The former category allowed me to examine the socio-historical and literary specificities of the region as they propose a distinct poetics for reading the Caribbean/Dominican experience, while the latter provided a frame for examining the different sets of genealogies that I touch upon throughout my project: race, nationalism, and marginality. Both types of theories intersect

through my work, allowing me to place the Dominican Republic within a larger intellectual dialogue.

Among the Caribbean texts that frame my analysis, Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel's *Caribe Two Ways* and Shalini Puri's *The Caribbean Postcolonial* allowed me to analyze the Dominican Republic as part of a larger geographic and imaginary space in which literature has been traditionally and historically linked to the process of national identity formation. In this sense, my work examines a specific (Dominican) experience which can be translated into a common Caribbean experience that "repeats itself" through literary representations.⁷ Etienne Balibar's analysis of nationalism and race as well as Homi Bhabha's definition of the nation as a narration are key concepts that frame my discussions around nation formation and nationalism. In addition, the work of Silvio Torres-Saillant in dialogue with some of the aforementioned texts serves as a point of departure for the cultural analysis of race and ethnicity formation as specifically related to *Dominicanidad*. What my theoretical analysis hopes to accomplish is a dialogue across several disciplines (literature, history, and cultural studies) that proposes new ways of examining the Dominican Republic within current intellectual concerns while respecting the specificity of Dominican experience.

A number of recent studies on Dominican identity look at the Trujillo regime as the key period for the consolidation of the nation and the national

⁷ I refer here to Antonio Benítez-Rojo's seminal text *La isla que se repite*, which attempts to define the Caribbean as a space that, despite its diversity, possesses a common experience.

subject.⁸ My work complicates the narration of *Dominicanidad* as it traces its development and emerging contra (dictions) from the moment of independence to the present, proposing a more temporally fluid dialogue. My dissertation can therefore be read as a two-part study of *Dominicanidad*. The first section, which encompasses chapters 1 and 2, concentrates on the emergence of a dominant Dominican discourse that sought to portray *Dominicanos* as a non-black hybrid race by claiming Hispanic heritage and culture. This discourse, which finds its roots in the language of the independence was corroborated by the U.S. Imperial imagination which promoted the idea of Haiti and the Dominican Republic as two inherently distinct nations: the latter just a little lighter than the former and therefore, more fit for self-government. The first section takes a close look at the considerable role that Haiti occupied in the process of imagining and narrating *Dominicanidad* along racial, cultural, and political lines during the critical years of the birth of the Dominican Republic, and how this discourse translated into xenophobia and fear during the 20th century.⁹ In addition, it insists on the position of the United States in influencing the construction of an exclusionary national discourse, and its repercussion on 20th century cultural alienation, discrimination and the eventual persecution of minority groups. Ultimately, as

⁸ See Richard Lee Turits, *Foundations of Despotism* (2003), Eugenio Matibag's *Haitian Dominican Counterpoint* (2003), Néstor Rodríguez, *Escrituras del desencuentro* (2005) and Ginetta Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears* (2007).

⁹ Eugenio Matibag examines Haiti and the Dominican Republic as an "inter-culture" a space of mutual cooperation in which cultural difference is accepted. He argues that despite the difficult relationship that has existed between the Haitian-Dominican states, particularly during the second half of the twentieth century, the people of both nations have found ways to maintain a relationship through trade, farming and cooperation.

evidenced in the final chapter, migration appears as the eventual result of this discourse, as well as the locus from which dissidence can be articulated.

Chapter 1 examines the 1822 assassination of the Andújar family— better known as the Murders of the Galindo Virgins— as a symbolic episode in the contradictory narration of *Dominicanidad*. My analysis of the murders looks at historical evidence of the crime including court transcripts and other official documentations from early 1820s in addition to two important fictional narratives: (1) “Las Vírgenes de Galindo” (1891) by César Nicolás Penson, and (2) *La conspiración de los alcarrizos* (1940) by Max Henríquez Ureña. These narrations, although temporally distant and stylistically different, served to sustain anti-Haitian rhetoric at moments of crisis, particularly during the Trujillo regime (1930-61). My analysis of the representation of the Galindo murders allows for an examination of the processes of nation narration at the birth of the republic. I analyze how during the critical period following Dominican independence from Haiti (1844) the Galindo murders became celebrated in the media and literary productions as a Haitian crime against Dominicans, in order to propose Haitians as primitive black barbarians as well as the main enemies of the newly born nation.¹⁰ The link to the geographical and historical connection with Haiti as well

¹⁰ President Boyer occupied Santo Domingo on February 8th, 1822 shortly after the country had declared its independence from Spain. The new president of Spanish Santo Domingo, José Nuñez de Cáceres, turned over the city to President Boyer and renounced his position. After 22 years, following a series of conspiracies and revolts, the Dominican Republic was declared an independent nation on February 27th, 1844. However, a series of battles between Haiti and the Dominican Republic continued until around 1860. In 1861 the Dominican Republic became, again, a colony of Spain for a period of 3 years. Definite independence was gained in 1865 following the war of Restoration that was possible in part due to Haitian support. Independence day in the Dominican Republic is celebrated on February 27th therefore reaffirming

as the insistence on the feminine figure as bearer of the “essence of *Dominicanidad*” have been recurring tropes in late 19th and 20th century literature. This chapter examines the roots of the complexity of the narrations of *Dominicanidad* that resulted in the *contra* (dictions) that become apparent in this chapter.

Chapter 2 examines the significance of the U.S. military intervention of the Dominican Republic (1916-24) in shaping Dominican politics and cultural identity. I analyze how the logic of the occupation contributed to imagining the Dominican body as a site that needed to be controlled and civilized, focusing on racism and sexism as two important elements influencing the discourse of the U.S. domination. Through a close reading of a series of U.S. military records that look at the persecution of Afro-religious leader Olivorio Mateo, as well as one Dominican-American novel: *Song of the Water Saints* (2002) by Nelly Rosario, this chapter attempts to put into dialogue two very distinct types of texts in order to propose a sensible account of the intervention that shows, not only how the Marines implemented U.S. policies in the Dominican Republic, but also how these policies affected the everyday life of Dominican citizens at the time. The significance of memory and storytelling as important (*contra*) *dictions* of history become evident in this chapter as I attempt to demonstrate how fiction can often fill in the *blank pages of history*, especially in situations of dictatorship and

that the desired independence is from Haiti and not necessarily from Spain. See Sybille Fischer *Modernity Disavowed* (2004).

oppression.¹¹ In addition, the counterpoint examination of the two different types of texts I examine in this chapter offers an explanation of the relationship between the history of U.S. imperialism, and the phenomenon of migration.

The last two chapters of this study examine how the ideologies created during the late 19th century transcended into tangible policies that promoted xenophobia, marginalization and exclusion, ultimately pushing the majority of Dominicans to the margins of the nation, and many to exile during the second half of the twentieth century.

Chapter 3 looks at the tragic massacre of 20,000 Haitians who lived in the northwestern Dominican borderlands in 1937 as remembered in four fictional accounts: (a) Juan Bosch's "Luis Pié" (1943), (b) *El Masacre se pasa a pie* by Freddy Prestol Castillo (1973), (c) *Compère Général Soleil* (1955) by Jacques Stephen Alexis, and (d) *The Farming of Bones* (1998) by Edwidge Danticat. My analysis of each of these narratives emphasizes the effects that this past experience had on notions of Dominican nationality, identity and community, as seen through literary representation. In addition, this chapter links this tragic event to the anti-Haitian discourse that emerged with the independence movement, examined in the first chapter, and that gained strength and support during the Trujillo Regime. I argue that on the one hand, the massacre contributed to the solidification of clear national borders through fear, hate and

¹¹ The use of the phrase blank page '*páginas en blanco*' within Dominican understanding is a reference to the famous book *Memorias de un cortesano en la era de Trujillo* written by Joaquín Balaguer (Santo Domingo, 1986). In these memoirs, Balaguer literally left a blank page in which the name of the assassin of journalist and left-wing anti-Balaguer activist Orlando Martínez — who was murdered in 1975 during the famous 12-year authoritarian government of Balaguer— was to be published. Six years after the dictator's death, the page continues to be blank.

shame. On the other, however, it created an opportunity to renegotiate psychological borders, particularly in relation to racial identity. The massacre provoked compassion for Haitian immigrants that translated, as I argue in this chapter, into a re-connection with African roots that is evidenced in the literary and cultural production of the period. On the other hand, however, the massacre generated feelings of guilt, shame and rage among Dominican radical youths and intellectuals, who located in the Haitian immigrant the embodiment of oppression.

My goal with this chapter is to incite a conversation among Haitian, Dominican, and American (diasporic) texts while insisting on the contemporary and urgent nature of the issues being explored. During the current administration of President Leonel Fernández (2004-?) the massive deportations of allegedly undocumented Haitians re-emerged.¹² In addition there have been a number of reported lynching of Haitian immigrants, as well as an increasing incidence of human rights violations against ethnic Haitians residing in the Dominican Republic. This situation, although condemned by the United Nations, Amnesty International, and many other human rights organizations, and despite the significant attention in the media, continues to worsen.

The historical events that I explore in chapter 3 thus sadly resonate with the present situation of Haitian-Dominican relations as evidenced in the current

¹² Although Dominican constitution was redefined in 1996 at the insistence of democratic leader José Francisco Peña Gómez to dictate that no president could serve more than two terms, in an effort to end the history of long dictatorships that have dominated the Dominican Republic since its formation, President Leonel Fernández amended the constitution in 2007 and announced his intention to run for a third term during the 2008 elections. In an effort to insist on bringing attention to the anti-democratic practices of this current administration and the dictatorial traces that seem to transcend Dominican history, slipping into the present, I have used “2004-?” as an emblem of what this reelection signifies—another 12 years perhaps?

militarized borders, the disenfranchisement of ethnic Haitians, and the growth in the number of stateless subjects or 'sujetos apátridas' which comprise nearly 25 percent of the overall population of the Dominican Republic. The involvement of the United States in the island, as evidenced in the passing of the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) and the creation of a new military base in the southwestern borderlands (allegedly to replace Vieques) continues to be a significant element in the narration of *Dominicanidad*.¹³

The closing **Chapter 4** offers a close reading of Josefina Báez's performance text *Dominicanish* (2000), a performance of language and migration that narrates the experience of a 1.5 generation Dominican girl-woman growing up in New York City.¹⁴ The work of Dominican-American scholar Silvio Torres-Saillant is central to my analysis. In his collection of essays *El retorno de la yolas*, Torres-Saillant examines the idea of the *Dominicanyork* (racialized) identity as an invention of the powerful Dominican ruling class that seeks to find a

¹³ In 2003, after many years of protest, the U.S. Marines finally left the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico, which had been used for bombing target practices. In 2004, a clandestine U.S. military base was created in the coast of Barahona, a city located 30 miles east of the Southern Haitian-Dominican border. Although Dominicans from the region have been protesting the military presence, the governments— Dominican and American— do not admit that the base is actually there. Rather, the Dominican State insists on claiming that the Marines are there to conduct community services and assist in building houses for the impoverished population of the region. In March 2006, I visited Barahona and upon trying to enter the area where the "Military Community Service Group" was set up, I was nicely escorted out by a Marine who informed me the area is restricted. Late October of 2006 I was able to interview Marine Sergeant Chris Smith [name has been changed for his protection and at his request] for a commissioned article that was never published, who told me: "we are supposed to be here doing community service but we do not have any contact with the locals and have not built a single house yet. Everyone here came from Vieques — or was supposed to go there— everyone in the base knows this will just become another Vieques once CAFTA is passed and the U.S. owns this motherfucker. I guess I am lucky though, at least I was not sent to Iraq."

¹⁴ The term 1.5 generation immigrant refers to people who have immigrated to the United States at an early age, retaining a close connection with the country of origin while successfully functioning in the new society— learning the language, navigating social systems, etc See Pérez Firmat's *Life on the Hyphen. The Cuban-American Way*. (Austin, 1994).

scapegoat for the problems of the nation in those who leave. Following this analysis, I argue that marginality becomes a transnational experience for *Dominican York* subjects who are the same poor-black-marginal subjects that have been historically oppressed and pushed to the margins of the nation.¹⁵ *Dominican Yorks* then occupy in current Dominican national imaginary a similar imaginary space to ethnic Haitians—they are seen as criminal and undesirable. However, unlike the Haitian immigrants, *Dominican Yorks* are economically powerful. Their monthly remittances to the island represent the number one source of income in the entire nation. Therefore, despite the negative depictions, these subjects have a strong influence on the cultural, social, and political development of the island. Chapter 4 discusses how this power translates into a redefinition of racial paradigms that transcends national borders, creating a space from which to revise history and demand representation.

Dominicanidad in Contra (Diction) is an interdisciplinary and transnational narration of *Dominicanidad*. It examines both fictional and official representations of national boundaries and their role in creating or contesting the formation of marginal subjects. Through a conversation between what is traditionally assumed to be evidence of fact (e.g. military records, newspaper articles, and other written and official documentation found in archives and libraries) and cultural production associated with the creation of fiction (novels, short stories, performance pieces, and popular beliefs), I examine key socio-historical moments in which national paradigms were questioned or redefined

¹⁵ The Dominican Migration to the United States since the 1980s has been mostly caused by economic crisis. See Torres-Saillant, Hoffnug-Garskof, and Jorge Duany.

within the nation in order to exclude those deemed as improper subjects. As a result, this study presents an assessment of the formation of the dominant Dominican national discourse as a significant element in the definition of a *Dominicanidad* that has pushed the majority of the population—the women, the black, the poor, the Haitian, the *Dominican-York*, and the homosexual—to the margins of the nation in an effort to preserve the ideals of the dominant elite. In this sense this study hopes to place the Dominican Republic within a larger intellectual debate, contributing to de-center the U.S. and to promote the need for specific studies that can better inform our understanding of social, political, and cultural concerns.

CHAPTER I

BLACK MONSTERS AND WHITE VIRGINS: A NARRATION OF THE DOMINICAN NATION

The imagining of Dominican national identity, as elusive and inconsistent as this process can be, has occupied significant space in Dominican letters since the emergence of the nation in the 19th century to this date.¹⁶ Early republican intellectuals such as Manuel de Jesús Galván and Javier Angulo Guridi insisted on depicting the national subject as culturally Hispanic and racially mixed, yet as other than black, in order to protect the psychological borders of the new nation from its potential enemy: the Haitian neighbor.

From its emergence in 1804 Haiti was imagined, and depicted, as a black nation. In order to envision another state in the same small island and to obtain recognition from the United States and other influential nations, the Dominican Republic needed to be narrated as different from Haiti. Race therefore constituted an important concern in this early republican endeavor because, as

¹⁶ The imagining of *Dominicanidad* is an important subject in Dominican studies in the island as well as in the diaspora. Diverse scholars such as Frank Moya Pons, Juan Bosch, Silvio Torres-Saillant and Ginetta Candelario argue that the complexity of Dominican racial identity is rooted on the distinctive colonial history that allowed for the short duration of the plantation economy. See Ginetta Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears. Dominican Racial Identities from Museums to Beauty Shops* (Duke, 2007).

Silvio Torres-Saillant argues, the newly formed Dominican nation included a large number of people of color.¹⁷ Racial diversity was thus explained through claims of Indianness, which were reconstructed in fictional and historical narrations. Ultimately, blackness was excluded from the cultural language of racial/ethnic self-identification in a narrative of contra (diction) and ambivalence that decisively shaped the culture, history, and politics of the Dominican nation.¹⁸

This chapter examines a symbolic historical event — the 1822 murder of the Andújar Family in Galindo— as reconstructed and remembered in two fictional narrations: “Las Vírgenes de Galindo” (1891) by César Nicolás Penson and *La Conspiración de los Alcarrizos* (1940) by Max Henríquez Ureña. In dialogue with a series of primary historical documents, I examine the aforementioned fictional texts as important representations of the considerable role that Haiti occupied in the contradictory process of imagining and narrating *Dominicanidad* at distinct moments in the history of the nation.¹⁹ My analysis insists on the significance of the historical coincidence that locates the murder of the Andújar family during the first year of the Haitian unification of the island, decisively linking the memory of crime to the complicated history of Haitian-Dominican relations. Through fictional depictions and historical re-visions of the event, the Galindo murders of 1822 became a symbol of the Haitian ‘occupation’

¹⁷ See Torres-Saillant, “The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity” *Calaloo* 23.N 3 (Baltimore, 2000): 1086-1111.

¹⁸ Dominicans use color or racial identification terms that affirm their imagined Indian identity: *indio*, *indio claro*, *indio oscuro*. These terms are validated in school curricula through the study of *indigenista* literature and pre-Hispanic history, as well as in official documents such as driver license, national identification cards (*cédulas*) and birth certificates. See Candelario.

¹⁹ The first is the moment following the restoration of the republic in 1865, the second is located during the emergence of liberalism in Dominican letters (1880s-1900) and the third during the Trujillo regime (1930-61).

as well as a historical reminder of the dangers that existed on the other side of the frontier.

On May 30th, 1822, Andrés Andújar and his three daughters, ages 7 to 16, were brutally murdered in the Galindo Hacienda, located in the outskirts of Santo Domingo City, near what is known today as La Caleta.²⁰ Pedro Civial, Manuel de la Cruz, Julián Mateo, and Alejandro Gómez were convicted for the crimes on June 11th, 1822.²¹ Only one of the convicted men, Pedro Civial, was Haitian. The testimony of Isabel, the black *Dominican* house servant, was critical in solving the case, as she was an eyewitness to the entire event.²² Known as the *Galindo Virgins*, Águeda, Ana Francisca, and Marcela Andújar soon became the first Dominican female martyrs, compared in esteem and celebrity only to the Mirabal sisters who Julia Álvarez recently celebrated.²³ The image of the

²⁰ See “Venta de Hacienda Galindo” In Protocolos. *Libro de Asiento 1818-22. Época Haitiana*. Legajo 2. AGN. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. There are not many documents available from the period of the Haitian unification of the island, except for the record book previously cited and some partial manuscripts of court proceedings. The record book contains a brief description of the *hacienda* as well as some details on its purchase after the death of the Andújar family. Other primary documents consulted on this topic were the court sentencing found in the AGN under the title of “Procesos penales de la época haitiana 1822-44”, the *Libro de Registro de la época haitiana*, which although I was able to consult, at first is no longer available at the AGN because it has been misplaced, and a series of protocols from 1810-24. More information on the Galindo murders can be found in the *Revista de asuntos jurídicos 1939-1943* where a transcript of the court proceedings was reproduced. It is important to note however, that most of these documents were unavailable to the public until the 1980s because they had been misplaced therefore there is virtually no scholarship on the Galindo Murders and very little critical analysis on any of its fictional representations.

²¹ Although the Haitian unification of the island made all peoples Haitian citizens, I will continue to use the distinctions “Dominican” and “Haitian” to avoid confusion and to illustrate the ethnic divisions that persisted even during the political unification.

²² “Sentencias penales de la época Haitiana” June 10th, 1822. Legajo 2, Folio 7. AGN, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

²³ Also known as ‘las mariposas’ the butterflies, Patria, Minerva and Maria Teresa Mirabal were assassinated on Nov. 25th, 1960 for opposing the Trujillo Regime. They have become a symbol of bravery, feminism and *Dominicanidad*. Dominican-American writer Julia Álvarez raised their popularity with her novel *In the Time of the Butterflies* (Chapel Hill, 1994), which was adapted into a Hollywood film in 2000.

Galindo sisters, rescued and reconstructed at various moments throughout Dominican history, became a symbol of the nation and a way of creating unity among people against a ‘tyrant and vile’ (Haitian) enemy. Historical and literary accounts of the tragedy have influenced the collective memory of the Haitian occupation, inscribing the Galindo murders as the first of many horrors brought forth by Haitians.²⁴ Court transcripts, witness testimonies and other documentation, however, were not accessible to the public until very recently; therefore the only “viable” sources of information for over one century, were Félix María Del Monte’s poem “Las Vírgenes de Galindo” (1885) and César Nicolás Penson’s *tradición* which bears the same title (1891).²⁵ Both texts describe the crime as a horrible incident that led to the “migration of the best and most prestigious white families of the Spanish part of Santo Domingo” (Penson 211) and to the subsequent decay of the country in the hands of the “brutal violent leaders of the west” (Del Monte 2). The image of the girls as the embodiment of a fragile and emerging nation, serves in both narratives as a quasi-religious construction of the stoic and sacred model of the motherland. Both authors

²⁴ A manipulated and incomplete translation of the court proceedings was made public in 1940 by the Trujillo Regime. The original court transcripts however were missing from the National Archives while many of the documents related to the case are incomplete or illegible. After I asked many questions as to the whereabouts of the original documents, I was informed by AGN officials that all newspapers and other documents of the period are located in Rodrigo Demorizzi’s personal archives, which are not open to the public. The only available documents are a record book written in French which contains information on the hacienda, an incomplete court transcript, and the re-printing of the sentencing available in various *Boletines de Archivo de la Nación Vol 79*, 1953 and in *Revista de asuntos jurídicos* (Santo Domingo, 1943).

²⁵ Felix Maria Del Monte was one of the most influential of the *trinitarios* (la Trinitaria was the name of Juan Pablo Duarte’s secret society that led the struggle for independence from Haiti) as well as an important poet during the post-independent period. He defended Hispanic ideals and promoted the preservation of Spanish culture among Dominicans. He is responsible for promoting the use of the word “Spanish” to describe Dominicans during the early independent years. His cousin, Joaquín Del Monte, was the judge in charge of the Galindo trials. See Catherina Vallejo, *Las Madres de la patria y las bellas mentiras* (Miami, 1999).

manipulate the figure of the Galindo sisters as artistic objects captured outside of time, like “ángeles...de mármol” [marble angels] (Del Monte 12) similar only to a “pubescente Venus desnuda” [pubescent naked Venus] (Penson 220), in an effort to establish them as true martyrs of the *patria*.

The first documented depiction of the Galindo murders appeared in June 1822, shortly after the crime, in the form of an informative leaflet. The contents of the leaflet are briefly summarized in the records of the court proceedings, and include a few factual details regarding the crime.²⁶ Between 1822 when the crime took place and 1885, when Félix María del Monte’s poem was first published, there are very few documented mentions of the Galindo murders.²⁷ A similar gap exists between the publication of César Nicolás Penson’s *tradicción* in 1891 and Max Henríquez Ureña’s novel in 1940. The significant temporal gaps that exist between the various narrations of the Galindo murders suggest the possibility of a conscious political attempt to recuperate the Haitian unification as a collective traumatic experience at critical moments in the definition of the nation-state. Del Monte’s narrative, for instance, was published during the critical period following President Gregorio Luperón’s Treaty of Peace, Friendship and

²⁶ Although there are no available copies of the actual pamphlet, it is described in the *Libro de Asiento*, *Época Haitiana* (1818-20). It states that the crime occurred in the Galindo Hacienda and the accused would be prosecuted. Historian Raymundo González advised me that the original pamphlet as well as some newspaper clippings were at some point available in the Archives of the Museo del Hombre Dominicano, however, my attempts to find it proved fruitless as no one seems to know where those documents were transferred to after the death of Trujillo. I then traveled to Haiti in hopes of finding newspaper clippings from the period however, due to a fire, most documents from the occupation period were destroyed and those that survived are currently being restored and therefore unavailable for viewing.

²⁷ In 1853 Nicolás Ureña published a poem entitled “Mi Patria” in which the incident is briefly mentioned as “el crudo martirio de las vírgenes de Galindo”. See *El Progreso*, July 17th, 1953. In *Documentos de la República 1844-60*. Legajo 7, folder 4. AGN. Santo Domingo.

Commerce with the Haitian state, which resulted in a new diplomatic crisis with the neighboring nation.²⁸ Similarly, Henríquez Ureña's 20th century rendition follows the Haitian-Dominican international crisis that emerged as a result of the 1937 Massacre. In each of the fictional narrations herein mentioned the trauma of the Haitian occupation was displaced in the image of the Andújar sisters who continued to be recalled as symbols of the nation that needed to be protected from (Haitian) foreign forces.²⁹ My analysis will focus on the two more extensive and temporally distant narrations of the event: Penson's and Henríquez Ureña's in order to show how the narrative operated during distinct socio-political moments.

César Nicolás Penson (1855-1901) was a journalist, an educator, and a poet (Vallejo 154). To Penson, Dominican letters owes its first dictionary of *dominicanismos* as well as a vast collection of Dominican folkloric poetry and oral traditions. Penson's influence on Dominican letters, journalism, and history is immeasurable. His chronicles and articles were influential in the development of a distinctive Dominican narrative style that uses colloquial vocabulary and descriptive historical elements. In addition to these stylistic contributions, Penson's classicism which is reflected in the nostalgic reminiscences of the

²⁸ Gregorio Luperón was an important leader in the Restoration War of 1863-65 that re-establish independence to the Dominican Republic after its re-annexation to Spain. Luperón also sought to redefine Haitian-Dominican borderland relations, a fact that often caused discontent among Haitian leaders. See Frank Moya-Pons *Manual de Historia Dominicana* (Santiago, 1977).

²⁹ After the assassination of the Mirabal sisters by the Trujillo Regime in 1960, the Galindo murders became less celebrated and almost forgotten. The Mariposas replaced the Galindo Virgins as martyrs and the symbol of the Dominican Nation. Although the national enemy continued to be the Haitian neighbors, the strategy of the state, was to portray them as inferior, but not as a threat. The literature of the second half of the 20th century shifted in its representation of Haitians as subjects that needed to be pitied rather than feared.

majestic Hispanic period, and his blatant racism against black Dominicans and ethnic Haitians, have also influenced 20th century discourse as seen in the work of Manuel Arturo Peña Batlle, Max Henríquez Ureña and Joaquín Balaguer, to mention a few.³⁰

Literary critic and writer José Alcántara Almánzar argues that it is Penson's early "distorted vision of the Haitian society and the bursts of racism that emerges in every narration... as well as the simplistic historical explanation that the author renders in his narratives" that has had the most influence in the "ideological deformation of many of our most prestigious writers" (6). A detailed critical examination of César Nicolás Penson's work would, without doubt, show how aside from his important intellectual contributions, Penson's work responded to a perception of the world that lamented the disappearance of all that was Spanish and the emergence of a mulatto society that rejected slavery, caste divisions, and colonialism. In order to better understand his narrative project and ideology it will be fruitful to quickly review the various discourses that emerged after independence from Haiti during the second half of the 19th century and which had a great impact on Penson's narrative.

³⁰ Many scholars of Dominican race and nationalism such as Richard Turits, Lauren Derby, and Eugenio Matibag argue that it is during the Trujillo regime that anti-Haitianism is institutionalized in order to secure the borders of the nation and to promote nationalism. Although I agree with the fact that the intellectual class serving the Trujillo regime crafted in a very coherent and clever way an anti-Haitian ideology that was equated to nationalism, these ideas do not emerge during the Trujillo Era. Rather, I think they find their roots in the intellectual thought produced during the second half of 19th century.

Racial Narratives and National Myths

According to Catharina Vallejo there were two main groups that dominated Dominican politics during the early years of the republic: (1) the radicals which searched for racial equality and abolition while at times seeking unification with Haiti, and (2) the liberals who advocated for independence from Haiti while glorifying Hispanic cultural values.³¹ Despite the seemingly democratic party structure, the political and economic atmosphere of the early republican years was far from stable. In 1861, for instance, president Pedro Santana annexed the country back to Spain (Moya Pons 15). In 1865 the country regained its independence after years of military struggle, but the threat of colonialism and occupation continued for many decades to come. On the one hand, Haiti continued to represent a menace, as there were, according to Moya Pons, a series of attempts to occupy the country.³² On the other hand, the United States became increasingly interested in the area, creating the possibility of another annexation, this time to the American power. Historian Frank Moya Pons characterizes this post 1865 period as one of great transformations (218). I would say, however, that rather than a transformation period, it was a time of great challenges for the young nation. The 1870 census records show that there were only 900 houses and 6,000 people living in the capital of the republic.³³ In addition, the unified hybrid nation that the founding fathers had imagined in 1844

³¹ Catherina Vallejo. *Las madres de la patria y la bellas mentiras*.

³² See Frank Moya Pons. *La Dominación Haitiana*. (Santiago, 1978).

³³ See "Primer Censo de la República" in *Gobierno de Restauración*. Documentos y Censo de Santo Domingo 1870. Legajo 1, folder 3. AGN. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

was far from a reality as *caudillismo* grew more powerful and the intellectual and political debate became divisive.³⁴ The liberals became organized under the blue party, and found support in the writers and artist of the early republic, who, for the most part, were members of an emerging petit bourgeoisie. Most national writers were anxious to establish a national identity that would allow the country to unify and they articulated this anxiety within the context of the blue party.

From the very early republican years, newspapers emerged in the Dominican Republic as an important medium in which the ideals of the two political groups that were struggling for power and control were disseminated. Santo Domingo soon became a *lettered city*, to borrow Angel Rama's term, in which newspapers became an important space of socio-cultural production.³⁵ Liberal writers, who struggled with their desire to maintain Hispanic identity while asserting their commitment to political independence, took on the task of narrating the national character of a population that was mostly of mixed race. They were eager to gain the support of the "radical" leaders and *caudillos* who according to Roberto Cassá controlled the peasantry. In order to do so, the nationalist liberals depicted Dominicanos as an ambiguously mixed race, in

³⁴ *Caudillismo* refers to a type of militia leadership that emerged in post-independent 19th century Latin America. Caudillos were charismatic leaders with a lot of economic and political power over a certain group of people or region. In 19th century Dominican Republic *caudillos* were extremely powerful, controlling most of the peasant population. There were 3 main areas dominated by caudillos: (1) the southwest region which included Azua, San Juan and the borderlands; (2) the Cibao region, which was considered the most powerful and encompassed cattle ranchers and tobacco farmers; (3) the east region, the center of this being the province of el Seybo.

³⁵ Angel Rama, *La Ciudad Letrada*.

hopes of uniting the dispersed population and therefore be able to obtain political power.

One of the earliest example of the narrative of hybridity that served as an inspiration to the liberal writers of the 19th century can be located in Juan Pablo Duarte's celebrated poem "Unidad de las Razas" in which all the imagined Dominican color identifications but black are listed: "Los blancos, morenos, cobrizos, cruzados, marchando serenos unidos y osados. La Patria salvemos de viles tiranos y al mundo mostremos que somos hermanos" [Whites, brown, red, mixed-race will all calmly march together with determination and courage. To save the fatherland from the vile tyrants and show the world that we are brothers] (Duarte 16).³⁶ Duarte's omission of the word 'negros' from his recipe for Dominican national race is linked to the explicit *negro* identity of the *tiranos* that he refers to in this poem. Dominicans were narrated in Duarte through what was conceived as the only possible race: the new hybrid Dominican race. Shalini Puri argues that the rhetoric of hybridity allows a nation to "manage racial politics either by promoting cultural over racial hybridity or by producing racial mixes that are acceptable to the elite" (45). In the case of the Dominican Republic, Duarte's (liberal) hybridity discourse served to create an other-than-black Dominican race that was culturally Hispanic and racially distant from the (black) French-speaking neighbors.

The myth of an *other* than black hybridity was ultimately corroborated by the United States' imperial imagination. The U.S. feared the emergence of

³⁶ Juan Pablo Duarte was the founder of the Trinitaria (1836), the clandestine independence movement that obtained the Dominican independence in 1844.

another black nation in the hemisphere, therefore it sought to make sure that Dominicans were not black in order to approve their ability to self-govern: “Thus the US Senate Commission of Inquiry who went to the Dominican Republic in early 1871...found people to be generally of mixed blood with a great majority being neither purely black nor white” (Torres-Saillant, “Tribulations” 128). United States’ approval of the Dominican Republic as “other than black” added to the complexity of how the country was imagined and perceived by its inhabitants and the outside world while it granted power and authority to the dominant narration of hybridity put into motion by the liberal elites.

In the Dominican Republic literature became one of the most important ways of disseminating the ideology of the dominant elite during the second half of the 19th century. Literary production of the period reflected a preoccupation with what were considered the necessary elements for the formation of the national subject. The trauma of the Haitian unification in which publications were censored and universities shut down created a need to assert Hispanic culture as a form of intellectual opposition. However, as seen above, they were also concerned with defining the national subject racially, without including “blackness” as part of the equation. Thus they resorted to claims of Indianness as a way of explaining racial mixture. Through an invented *mestizo identity* (Indian and white) that was only useful because the “ethnic element,” that is, the Indian race, was no longer present, the hybridity discourse gave way to a narrative of *indigenismo*. This narrative of Indianness, which was disseminated among the population for over a century, created an idea of cultural hybridity that

substituted the living Afro-Dominican heritage with the spirit of a decimated indigenous race. Consequently, people of color began to describe themselves as “indios” (Indian) contributing to a rejection of African roots.

Within the first three decades of Spanish colonization, the native population of Hispaniola was reduced to 11,000 (Moya Pons 29). Such destruction, Moya Pons argues, resulted mainly from the hardships of the mining industry for which the indigenous people had become the main source of (forced) labor. As early as 1520, African slaves were brought to Santo Domingo to replace the disappearing Indian work force, beginning what would become the largest and most important economic exchange of the modern world: the African slave trade. Ginetta Candelario argues that this development had a significant impact on how people in the colony organized and imagined themselves along racial lines because racial systems frequently shifted due to the short duration of the sugar plantation economy and to the occupation of the western part of the island by French colonizers.³⁷ Progressively, as Candelario and Moya Pons have argued, the term “black” became associated with the idea of slavery, and so mixed people of color in Santo Domingo began to imagine themselves as other than black. Color identifications for the people of Santo Domingo acquired more significance while the black/white binary opposition gradually disappeared from the colony’s racial vocabulary.

Although the colonial government’s position continued to be racist, privileging whiteness and supporting legal discrimination, the experience of race

³⁷ See Ginetta Candelario, especially chapters 1 and 3.

in colonial Santo Domingo was transformed into a dual reality. While the official racist position dominated the urban areas, a more relaxed social interaction within the independent communities determined how people viewed themselves in the countryside.³⁸ In the period of State formation these two worlds were imagined as a whole in a discourse of nationalism that attempted to manipulate these complex racial identifications into an invented *mestizo* identity that erased African roots, in order to secure the physical and psychological borders of the newly formed nation.

In his seminal text *Playing Indian*, Phil Deloria argues that the United States independence movement was grounded on claims of Indianness that helped Americans “define customs and imagine themselves as a legitimate part of the continent’s ancient history” (125). Native American “history” represented power for the Dominican elite, as it did for the North American founding fathers. It granted them the command to create a space for legitimation that would allow for claims of sovereignty and authenticity in front of other nations and the colonial powers:

Authenticity as numerous scholars have pointed out is a culturally constructed category created in opposition to a perceived state of inauthenticity that depends upon the trauma that defines the inauthentic and upon the received heritage that has defined the authentic in the past. (Deloria 101)

³⁸ Richard Turits examines the rural economy of colonial Santo Domingo and the emergence of a peasantry that, as Pedro Francisco Bonó had described earlier, descended from mostly from *cimarrones*, or runaway slaves who mixed with poor whites. See chapter 1, *Foundations of Despotism*.

The intellectual elites of the emerging Dominican nation found in claims of Indian authenticity a series of advantages for legitimating their version of history. First, being part Indian provided a way of claiming genuine ties to the land and therefore securing a history prior to colonization, while maintaining a link to the colonial power through the Spanish counterpart implicit in the racial mix. Secondly, the indigenous claims connected them ideologically and politically to the other Latin American independence movements, locating the Dominican Republic within a much larger enterprise. Finally, it allowed for the desired erasure of African roots from the official narrative of the Dominican nation through its substitution with Indigenous heritage.³⁹ Nineteenth century literature such as Manuel de Jesús Galván's *Enriquillo* (1879) became important media for celebrating this imaginary Dominican Indian identity.⁴⁰ But *indigenista* literature was only one half of the narration. The other part, as evidenced in the work of Penson, sought to depict blackness as a Haitian quality and Hispanic values as an essential part of *Dominicanidad*. As a result, the discourse of *Dominicanidad* translated into a contradictory narration of hybridity that was partly Indian, partly Spanish, and decisively anti-Haitian (and other than black).

³⁹ In Latin America, the term *indigenismo* or *indianismo* emerged to describe an array of cultural and intellectual production that celebrated the figure of the native Latin America.

⁴⁰ Manuel de Jesús Galván's *Enriquillo* (1879) is a historical novel based on the journals of Padre Las Casas, that recounts the life story of the last Taíno cacique, Guarucuya (Enriquillo), and his rebellion against the Spanish colonial government. This text is regarded as one of the most important in Dominican literature. Doris Sommer, for instance, calls it the "foundational fiction" of *Dominicanidad*. See *Foundational Fictions: The National Romances of Latin America* (University of California Press, 1993).

Politics and Race: Rescuing the Galindo Virgins

César Nicolás Penson's *costumbrista* rendition of the Galindo murders is an important example of the ambivalence that characterized Dominican literature of the second half of the 19th century.⁴¹ An important liberal elite who believed in the value of freedom and independence, Penson struggled with his desire to be recognized as “cultured” (that is as Hispanic). His “*Virgenes de Galindo*” insisted on depicting the Haitian unification as the end of civilization and the beginning of barbarism (43). The result is a complicated rendition that utilizes the Dominican female body as a symbol of a national purity, symbolized through the penetration of young (white) virgin bodies by an ‘inferior oppressing race.’ The Dominican patriarch is rendered in Penson’s narrative as a failure for he is not able to protect the essence of his nation embodied in the innocent Galindo virgins. His writing however seeks to create a link between Fatherland and masculinity, through the insistence on the “horrific nature of the story” that makes the tradición “too violent for the delicate eyes of women” (38). Penson, therefore, narrates for men, insisting on their responsibility and duty to the nation. National values are therefore equated in Penson’s narrative with personal honor, which can only be regained through the constant vigilance and protection of the female body.

⁴¹ *Costumbrismo* is a literary style that narrates the attitudes, customs, behaviors, values and habits that are common to a social group or country through detailed descriptions of the environment, dress, tradition and ways of living. The most celebrated of the *tradiciones costumbristas* in Latin America is Ricardo Palma’s *Tradiciones Peruanas* (1872).

Penson's "Las Vírgenes de Galindo" begins with a nostalgic reconstruction of Santo Domingo East prior to the Haitian occupation: "Entonces vivía uno a sus anchas en esta bendita tierra en que no se conocían pobres... Todo el lujo de la época, que no era ostentador ni insolente, se echaba allí." [Back then one lived freely in this blessed land that did not know poverty... All the luxury known to that time period, which was neither ostentatious nor insolent, could be found there] (198). The first part of the story paints, through Penson's nostalgic eyes, a better time when luxury and tranquility reigned in Santo Domingo and where everyone occupied a designated space within society—blacks were slaves or servants, whites were rich landowners—and where peace and prosperity reigned.

Disruption, however, comes soon in the story, when the Haitian military enters the city, destroying peace and bringing fear to the people: "Allí vicios, allí crímenes, allí escándalos, y algazara aromatizada con mucho aguardiente, sobre todo prácticas supersticiosas y además la castiza brujería que entre mañeses es sacramental y nacional; y por complemento, ranchos nauseabundos y bailes salvajes." [There was vice, there was crime, there were scandals and laziness accompanied by lots of alcohol, and especially by superstitious practices in addition to witchcraft which among the *mañeses* was both a sacred and national practice; and to top it all off the nauseating shanty homes and the savage dances] (212).⁴² This first part of the *tradición* shows an oppositional image of Dominicans and Haitians, the former seen as civilized, industrious,

⁴² Mañé is a derogatory term used to name Haitians.

catholic, artistic and peaceful, while the latter is presented as barbaric, drunk, dirty and superstitious:

Y déjenos en paz los que confunden y barajan a cada paso, por pura ignorancia de la geografía y la historia, las dos porciones de la isla esencialmente distintas en raza, idioma, costumbres, civilización, historia, orden social, constitución política, aspiraciones, carácter nacional y cuanto hay. [And leave us in peace those of you who confuse and hesitate at every step, because of your ignorance of the history and geography of each of the two parts of this island that are essentially different in race, language, customs, civilization, history, social order, politics, aspiration, national character, and all that there is.] (229)

These contradicting depictions, comparable to Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's seminal text *Facundo: civilización y barbarie*, served to set the stage for Penson's interpretation of the Galindo murders, which in his *tradición* becomes a crime of the barbaric against the civilized.⁴³

The rhetoric of Penson's writing, as seen in the previous excerpt, attempted to manipulate what was perceived as culturally different in order to justify the disdain for all that was Haitian. Teresita Martínez-Vergne argues that this strategy was common to 19th century Dominican intellectuals as it provided a justification for racism by avoiding the use of race:

As always, Dominicans at the turn of the century were careful to deny that they disdained Haitians because they were black. Rather, they insisted, the difference that made the two people incompatible

⁴³ *Facundo: civilización y barbarie* (Buenos Aires, 1845) by Argentine writer Domingo Faustino Sarmiento was as protest against the regime of Juan Manuel de Rosas (1835-1852). The book, an icon of Latin American literature, is a biography of caudillo Juan Facundo Quiroga, who is portrayed as an untamed and "barbaric" Argentine. The text proposes the need to civilize such leaders as the only way to achieve progress.

resided in culture, language, religion, body of laws, social practices, Vodou, and cannibalism, two “germs even more barbarian and solvent of culture than race is... placed Haiti at the very bottom of civilized nations.’ Most writers were convinced that Haiti was, and was destined to be ‘a land of cannibals’, an anomaly in the ‘hospitable and republican terrain of America’ (96).

Penson’s “Virgenes de Galindo” is intended, according to its author, as an “objective” narration of the tragedy. Instead, the author leaves us with a description of what he conceived as two essentially different peoples: the good and the bad, the civilized and the barbaric. The narrative then presents us with a list of binary oppositions that seeks to legitimate Dominican’s superiority.

The process of narrating the Dominican nation at the end of the 19th century was framed around two figures: (1) the Dominican woman and (2) the Haitian intruder. The woman, who was represented in three ways: (a) as the dedicated mother; (b) a faithful wife, or (c) a beautiful (white) virgin, had to be protected from the Haitian invader, depicted as a black, savage, soulless, primitive tyrant, who threatened the honor of the state (embodied in the woman). The rhetorical appropriation of the Galindo crimes served as an instrument for this narrative strategy as the historical event transcended into a mythical and poetic legend. By making the crime a myth and the victims martyrs Penson succeeds in equating the girls to the nation, insisting on their whiteness as an equivalent to purity. Gender then becomes likened to race as a fundamental category in 19th century Dominican texts, therefore persisting in a depiction of “the woman” as the guardian of the Dominican “essence” the author refers to in the text.

The fact that 19th century literature seeks to define a kind of universal identity for Dominicans, while attempting to assert some type of ultimate truth within the political framework of the nation, makes it foundational (Sommer, *Foundational Fictions*). And like many other *foundational fictions* of the 19th century, Dominican narratives seek to formulate “the woman” as a cultural category. She is defined more often than men, and placed within a more constricted hegemonic patriarchal space that supposes her to be the mother of the *patria*, and constricts her to the private (home space). In the case of Penson’s narrative here studied, the young sisters (potential future mothers of the *patria*) are undoubtedly white and therefore oppositional to the “inherently black” intruders, in an effort to assert, once more, whiteness as an explicit characteristic of *Dominicanidad*. Jean Franco has insisted on the significance of gender-related terms—colonization, castration, violation, prostitution, and impotence—in narrating Latin American struggle with colonization (506). In the case of the Dominican Republic, this gendered narration is further problematized by the insistence on race as the decisive category in the definition of access to citizenship in a nation where the majority of the population is of color.⁴⁴

Penson’s gendered and raced narration of the Galindo murders ultimately seeks to make the Dominican patriarch responsible for guarding the white virgins (that is, the nation) from further intrusion by appealing to a sense of duty and guilt found in the presumably racial-political crime. The author’s

⁴⁴ See also Mary Louise Pratt’s “Women, Literature, and National Brotherhood” in *Nineteenth Century Contexts*. 18 (1994) and “Las mujeres y el imaginario nacional del siglo XIX” in *Revista de Crítica Latinoamericana* 38 (1993).

description of the Andújar sisters renders the girls as three “white as snow” beautiful, fragile little girls (199), whose mother died at childbirth, leaving them in the care of a somewhat stubborn and irresponsible father who often left the children alone in the wilderness while getting drunk and going to cockfights:

(Andrés Andújar) en sus diligencias se iba a la ciudad continuamente, y pues tenía que dejar solas a las pobres niñas en aquel desierto; pues la estancia quedaba enclavada en el corazón del bosque...Y acaso más que sus diligencias, el fatal vicio que le dominaba. Así que días y aún noches lóbregas pasaba la familia de Don Andrés aislada en medio de la selva mientras él tiraba de la oreja al burro en indignos garitos de la ciudad o echaba una fortuna a las patas de un gallo en las galleras. De aquí que la desazón y el disgusto de las personas que tenían afecto a las niñas fuese grande y en aumento. [Andújar would continuously go to the city to run errands, and so he would have to leave the poor children alone in that desolate place; because the Hacienda was buried in the heart of the forest... And more than going to run errands, he would go because of that horrible vice that dominated him. Therefore the family would spend days and even nights isolated in that forest while he would get drunk in the bars of the city or spend a fortune betting in the cockpits. This is why those who loved the girls were increasingly upset and angry.] (207)

Andrés Andújar, the father, is portrayed in the previous quote as a careless man, who due to his recklessness and vices jeopardizes the life of his own daughters. This image functions as an allegory of the newly born Dominican nation that appeals to the sense of duty and patriotism of Dominican men, while recognizing that these men were not ready to assume such responsibility.

The contradictory rhetoric of the nation, as seen in Penson's work, wants to convince the readers that Dominicans are indeed better than Haitians for they are civilized, yet it fails to do so, showing us instead a Dominican man who is

lazy, corrupted, and incapable of protecting his own family. This inconsistency finds its roots in the language of the early republican narrations explored at the beginning of this chapter. The Andújar girls represented in this story serve as symbols of a very fragile and pure nation that must be protected at all cost against the enemy, because otherwise she (the nation girl) would be raped, killed, and dishonored. Due to the death of their mother (who symbolizes Spain) this duty corresponds to the father (the newly-born republic). But when the father fails, Penson cannot help but claim the memory of the dead mother as the true root of the nation, proposing that the hope for the survival and unity of the republic can only be found in the memory of Spain.

With the mother dead and the father being so absent and irresponsible, the Andújar girls are left in the care of their nanny, Isabel, who according to Penson had been recently manumitted by the invaders. But Isabel does not appear to be a good caretaker since she is handicapped, uncultured, and savage: “Hacíales compañía la esclava sordo-muda llamada Isabel, quien, aunque cuando podía gozar de entera libertad con el nuevo orden de las cosas reinantes, había preferido permanecer...con las tres doncellas.” [Their mute and deaf slave named Isabel, who was also able to enjoy freedom due to the new order of things preferred to stay with the three girls, kept them company while the father was out] (227). Although Isabel is described to be “as loyal as the house dog” (246), Penson asserts his suspicions of this servant as an accomplice to the criminals not for being the only survivor of the tragedy, but because she was a black slave who “owed her freedom to the triumph of the Haitian flag” (Penson

250). This analysis demonstrates the implicit mistrust of Black Dominicans who were perceived as potential traitors of the nation, an anxiety experienced by the founding fathers as well.

Race, and specifically blackness, in Penson's writing, becomes a handicap for the nation-building project. The author does not see the possibility of an independent nation as long as there are "black Dominicans" that could potentially ally with the neighboring black Republic. Loyalty is therefore defined in this story along racial, not national lines. To be black meant not belonging, to become an outsider to the nation. But how could Dominican intellectuals completely eliminate the majority of the population from the national imaginary, which consisted of people of color? The strategy was to look to Haiti as the solution. Martínez-Vergne writes:

While the process of racial definition was put into motion, however, Dominicans worked on both celebrating the mixed heritage and minimizing their African origins... If Dominicans embraced their *mulatez* (brownness, black and white mix) it was only because they could look down on the "truly black Haitians." (101)

Dominican intellectuals, such as Penson, chose to adopt a nationalist discourse that celebrated Hispanic culture and *mestizaje* as the defining qualities of *Dominicanidad*, reserving blackness to the neighboring nation.

According to historical documentation on the crime, Isabel was manumitted by her master, Andrés Andújar, many years before the girls were even born.⁴⁵ Both Isabel and her son Goyo lived with the Andújar family at their

⁴⁵ Comprobante de protocolo José Troncoso 1822 in "Archivo de la Epoca Haitiana" Legajo 2, folder 7. AGN. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

will. The documents also explain that although Isabel had “problems communicating” which I assume to be some kind of speech impediment, her testimony was crucial in solving the case and punishing the authors of the crime. The intention of Penson’s story was, in spite of his claim to not want to “novelate” but tell the truth as it happened (249), to create a link between blackness and Haitian, so that to identify oneself as black could potentially mean, like in the case of Isabel, treason. To be black meant to be closer to Haiti and therefore a traitor of the fatherland.

The night of the crime the three sisters were alone with their nanny, waiting for the father to return home when, according to Penson, “horribles aparecieron las negras y feas estampas de los haitianos” [the horrible shadows, black and ugly, of the Haitians appeared] who came to kill and then rape the dead bodies of the innocent girls:

El grupo de las tres vírgenes desamparadas, se destacaba allí en la penumbra, en el fondo de la habitación, estrechadas unas con otras y como si las hubiese petrificado un hálito infernal... Ved a los tigres, saciando su nauseabundo apetito y su sed de sangre, revolcándose en la inocencia de las pobres niñas frías ya por la muerte; vedlos consumando su obra inicua!” [The three helpless virgins could be seen there in the darkness, at the end of the room, they were holding each other as if petrified by an infernal breath... See the tigers quenching their nauseous hunger and thirst for blood, possessing the innocence of the poor girls who laid there cold, dead; see them completing their cruel plan!] (225-227)

Penson’s depiction of the crime attempts to make of Haitians, through the use of necrophilia and mutilation, barbaric animals that are thirsty for blood. The reconstruction of this crime in Penson’s story serves to mark it as a horrendous

episode in Dominican struggle against the Haitian enemy. The result has national resonance as Penson's narrative clearly marks a border division between what he qualifies as two intrinsically different nations in order to reinforce the national identity of Dominicans along racial and ethnic lines.

In Penson's account, the Galindo girls are killed and then raped by the Haitian military while the father and Águeda's fiancé are in the city, away from their duties. At the end, the father is also killed and the fiancé cries, inconsolably, but does nothing to avenge the death of his loved one. The nanny, who is also supposed to protect the children, ends up being "one of them" betraying the girls at the most critical moment. The story succeeds in demonizing the Haitian, while depicting the newly formed Dominican nation as too weak to function on its own. Influenced by positivism, Penson's narrative proposes the ideals of Order and Progress in order to "save" the nation and restore the national subject's honor. His repetition of the Galindo murders served to institutionalize a historical event as a national myth promoting an ideology of prejudice against all that was Haitian at a time when the country struggled with its own idea of cultural and racial identity. In addition, Penson's depiction of the 'virgins' reinforced the idea of the national female figure as white and pure, providing a complementary narrative to the Indian version of *Dominicanidad* embodied in the figure of Anacaona, the Taíno queen celebrated in various 19th century fictional texts.

Penson rendered his "Vírgenes de Galindo" as a legitimate historical narration of the events. In his appendix to the story he claims to have met and interviewed a series of people who personally knew the case. In addition, he

includes a summary of the sentencing of the prisoners. Through said acts, Penson ultimately attempts to make of himself an authority figure and a potential leader for the nation, guiding the men through a process of identification that promoted hatred against all that was perceived as Haitian. And it is precisely the type of rhetoric exemplified in Penson's work that would be appropriated in the 20th century by those that controlled the technology of writing under Trujillo in order to justify xenophobia and to create a collective trauma of the Haitian unification among Dominicans. Along with indigenista literature such as Galván's *Enriquillo*, "Las Vírgenes de Galindo" would be integrated in the "mandatory reading list" taught throughout public and private schools of the Trujillo nation, validating the exclusionary and contradictory narration of Dominican identity.⁴⁶

The Transcendence of the Myth: The 20th Century Aftermath

Dominican thinker, writer, and literary critic, Max Henríquez Ureña, revisited the Galindo crime in his 1940 historical novel *La conspiración de Los*

⁴⁶ During the Trujillo Regime, all aspects of the socio-political life were centralized. Education was an important agenda of the Trujillo regime. Schools were built all over the nation, including remote areas, especially in the borderlands. School curricula served to indoctrinate children into the process of national identification. The singing of the national anthem was institutionalized in 1932 as a mandatory practice in all schools of the nation. In addition, "national histories" depicting the Haitian unification as a forced occupation similar to slavery was introduced in the curriculum. Two important narratives were also included as mandatory texts, Penson's "Vírgenes de Galindo" and Galvan's *Enriquillo*. To this date these narratives and the aforementioned rituals and practices are still mandatory in all public schools throughout the country. See Archivo General de Trujillo. "Secretaría de Estado de Educación y Bellas Artes" Legajo 3, folder 5 "Currículo de historia y literatura dominicanica". AGN. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

Alcarrizos.⁴⁷ The novel reconstructs the first known organized plot to overturn the Haitian government, the Los Alcarrizos Conspiracy, while linking it directly to the Galindo crime through the main character in the novel, Lico Andújar. The author's description of the Galindo incident renders it as a decisive moment in the consolidation of the "Dominican Race" and in the emergence of the independence movement.

Outraged by the brutal killing of his cousins, Lico makes it his personal goal to avenge the crime by defeating the (barbaric) Haitians and bringing back (civilized) Spain:

Los Andújar somos muy unidos, y esas muchachas se criaron junto a mí, más como hermanas que como primas; pero con ser muy grande mi dolor como miembro de la familia, más grande es mi indignación como dominicano. Ese crimen espantoso, obra de bestias y no de hombres, es el fruto de la ignominia en que vivimos. Nunca se habían registrado hechos semejantes entre nosotros. Para que eso ocurriera era preciso que las tribus primitivas del occidente de la isla, siguiendo la inspiración de un caudillo ambicioso, vinieran a ocupar nuestro territorio. Ya no podemos figurar más en la lista de países civilizados. Hemos retrogradado a la barbarie. [We—the Andújars—are very close as a family. And these girls grew up close to me, more like sisters than like cousins. But larger than my pain as a family member is my indignation as a Dominican. This horrifying crime, the works of beasts, rather than men, is the fruit of the ghastly times we live in. Never before had events such as this one registered among us (Dominicans). For something like this to happen, it was necessary for primitive tribes from the western part of the island came here, and following the inspiration of an ambitious caudillo, occupied our territory. We can no longer appear in the list of the civilized nations. We have devolved to barbarism.] (96)

⁴⁷ Max Henríquez Ureña was the brother of celebrated Dominican intellectual Pedro Henríquez Ureña. They had radically dissenting political views.

Like Penson's depiction, Henríquez Ureña's novel reminds the reader of the essential difference that existed between the two peoples that inhabit the island of Hispaniola. The author insists on the "civilized" condition of Dominicans and their closeness with the European colonizer. But it is the murder of the Galindo girls, as seen through this story that makes this essential difference clear within the "Dominican family." Lico embodies the Dominican man, who battles with the desire to be independent, yet Spanish.

Although there is no historical evidence of a link between the Galindo murders and the eventual emergence of any of the independence movements, Henríquez Ureña's text insists on it, reminding Dominicans that Haitians are the enemy of the nation. Furthermore, the recuperation of this myth at a critical time in Haitian-Dominican relations (following a series of borderland reforms and the massacre of 20,000 Haitians in the northern borderland in 1937 during the Trujillo Regime) sought to bring back the past collective memory of anger and fear against the neighboring other. The conspirators depicted in Henríquez Ureña's novel are celebrated for seeking in the colonizer a solution to the "Haitian problem" due to what is believed to be lack of a better choice. The text therefore defends the idea that anything is acceptable, even treason or genocide, in order to protect the Dominican Republic against its most dangerous enemy because as expressed by Pedro, one of the young conspirators in the story: "anything is better than being Haitian" (31).

The Galindo tragedy served in Henríquez Ureña's, like in Penson's text, as the motor for achieving the desired solidarity and unity among Dominicans

and for establishing a clear separation from the oppressors. Moreover, it helped to create a racist national language that erased the possibility of the word black from the discourse of the nation, leaving black Dominicans with only two options: (a) claiming their blackness and become traitors of the fatherland or (b) accepting their new mixed identity by calling themselves Indians and therefore securing a place within the national space.

The process by which Dominican intellectuals attempted to narrate the identity of Dominican people was, as we have seen, fluid, contradictory and at times, confusing. The elite founding fathers as well as the generation of liberal intellectuals that emerged at the turn of the 20th century were desperately trying to reconcile race, culture, and nationality without compromising the much-desired colonial Spanish identity. The Haitian unification, and moreover, obtaining independence from Haiti, allowed for the location of a “common enemy” on whom to blame all the ills of the nation and on whom to displace the undesired black identity. This allowed them to secure acceptance by the more powerful nations (United States and those in Europe), which found blackness to be a handicap to self-government. Hispanic culture became then the common denominator for identifying Dominican nationals, while the Indigenous past was used as a way of explaining the racial mix that made Dominicans “something other than black.” The result of this was forced conformity, exclusion, and discrimination against a great part of the population.

Fiction, as well as newspaper chronicles, was used by the ruling class to present this newly imagined Dominican identity and to promote the solidification

of the nation. While *Caudillismo*, peasant sovereignty, and lack of border control presented important challenges to the nation-building project, the seeds of a nationalist project based on racism, rejection, and exclusion had been forever planted and the devastating results can be seen throughout the twentieth century. The Trujillo regime represents the climax of these racist ideologies as intellectuals who were working for the dictatorship, such as Max Henríquez Ureña, justified and disseminated these ideas among the population, creating even more division, while institutionalizing hatred and marginalization.

I do not explore in this first chapter how resistance was articulated among the marginalized population because my concern here has been with the construction of the nationalist ideology that predominated during the 20th century. The following chapters, however, look at how this ideology is interpellated through various processes, such as the Negritude movement, civil revolts, and migration (Haitians to the Dominican Republic and Dominicans to the United States) throughout the next century, by people who had been traditionally excluded from this first narration of *Dominicanidad*. Migration to the United States, and the extensive contact with African American populations will be one of the factors that lead Dominicans to question and challenge racist norms

CHAPTER II
OF BANDITS AND *PUTAS*:
U.S. IMPERIALISM AND THE IMAGINING OF *AFRO-DOMINICANIDAD*

In May 1916, with the pretext of protecting financial interests in the area, the United States invaded the Dominican Republic, exercising control over this sovereign nation for a period of eight years.⁴⁸ In U.S. history, the intervention of the Dominican Republic is but a minuscule footnote on the narration of U.S. Imperial expansion over the Caribbean, which began with the Spanish-American war in 1898. But for Dominicans, the time the U.S. Marines spent on the island radically and determinedly changed the country's political, social and cultural life for years to come. The agricultural laws promulgated at the time, for instance, contributed to the strengthening of a plantation system that condemned Dominican peasantry to poverty. The establishment of the 'Guardia Nacional Dominicana' or Dominican National Guard (GND) by the U.S. Marines served as a vehicle for the founding of the 31-year dictatorship of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo

⁴⁸ The United States intervention of the Dominican Republic (1916-24) was part of a larger strategic plan to exercise control over the Caribbean region in order to protect U.S. interests in the area and the Panama Canal. Since the Spanish American war (1898) in which the U.S. gained control of Puerto Rico and Cuba, its involvement in the region increased significantly. See Bruce Calder. *The Impact of the Intervention. The Dominican Republic during the U.S. Military Occupation of 1916-24.* (Austin, 1984).

and many other ruthless and violent episodes in Dominican history. In addition, U.S. military policies on border control and manual-labor importation contributed to institutionalizing anti-Haitian sentiment and to the eventual destruction of an ethnically mixed and racially diverse border population.⁴⁹ The U.S. military government seized the customhouses, took control of the finances and imposed U.S. standards of administration in all aspects of the government, the military and civil life. Despite the local armed and intellectual resistance, the U.S. military was successful in controlling the population through censorship, intimidation, fear, and military force, breaching the country's sovereignty with imperial will.⁵⁰ Through U.S. centric ideas on race, gender, sexuality, religion, and exoticism, the U.S. military intervention contributed to the disenfranchisement of Dominican women and the persecution of people who practiced Afro-cultural and Afro-religious traditions, a legacy followed by general Trujillo during his dictatorship and which has continued until today.

⁴⁹ *Guardias* were trained by the Marines and served under their command. During the last 6 years of the intervention, the GND was used to repress and torture people who were perceived as enemies of the nation. Eventually, after the occupation ended, the GND became a tool in service of the various Dominican dictatorships of the 20th century (specifically Trujillo and Balaguer). To this date, the GND continues to be the main vehicle for exercising repression and censorship on Dominican people. The GND is often deployed during peaceful demonstrations in the Dominican Republic to intimidate protesters. In May 2006, for instance, President Leonel Fernández, ordered the GND to “exercise control over the population” following the unconstitutional establishment a national curfew prohibiting people from congregating after 11.00 PM on weekdays and 2.00 AM on weekends. David Howard. *Coloring the Nation: Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic*. (Oxford, 2002). See also Bruce Calder.

⁵⁰ Between 1916 and 1924, the entire island of Hispaniola was under U.S. military control—Haiti was also occupied by U.S. marines (1915-34). One of the priorities of the military governments of both island-nations was to create a clear borderline to separate both countries. The Marines saw Dominicans and Haitians as two different peoples, often referring to the latter as more primitive and (more) black. See Sybille Fischer. *Modernity Disavowed* (Durham, 2004) and Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti*. (Chapel Hill, 2001).

This chapter examines the significance of the U.S. military intervention of the Dominican Republic (1916-24) in shaping Dominican national, racial, and cultural identity. I will analyze how the logic of the occupation, in addition to U.S. paternalistic discourse, contributed to imagining the Dominican body as a site that needed to be controlled and civilized. My analysis will focus on racism and sexism as two important elements influencing the discourse of U.S. domination as exemplified by two crucial practices: (1) the persecution of subjects who practiced Afro-Dominican religions and (2) the repression and control exercised over the Dominican (racialized) female body. In order to do so, I will examine a series of U.S. military records from 1917 to 1924 as well as one Dominican-American novel: *Song of the Water Saints* (2002) by Nelly Rosario. By putting into dialogue these two very distinct and temporally distant texts I hope to propose a sensible account of the intervention that shows, not only how the Marines implemented U.S. policies in the Dominican Republic, but also how these policies affected the everyday life of Dominican citizens at the time. In addition, this chapter hopes to explain how the U.S. became an important psychological border in the narration of Dominican cultural, racial, and political identity.

Olivorio Mateo: Death and Birth of a God

In 1908, Olivorio Mateo, 50, an illiterate *campesino* from the Valley of San Juan, had risen up as a spiritual leader, after undergoing a mystical experience

that not only changed his life but that of the San Juan Valley peasants forever. According to the testimony of journalist and writer Emigdio Garrido Puello,⁵¹ Olivorio disappeared during a terrible hurricane that hit the region in 1908 and came back weeks later a changed man. He came to his people transformed by the spirit of god and became a healer, a leader, and a prophet:

Olivorio Mateo... desapareció durante la tormenta. No era la primera vez que Olivorio inquietaba a sus familiares con desapariciones de días y aún semanas sin poder justificar la causa de sus ausencias. Pero en esta ocasión, la familia ya lo había dado por muerto suponiendo que había sido arrastrado por la tormenta... Un buen día Olivorio Mateo, diciendo ser enviado de Dios, se presentó ante sus azorados familiares diciendo: 'Yo vengo de muy lejos' [Olivorio Mateo...disappeared during the storm. It was not the first time that Olivorio had worried his family with long unexcused absences that lasted many days and sometimes, even weeks. But this time, Olivorio's family thought him dead, assuming that perhaps he had been dragged away by the powerful storm. One random day, however, Olivorio Mateo, claiming he had been sent by God, returned to his astonished family, saying: 'I come from far away'] (18).

News about Olivorio's healing power, and abilities to predict the future spread all over the country and soon a large community of followers congregated as an independent brotherhood under the *Olivorista* principles of peace, community and love. In their text *Peasants and Religion* Jan Lundius and Mats Lundahl argue that the *Olivorista* movement became an answer not only to the spiritual

⁵¹ Emigdio Osvaldo Garrido Puello, Badín (1893-1983) was one of the most important members of the San Juan City elite class. He was the descendant of the famous leader Carmito Ramírez, an important *caudillo* in San Juan Valley. He was a teacher as well as a writer and he founded a newspaper, *El Cable*, which was shut down in 1930 by Trujillo. Garrido Puello was very invested in the project of modernizing the nation and made it his life mission to fight what he believed to be 'Haitian' influence in Dominican culture (anything that resembled Afro-Dominican cultural traditions). His account on Olivorio and his people, although fairly informed, is also harsh and exhibits his anti-Haitianism and class prejudice. His arguments are often biased as they render *Olivorismo* as superstitious and barbaric. See Emigdio Garrido Puello, *Olivorio: un ensayo histórico*.

needs of the people of San Juan Valley but also to the socio-political changes that occurred in the early twentieth century Dominican Republic (28), thus making Olivorio not only a religious symbol but also an emblem of social justice and resistance throughout the twentieth century.⁵²

At the moment of Olivorio's appearance, the Dominican Republic was undergoing a series of political and economic changes due to the country's insertion in the global market, mostly through the sugar industry. A new and strong middle class emerged and soon the cities became more populated and important. This imminent "progress" affected the peasant and rural classes who, according to Roberto Cassá, became the target for the elite who sought to eradicate anything that opposed their idea of modernization and progress (6).

Papá Liborio, as he later became known, established his camp in the mountains of La Maguana, where many people from all over the country gathered to find help for their ailments. The syncretic religious community that emerged employed elements of Santería, Vodou and Christianity, in which *velaciones* and *fiesta de palos* were the main form of spiritual devotion.⁵³

⁵² During the Trujillo Regime, *Olivoristas* were once more persecuted and forced to continue existing as a nomadic community. Soon after the death of the dictator, however, there was a public revival of Olivorismo. But in December of 1962, following intense pressure from the U.S. to eradicate all peasant and grassroots groups that could harvest communist sentiments, the Guardia Nacional Dominicana attacked the *Olivorista* camp in Palma Sola, San Juan, killing unarmed civilians, including children. The act, known as the 'Masacre de Palma Sola' was a reaction to an increasing fear of another communist revolution in the area as well as the result of many decades of anti-Afro-Dominican (Anti-Haitian) rhetoric. See Francisco Lizardo Lascocé *Palma Sola, la tragedia de un pueblo*.

⁵³ *Velaciones* are religious meetings in which people congregate to pray to a particular saint. *Salves* (popular chants) are often sung during these meetings. *Fiesta de palos* are religious celebrations often held in honor of the dead or in celebration of the birthday of a saint. They are called *fiesta de palos*, because *palos*, or drums are played during the celebration and dancing also takes place. See Carlos Andújar *Identidad y religiosidad popular*, and Adalberto Grullón, *Fiesta de palos*.

Olivorio never charged anyone for his healings, predictions or advices, however, the *Olivorista* community received gifts in the form of clothing, shoes, and foodstuffs, which would then be used on a communal basis (Lundius and Lundahl 73). His preaching emphasized the need to unite and work as a community and the importance of caring for one another as part of the human race. Those who knew him say Olivorio was a kind, soft-spoken man, who liked to help others (Martínez 17). Yet, his increasing influence over Dominican peasantry quickly became a major concern for the U.S. military leaders who perceived the gathering of any group outside of the official Christian churches as a threat to their regime.⁵⁴ Olivorio and his followers were therefore persecuted, and forced to go into hiding, ultimately becoming a nomadic secret religious community.

On July 27th, 1922, a detachment of 12 armed men mostly from the newly formed *Guardia Nacional Dominicana* (GND) and under the command of U.S. Marine Captain George H. Morse and Lieutenant. G.A. Williams killed Olivorio Mateo.⁵⁵ Papá Liborio, as he is still referred to by his followers, was mutilated and shot 15 times until blood came out from various orifices of his body. The god of San Juan Valley was then tied up in the town square so that all his followers could see the corpse of their spiritual leader rot. After three days of this macabre spectacle, Olivorio was buried in the San Juan City Cemetery. The local paper

⁵⁴ See "Memo from the Second Provisional Brigade of the U.S. Marine Corps regarding the preservation of order in the Dominican Republic" June 11th, 1918. RG 45, Box 756, Folder 6. "Chief Naval Operations" National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁵⁵ The death of Olivorio appears reported in a document entitled "Contact with Dios Olivorio" signed by Lt. Williams on July 8th, 1922 and filed under "Chief Naval Operations" RG 38, Box 50, 1922. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

published an obituary that read as follows: “With the death of Olivorio, we consider his coarse religion to be finished forever. It constituted a disgrace for this municipality, particularly since the majority of its followers were *foreign elements*” (El Cable, July 1922, emphasis added).⁵⁶ The military government hired a photographer to document the death—and the spectacle—of Papá Liborio as a form of intimidation and as evidence to those who would otherwise insist on believing he was alive (see figure 2). The killing of Dios Olivorio was the climax of a five-year persecution by the U.S. military government against a peasant Afro-religious community, and its most extreme demonstration of cultural prejudice and intolerance.

⁵⁶ Dominican publications were subject to the military government censorship laws as evidenced by the significant number of publications that was shut down. Executive order number 591 dictated that the Military Government had the power to forbid the publications of articles in magazines, newspapers “pamphlets, periodicals, hand bills, publications which” teach doctrines that create disturbances, lead to disorder or exhibit morals that are not of the “civil nations”. A number of local newspapers including *La Abeja* and *La Opinión* had been shut down earlier that year by the regime therefore it is fair to conclude that the position of *El Cable*, as the only paper in the southwest that remained open during the intervention, was also the position of the military regime. See RG 38. Military Government of Santo Domingo. Chief Naval Operations 1917-25. Box 49. Folder 2. Executive Order 591. September 26, 1922. Naval Records, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. and Gobierno Militar, Legajo 1, Folder 21. “Memorandum de Ley Ejecutiva” AGN. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.



Figure 2: Body of Olivorio Mateo as exposed in front of the San Juan City Hall⁵⁷

For a period of nearly four years before the killing of Olivorio, the U.S. Marines led a series of aggressive expeditions through the mountains of San Juan Valley in order to find and capture Papá Liborio. A large number of the Marine reports generated by officers stationed in the Southwest region of the country between 1918-22 denote the various attempts to find, and moments of contact with, the God of San Juan Valley or his followers. At times, some presumed follower was captured and killed, but in general, Olivorio continued to escape the Marines with help from his large number of followers:

April 6th, left town at 7.00 AM, for the hills in which the enemy was located... Lieuts Barry and Miller with the Guardia were ordered to

⁵⁷ "Fotografías y Gráficas" Archivo General de La Nación, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

advance and seize hill "D"; Lieut. Budd was ordered to cover their advance by fire of position. This position was taken after an extremely stubborn resistance. Lieut. Budd and the remainder of his company was now ordered forward and the entire command deployed and swept up the hill to "E" and to Naranga, Olivorio's headquarters... Owing to the conditions we were unable to search the field for the enemy's dead and wounded but from reliable reports from various detachments of both native and American troops, nine dead and twenty four wounded, were accounted for, which is somewhat less than reported by natives... April 8th reveille at 5.30 A.M. marched at El Coronel at which place the Guardia killed five of Olivorio's men. The places visited and surrounding country are owned by Olivorio and his followers...⁵⁸

Like Lieutenant Colonel H. I. Bears's there are a series of reports from various commanding officers on the persecution and escape of Dios Olivorio. From the documents, it is possible to deduce that due to the increased persecution, Olivorio and his followers decided to defend themselves and were indeed armed. However, their strength seemed to rely not on their fighting abilities or the availability to obtain weapons but on the complicit support of the local communities that persistently defended and hid Olivorio as well as his followers. According to Roberto Cassá, this network of support extended throughout the Central Valley ('La cordillera central') and across the border with Haiti (12). At times of extreme persecution, Olivorio is said to have taken refuge in the Haitian-Dominican communities of the Artibonite Valley, near Dajabón.

In 1922, however, the mission to capture and kill Olivorio was assigned to Captain George H. Morse, an experienced officer with good knowledge of Latin America. Morse immediately pledged to finding and capturing the last of

⁵⁸ RG 45: Naval Records 1911-1917 (WA-7) Box 756. Folder 12. "Report from Operations from April 2nd to the 9th, 1917" Submitted April 9th at 12.00 p.m. Naval Records, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Dominican “bandits” and through local connections, torture, and bribes, soon enough was able to find the new location of the prophet’s camp in Arroyo Diablo, near Bánica in the Southwest borderlands. With four Marines and a small detachment of the GND, Captain Morse attacked the village of Arroyo del Diablo in May 1922, where Olivorio was hiding, brutally killing twenty-two civilians, including children. Despite the bloodshed, Morse described this mission as a complete success, showing no remorse for the dead of the civilians:

Accompanied by twenty enlisted men of the 19th company, GND, all of whom except two came from the frontier posts, the undersigned made an assault on the camp of Dios Olivorio Mateo at 5.20 a.m. May 19th, 1922, which resulted in the death of twenty-two members of this *band*, including twelve men, eight women and two small children. The women and children were killed in their beds due to the concentrated fire into the shacks of the camp... Four prisoners, two men Pedro del Carmen and Enerio Romero, and two women, Ramona Bautista and Petronila Jerronemo, were captured. The number of men and women wounded is not known, however the sides of the mountains were covered in bloody trails, indicating that a large number of the *band* was wounded. (emphasis added).⁵⁹

Captain Morse’s account attempts to demonstrate that the *Olivoristas* were “bandits” and their religious beliefs and practices were no more than a form of barbarism and debauchery. *Olivoristas* were converted in the eyes of Captain Morse into sub-human creatures unworthy of sympathy or care as exemplified in the second page of his report:

⁵⁹ RG 38. Military Government of Santo Domingo. Chief Naval Operations 1917-24. Box 49. “Report of contact with Dios Olivorio” submitted by Officer Colonel Bearss. May 23rd, 1922. Page 1. Naval Records, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

The camp consisted of fourteen shacks, laying in a zig-zag fashion on the side of the mountain... Needless to say, the camp of Olivorio cannot be compared even with a pigpen. In searching the shacks, large quantities of foodstuffs were found, many empty bottles showing that a large amount of *Haitian rum* smuggled across the border reached Olivorio's camp. All kinds of letters and papers were found, the contents of which *would disgust anyone*. They show that Olivorio and his *band* are of the *lowest order of human beings* and that debauchery and prostitution were the only modes of living. People from all over the republic either visited his camp or received instructions on how to cure ailments, which was paid for by rum, tobacco, foodstuffs and money. *There are no letters to show that Olivorio was or is in any way connected or in communication with any of the former revolutionary leaders on the island.* (emphasis added)⁶⁰

Reading Morse's account, one is lead to wonder how he imagined himself in front of Olivorio's people. Did Morse see himself as a white Christian man? Was he conscious of the fact that his actions and words represented the United States? Were the killing of Olivorio's followers simply a part of his duty as a Marine, or was it a personal decision based on his perception of "the other" at the moment of the encounter? Did he feel fear? Disgust? Hate? Or was he so frustrated at the impossibility of capturing the dissident leader that he took out his rage on whomever was suspected of sympathizing with him? We will never know the exact answers to these questions; however, we can speculate that the Imperial discourse of civilization and progress as well as a history of U.S. curiosity and exoticism of Afro-Caribbean religious practices, evidenced in the representation of Haitian Vodou, for instance, must have formed part of the equation. As evidenced in the quote above, the logic of the U.S. occupation promoted

⁶⁰ RG 38. Military Government of Santo Domingo. Chief Naval Operations 1917-24. Box 49. "Report of contact with Dios Olivorio" submitted by Officer Colonel Bearss. May 23rd, 1922. Page 3. Naval Records, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C

whiteness as a sign of civility and in turn made barbarity a racialized characteristic of those who were perceived as other than white. This binary opposition, as Roxann Wheeler has argued, served to justify the conflicts of imperial interaction as the Marine successfully embodies the rhetoric of the heterosexualized white nation he represents.⁶¹ In this sense, Captain Morse is able to justify his actions as part of the “greater good” of order and civilization that he, as a U.S. Marine had been charged to protect.

Captain Morse, like many other Marines, recognized himself as an embodied power, a symbol of a sexualized, gendered, and racialized state, that as M. Jacqui Alexander has argued, functions as an important way to maintain “the hegemony of imperial, capitalist power across geographical and psychological borders” (4). Furthermore, the language of the intervention sought to convince Marines and other officials of their duty, as representatives of the United States, to eliminate opposition and control the Dominican population. A memo issued by Commanding General Harry Lee, at the end of 1921 clearly outlines these duties:

It is thought well at this time to remind all that we, a force of the United States, are in Military Occupation of the Republic of Santo Domingo, and that the territory has been placed under Military Government, and is in a modified way in a status of territory of a hostile state, over which military authority has been exercised. The authority of the legitimate power having passed into the hands of the United States, *we as representatives of the occupant shall take all the measure in our power to insure public order and safety...* No cruel, harsh or unusual measures are permitted against the inhabitants. Measures to locate and apprehend or capture

⁶¹ Roxann Wheeler. *The Complexion of Race*. (Philadelphia, 2000)

lawbreakers and evildoers such as bandits and other criminals must be taken in order to insure order and public safety (emphasis added).⁶²

Like other United States occupations of the 20th and 21st centuries, the Dominican Intervention was a complicated enterprise that engaged a hetero-normative understanding of the world, in which the United States, embodied in each of the white-male Marines, was trusted with the duty to “protect” public order and safety. The Marines were often confused when confronted by a strong resistance from an unwilling population that resented their presence in the island. The result was a series of “undesirable” events, which often included the killing of innocent civilians, raids, rapes, and persecution, many of which went unreported and/or unpunished as evidenced in memo issued by General Knapp on October 26th, 1918 to all Brigade Commanders. In this document the General expressed great concern for the extreme and “unnecessary harshness, even arbitrariness” that was exhibited by the officers, and even admits to having to “regret” that actual “brutality” had been used against local civilians as if Dominicans were in fact enemies of war. General Knapp’s memo expresses the contradictions that emerged during the occupation when due to “these anomalous conditions we have put a friendly country under martial law.”⁶³

⁶² Gobierno Militar, Legajo 1J , Folder 20. “Memorandum from General Harry Lee to all Commanders” AGN. Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

⁶³ The memo also states that although no measures had been taken to punish the Marines accused of such acts, he was concerned that if they continued in this way, attention from other Latin American countries would soon come and that would hurt them personally as well as collectively as representatives of the United States Government. RG 45: Naval Records 1911-1917 (WA-7). Box 757. Folder 6. “Memo from Commander officer to all brigadiers # 2816” Naval Records, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

The Haitian Connection

“Now and then people of the United States should be reminded that they
are no longer merely citizens of a republic
but also citizens of an empire.”
—Carl Van Doren

As the first black nation in the Americas, Haiti has occupied a central place in the political and cultural imaginary of many diverse, and often times, oppositional groups. Haiti's success in obtaining independence, despite the strong opposition of the French colonial power, served as a model to follow for many young independence movements all over the Americas. Powerful leaders such as Simón Bolívar and José Martí relied on Haitian complicit support in their struggle for independence from Spain, and even the United States sought Haitian aid during the Civil War (Trouillot 35). In addition, African-American and Caribbean intellectuals, artists, and writers have also sought in Haiti a space from which to image a Pan-African identity and a source of African roots within the Americas.⁶⁴ As travel narratives had once done in the sixteenth century, novels and theatrical performances, produced in the United States in the early twentieth century attempted to construct a representation of Haitians as savages, incapable of governing themselves and morally corrupted.⁶⁵ Through the use of what Carl Van Doren has called *literature of the empire*, Haiti was depicted as a land of corruption and savagery and Vodou was represented in many memoirs of

⁶⁴ This is evidenced in artistic movements such as the Negritude and the Harlem Renaissance.

⁶⁵ See Jennifer Morgan “Some Could Suckle Over Their Shoulders: Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology” in *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54 (1997).

religious leaders and soldiers as a cannibalistic practice that needed to be eradicated in order to promote civilization and progress.⁶⁶ Haitians were, through these discourses, portrayed as uneducated, poor, and simple savages without history.⁶⁷

As demonstrated elsewhere in this dissertation, Haiti has occupied a very significant space in the Dominican national imaginary.⁶⁸ To justify the persecution and killing of *Olivoristas*, and to secure the support, or at least the lack of opposition, of Dominican elite, the military government insisted on highlighting the “foreign” (namely Haitian) nature of this group of people and the presumed connection of Olivorio Mateo with Haiti’s guerrillas, as evidenced in the obituary published in *El Cable* and the various military reports here reproduced.⁶⁹ This allowed the Marines to freely persecute a religious community, without much political resistance or any scrutiny from the intellectual opposition. In addition, it functioned as a way to justify the mission in the eyes of the Marines who despite being aware of the non-rebellious nature of the *Olivorista* community, captured and often shot *Olivoristas* without mercy. They were acting guided, without

⁶⁶ Carl Van Doren praised many of the literatures about Haiti as important in the construction of an American Empire. He was a professor of literature at Columbia University during the invasion. See Mary A. Renda, introduction and chapter 7.

⁶⁷ Some of the most important narratives and cultural production about Haiti of this time include the work of famous playwright Eugene O’Neill whose *Emperor Jones*, a play based on the life of Henri Christophe, became very celebrated. The play tells the tale of Brutus Jones, an African-American man who kills a man, goes to prison, escapes to a Caribbean island, and sets himself up as emperor. Other important titles include *The Gout Without Horns* by Robert Davis, *Black Majesty* by John Vandercook, *The Magic Island* by William Seabrook and the film *The White Zombie*.

⁶⁸ See Chapters 1 and 3 of this dissertation.

⁶⁹ The reports highlight the use of Haitian rum, the “foreign element” of the *Olivoristas* as well the presume suspicion of Olivorio’s connection with Haitian rebels.

doubt, in part out of fear and disgust towards what they perceived to be a morally corrupt Haitian-influenced religion.

The Marines who landed in Haiti (1915) and in the Dominican Republic (1916) were for the most part white and had been socialized by the U.S. racial system to imagine themselves as superior to those who were perceived as non-whites (blacks, people of color, people of mixed race). As Mary A. Renda assertively argues, whiteness for the military represented an “essential element of American manhood and American men were poised to assert their manhood around the globe” (64). The language of imperial expansion as verbalized by president Wilson, persisted on the need to “help” smaller nations become politically sound and “teach them how to govern themselves” (Renda 76). These white Marines that came to the island of Hispaniola and occupied both nations saw themselves as fathers or big brothers of less capable black nations. The Marines saw Dominicans and Haitians as two different peoples, often referring to the latter as more primitive and (more) black than the former, a view that had influenced the relationship between both island-nations since Dominican independence from Haiti in 1844.⁷⁰ This perception resulted in the establishment of immigration laws that prohibited Haitians from freely crossing the borders into the Dominican Republic as well as a series of attempts between 1917 and 1923,

⁷⁰ When the Dominican Republic declared its independence from Haiti in 1844, the U.S. sent agent John Hogan to assess the nation’s ability to govern itself in order to see if the U.S. could recognize its independence (a recognition it had denied Haiti for over 20 years after its independence from France). After spending a few months in the country, Hogan concluded that it had plenty of white people as well as enough lighter colored men, to be accepted as an independent nation. See Torres-Saillant’s “Tribulations of Whiteness”.

to redefine the frontier and control the free flow of the borderland population, known as *rayanos*.

A border patrol formed by Marines as well as members of the GND was established in 1917, in addition to a series of laws to control population movement. A report signed by the American High Commissioner to Haiti, John H. Russell, on May 16th, 1922, expressed the U.S. military government's concern with the "border issue" and the increased frustration at their inability to keep people from crossing their "national lines":

Until the frontier is definitely settled and permanently marked, it is believed that questions of this nature will constantly arise... The recent violations of boundary by both Haitians and Dominicans show that such a tentative boundary will only hold good for military purposes, such as preventing patrols from crossing the boundary.⁷¹

The question of defining the Haitian-Dominican borders had always concerned the Dominican state. However, it was not until the military intervention that attempts to define, not the territory, but the actual people living in it, emerged. This concern, as I further explore in chapter 3 of this study, translated in the destruction of the borderline population of *rayanos* when general Trujillo ordered the killing of "all Haitians" living within the Dominican territory. The result was a massacre of over 20,000 ethnic Haitians and black Dominicans, who lived in the northwestern borderlands.

⁷¹ Gobierno Militar, Legajo 4, Folder 37. Office of the Military Governor. Report on Dominican-Haitian Frontier, May 16th, 1922.

In addition to racism and cultural prejudice, the Marines saw in Olivorio a potential political enemy. Although practically ignored by most American accounts of the occupation at the time, Dominican guerrilla opposition represented a significant challenge to the Marines who expected no armed resistance upon landing on Dominican territory.⁷² The presence of a peasant leader who represented all of the aforementioned elements in the eyes the Marines: savagery, African heritage, potential political and guerrilla resistance, and barbarism, and who was respected and loved by most people in the country produced a lot of anxiety among the Marines, who had already been embarrassed by the power of resistance that a few illiterate peasants from the mountains had been able to pose for over 5 years.

As a result of these concerns, there was an increase in military control of the southwestern region from early 1922. Historian Roberto Cassá argues that this military presence resulted in repression, torture, and murders, Olivorio's being just one example of a larger pattern:

Puede establecerse una conexión entre los cambios que se estaban produciendo en el país y la eliminación de Olivorio. Este operaba como un fugitivo, acompañado de una partida ambulante de hombres armados, lo que constituía un reto a los propósitos de erradicación del caudillismo que se habían propuesto los norteamericanos... No fue fruto de casualidad que el profeta fuera eliminado poco después de la rendición de las principales cuadrillas de rebeldes rurales el Este, y otros lugares (los denotados como gavilleros) [It is possible to establish a connection between the changes that were happening in the country and the elimination of Olivorio. He operated as a fugitive, accompanied by a number of armed men. This constituted a challenge to the North American goal of eradicating *caudillismo* and regional conflicts within the nation... It was not a coincidence then that the prophet

⁷² See Bruce Calder.

was eliminated shortly after the main rebels from the East and other areas (those known as gavilleros) had already surrendered] (16).

Dominican guerrillas lacked unified leadership; a fact that seriously affected their operations and which ultimately resulted in their defeat. The emergence and sudden fame of God Olivorio Mateo as a peasant religious leader, represented a true source of concern for the Marines, who were already feeling demoralized for being sent to the Caribbean to a questionable mission, while a real war was being fought in Europe. So despite being aware of Olivorio's lack of involvement in the political resistance as evidenced in Captain Morse's report, the military government continued to persecute the god of San Juan Valley and his followers, justifying its actions with the rhetoric of paternalism: it was their mission to civilize these smaller nations and Olivorio threatened their mission through his savage ways.

A Rhythm of Resistance

*Dicen que Liborio ha muerto, Liborio no ha muerto ná.
Lo que pasa es que Liborio, no come pendejá.⁷³*

Despite only hearing Morse's voice through a report, we can still sense his disgust as he describes the encounter with the camp and the people of Olivorio. Every person is referred to as a bandit, as a morally corrupt subject, less than human and the religious practices are reduced to "debauchery and prostitution." Morse's report on the destruction of Dios Olivorio's camp not only tells us a lot

⁷³ "They say Liborio has died, but no, Liborio ain't dead. What happens is that Liborio is not a coward." Popular song often sang during peasant protests in the 1980s.

about U.S. military operations that targeted those perceived as rebellious (or different) against the military regime, but it also offers us glimpses of the cultural processes that shaped the violence of U.S. imperialism in the Dominican Republic. More specifically, it tells us how Dominican cultural and religious practices were viewed in the eyes of the Marines.

It would be unfair to argue that all Afro-religious leaders were, like Olivorio, in fact imprisoned or assassinated during the military regime. However, what does seem clear is that many Afro-religious Dominicans were harassed and ridiculed, often being forced to congregate in secret.⁷⁴ Dominga Alcántara, a santera leader from San Juan de la Maguana, offers us an example of a typical Afro-religious persecution during the military regime. Dominga was the queen of the Holy Spirit Brotherhood of San Juan, an important religious community recently declared patrimony of humanity by the UNESCO.⁷⁵ In the years of the occupation, Dominga lived very close to the center of town. In her small house located next to the city hall, Dominga kept an altar dedicated to all the saints, with special devotion to the Holy Spirit, exemplified by a cross, which she dressed in light blue and white fabrics (see figure 3). Every week, Dominga held *velaciones* in her house, and many brothers and sisters would come and pray to the Holy Spirit for life, health, strength, for good crops, and especially, for the safety and well-being of their prophet, Liborio. On the day of the Cross, in May, the Holy Spirit Brotherhood, decided to host a big celebration. The brothers and

⁷⁴ The situation might have been a lot more extreme in Haiti where according to Mary A. Renda, Marines were ordered to “shoot all rebels and voodooers” (41).

⁷⁵ May 18th, 2001.

sisters brought a couple of goats for the typical stew of ‘chivo con chenchén’ which is served on these occasions. There was rum, tobacco, and all the drums had been blessed for the dance. The morning of the *fiesta de palos*, however, just as the drummers were getting started, a group of armed GNDs commanded by a Marine sergeant, came into Dominga’s home declaring that “the party was over.” The brothers and sisters were ordered to go home, the military authorities confiscated the rum, tobacco, and drums.⁷⁶ When questioned as to why the drums were confiscated, Captain Morse, who was in charge of the southwestern division at the time, responded that “the sticks in question were seized” because the dance was next to the police station and because “the undersigned had received information that a group of Olivorio’s people would be in town.”⁷⁷ Disconcerted by what she perceived to be a complete sacrilege of the saints and the brotherhood she had been charged to guard, Dominga wrote a letter to the military governor of Santo Domingo, General Harry Lee, complaining about the confiscation of the sacred drums of the Holy Spirit by the stationed Marines:

Ciudadano Almirante: Después de saludarlo tomé de mi vil pluma para reclamar los quijongos del espíritu santo que le dicen los palos camitos del espíritu santo que en San Cristóbal lo tocan como devoción, en Las Matas también y a ninguno los han aprehendido solo los de San Juan que los hizo preso al capitán Morcia (Morse) y hasta la fecha están presos pues *yo quiero que Ud. me diga si los palos del espíritu santo son del gobierno o son de las gentes del batey*. Ud puede informarse con el General

⁷⁶ Documentos Guardia Nacional Dominicana. Legajo 3, Folder 2 “General Communications” (1920-22). AGN, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

⁷⁷ RG 38. Military Government of Santo Domingo. Chief Naval Operations 1917-25. Box 49. Folder 2 . “Report Regarding Letter from Dominga Alcántara.” Naval Records, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Wenceslao Ramírez si esa hermandad no es muy vieja y *el gobierno nunca nos había probado hasta hoy*. Pues me despido con to respeto y esta única ama de dicho quijongo y del espíritu santo queda en espera de su contesta. Dominga Alcántara. *P.D. Ahora lo tienen en la gobernación como distracción y como ud. comprenderá esos son palos benditos y se usan solo cuando se necesitan...* [After greeting you, I would like to inquire about the drums of the Holy Spirits, which are also known as the *camitos* of the Holy Spirit and which are played in ceremonies in San Cristobal and which are also played in Las Matas. And none have been confiscated except for those from San Juan. So I would like it if you told me to whom those drums belong? Do they belong to the government or to the people of the Batey? You can ask General Wenceslao Ramírez about this brotherhood, about how old it is and how the government had never tested us, until today. This servant of the Holy Spirit and only master of those drums respectfully salutes you and waits for your response. PS. Now they have them (drums) at the Police Station and they play it for fun, and as you may well understand those drums are sacred and are only to be used as needed...]⁷⁸

As evidenced in Dominga's letter to the military governor reproduced above, Afro-religious practices were often disrespected or threatened by the Marines and the GND. The confiscation of the sacred drums (quijongos) constituted an open challenge to the San Juan community who saw this act as a desecration of their religious values. As the leader of the Holy Spirit Brotherhood, Dominga defied the military government, stating that the brotherhood she represented had been peaceful to that date but only because "they had not been tested until today." Aware of the military government's fear of Dios Olivorio, as a potential locus for armed resistance throughout the nation, Dominga was able to challenge the regime, ultimately regaining possession of the drums and respect from the local GNDs and Marines.

⁷⁸ RG38, Box 49. General Communications. Folder 2 "Letter from Dominga Alcántara". Chief Naval Operations. National Archives, Washington, D.C.

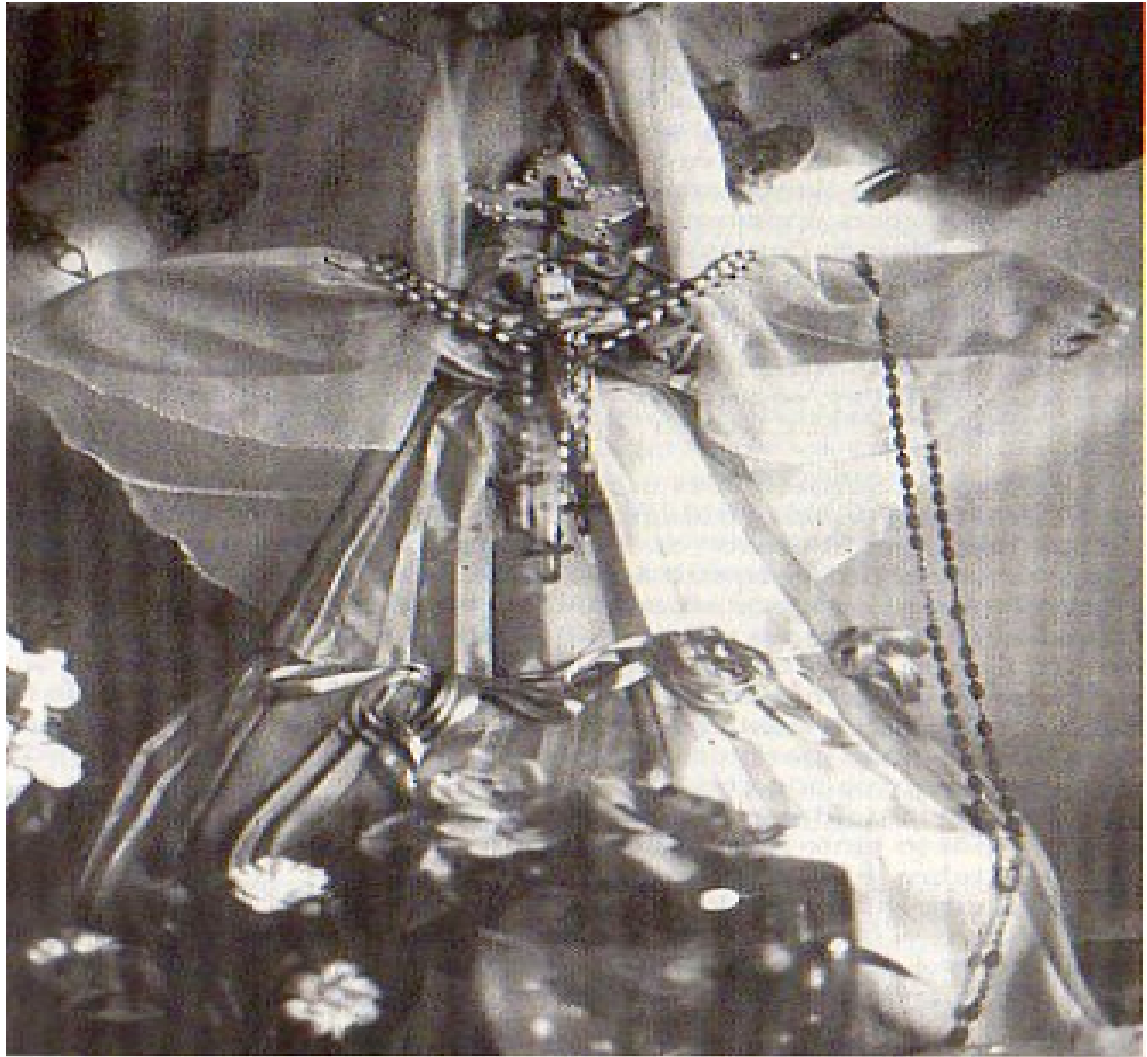


Figure 3: *La Cruz Vestida*, photo of a cross “dressed” for ceremony (photo courtesy of Editora AAA)⁷⁹

Afro-Dominican religion, and more specifically, the body of the religious devout can function, as evidenced in the examples thus far explored, as a form of resistance because the body physically becomes a site for remembering:

⁷⁹ “La Cruz Vestida” Still from Adalberto Grullón, *Fiesta de Palos..*

Since the spiritual does not exist outside the very social, cultural and political relations, it too can be taken to constitute the body praxis, and, this I believe, is what Karen McCarthy Brown means when she says that “religions such as Vodou inscribe their traditions in the bodies of the followers... the tradition, the memory of how to serve the spirits is held in the ritualized and ritualizing human body...” In this matrix the body thus becomes a site of memory, not a commodity for sale, even as it is simultaneously insinuated within the nexus of power. (Alexander 295)

As M. Jacqui Alexander argues, the body of the religious can become a vessel from which the past, in the form of the dead, would come back and speak some sort of truth. The occupation forces, as evidenced in Captain Morse’s report, viewed the attack on Arroyo Diablo as the beginning of Olivorio’s end. The god of San Juan Valley had lost several of his closest brothers, including his musician and right hand Bejamín Gómez. In addition, many of his followers had fallen wounded, or been captured by their attackers. The Marines believed that they had succeeded in destroying *Olivorismo* during this first attack and they also believed it led to the eventual killing of the prophet, a month later. Captain Morse and Lt. Williams were rewarded for completing the mission successfully. Dominican elites, on the other hand, were pleased to find out that what they perceived to be another “primitive” source of moral corruption and barbarism had been destroyed. Yet, to Olivorio’s followers and many San Juan Valley peasants, the prophet had not been defeated. They believed Papá Liborio had offered himself to the military forces, as he had predicted he would back in 1910, in order to stop the persecution and killing of his brothers and sisters. His murder soon became a symbol of unity for the peasants, as well as an emblem of resistance to subsequent revolutionaries. As Alexander argues, Afro-Caribbean

religiosity often offers the opportunity for making the invisible visible and for literally embodying resistance at moments of censorship and control. The death of Olivorio allowed for the creation of a collective memory of the occupation, among Afro-Dominican communities, through songs and *salves* that were repeated in religious ceremonies throughout the 20th century.

Olivorio Mateo is now remembered as a revolutionary rather than as a peasant-religious leader. Socialist, grassroots, and guerrilla groups have appropriated his name at various times in Dominican history to resist U.S. Imperialism and to protest Dominican state repression.⁸⁰ In addition, Olivorismo as a religion has grown significantly, spreading throughout the country and in the diaspora.⁸¹ The grounds of Olivorio's camp are believed to be holy and the water from the stream is believed to cure one of any ailment, be it physical or spiritual. On the anniversary of Olivorio's death many believers walk across the valley of San Juan to visit the site and pay respect to the prophet. Although Olivorio's spirit often mounts the bodies of his followers, they also believe he will eventually come back to save them from misery, oppression, and poverty. Thus, through his death, Olivorio became the messiah that would come back to fight hegemony and oppression, becoming much more powerful in his death than he ever was

⁸⁰ During the 1965 civil war, many of the urban guerrillas would chant "Olivorio is not dead" as they confronted the marines that arrived in Dominican shores during the second military intervention of the 20th century on the eastern portion of the island. In addition, Olivorio's camp still functions as an independent peasant community where many disenfranchised peoples come to find help. See Lusitania Martínez and Adalberto Grullón.

⁸¹ There are Olivorista groups in Washington Heights, New York as well as in Tuscany, Italy. There is currently no study on these diasporic Afro-religious communities. However, I was able to visit some of their ceremonies during 2006 and 2007. A future study hopes to examine how these communities survive in the diaspora, particularly considering that in the Dominican Republic they are mostly rural-peasant communities.

alive. But when the military government declared Olivorio's and the *Olivorista* movement dead forever, in 1922, they did not know this. They were unaware that the god of San Juan Valley had predicted the very events leading to his death, years before. They were also unaware that his spirit had risen back to life, reincarnating as an anti-Yankee messiah for generations to come.

Embodying the Saints: A Woman's Narration of Resistance

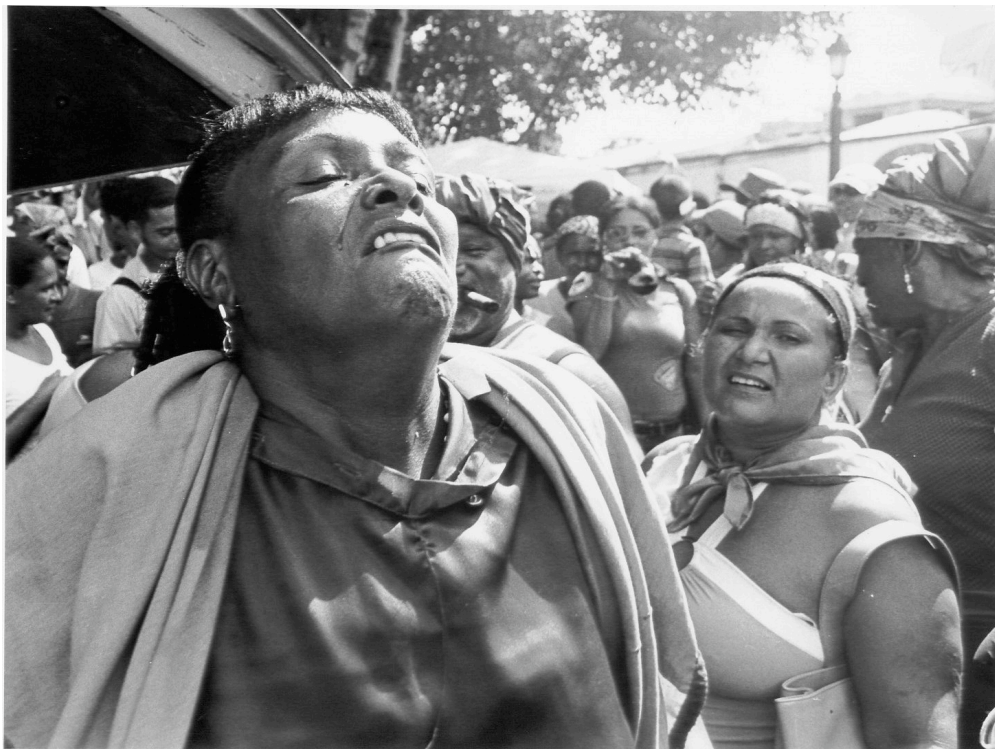


Figure 4: *Spiritual Bliss*. Woman mounted by a spirit
Fiesta de San Miguel, Santo Domingo, 2005. (Photograph by JP Gallagher)

*Cuando yo me muera, que toquen los palos, que no lllore nadie y que me
canten salves.*

*Pañuelo rojo, traje blanco y que los quijongos no se callen...
Ya verás como vuelvo, hecho todo aire,
a contarle a todos dos o tres verdades*

(popular palo chant from San Juan)⁸²

Songs and *salves* like the one above are often repeated during Afro-Dominican religious ceremonies, which continue to exist in the periphery of *Dominicanidad*. Paleros and santeros, however, are determined to resist serving as inspirations to many dissidents, including contemporary writers and intellectuals seeking to re-write the official version of Dominican history. This desire is evidenced in Nelly Rosario's novel *Song of the Water Saints* (2002), through which the author offers the reader a site from which to remember the U.S. military occupation of 1916-24 from the perspective of those who did not get a chance to write history. As hinted in the title of the novel, Rosario's unofficial history alludes to the art of remembering through traditional spiritual songs and stories passed on by women from generation to generation. By means of the lives of Graciela, Mercedes, and Leila, Rosario brings us closer to important moments in Dominican history: the U.S. occupation of 1916 to 1924, the dictatorship of Trujillo (1930-61), and the economic crisis of the 1980s that resulted in the massive migration of underprivileged Dominicans to New York City. Each of Rosario's *songs* attempts to reconstruct the potential non-official version of history as remembered by those who suffered the consequences of it. In this sense, *Song of the Water Saints* converts remembering into a political act, confronting, as Lucía Suárez suggests, history through the process of narration (13). Through the life of Graciela, the main character, Rosario shows us the

⁸² When I die, let there be drums, let no one cry, let all sing songs. Red handkerchief, white dress and may the drums, never rest. Soon enough I will return, and through your breath tell all, a thing or two you did not know.

cultural processes that underlined the United States military occupation of the Dominican Republic, and how the actions of the Marines as well as other foreign subjects that entered the country as a result of the intervention affected the everyday lives of real persons, families, and communities. My analysis at this time will focus on Graciela, a young girl-woman, who embodies the impact of the intervention, ultimately rendering herself as a site of memory.

An adventurous and curious girl, Graciela was the oldest daughter of a farmer from a semi-urban neighborhood near the Ozama River in Santo Domingo. Uneducated, dark, and poor, Graciela was expected to become a wife, bear children, and help her family financially by working as a maid for one of the richer families in the neighborhood. Still a child at age 13, however, Graciela moved in with her boyfriend, Silvio, 15, in hopes of finding freedom from what she perceived to be a dull and oppressive life. Soon after eloping, however, Silvio was killed by the Marines for helping the Gavillero rebels, and Graciela was forced to become a laundress in order to support her young daughter Mercedes.

Graciela and Silvio were confronted with the impact of the occupation very early on in the novel, through their various encounters with the Marines, as well as with the American civilians that traveled to Santo Domingo in search of exotic adventures and fortune. They first met an American one hot afternoon while the teenage couple was still dating, during the first song —chapter— of the novel. While taking a stroll and kissing by the beach, the young couple was approached by a photographer, Peter West, who offered them money in exchange for some pictures:

With the promise of pesos, Graciela and Silvio found themselves in the Galician vendor's warehouse, where Peter West had staged many ribald acts among its sacks of rice. How happy they had been to help this yanqui-man push together the papier-mâché trees, to roll out the starched canvas of cracked land and sky...The pink hand tugged at her skirt and pointed briskly to Silvio's hand. They turned to each other as the same hand dangled pesos before them... Graciela's shoulders dropped. She unlaced her hair and folded her blouse and skirt. In turn, Silvio unbuttoned his mandarin shirt and untied the rope at his waist... In the dampness they shivered as West kneaded their bodies as if molding stubborn clay... Then Graciela and Silvio watched in complicit silence as West approached the couch and knelt in front of them...One by one, West's fingers wrapped around Silvio's growing penis. He wedged the thumb of his other hand into the humid mound between Graciela's thighs. Neither moved while they watched his forehead glitter. And just as they could hear each other's own sucks of breath, they felt piercing slaps on their chins. West ran to the camera to capture the fire in their faces... As promised, the yanqui-man tossed Silvio a flurry of pesos. (11)

Rosario's poignant introduction to the intervention positions the United States as a penetrating force that seduces, objectifies, infantilizes, and violates the Dominican subject while justifying its action through financial assistance, which in the case of the intervention, was exemplified in the various education, roads, and land assistance programs. But the assistance, as seen in this scene, only benefited a small part of the population and the majority of the profits, continued to serve the foreign power.

West pays Silvio for the photographs and gives Graciela nothing but a smile. To her surprise, Silvio refused to share the earnings: "Didn't you enjoy it too?" he asked, as if that should have been enough payment for Graciela's services (14). Silvio ends up forming a gender alliance with his exploiter, failing to recognize Graciela as an equal partner in the business transaction they had all

agreed to participate in. Despite the fact that the sexual encounter was established as a business transaction, the men, both West and Silvio, are the only ones who benefit financially —Peter makes a postcard of the image to promote exotic sex tourism in Europe and North America, while Silvio uses his earnings to buy sweet and toys (16). Frustrated and humiliated, Graciela has no choice but to keep quiet and hope that Silvio would eventually put a roof over her head so that she does not have to bear the shame of her transgression.

West, a photographer who prided himself on his large collection of images of nude women of color (9), had gone to Santo Domingo, to enjoy the benefits of the intervention for non-military Americans: “fruit was sweet, whores were cheap” (9). He was an entrepreneur aware of the power that being an American in occupied soil granted him. Through the image of the photographer, Rosario introduces the emergence of a market of desire in which the “West,” quite literally, exoticizes and possesses a foreign territory for the sole purpose of its pleasure. Like West, many other Americans and Europeans ventured in the island, often driven by stories about the overly sexual local women, and the opportunities to grow financially. In these early stages of sex tourism, the image of Dominican women as sexually available was carried through rumors, and informal catalogs (such as the ones West produces) often disseminated by the Marines and other travelers. Years later, however, this would become an important transnational industry in which women, young girls and young boys

would become part of an exploitative system that sinks people deeper into the circle of poverty.⁸³

Sexscape. Exoticism and Social Control

A few years ago, upon moving to Ann Arbor to start graduate work at the University of Michigan, I attended a graduate-student social gathering. A fellow graduate student, who heard my accent, approached me and asked where I was from. When I said the Dominican Republic, he smiled and responded “Santo Domingo... I’ve been there! Good rum and cheap whores.” Stunned by the comment I could not even respond. Much like the characters Peter West and Eli in Rosario’s narrative, this man had converted my homeland into a sexscape and me, in turn, into a whore. Years later, I commented the event to a group of Dominican female friends, some of them scholars as well, and was surprised to find out how often they have also been approached by men who, regardless of what they were wearing or the space they were in, assumed, upon hearing their “Dominican accents” that they would be sexually available. And so I wondered, How did one’s place of birth all of a sudden become a symbol of sexual availability? The final section of this chapter hopes to propose some answers to these interrogations.

The extent of relationships between U.S. Marines and the local population is not very clear in the official documents of the intervention as they tell us very

⁸³ See Denise Brennan, *What’s Love Got to Do With It*, and Mark Padilla, “The Limits of Heterosexual AIDS” and *Caribbean Pleasure Industry*.

little about the actual histories of individual Marines. However, we do know that efforts were made to keep them from creating long-term ties with the locals (Laws of Conduct, 2). Despite the official position of the government, however, many Americans, and especially, many of the stationed Marines, ventured into the towns, and befriended the locals, especially the women, who often served as a bridge between both groups. As a result, the occupation regime exhibited a lot of concern for the role of women and their potential ability to distract and corrupt the Marines. Undoubtedly, they were afraid that Marines would become sensitive to the local culture, and cease to see Dominicans as their enemies. Dominican women were, therefore, major targets of the military government, which persisted in depicting them as *putas* carrying venereal diseases and as sites of moral corruption. This rhetoric contributed to a reported number of rapes and many other crimes against women.⁸⁴

In the passage immediately following Graciela's encounter with Peter West, Rosario brings to attention, through the eyes of the main character, to the violence against women that the Dominican Republic experienced during the occupation:

A woman with the carriage of a swan and a bundle balanced on her head walked from the nearby stream. Her even teeth flashed a warning as she stepped onto the road... Graciela shaded her eyes. Tall uniformed men in hats shaped like gumdrops sat on the roadside. They drank from canteens and spat as far onto the road as they could... The yanqui-men's rifles and giant bodies confirmed stories that had already filtered into the city from the eastern mountains: suspected gavillero rebels gutted like Christmas piglets;

⁸⁴ See Blanco Fombona's *Crímenes del Imperialismo Yanqui*.

women left spread-eagled right before their fathers and husbands; children with eardrums drilled by bullets. Graciela had folded these stories into the back of her memory when she snuck about the city outskirts with Silvio. The yanqui-man in the warehouse seemed frail now, his black box and clammy hands no match for the long rifles aimed at the woman. "Run you Negro wench!" The soldier's shout was high pitched and was followed by a chorus of whistles. A pop resounded. Through the blades of grass, Graciela could see the white bundle continue down the road in a steady path. The woman held her head high as if the bundle could stretch her above the hats. Another pop and Graciela saw the woman drop to the ground. The soldiers milled around screaming and thrashing in the grass. Some already had their shirts pulled out of their pants." (13-14).

This passage exposes the traumatic memory of the violence of the intervention, often recalled through stories and chants repeated by individual people and communities. Many histories of the intervention have been narrated; however a lot have also been silenced due to the unavailability of historical documents. Rosario's narrative seeks to fill in those silences by proposing a revision of the accounts from the memory of the female body. Lucía Suarez argues that it is through diasporic literature that violence can be remembered in order to "refuse to let the violence of the past be buried" (11). The previously described imagined episode of the woman not only brings attention to the violence of the intervention but also to the silences of Dominican history which, being traditionally held in the hand of elite white Dominican men, often ignores episodes such as this one, because the woman in question is poor and black.

From the moment of Dominican independence, the nationalist discourse represented Dominican woman as the mother of the land in need of constant protection. Yet, the Dominican woman depicted in that rhetoric is portrayed as

white, educated, and rich. The “other woman” represented in Rosario’s narrative does not fit this description and therefore is unworthy of patriotic protection. As seen in Silvio’s alliance with West, Dominican men participated and benefited from the exploitation and marginalization of poor, brown, Dominican women, while their rhetoric, as evidenced in chapter 1 of this study, declared the protection of Dominican purity, as embodied in the imagined white virgin. The racialized Dominican Madonna/whore national rhetoric allowed U.S. Marines to rape, kill, and dishonor (black) Dominican women during the 8 years of the occupation, while Dominican men were busy condemning Haitians for similar crimes against young white virgins.⁸⁵ The sexist-racist ideology of the intervention was then supported by an equally sexist-racist national rhetoric already in place.

The United States military government established, upon arriving, a series of sanitation laws to control women perceived as or accused of being prostitutes. These laws were mostly created to make sure that the Marines had access to safe and casual sexual encounters. But the Marines sometimes fell in love with local women and consistently set up homes and even started families with them. Concerned about losing control, the military government prohibited Marines from legally marrying Dominican women, often demoting or discharging those who did not obey:

It is generally known that some enlisted men in various posts of the country are or have been living with native women as

⁸⁵ See chapter 1.

“matrimonias.” Some of these women, undoubtedly without either the knowledge or consent of the men in question, have prostituted themselves... Men here personally asked the undersigned if it was true that if they “signed up” for women who had previously been prostitutes, the women would be let alone. The men stated their willingness to do so. The undersigned talked with these men, cautioned them against such procedure and advised them of the danger they ran... Similar cases are heard of the comparatively frequent intervals from army, navy and marine corp posts elsewhere... Attention was simply intended to be in accordance with decreasing the possible incidence of venereal disease among the department. There was absolutely no idea of making any charge of grave misconduct against the Marines.⁸⁶

According to the quoted report, the Marines who were living with Dominican women were not punished, at least not severely. However, evidence of significant number of transfers between the posts, suggests otherwise. Unlike the Marines, however, Dominican women accused of carrying venereal diseases were often imprisoned and quarantined. This became a common way to repress and contain “troublemakers” or those women perceived as a potential danger to a local-stationed Marine. That is the case of Luisa Salcedo, a seamstress from Santiago.

Salcedo was accused of carrying gonorrhea and syphilis and consequently was imprisoned by the sanitary law officer from La Vega Captain B. F. Weakland. Weakland alleged that after examining Salcedo, he had found her to be infected and therefore in violation of the sanitation laws. However, when examined by the local doctor, Salcedo was found healthy and consequently non-guilty by the local judge:

⁸⁶ Gobierno Militar 1916-24. Legajo 1, folder 31, 1920 AGN, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

Luisa Salcedo, 21 years of age, single, a dress-maker by profession with her domicile in this city, accused of violating Sanitary Law #3338... was found innocent, and immediately the Procurador Fiscal ordered that she be released, and to this effect, the prison warden of La Vega, complied the order... The following day as the government was not satisfied with this sentence, they arrested Miss Salcedo and imprisoned her for the second time, alleging in order to justify the arrest, that Luisa Salcedo was a prostitute.⁸⁷

Luisa had somehow managed to catch the military government's attention.

Perhaps she was propositioned, and declined. Or perhaps she openly opposed the regime. Another possibility could be that she had actually fallen in love with a Marine, and needed to be ridiculed and publicly humiliated, accused of prostitution and of carrying (and contaminating others with) venereal diseases. Dominican women were often raped by the Marines and upon filing a complaint were accused of prostitution and punished. Some who had children with the men were not granted protection or support.⁸⁸ Many of these women, not knowing where to turn, resigned themselves to their fate and did not seek justice. But this was not the case of Salcedo. For many months her family and friends wrote letters, pressuring the local government to review her case. Many local people,

⁸⁷ Archivo del Gobierno Militar 1916-24. "Letter to the President Court of Appeal, signed by Judge J.R. Berrido." La Vega, September 12th, 1922. Legajo 1, folder 7. AGN, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

⁸⁸ A series of petitions to the Military Governor asking for child support for children fathered by stationed Marines is found in the "Administration" files of the military government from 1917-22. One in particular called my attention. It is from Altagracia Ortiz, a woman from San Luis, east of Santo Domingo who says the father of her child, who was a Marine, had died in the hands of the *gavilleros* and she could no longer support their child. She continues saying that the marine had "taken me from my home and promised to marry me...but now I am alone in the world with this child and no help as my father will not take me dishonored". A memo denying to Altagracia's request was issued one day after her letter was received. See Office of the Military Government, 32-27, Administración, 1917. RG 38. Box 757, folder 17.

including a priest, wrote letters to the Admiral, attesting to the young woman's impeccable morals and hard-working habits. But all efforts seemed in vain, as months later, Salcedo was still imprisoned with no rights to a lawyer, and no trial or release date.⁸⁹

The rhetoric of the intervention portrayed Dominican women as sources of pleasure and pain. They could be sexually available, yet they could also be the carriers of awful diseases that could destroy and kill the Marines. Like Salcedo, many other women were imprisoned. Others were routinely forced to attend the local clinics to be checked for venereal diseases. The round-ups of Dominican "prostitutes" were indiscriminate and often included young girls who were not sexually active (Cassá 29). To the logic of the intervention all "black" Dominican women were the same, and as such, they were all potential carriers of venereal diseases. As Homi Bhabha would argue, the invader's idea of the Dominican woman was fixed through an ideological construct that was reinforced through repetition:

An important feature of colonial discourse is its dependence on the concept of fixity in the ideological construction of otherness...Fixity, as the sign of cultural, historical, racial difference in the discourse of colonialism, is a paradoxical mode of representation: it connotes rigidity and an unchanging order as well as disorder, degeneracy and daemonic repetition. (66)

As evidenced in the number of available documents and memos warning the Marines of the potential danger of sleeping with the local women and the

⁸⁹ Archivo del Gobierno Militar 1916-24. "Letter to the president court of appeal, signed by Judge J.R. Berrido" La Vega, September 12th, 1922. Legajo 1, folder 7. AGN, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic.

constant sanitary checkups, the idea of Dominican women as potential prostitutes, and as carriers of diseases became a fixed ideology which was constantly reinforced to the Marines through repetition in order to control them. Effectively, this strategy sought to direct the beliefs of the Marines through the objectification and containment of the Dominican racialized female body.

In an effort to recast history through the female eye, Rosario subverts the aforementioned narrative suggesting that it is the foreign man and not the Dominican woman who constitutes such danger. It is he, and not the woman represented by Graciela who carries the disease and could potentially contaminate the local body, thus ultimately destroying it. This is evidenced when Graciela becomes infected with syphilis after sleeping with Eli, a European man who had come to explore the island after receiving one of West's "exotic post-cards." When they meet in the train to Santiago, Eli was automatically fascinated with Graciela, who he perceived as sexually available for his "exotic exploration" (85). Hungry and away from home for the first time, Graciela sees no choice but to give in, not realizing she would be sold to prostitution by her seducer:

You know the other whores are already jealous of you, he continued as he squeezed thyme and lavender under her thighs... What whores? Graciela asked, cringing from the rubbing... Some things are made by nature for pure enjoyment... Stand up. Let me see you. He made Graciela walk around the tub of dirty water. Had her bend over from behind. Had her untie all her hair. She did. And more... In bed, Eli sniffed her. A beast on a hunt... (80).

After a night with Eli, Graciela is able to escape, ultimately returning home to her daughter Mercedes, ill, tired and demoralized. Graciela's encounter with Eli, as

with West, predicts the future of the Dominican Republic as a *sexscape*, to borrow Denise Brennan's term, as a location for commercialized sexual exchange between white tourists and locals. Eli's sole purpose for coming to the island was to "conduct research" for a pamphlet he was writing about the wonders of the "exotic Negress" (69). Much like West, he is a commercial sex entrepreneur whose visit to the island will result in the dissemination of the idea of the Dominican Republic as a *sexscape*. This practice, as Brennan would argue, contributed to the imagining of the female citizens of the Dominican Republic as sexually available and sexually proficient objects.

Nelly Rosario's depiction of Dominican women's early encounter with foreign penetration in all aspects of their culture, suggests that the logic of imperialism and globalization (exemplified in the U.S. intervention but put into practice by many other foreign powers) contributed to easily converting a human being into a commodity for foreign consumption. Because, as seen through the logic of the intervention, when a land is occupied, so are its subjects. In the case of the Dominican Republic, the hetero-normative rhetoric of the interventionist forces infantilized and ridiculed Dominican men (and their cultural practices) while it eroticized and demonized women, making them objects at the service and disposal of the consumers (in this case, the Marines).

As Brennan argues, the Dominican Republic has become in the eyes of foreigners a site for negotiating sexual encounters through a global and transnational economy of inequalities in which the circle of poverty is, quiet often, reproduced:

In sexscapes such as Sosúa, there are many differences in power between the buyers (sex tourists) and the sellers (sex workers) that can be based on race, gender, class and nationality. These differences become eroticized and commodified inequalities. The exotic is manufactured into the erotic- both privately in consumers' imaginations and quite publicly by entire industries that make money off this desire for difference. (16)

As Brennan demonstrates and as exemplified in Rosario's novel, women often become the commodities within this industry, but not necessarily the beneficiaries. The money that clients pay for access to their erotic fantasy of exotic inequality, is often retained by an intermediary, who in this industry, could be a company, an establishment, or at times, even the state. The result is more inequality and poverty; in addition to the social stigma and fear that sex workers are often victims of.

The rhetoric of the intervention sought to control and "civilize" the Dominican body for foreign consumption (labor, sex). Men were expected to join the GND, becoming obedient tools for the regime while women were commodified for entertainment. Dissidence was equated to banditry and difference to savagery. In the name of progress and civilization "bandits" and "savages" were persecuted, captured, punished and often, even killed. The ideology of the occupation, therefore insisted on controlling not just the economy and the systems of government but also the minds and bodies of the people who lived in the occupied land. Intellectuals and thinkers were often imprisoned, newspapers closed, literature censored, and gatherings controlled. Cultural practices, especially those of people of Afro-Caribbean descent, were ridiculed

and often banned. Women and Afro-Dominican religious practitioners were targets of the intervention; their bodies read as both carriers of pleasure and of corruption. In a contradictory struggle for “democracy,” “civilization,” and “freedom” which sadly resonates with the contemporary rhetoric used to justify the wars in the Middle East, the intervention of the Dominican Republic systematically oppressed a large portion of the Dominican population which had already been pushed to the margins of the nation by the dominant elite and the white nationalists of 19th century Santo Domingo. Ultimately, the structures of power sustained by the military government served as the basis for Trujillo’s 31-year dictatorship, which continued to threaten Afro-Dominican cultural practices, and promoted a vision of women as either mothers of the *Patria Nueva* or sex objects, in a contradictory rhetoric of *Dominicanidad*.

By choosing a contemporary Dominican-American novel in addition to historical texts to explore an event that occurred in early 20th century Dominican Republic, this chapter proposes memory as an antidote to the historical amnesia that has contributed to the exclusion and alienation of many people from the official discourses of the nation(s). In addition, the counterpoint examination of these two very different types of texts also hopes to convey a message of continuity that can help us better understand the relationship between the history of U.S. imperialism, and the recent crisis of democracy evidenced in the present military occupation of Iraq, the U.S. immigration reforms, and the increasing limited public access to knowledge and information due to government restriction and corporate control.

CHAPTER III

REFRAMING THE PAST THROUGH FICTION: A LITERARY HISTORY OF THE 1937 HAITIAN MASSACRE



Figure 5: *Dulce Despojo*: Woman performing a cleansing ritual
Photo by John Paul Gallagher

Déye mon gén mon —Haitian proverb⁹⁰

Dominican *Palos* are often played in memory of the dead. If the *paleros* are very good, and if their hearts are in the right place, the spirit of the dead may reincarnate in the body of one of the dancers; she or he will be mounted,

⁹⁰ Beyond the mountains, there are more mountains.

montada. Death and life are for *paleros* two spiritual levels that co-exist. True death, that is, death of the spirit, does not come with the disabling of the body, but only when the dead is no longer remembered by the living. This chapter embraces these palero beliefs in an effort to offer an antidote to the historical amnesia that has persistently erased the death of thousands of ethnic Haitians from the memory of the Dominican nation.

Between the second and eighth of October 1937, nearly 20,000 ethnic Haitians were murdered by Dominican military and civilian ally forces in the northwestern frontier region of the Dominican Republic (mainly in the Dajabón Province). Using machetes and knives to simulate a fight between peasants, the killers converted what was once perceived as a peaceful multi-ethnic community into a sight of horror and sorrow. Driving around the Artibonite Valley that borders the northwest of the Dominican Republic, one can hardly imagine that the very calm river weakly flowing back and forth between both island-nations was once dyed red by the blood of thousands. One cannot know because no historical mark reminds the passerby of the history these lands witnessed. Monuments, as Kristin Hass has argued, allow ordinary citizens to come to terms with their losses and to participate in public debates about how traumatic events should be remembered.⁹¹ Yet, these possibilities have not been offered to the people of the Artibonite Valley because the Dominican state refuses to create a monument, a sign at least, through which the many Haitian-Dominican bodies that once fell on these very lands could be remembered and honored.

⁹¹ See *Carried to the Wall. American Memory and the Vietnam Veterans Memorial*.

This chapter proposes an examination of the 1937 Haitian Massacre and the resulting anti-Haitian rhetoric as remembered or suppressed in four particular literary accounts: (a) Juan Bosch's "Luis Pié" (1943), (b) *El Masacre se pasa a pie* (1973) by Freddy Prestol Castillo (c) *Compère Général Soleil* (1955) by Jacques Stephen Alexis and (d) Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* (1998). Each of these aforementioned narratives recounts the memory of the pain caused by the traumatic historical event of 1937 from the perspective of the victims and survivors, therefore proposing remembering as an act of historical justice. My analysis will emphasize the effects that this past experience had on the contra-dictory narration of *Dominicanidad* as seen through literary representation. I will provoke a conversation among Haitian, Dominican, and American (diasporic) texts, therefore insisting on a counterpoint examination of Haiti and the United States as two psychological borders that have influenced the definition of a Dominican national identity.

Guilt, Trauma and the Narratives of the Nation

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I explored the construction of a Dominican national discourse that promoted the idea of Dominicans as a hybrid, non-black race, during the early years of the republic. In examining how this identity was imagined in opposition to the neighboring Haitians, who were often depicted as black, evil, and savage, my analysis demonstrated how Dominican narratives of the early republic sought to reproduce the aforementioned

discourse in order to reinforce the psychological borders of the newly emerged Dominican nation. The work of early republican intellectuals and writers such as César Nicolás Penson, Américo Lugo, Juan Antonio Alix, and Manuel de Jesús Galván, to mention a few, although influential in shaping Dominican politics and public opinion, did not translate into a tangible re-definition of national identities among the peasantry and the borderland population. This was in part because borders, both geographical and psychological, continued to be fluid for the two nations sharing the island of Hispaniola as people, particularly those who lived in the borderlands, often found common interests that united them.⁹²

It is not until the period known as the Trujillo Era (1930-61) that these ideologies introduced by the founding fathers and early intellectuals of the Dominican Republic were translated into tangible actions that reinforced clear national, territorial, and psychological borders through law, force, and violence. This chapter explores the repercussions of the aforementioned rhetoric many years after the declaration of Dominican independence from Haiti (1844). Specifically, it reviews how, during the rise of Dominican nationalism this anti-Haitian discourse was appropriated, widely disseminated, and manipulated by the Trujillo dictatorship (1930-61) in order to serve the goals of the nation-state (namely Trujillo himself) thus resulting in the imposition of a Haitian-Dominican border that was built on xenophobia, intolerance, and, ultimately, genocide.⁹³

⁹² Eugenio Matibag's *Haitian-Dominican Counterpoint* makes a compelling argument for the need to examine the existence of a multi-ethnic border community that traded and collaborated throughout the colonial period and during the early years of the republic.

⁹³ The works of Roberto Cassá, Frank Moya Pons, Ernesto Sagás, Debora Paccini Hernández and Richard Turits coincide in proposing that the first 15 years of the Trujillo

Known as “el corte” or “kout-kouto-a,” the events of 1937 were the result of an order issued by Dominican President Rafael Leónidas Trujillo in an effort to “protect” the territorial borders of the Dominican nation from the “silent invasion” of Haitians who were allegedly migrating to the eastern portion of Hispaniola in order to “steal cattle and Africanize Dominicans with their barbarous and inferior customs” (Balaguer, *La isla al revés* 23). The massacre was part of a nationalization campaign launched by Trujillo and supported by notorious Dominican intellectuals such as Max Henríquez Ureña, Arístides Fiallo, Joaquín Balaguer, Manuel Arturo Peña Batlle, and many others, who believed Haitian immigration represented an imminent threat to the white European constructed identity of the nation. The rhetoric once put in motion by the intellectuals of the early republic, had been translated during the regime into clear actions and the narratives that resulted from this historical event sought to negate, justify, suppress, or expiate, that which occurred around the Massacre River in 1937.

To this day, no one knows exactly how the massacre came to happen. Was it a master plan, carefully drafted by Trujillo himself? Or was it, like some say, a spontaneous, enraged, and drunken response to “the Haitian problem”? Whatever the motives and reasoning behind Trujillo’s orders to “kill all Haitians” living in the borderlands, the results were “effective”: the Haitian-Dominican frontiers were forever redefined, and as Richard Turits argues, “what was once a

dictatorship were the most significant in conceptualizing Dominican nationalism through a populist campaign that especially targeted the Cibao peasant, presenting him as the prototype of the Dominican citizen.

fluid mixed population became divided by pain, guilt, and fear” (*Foundations* 159).

Soon after the massacre and all through the decade of the 1940s, many Dominican intellectuals took on the task of justifying the genocide through an aggressive anti-Haitian campaign that reclaimed the history of the Haitian occupation (1822-44) and the various colonial border conflicts. This was in part due to increased attention in the international media and diplomatic pressures from the United States.⁹⁴ The decade that followed *el corte* resulted in a series of texts that minimized the transcendence of the events in order to justify them. These nationalist writings presented the events as a conflict between Dominican peasants and Haitian immigrants; the latter were being often accused of trying to take over the land while stealing cattle from Dominican borderland ranches. In this context, the 1937 conflict was presented to the international community as a necessary action taken by civilians in order to protect the borders of the nation from the tyrannical, neighboring enemy that was allegedly slowly taking over “Dominican essence”⁹⁵:

La desnacionalización de Santo Domingo, persistentemente realizada desde hace más de un siglo por el comercio con lo peor

⁹⁴ Following the publication of a *New York Times* article on November 6th, 1937, a few weeks after the killings had stopped, the Dominican state was pressured to investigate and provide a public explanation of the events. U.S. Secretary of State Sumner Welles, actively challenged Trujillo for the events. Ultimately, an international mediation committee was formed by Cuban president Federico Ladero, Mexican president Lázaro Cárdenas and Sumner Welles. Trujillo agreed to provide Haiti with monetary reparation (which was never paid in full) for the damages in the 1938 Haitian-Dominican Agreement signed in Washington, D.C.

⁹⁵ I employ the term “Dominican essence” to refer to the elusive idea of Dominican identity endorsed by 20th century intellectuals through which “Dominicanness” is seen as something inherited by the people of the Dominican Republic.

de la población haitiana, ha hecho progresos preocupantes. *Nuestro origen racial y nuestra tradición de pueblo hispánico*, no nos deben impedir reconocer que la nacionalidad se halla en peligro de desintegrarse si no se emplean *remedios drásticos* contra la amenaza que se deriva para ella de la vecindad del pueblo haitiano... Para corregirlo tendrá que recurrirse a providencias llamadas forzosamente a lastimar la sensibilidad haitiana... Lo que Santo Domingo desea es conservar su cultura y sus costumbres como *pueblo español* e impedir la desintegración de su alma y la pérdida de sus rasgos distintivos. [The de-nationalization process that Santo Domingo has persistently undergone for more than a century, due to its trades with the worst part of the Haitian population, has reached worrisome progress. Our racial origins and traditions as a Hispanic people, should not keep us from recognizing that our nationality is in danger of disintegrating if we do not employ drastic measures against the threat represented by the neighboring Haitian people... In order to correct this, we might have to employ tactics that will, without doubt, hurt the sensibility of the Haitian people. What Santo Domingo desires is to preserve its culture and customs as the Spanish people we are and to stop the disintegration of our soul and the loss of our distinctive characteristics.] (Balaguer, *La realidad dominicana* 45)

As evidenced in the previous excerpt, what is encountered during the Trujillo regime is the emergence of a nationalist rhetoric that draws heavily on the Hispanophilic scholarship that emerged at the end of the 19th century and which sought to “whiten” Dominican cultural and national identity through the promotion of European cultural values and the rejection of all that was considered African or Black.⁹⁶ Intellectuals such as Joaquín Balaguer (the author of this passage)

⁹⁶ Chapter 1 of this dissertation examines an array of 19th century official documents and literary texts, which show the emergence of this Hispanophilic ideology and the beginning of an anti-Haitian discourse during the formative years of the republic. The work of important late 19th century intellectuals such Manuel de Jesús Galván, César Nicolás Penson, José Gabriel García, Francisco Bonó, and Juan Antonio Alix, to mention a few, was extremely influential in drafting an idea of Dominican race that persisted on claiming a sort of cultural whiteness inherited from the colonial history. This ideology was further complicated by the need to satisfy U.S. imperial questioning on the legitimacy of the Dominican Republic and its ability to self-govern. Dominican intellectuals had to imagine their identity as white/Hispanic in order to a) have a common linkage to other Latin American countries, b) be accepted by the U.S. and other European countries

played an important role in drafting the ideology of the dictatorship, especially in relation to race, culture and national borders. Although during the first seven years of the regime (1930-37) there was little to no state-sponsored anti-Haitian propaganda, the education, sanitation, and immigration policies introduced during this period reflected an increase in institutionalized racism and xenophobia.

Like Balaguer, many other important twentieth-century intellectuals dedicated their work to the nationalist project he describes in many of his writings: the preservation of a purported Dominican essence, allegedly threatened by Haitian immigration. Influenced by Nazism and other European, eugenicist racial ideologies, nationalist intellectuals advocated for the immigration of whites and the deportation of blacks--namely Haitians--and actively defended Trujillo's "borderland preservation" campaign. In a letter to the editor in chief of *El Tiempo*, the most important daily paper in Colombia at the time, Balaguer explains the allegiance of the intellectual class to the Trujillo regime as a necessary patriotic duty of all citizens of the republic. The writer and politician argues: "Si los hombres de pensamiento, con tres o cuatro excepciones, respaldan el régimen del Presidente Trujillo, es porque el estadista dominicano está resolviendo, con iluminada devoción patriótica, los problemas fundamentales de cuya solución depende el futuro de la República Dominicana." [If thinking men, with three or four exceptions, support the Trujillo regime, it is because he is solving, with amazing patriotic devotion, the main problems

which would in turn facilitate trade, and c) culturally and racially distance itself from its neighboring country in order to justify the separation of states.

affecting the future of our Dominican Republic] (504). The potential 'ennegrecimiento' [blackening] or "hybridization" of the "Dominican race" constituted a major fear among the dominant elite. Their desire to maintain the illusory idea of a Dominican essence moved them to actively support Trujillo's campaign and to defend the state-endorsed racist ideologies. Balaguer, Max Henríquez Ureña, and other important Hispanophile intellectuals of the period served as ambassadors to various European and Latin American countries throughout the regime, promoting their idea of Dominican national and racial identities and actively defending Trujillo's actions. This strategy continued—and increased—even after the dictator's actions resulted in the most shameful crime against humanity ever committed in the Dominican Republic.

Despite the overwhelming number of anti-Haitian texts written during the Era of Trujillo, and especially after the massacre, critics have also categorized this time as the period of literary compassion (Veloz Maggiolo 95). This is mainly because of a trend that emerged as a belated response to the Négritude movement and *social realism* and which sought to represent blacks, peasants and, especially, Haitian immigrants as essentially good people who were victims of a corrupt socio-economic system supported by U.S. imperialism and condoned by the Dominican State.⁹⁷ Ramón Marrero Arísty's novel *Over* (1939) and Juan Bosch's multiple collections of short stories written while exiled, are the most significant examples of literature of compassion. Both authors express empathy

⁹⁷ A literary and political movement that developed in the Caribbean during the 1930s, Négritude found solidarity in the affirmation of Black identity and cultural values. Inspired in great part by Haiti, and influenced by the Harlem Renaissance, this movement brought together writers like Aimé Césaire, Alejo Carpentier and Leon Damas.

(and sometimes guilt) toward the Haitian subject, whom they depict as the ultimate victim of the system of oppression that affected Dominican society during the Trujillo regime. In their efforts to give voice to the subaltern, however, these writers sometimes end up falling in a narrative of contradiction that condemns anti-Haitianism while attempting to maintain the national boundaries.⁹⁸ The desire to preserve some kind of Dominican essence leaks into the process of narration, alluding to the confrontation between guilt and nationalism that has persistently characterized Dominican narrations since the moment of independence.

Juan Bosch's short story "Luis Pié" (1943) presents one of the most articulate examples of the literature of compassion and its struggle with a *Dominicanidad* in contradiction as the narrator enters the internal world of a Haitian immigrant working and living in the *bateyes*.⁹⁹ A widower and father of three little children, Luis Pié, the main character of the story, leaves his homeland to find work in the neighboring country's prominent sugar cane plantations. One day, Pié suffers a horrible machete accident, which makes it difficult for him to walk the several kilometers, by the side of the road, from the sugar cane field to his shack in the *batey*. Bosch's narrative takes place during the excruciating hours in which Pié crawls through the ravines while begging God for strength so he can make it home to feed his little children: "Ah... Pití mishé tá esperan a

⁹⁸ Teresita Martínez-Vergne locates those contradictions within a larger Latin American intellectual anxiety of representation in the context of European ideologies of race that ultimately depicted the majority of the population of Latin American as unfit for self-government (*Nation and Citizen in the Dominican Republic*).

⁹⁹ *Bateyes* are sugar company towns where the seasonal cane workers live.

mué- dijo con amargura Luis Pié. Temía no llegar en toda la noche y en ese caso, los tres hijitos le esperarían junto a la hoguera...sin comer” [*Piti Mishe* are waiting for me, said Luis Pié with sorrow. He was afraid he would not make it home tonight in which case; his three little children would wait by the fire...without food] (53). Throughout the story, the reader sees Luis Pié through the eyes of an omniscient narrator who attempts to enter the heart and mind of Luis in an effort to offer the reader glimpses of this man’s painful ordeal.

A writer, thinker, and the founder of the two dominant political parties in the country, the PRD and the PLD, Bosch is clearly one of the most important figures in 20th century Dominican politics and history.¹⁰⁰ His short stories and essays, as well as his political thought, influenced Dominican letters, creating a distinctive narrative style that sought to challenge the margins of the nation and the rhetoric of oppression imposed by the various U.S. military occupations of the 20th century and the Trujillo and Balaguer regimes. Yet, most of Bosch’s influence in Dominican culture and politics was exercised from exile where he spent a large part of his productive life, as a result of the constant death threats, censorship, and imprisonments he suffered under the Trujillo dictatorship. Inspired by the ideals of solidarity and unity that Eugenio María de Hostos and José Martí had dreamt in the 19th century, Juan Bosch was able to become, during his long and multiple absences (1938-62, 1963-70) the first thinker to articulate and promote the creation of a transnational *Dominicanidad* that could

¹⁰⁰ See Jacqueline Jiménez Polanco, *Los Partidos Políticos en La República Dominicana*.

exist outside the geographical borders of the nation.¹⁰¹ This inclusive rhetoric, rooted in the desire for a free and united Latin America, was the basis for the articulation of a revolutionary narrative project that forever transformed Dominican letters and culture by allowing dissident voices to insert themselves in the national dialogue, interpellating history and complicating the notion of national frontiers.

Bosch was born in the Cibao valley, the most agriculturally productive area of the Dominican Republic, and grew up under the residues of a *latifundio* economy, constantly interacting with peasants and Haitian workers. In addition, during his very early childhood, Bosch lived in Haiti, where many of his siblings were born.¹⁰² His writing is thus characterized by a desire to denounce socio-economic injustices and by a somewhat romantic idea of the Dominican peasant and the Haitian immigrant. Bosch's narrative project illustrates the feeling of castration and impotence often provoked by dictatorships as the author confronts, from his own position of exile, the political reality affecting his nation.

¹⁰¹ Bosch's insistence on his condition of exile in the titles of most of his books functions as a performative act that seeks to deal with the contradictions that have led him to write about the Dominican reality from a distance, becoming both an agent and a subject of history. While claiming an authoritative space that the very condition of exile granted him, Bosch insisted on the legitimacy of his narration of *Dominicanidad ausente* as a form of resistance and of patriotism, because as Torres-Saillant has argued "se va quien no puede quedarse" (*El retorno de las yolas* 18). In the case of Bosch's particular experience, his absence from the national territory is presumed, in the title of his books, a necessity, an involuntary circumstance caused by the persecution of a dictatorial regime. His discourse, however, can also be read as a legitimization of the diasporic Dominican voices of the late 20th and early 21st century who also left their homeland in search of democracy, and progress once the democratic project embodied in Bosch had been destroyed. Exile provided the writer and politician with a new freedom to voice (and publish) all his concerns and to propose a new way of representing the subaltern of Dominican society-- the poor, the black, the Haitian immigrant-- as part of the nation-building project. See Lorgia García-Peña, "Más que Cenizas."

¹⁰² See Guillermo Piña-Contreras, *En primera persona*.

As a writer and a political figure, Bosch took on the ambitious, and often overconfident, task of changing the social reality of the island through his work (and later through political involvement), a common trend among Latin American intellectuals of the period.¹⁰³ “Luis Pié” is Bosch’s attempt to condemn the atrocities committed against Haitian immigrants during the Trujillo regime and a direct reaction to the 1937 massacre. The text was written in Cuba at the end of 1940 and it was greatly inspired by his distaste for the abuses against Haitian immigrants that continued to occur throughout the Trujillo regime.

“Luis Pié” presents the reader with a realistic depiction of the Haitian immigrant situation in the Dominican Republic. Bosch utilizes the recognizable image of the oppressed sugar cane worker, while alluding to the events of 1937 through the figure of Pié, who serves as an emblem of *Haitianidad*. By placing Pié within the sugar cane barracks — a strategy that will later be recaptured by Haitian writers— Bosch’s story succeeds in provoking a critique on the U.S. Imperial socio-economic system that reproduced poverty and oppression in many Latin American countries throughout the 20th century, while linking it directly to the national narration of *Dominicanidad* as embodied in the Trujillo regime.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Teresita Martínez-Vergne in her study *Nation and Citizen in the Dominican Republic*, examines the role of the intellectual class in shaping the theoretical underpinnings of the socio-economic system. In the case of Juan Bosch, his theory transcended into the political arena as he founded El Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD) and ran for presidency after the fall of the regime. Along with Balaguer, Bosch became one of the most important and influential Dominican politicians of the 20th century, winning the elections in 1962, and the popular vote many times after.

¹⁰⁴ Bernardo Vega, among other Dominican historians has insisted on the “historical inaccuracy” of literary texts such as Bosch’s and Danticat’s (which will be studied later in this chapter) that locate the massacre in the sugar cane plantations. I believe that the choice of location, however, was no coincidence but a narrative strategy carefully drafted in order to speak to the “Haitian problem” as something that is not solely the responsibility of Dominicans but also

This particular interpretation, much like the theory I propose in this study, therefore suggests the possibility of examining anti-Haitianism as the result of two significant narratives: (a) the one imposed by the discourse of U.S. Imperialism; and (b) the one that dominates Dominican nationalist discourse throughout the 19th and 20th century.

The second part of the story shows the reader how while Pié is crawling home to his children; a rich plantation manager (Pié's boss) "accidentally" causes a huge fire after throwing his lit cigarette out the window of his fancy car. Dominican overseers immediately go looking for the person responsible for this fire, finding Luis Pié, who had coincidentally lit a match to look at the state of his wound. Pié is automatically accused of causing the fire and is tied up and dragged across the *batey* while his children watched as he was brought to what the reader perceive to be his execution: "Inmediatamente aparecieron diez o doce hombres, muchos de ellos a pié y la mayoría armados de mochas. Todos gritaban insultos y se lanzaban sobre Luis Pié." [Immediately after ten or twelve men, many of them on foot, turned up at the scene. They were all screaming insults and throwing themselves onto Luis Pié] (57). Confused by the sudden aggression and not knowing what he was being accused of, Pié prayed to the God of Dominicans to save him from what seemed like his imminent death:

Luis, con su fiebre delirante causada por la herida infectada, había quedado atrapado dentro de un incendio que por descuido causó su patrón en el cañaveral, hecho por el que luego sería culpado.

of the Imperial and Colonial powers that have benefited from this conflict for more than a century. Juan Bosch was very knowledgeable of Dominican history and geography, not only as a scholar but also as the son of farmers from a Haitian-Dominican area.

En momento de desesperación, Luis clama a Bonyé, al dios de los cristianos que según sus cavilaciones debe ser tan bueno como los “dominiquen bom” que le han dado la oportunidad de trabajar en su tierra. [Suffering from a delirious fever due an the infection on his wound, Luis fell trapped in a fire that his boss had negligently caused, and for which he would later be blamed. In this desperate moment, Luis prays to Bonyé, the god of Christians, the god of the good Dominicans that have allowed him to work in their land.] (56)

But the Dominican God does not listen to this Haitian man, and the story ends with the image of Pié’s little children, watching as their father is slowly murdered by an angry mob of Dominicans who seem completely oblivious to this poor man’s suffering. This closing image alludes to the persistent contemporary problem of ethnic Haitian children born in the Dominican Republic who are not recognized as legal citizens by the Dominican state nor by their parent’s country, becoming ‘apátridas’ or without fatherland.¹⁰⁵

Bosch’s narrative strategy seeks to equate the Haitian worker with the Dominican peasant through a reinforcement of common cultural and religious values, therefore insisting on the similarities that should unite rather than separate the two peoples of Hispaniola. The author’s rhetoric actively hopes to de-construct the century-long narrative tradition that has portrayed Haitians as culturally and racially different from Dominicans in order to reassert the invented borders of the two nations. In his article “Primitive Borders: Cultural Identity and Ethnic Cleansing in the Dominican Republic,” Fernando Valerio-Holguín examines the development of anti-Haitian discourse in literature, history, and

¹⁰⁵ Dominican nationalization law stated that children of illegal Haitian immigrants should not be recognized as Dominican citizens. After an active public awareness campaign launched in the context of UNICEF Rights of the children, this law was expanded to include all children of illegal immigrants in the Dominican Republic. According to a study by Batey Relief Alliance, there are over 500 thousand children in the Batey and rural areas without a birth certificate and access to public services such as health care and education.

journalism. He argues that through a barbarization of Haitians, this discourse has sought to assert Dominican identity in opposition to its neighboring state. Valerio-Holguín's argument insists on difference as the main narrative strategy for promoting anti-Haitian sentiment and reinforcing the national frontiers between the two nations. Following Valerio-Holguín's thesis, we could read Bosch's story as subversive text that posits an alternative vision of the Haitian subject through Luis Pié's rendering as similar to the Dominican peasant, as evidenced in his religious beliefs and family ties. The story attempts to create empathy, but reaches a certain discursive limit that can only be resolved through the embodiment of a mythic heroism that transcends the tangible reality of Haitian-Dominican relations. The recourse of mysticism within an otherwise social realist text points to a common limitation encountered by compassionate writers who struggled to articulate a new vision of the various Haitian-Dominican frontiers, but who are ultimately haunted by the collective guilt and trauma of the 1937 massacre.

Luis Pié is ultimately recreated in Bosch's narrative as a hero, comparable only to Jesus, in an effort to recast a narrative tradition that has persistently portrayed Haitians as inhumane, violent, and dangerous. The omniscient narrator who brings us inside Pié's tortuous world shows us a man of such spiritual strength and innate goodness that he is capable of being peaceful even at the time of his death. In the midst of his desperation, Luis Pié's submissiveness to his Dominican aggressors, and his eventual death, are presented as examples of a superior spirituality in what Kaja Silverman has

called "the celestial suture," the spectacle of masochism as experienced through the image of the 'ultimate sacrifice' of the son of God (93).¹⁰⁶ Like Jesus, Pié's *via dolorosa* shows us a man's journey to death, but it is only death of the flesh as his spirit has already elevated to the sky where pain no longer exists: "Luis Pié no se daría cuenta de ello. No podía darse cuenta porque iba caminando como un borracho, mirando el cielo hasta ligeramente sonreído." [Pié would not realize it (the pain). He could not realize it because he was walking as if drunk, looking at the sky and smiling] (60). Bosch's critique of anti-Haitianism through the figure of Luis Pié proposes death as the only way to achieve freedom in a nation where oppression and xenophobia dominate. Pié dies because of the lack of compassion of the spectators who do nothing to stop the abuses that the "authorities" are committing against this one man. His death, however, does not seem to be in vain, as Pié is ultimately rendered as a hero, an embodiment of will and spiritual endurance. The death of Pié however, also exemplifies the contradictory rhetoric of *Dominicanidad* that many writers were forced to confront during the 20th century as Luis Pié's silence and ultimate death can be read as the symbolic death of the Haitian subject as an agent within Dominican society, and his birth as a mythical figure from which a Dominican (in this case the author himself) can articulate a narrative of solidarity with the marginal. The fact that Pié does not narrate his own story, and does not survive the tragedy could be a double-edge sword: on the one hand the Dominican subject (reader) is made

¹⁰⁶ Freudian feminist Kaja Silverman in her seminal book *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* situates psychoanalytic paradigms within an ideological framework that interpellates the Western masculinity discourse that insist upon the male subject as "symbolic father".

responsible for the sacrifice of Pié —emblematic of the 1937 massacre— but on the other hand, the Haitian subject ends up being silenced, as he is incapable of defending himself against his oppressor, becoming an object rather than an agent within his narration.

At this point, it would be useful to review the narrative trends that emerge as a result of the massacre. To simplify our analysis, I will group them in two major categories: (1) Hispanophilic narratives, which often sought to justify anti-Haitianism and minimize the events as a series of simple disagreements between local borderland Dominican peasants and Haitian cattle thieves. In this group we can include the work of Balaguer, Peña Batlle and Max Henríquez Ureña. (2) The literature of compassion, which described the general state of poverty and desperation affecting Haitians in the Dominican Republic, but which sometimes struggled with the contradictions of *Dominicanidad*. In this group we can find writers like Juan Bosch, Marrero Aristy, and Prestol Castillo. The climate of intellectual ambiguity regarding the massacre continued to grow throughout the Trujillo Regime and well into the late 20th century. In a literary culture where historical novels are prominent, the virtual self-censorship regarding the genocide is distressing. This is why Freddy Prestol Castillo's text *El Masacre se pasa a pie* (written in 1939 but published in 1973) constitutes such an important literary and historical document.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ The coincidence of the Word "pie" in both of this narratives is very interesting and tempts one to link them together. However, there is no evidence of Prestol Castillo's manuscript circulating until the 1970s and the author himself claims to have lost it (and then found in the 70s). If anything, we can suggest that the title of this book could be inspired on Bosch's story, which was published in the early 1940s.

Produced in the middle of the intellectual ambiguity seen in the previous narratives, *El Masacre se pasa a pie* relates the 1937 events from the perspective of a young writer struggling to find an explanation for the genocide. Prestol Castillo's text is extremely problematic due to the many contradictions it presents: first of all, the text was not published or even available as a manuscript to anyone but the author for 36 years; secondly the author occupied several government positions during the regime, even playing an active role in the events following the massacre; finally the text fails to fall in one particular category (novel or testimony) and often reproduces the xenophobic language of the state. Despite the aforementioned shortcomings and its lack of stylistic accomplishments, Prestol Castillo's text is extremely valuable as a testimony if not of the massacre, at least of the intellectual reaction that emerged after the events, for it offers a first-hand experience narration from the perspective of a young Dominican writer living and working under the Trujillo Regime.

El Masacre opens with an autobiographical prologue, entitled "Historia de una historia" (The Story of the History) in which the author explains the reasons behind his firsthand knowledge of the events he is about to narrate. Due to the loss of his father's fortune to North American industrial expansion in the country, the author-protagonist has to obtain a modest job as a state prosecutor in the borderland province of Dajabón, a less than desirable position for any young lawyer. The experience of moving from his home town of San Pedro, located 40 miles east of the capital, to the distant borderland town of Dajabón is described by the author as a psychological exile from the nation: "Escribí bajo cielo

fronterizo, en soledad. Sin darme cuenta, yo estaba exiliado...” [I wrote under a frontier sky, in solitude. Inadvertently, I had gone into exile] (7). The narrator’s depiction of the area summarizes the general perception of the elite intellectual class regarding the borderlands: they saw it as a backwards, uncivilized area, populated by half-breed peasants who had no notion of what it meant to be a citizen of a nation:

El Amalcigo, un paraje lejano agreste, en soledad sin caminos, donde ella, la maestra, es la única persona que sabe eso de que hay una República Dominicana. ¿Qué es eso? Dirían los asombrados habitantes del paraje, que solo tienen una vida mísera, como la de los cerdos, sin noción de patria. [El Amalcigo, a distant grey village, surrounded by loneliness, without roads, where she, the teacher, is the only person who knows that there is something called the Dominican Republic. What is that? would say the surprised residents of this village, those who had nothing but a miserable existence, like pigs, with no notion of a fatherland.] (84)

When sent to work in the borderlands, the narrator is suddenly transplanted into what feels like the limits of the nation, a place he considers foreign and untamed. Yet, he is more than ever inserted into the nation for he is “sent” by the dictatorship to be part of a nationalization plan, and in the process he becomes an ally of the very system he despises. Prestol Castillo’s transplantation to Dajabón is therefore the single most important historical intertext in *El Masacre*, for the author becomes a passive participant in the genocide, a fact evidenced through his condescending narrative of race and his long multiple moments of discursive silence.

El Masacre is an apologetic text that struggles to find a way to denounce the injustices committed against Haitian immigrants during the Trujillo regime, while respecting the established nationalist discourse that separated the Dominican subject from its Haitian neighbor. The overwhelming contradictions and ruptures evidenced throughout this text produce a narrative of silence that seeks to create a sense of complicity in order to erase the author-protagonist's responsibilities under a discourse of national collective guilt:

¿A dónde voy? Yo mismo no lo advierto, mientras camina la mula.
¿Qué busco aquí?, me dice mi conciencia... Tienes hambre... como estos muertos... pero el pan que comes está sucio de sangre... Si sigues aquí flotarás también en ese río, río sangriento.
[Where do I go? I do not even know myself, as the mule walks on. What am I doing here? Demands my conscience... You are hungry... like these dead... but the bread you eat is tainted with blood. If you remain here, you too will float in this bloody river.] (*El Masacre* 63)

The sudden switch from the first person pronoun *yo* (I) to a second person *tú* (singular you) not only assumes that the reader is Dominican but also seeks to make him or her an accomplice of the narrative voice, and in turn makes of *El Masacre* a project of collective expiation. Like "Luis Pié" and other compassionate texts of the period, *El Masacre* inserts itself within the ambiguity of Dominican nationalist rhetoric, while attempting to de-construct anti-Haitianism. In that sense, the textual project is a failure because the rhetoric of Dominican national identity is one of opposition, that is, it is a discourse of anti-Haitianism. Therefore, to write a Dominican nationalist text in the context of the

Trujillo regime is to write an anti-Haitian text. These two ideologies are, as demonstrated in this study, not self-exclusive and essentially interdependent.

The Dominican borderlands had always functioned somewhat independently from the central state, partly because of their geographical distance from the capital, but also because *rayanos*¹⁰⁸ had never been incorporated into the nation-building project. As Richard Turits assertively argues, Dominicans and Haitians intermingled and mixed in the borderlands, creating what Bhabha would describe as a community of neither Haitians nor Dominicans, but a Haitian and Dominican community (*Nation and Narration* 303). The existence of such an independent population, made up of mainly blacks and mulattoes, caused major anxiety and discontent among the elite dominant classes who feared losing their (desired) European identity to the potential growth of this hybrid community. Literary critic and historian Max Henríquez Ureña, in a letter to American Secretary of State Sumner Welles requesting an end to the *bracero* program, implemented by US-owned sugar cane companies during the 1916-24 U.S. intervention, and which continued throughout the Trujillo Regime, stated the following: "... This law, seeks to end the importation of black labor to our country... Because black blood can damage the Hispanic culture and tradition of us Dominicans" (*Archivo del Palacio Nacional*, Legajo 267). Max Henríquez Ureña, a respected and internationally renowned intellectual, did not hesitate to offer his support for the nationalization campaign and the various immigration reforms that sought to deport all Haitian and West Indian workers in

¹⁰⁸ This term is used to refer to people from the borderlands.

an effort to preserve that imagined Dominican whiteness. Like Prestol Castillo, Henríquez Ureña saw Haitians as essentially different, culturally and racially from Dominicans, and thus found in Trujillo's campaign a possibility for forever drawing clear boundaries to separate the two nations.

The parallel narratives that co-exist within *El Masacre*—Prestol Castillo's life and the young lawyer's account—hint, at times, to a secret conflict that the story resists to reveal, and which makes the reader question the authority and veracity of this text. Doris Sommer describes *El Masacre se pasa a pie* as a controversial text of guilt and silence (*One Master for Another*, 162) because the author/character is a firsthand witness of the event, yet chooses to be silent for 36 years. The ambiguity of this text, evidenced in the prologue in which the author refers to his text both as a novel and as an autobiography (*El Masacre* 10), is exacerbated by the many omissions that persist throughout the novel and which ultimately made many critics doubt its validity as a historical document.¹⁰⁹

In the prologue to *El Masacre*, Prestol Castillo speaks of the persecution he suffered because of his dissident thinking during the Trujillo Regime. Yet, unlike other anti-regime writers such as Bosch, Prestol Castillo remained in the country even when presented with the opportunity to leave.¹¹⁰ In addition, the

¹⁰⁹ Many contemporary Dominican critics find Prestol Castillo's text to be confusing, and at best not a good work of art. Pedro Conde and Diógenes Céspedes offer the most disarming criticisms, ultimately categorizing the book as overall failure. In a review presented at Livingston College, Doris Sommer recuperates the various critiques of Prestol Castillo's narratives (*El Masacre se pasa a pie: Guilt and Impotence Under Trujillo*).

¹¹⁰ Prestol Castillo devotes several pages of his autobiography to discussing his friendship with Pedro Henríquez Ureña, who offered him a free passage to exile in Venezuela. The author, due to fear and his inability to decide ends up staying in the country. The autobiography does not specify what Prestol Castillo does after staying, however, public records available at the Dominican National Archives show that he in fact occupied a variety of

author occupied a position within the state, being in fact one of the judges in charge of the proceedings conducted against Dominican peasants in Dajabón after the massacre.¹¹¹ The fact that the author does not let the reader see with clarity what his role was in the genocide makes his text a narrative of suppression. It is a book of expiation, exorcism, and guilt that fails to tell us the whole story it promises to deliver. A reading of his earlier and extremely obscured essay *Paisajes y meditaciones de una frontera*,¹¹² offers the opportunity to further understand the author's self-censorship and narrative schizophrenia as a desire to express a sort of collective complicity of silence through the partial narration of his autobiography. In his essay, the author adheres to the anti-Haitian state-sponsored propaganda in order to show clear "racial" and "innate" differences between Dominican and Haitians, while portraying the *rayano* as "an obscured hybrid man without fatherland" (*Paisajes y Meditaciones* 10). I am interested here in the tensions, or rather the intellectual schizophrenia, shown between the two texts. As seen in chapter 1 through the

government positions including that of general prosecutor for the province of Neyba, Magistrate of Dajabón, San Cristóbal and Santo Domingo, and state judge for the land court (tribunal de tierras). In all these positions, Prestol Castillo forcefully had to defend the state, many times against peasant organizations or landowners.

¹¹¹ After increasing international pressure, and in an effort to mask the genocide as a civilian conflict, an order was issued to prosecute peasants who participated in the killings. Freddy Prestol Castillo was one of the various prosecutors in charge of conducting these proceedings. See *Documentos del conflicto Dominico-Haitiano de 1937* and *Expedientes de la Secretaría de Estado de Interior y Policía*, Legajos 102, 713 and 734.

¹¹² This essay was published in Ciudad Trujillo by Editorial Cosmopolita in 1943, and was never reprinted. The author does not mention this previous text in his novel or in any of his latter multiple publications about the Dominican frontier compiled under the title *La Tabla Gesta y Cantares del Valle de Neyba* (1950). While conducting research in the Dominican National Archives, I stumbled on the title of this essay through a newspaper article published in *La Nación*. Thinking that it could have been an earlier version of *El Masacre se pasa a pie*, I took on the task of finding this text. After a year of research, and with the support of Historian Raymundo González, I was able to find a copy of this essay in the personal library of a Dominican historian who prefers to remain anonymous. The mystery and silence surrounding this particular publication is as fascinating as the text itself for it contradicts the very public life the author lived.

work of Penson, since the emergence of the nation, Dominican nationalist intellectuals have been caught in a circle of contradictions regarding their ethnic-cultural identity within the national discourse. For the early republic intellectuals, these contradictions were evidenced in their desire to maintain colonial ties with Spain and therefore retain a white European identity while claiming sovereignty and freedom as an independent nation. For twentieth-century intellectuals like Prestol Castillo, however, the narration of Dominican national-racial identity was further complicated as the peasants and immigrants began to integrate into the nation (mainly through urban migration), bringing with them Afro-Caribbean cultural traditions. Twentieth-century intellectuals were, therefore, forced to negotiate their solidarity and responsibility to the oppressed classes with their desire to maintain clear national borders that would protect the very elusive idea of the Dominican nation as imagined and narrated by the nineteenth-century republican intellectuals.

Prestol Castillo's contradictions are evidenced in his two very different narrations of the frontier. On the one hand, the author is confronted with the guilt of participating in a genocide; on the other, he feels the need to find a logic to justify it in order to continue believing in the possibility of a Dominican nation:

¿Qué es esto? Es un balance de conciencia. Y todo esto acontece en una isla antillana dividida en dos países, en cada uno de los cuales existen sendos pueblos azotados por el hambre y por los látigos de los que mandan. [What is this? It is a test of my conscience. And all this happens in one Antillean island divided into two countries, and in each of the countries there are people oppressed by hunger and by the yoke of those who govern] (62).

The text, as corroborated in the previous quote, is an expression of a tortured consciousness that seeks to find relief through the act of writing. However, the author's reluctance to give us an actual depiction of his involvement in the events leading to the massacre suggests a silent complicity and a certain suspicion on the part of the readers that something has been hidden from us. The language of the novel, although empathetic in the spirit of what Veloz Maggiolo has called a literature of compassion, still shows the vestiges of a strong anti-Haitian sentiment that leaks through as a subtext of what is essentially a nationalist writing:

El haitiano comía de los frutales y tiraba la simiente al llano. Nacían árboles. Muchos árboles. También en las barracas del hato nacían haitianos, muchos haitianos. La tierra se poblaba de haitianos y de árboles... Los haitianos iban mansos, en filas largas. Viejos, como Tami, el limosnero; jóvenes y muchachas de carnes duras y fuerte grajo. [The Haitian would eat from the fruit trees and throw the seeds in the plains. Trees would grow. Many trees. In the barracks of the ranches Haitians were born, many Haitians. The land was filling up with Haitians and trees... The Haitians walked passively in long lines. Old Haitians, like Tami, the beggar; young men and girls of tight skin and strong body odor.] (30-32).

Prestol Castillo's deep empathy for the Haitian immigrant and the horror he expresses throughout his book for the racist slaughter to which he was witness, is contrasted almost constantly with a nationalist rhetoric that presents certain stereotypical depictions of Haitian as hyper-sexual, overly fertile, and dirty, evidencing his loyalty to the ideals of a certain privileged intellectual class. Later in the text, the narrator confirms this hypothesis by naming his position as a writer and intellectual from a more privileged, civilized area of the country (41).

Dominican writer and literary critic Diógenes Céspedes considers *El Masacre* to be a suspiciously Trujillo-friendly text in which the tensions between his elitist national and racial ideas are contrasted to an author's sense of relief regarding the "Haitian problem" (Céspedes 3). Like many other Dominican "compassionate" intellectuals, Prestol Castillo sees the "positive side" of the massacre in the imagined re-possession of the Dominican frontier. Sommer, who was able to interview the author before his death, finds this contradictory position to be "a testimony of the author's essential honesty" ("Guilt and Impotence" 169), which, according to her, validates the text as an important historical document. If examined in contrast to his earlier essay *Paisajes y meditaciones de una frontera*, one cannot help to wonder however who Prestol Castillo truly was and which version of the borderlands represents his "honest vision." We might never find the answer to this puzzling interrogation; however, reading both texts—the historical essay and the autobiographical novel—in the contexts in which they were written and published can suggest a meaningful point of departure for posing interesting questions regarding the power of Dominican nationalist rhetoric as one attempts to recast the events of the genocide, and the other seeks to recuperate the borderlands from the hands of the Haitians. The dichotomy however is not always clear because *Paisajes* grows as an intertext of *El Masacre*, allowing the reader to grasp a more sincere idea of Prestol Castillo's notion of the frontier.

Paisajes can certainly appear as a nationalist propaganda that sought perhaps to gain the favor of Trujillo during a time of severe censorship and

oppression. In the foreword to this article, which the author entitled “Palabras de explicación” [Explanation Words], he asserts: “Allí pensaba en las dos patrias nuestras: la de los guerrilleros mulatos olvidados por la crónica...y la nueva patria de Trujillo, que hoy construye una nueva economía y una nueva conciencia cívica en aquellas tierras secas y grises” [There I pondered on the our two homelands: the one that belongs to the guerrilleros forgotten by the chronicles...and the new fatherland that today Trujillo builds with a new economy and a new civic consciousness in these dry and gray lands] (11). The author then proceeds to praise Trujillo for his “extraordinary work on the borderlands” (12).

Dominican national identity developed as a slow process of historical interpellation that constantly relied on the history of colonialism and the relationship with a neighboring colony-state. The borderlands existed as an integral part of the Dominican imagination, but not necessarily as a civic partner in the imagined Dominican nation. The twentieth century, however, brought new elements that contributed to the development of a border consciousness and to the rise and solidification of anti-Haitian sentiment and xenophobia. The U.S. intervention on the island (1916-24 in the east and 1914-34 in the west) represented a key event in rise of nationalism and anti-Haitianism because the imperial power brought with it U.S.-centric concepts of race, class, and national frontiers. However, it is not until the emergence of Trujillo’s populist nationalist campaign that the border was truly established as a division (and not a connection) between both nations.

The borderlands represented a main concern for the Trujillo regime and for his nation-building project because of their fluidity and the lack of police control in the area. The massacre of 1937 became a quick solution to a long-lasting obstacle for the project of Dominican nation-building and modernity. In this context, Prestol Castillo's appraisal of Trujillo's border policies and his condemnation of the genocide, although seemingly contradictory, are also exemplary of a nationalist ideology sustained by a long process of rhetorical repetition. Haiti was proclaimed, even in the national anthem, as the number one enemy of the nation. And as such, even when it no longer represented a military threat to the Dominican nation, the myth of the pending invasion, now embodied in the massive immigration of workers and peasants, continued to haunt Dominican national consciousness.

Viewing the Haitian Massacre from the Outside

"I could now glimpse the truth of my own history: The West does not exist. I know, I have been there." — Michel-Rolph Trouillot

Lydia Gil's disarming critique of *El Masacre se pasa a pie* posits a view of this text as an essentially valuable historiography that successfully portrays the psyche of a group of people capable of committing terrible atrocities (43). Both of Prestol Castillo's narratives previously presented are valuable in allowing us to understand the mindset of Dominican intellectuals during the Trujillo regime, shedding light on the contradictions they were forced to grapple with in the context of increasing U.S. imperial expansion and the imminent threat of cultural

hybridization. When juxtaposed with anti-Haitian texts such as Balaguer's, Prestol Castillo's *El Masacre* and Bosch's short stories prove that the "Haitian problem" was an imminent preoccupation informing the narratives of nationalism being produced from both ends of the political spectrum.

Although Prestol Castillo and Bosch undoubtedly wrote compassionate texts that denounced social injustices, their representation of the massacre and of Haitian subjects does not allow for the agency of Haitians, rendering them once more as victims. In their effort to speak for the victims, these writers end up silencing their subjects and rendering them as helpless— although this is lot more pronounced in Prestol Castillo's text. The systematic persistence of a Dominican omniscient narrator in *compassionate literature* texts leaves the curious reader with a desire to take a closer look at the Haitian subject, one that is not mediated through Dominican nationalist rhetoric. In order to do so, I will dedicate the final part of this chapter to the study of two important fictional texts that address the events of 1937 from the perspective of the Haitian subject: *Compère Général Soleil* by Haitian author Jacques Stéphen Alexis (1955) and *The Farming of Bones* (1998) by Haitian-American writer Edwidge Danticat. Despite their temporal and geographical distance, these two novels establish an interesting dialogue within themselves while interpellating Dominican narratives by posing a confrontation with memory and history. Danticat's novel, which achieved significant recognition in the United States and on the island, was successful in provoking a U.S.-Haitian-Dominican interdisciplinary dialogue that

allowed for the possibility of Haitian-Dominican solidarity from the Diasporic space.¹¹³

Compère Général Soleil narrates the story of an impoverished Haitian couple that migrates to the Dominican Republic to work in the sugar-cane fields. Upon their arrival in San Francisco de Macorís, Hilarion and his wife, Claire-Herouse, are suddenly confronted with an ongoing racial conflict but find comfort in the kindness of Dominican neighbors. Soon after the move, their first baby is born, and so they start to imagine a future on this new side of the frontier. The events of October 1937, however, interrupt this new existence and the couple is forced to run for their lives. The last chapter of the novel describes the horrors they suffer as Hilarion and Claire embark on what seems like an impossible journey through Dominican *montes* (the wilderness) back to the Haitian border. On the way, the couple loses their child to hunger. Although they eventually reach the Massacre River, a Dominican guard shoots Hilarion as he and his wife attempt to cross it. In his dying moment, Hilarion acquires a revolutionary consciousness for he has seen “the light the day when a great red sun lit the chest of a worker” (290). In a hopeful gesture for Haitian-Dominican solidarity of the oppressed, the text ends in the middle of the Massacre River, half way between the borders of both nations.

¹¹³ Shortly after the novel was published an interdisciplinary forum was held in the United Nations Building in New York City (November 1999). Danticat served as a mediator. The speakers included Dominican and Haitian politicians, community leaders and political scientists. In addition, a series of debates regarding the events in light of the novel have emerged in the three geographical spaces, the most celebrated being the famous discussion between the author and Dominican Historian Bernardo Vega, which has been published widely on the Internet. Vega questioned the accuracy of Danticat’s narrative, while the latter defends her narrative space as a place from which the memory of the dead and the survivors can be articulated.

Born in Gonaïves, Haiti in 1922, Alexis was the son of Haitian ambassador Stephen Alexis and Dominican dancer Lydia Núñez. A revolutionary leader and a communist, Alexis planned a coup d'état against the Haitian dictator François Duvalier.¹¹⁴ The plan failed, however, and Alexis was assassinated in 1961, the same year as Trujillo. *Compère Général Soleil*, Alexis's first novel, is a peasant or proletarian text that defies the mystification of Haitian subjects, while attempting to maintain certain traditional ideas about Haitian identity: the closeness to the land and the legacy of resistance and struggle.¹¹⁵ A quick glance at the characters offers us a good idea of the novel's social aspirations: Hilarion, the protagonist, represents the working class who is driven into a criminal life by hunger. While in jail, Hilarion meets a political prisoner who teaches him about Communism and the struggle for equality. As the novel unfolds, we see how Hilarion encounters many other communist artists and intellectuals as well as community leaders, ultimately converting to the revolution at the time of his death. Claire-Heureuse, Hilarion's wife, is a street vendor, who lives in extreme poverty and has no formal education, but is full of ambitions and ideas for their future. She is presented as a more simple character whose desires do not go beyond the individual experience. As Hilarion becomes "enlightened" by the socialist movement, the couple grows distant from each other until the birth of their first child brings them closer once again.

¹¹⁴ Alexis was well known for his activities in the *Partie Démocratique Populaire de la Jeunesse Haïtienne* (to which other important Haitian intellectuals such as René Despretre belonged). He was a friend and collaborator of Chauvet and Roumain, with whom he shared the ideals of social responsibility of literature.

¹¹⁵ Proletarian Text is a term that refers to Haitian social realist literature of the 1940s and 1950s that depict the peasant's reality in confronting poverty and hunger.

Utilizing what Dayan has called the “literature of suffering” (123), Alexis, like many Haitian writers of his generation, presents us with an image of a Haiti that has been destroyed by imperialism and dictatorships through the very tangible body of the peasant. In the context of the regime of Duvalier—who, like Trujillo, idealized the peasant as the prototype of the citizen, while endorsing state policies that expropriated their land—this novel successfully shows the abject side of Haitian history through the figure of the peasant-proletariat: hunger, fear, violence, illness, and forced migration.

The opening scene of this work shows us an image of marginality and misery as embodied in the Haitian subject, who is also presented as part of a trans-national marginal community:

La nuit tropicale, entremetteuse vêtue de noir, transparente sur ses choses de chair rose et ses stigmates de vice. La nuit tropicale semble bouger. Une ribambelle de lumières crient sur la rue: le quartier-lupanar: La Frontière. Un tcha-tcha rit sur un jazz. Des femmes hurlent avec frénésie des jurons et des insultes ordurières: *¡Coño! ¡Mierda! ¡Hijo de puta!* Une putain dominicaine sort en courant du Paradise endiablé. Le Paradise comme un château crevant de lumières par toutes les issues de la nuit. Le chant, entre les clartés spasmodiques de l’orage tropical de musique: ‘La jicotea no tiene cintura, la jicotea no puede bailar’. Un saxo gémit son orgasme. Le piston fouaille les sens avec un hurricane sexuel et brutal...Hilarion court toujours, la faim maintenant retrouvée est dans son ventre, plaie brûlante, lancinante. Il court toujours, mais il est sorti de son anesthésia...Il a les yeux clairs, les machoirs serres, il parle tout seul, il rit, il va ‘parce que nous sommes gueux pour nous pas de frontières, nos enfants doivent vivre et grandir a cote des lupanars hurlants, a cote des putains saoules comme des toupies a cote de la déchéance et de la frénésie du vice... La, trois marines ivres sont aux prises avec un taxi qu’ils refusent de payer.... Hilarion court toujours, il parle tout seul, il rit, il va. [The tropical night is vibrant, a hustler dressed in black, transparent over parts of her rosy flesh, a stigmata of its vice. The tropical night

seems to move. A long light cries out along the street: the red-light district: La Frontiere. A maraca laughs in a jazz rhythm. Women are swearing in Spanish and yelling filthy insults: “¡Coño! ¡Mierda! ¡Hijo de puta! A Dominican whore comes running out of the turbulent Paradise, which is like a castle, exploding with light in all directions through the night. The song echoes between the spasmodic lightning bolts of a musical storm: ‘*La jicotea no tiene cintura, la jicotea no puede bailar.*’ A saxophone moans in an orgasm. Cornets lash the senses with a brutal sexual hurricane... Hilarion is still running. He has relocated his hunger in his stomach- a searing, excruciating wound. He is still running but his numbness is gone. He is speaking and laughing to himself as he walks: ‘just because we are beggars with no borders our children have to live and grow up next to noisy brothels. Among drunken whores who go hand in hand next to the corruption and madness of vice’... Three drunken marines arrive in the area arguing angrily with their taxi driver, refusing to pay him. ‘God damn you!’ Hilarion keeps running with determination. He is talking to himself and laughing.] (16-17)

The previous excerpt presents a striking visual description of the various underlying realities of the Hispaniola marginal subject: he is black as night, poor, oppressed, possessed, occupied, and ultimately very hungry. His body, marked by a series of overlapping languages, and histories, serves as a *contact zone*, to borrow Mary Louise Pratt’s term, for the possibility of a marginal Haitian-Dominican (or even Caribbean) community of misery outside the geographical borders of the two island nations. Like the work of Ana Lydia Vega, and other contemporary Caribbean writers, Alexis’s representation of the Haitian subject can potentially be read as a proposal for the possibility of a Pan-Caribbean community that, as Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel assertively demonstrates, is eventually created in various enclaves of Caribbean immigrants (*Caribe Two Ways*).

In his recent study of Haitian-Dominican borderland relations, Eugenio Matibag suggests the option of looking at the island of Hispaniola as a “loosely articulated system” where parallel histories can serve to imagine a pan-insular common identity (3). Alexis’ poetics of misery, and his narration of multiple psychological borders, seems to question how it was that two nations of similar peoples rose on this very tiny island. Alexis’s narrative presents us with a thoughtful examination of nationalist and capitalist interests that have been reproduced within the borderlands in order to legitimate the power structures that ultimately separated lower class groups that could otherwise build strong alliances to oppose the oppressing power structures of both nations. U.S. Imperialism appears in the novel, through the figure of the Marines and later the sugar-cane plantation manager, as an underlying cause for Haitian-Dominican suffering: “American cars that roll over the body of poor Haiti like enormous toads... The city dweller is the slave of the American, the slave of the state and certain among them would even be ready to sell their wives for that state!” (47). Although the main characters do not seem aware of the significance of the occupation as related to the everyday life of the peasants and workers, they are puzzled by this foreign presence on their land. Hilarion is ultimately conscious of the dangers of imperialism and nationalism, seeing them as two partner forces that oppress the people of Hispaniola. His understanding of the complex relationship of these two forces liberates him for he now understands that his identity as a Haitian cannot be taken from him, even when his human rights are trampled on: “Dawn was making the entire countryside ruddy. He rose up and

yelled. General Sun! See him! He is right at the doors of our native land! Don't ever forget, Claire! He slumped back and let out several short breaths. His eyes turned toward the east... He closed his eyes and smiled. She was alone” (349). Hilarion's last words pass on the message of potential liberation to Claire who is entrusted with the difficult task of surviving so that she may serve as a voice of history. By entrusting this task to a Haitian woman, Alexis's revolutionary text alludes to the connection between history and storytelling, proposing the latter as a legitimate means for the subaltern's narration of histories.

Alexis's novel serves as an important intertext in Edwidge Danticat's contemporary rendition of the massacre, *The Farming of Bones*, an important novel that confronts the psychological borders of the nation(s) from the perspective of a female narrator, Amabelle, whose very body serves a site for remembering. In the context of the Trujillo dictatorship, and as an antidote to the historical amnesia exemplified, for instance, in the absence of any memorial monuments—as mentioned in the introduction—the bodies of the survivors that inhabit Danticat's rendition successfully become visual testaments and historical markers of the massacres, therefore subverting the official discourse that has attempted to obliterate them.

After Amabelle's parents drowned during a flood of the Massacre River, she has no choice but to become a housemaid to a wealthy Dominican landowner family in a sugar-cane producing area. For the majority of her life, Amabelle remains loyal to the family and a faithful companion to Valencia, the young

mistress of the family. Danticat's story opens when Valencia and Amabelle are grown women, and Amabelle attends the birth of Valencia's twins, a poignant scene that marks the tone of the story, serving as an important allegory of the Haitian-Dominican conflict:

Señora Valencia used the clean end of a bed sheet to wipe the blood off her daughter's skin. The girl appeared much smaller than her twin, less than half his already small size... Her skin was a deep bronze, between the colors of tan Brazil nut shells and black salsify... 'They differ in appearance.' She wanted another opinion. 'Your son favors your cherimoya milk color,' I said. 'And my daughter favors you,' she said. 'My daughter is a chameleon. She's taken your color from the mere sight of your face.' Her fingers trembling, she made a the sign of the holy cross from her forehead down to the sweaty cave between her swollen breasts...Ambelle do you think my daughter will always be the color she is now? Señora Valencia asked. 'My poor love, what if she's mistaken for one of your people? (11-12)

The birth of the fraternal twins, one white, the other black, one strong male, the other weak and female, serves as a premonitory text of the massacre and an allegory of Haitian-Dominican relations during the Trujillo regime. Valencia's body is suddenly transgressed by the birth of a seemingly Haitian child, a sign of the fragility of Dominican racial division and of the elusiveness of the borders. When confronted with her own African roots through the birth of her child, Valencia does turn to the contradictory rhetoric of *Dominicanidad* and soon enough claims Indian ancestry as the reasoning behind her daughter's dark complexion (29). Danticat's allusion to the Dominican hybrid theory successfully reconstructs the scope of this narrative, while once more contemporizing the "Haitian problem" through the image of the undesirable black child— as seen in

Bosch.

Valencia's rejection of her child's black identity is also linked to her husband's desire to maintain a clear distance from Haiti. A Dominican army officer who seeks to rise in the ranks during the regime by assisting in the brutal slaughter of Haitians in the Dominican Republic, Señor Pico, who is described as an almond-color mulatto (35), seems to also be shocked about his daughter's appearance, accepting the "Indian" theory in order to not have to look behind his own ears and confront the possibility of a similarity between the people who he has been charged to kill and his own child. In a scene that echoes Bosch's narrative, we see how Señor Pico, who represents the authority of the state, shows no mercy or care for the Haitians, who he perceives to be almost less than human. It is through this character's lack of compassion that Amabelle is first forced to confront her position as a Haitian subject in Dominican land and to realize the tensions that existed outside the comfort of Señora Valencia's home.

The Farming of Bones's intertextual interpellation of history can be read as a continuation of Alexis's narrative as Amabelle seems to embody Alexis's Claire, when she has to go on living with the tortuous memories of the massacre physically inscribed on her battered marginal body:

The slaughter is the only thing that is mine enough to pass on. All I want to do is find a place to lay it down now and again, a safe nest where it will neither be scattered by the winds, nor remain forever buried beneath the sod....Misery won't touch you gently. It always leaves its thumbprints on you; sometimes it leaves them for others to see, sometimes for nobody but yourself to know of?" (224)

The constant memory of her experience makes Amabelle fall into a nightmarish trap, in which the act of telling provides her with the only possibility for healing, even if only for a moment. Danticat's writing allows for the representation of the trauma as experienced by Amabelle—and Alexis's Claire—making the reader confront the violence of the present as informed by the historical consciousness of individual and collective identities.

Like Bosch's and Alexis's stories, *The Farming of Bones* takes place within the context of a Cibao sugar-cane town, allowing the reader to experience the complexity of Haitian-Dominican 20th century socio-economic history. The accuracy of historical dates, as well as the author's insistence on the Haitian body as a contact zone for historical encounters, echoes Alexis's narrative project. However, Danticat's text proposes the necessity to examine the consequences of historical events. Unlike the rest of the texts here examined, which end with a view of the slaughter or the death of the suffering character, *The Farming of Bones* insists on the contemporary urgency of history as embodied in the memory of the surviving victims and the subsequent generations. Written in English and published in the United States, Danticat's novel seems to have taken Alexis's proposal one step further by provoking a pan-Caribbean dialogue that attempts to look at the violence of history from outside the geographical and linguistic borders of the island-nations, therefore challenging the established historical and rhetorical perspectives. In that sense the novel reproduces, as Lucía Suárez argues, the possibility of viewing tragedy from the perspective of a potential witness, not of the massacre, but of the

traumatic effects transmitted through the experience of those who did survive (30).

The literature of U.S. Caribbean Diaspora has played an important role in documenting significant historical moments, particularly in reference to the dictatorships, colonialism, imperialism, and migration. As seen through some of the texts presented in this study, in the Caribbean, writing history has been a fluid intellectual project that does not belong solely to historians. Poets, novelists, essayists, performers, and politicians such as Manuel de Jesús Galván, Juan Bosch, and Fidel Castro, have often claimed (or been granted by subsequent generation of *letrados*) historical authority. This is further complicated by the presence of authors such as José Martí and Máximo Gómez, who in addition to being writers were actors and subjects in the history of their nations. This Caribbean complexity has produced a rich variety of narratives in which the lines between genres are many times blurred. There is no doubt that Caribbean historiography has been enriched by literary productions such as the ones examined in this chapter, which served the social function of reconstructing the collective memories of the communities, where historical evidence lacked. In addition, as Pedro San Miguel argues in his book *La isla imaginada*, fictional texts have often been able to reconstruct social reality in moments of censorship or strict government control, when history has served the purpose of the state. The work of U.S. Caribbean writers such as Julia Álvarez, Edwidge Danticat, Maryse Condé, Cristina García, Achy Obejas and Nelly Rosario, to mention a few, seek to subvert the canon imposed by the paternalistic discourse of

Caribbean narratives by destabilizing history at a very fundamental level. The writing of Julia Álvarez and Edwidge Danticat, for instance, have served to propose a reconstruction of histories and collective memories of Hispaniola and their direct relationship to the present life of the exile/immigrant communities, while proposing pan-insular and trans-national dialogue on history, violence, and race.

Diasporic historical narratives insert themselves within the histories of the islands, which are perceived as part of their imagined identities. In so doing, these writers narrate the collective memories of the immigrant community in the U.S. while provoking a dialogue with the United States. In addition, by claiming histories, these writers insert themselves within the debates of two national narratives: the one they evoke (Caribbean) and the one they invoke (U.S.). Consequently, their work produces transnational bonds that blur the geographies of home and propose a fluid vision that connects wider socio-historical discussions (dictatorships, U.S. military intervention, imperialism, economic exploitation) to the local experience of their immigrant community.

A form of contra-diction and transnational linkage can be seen in Danticat's *Farming of Bones* as the novel examines the structures of nationalism in post-U.S. intervention Hispaniola, while denouncing anti-Haitianism as a long process of disenfranchisement: "To them we are always foreigners, even if our grandmères' grandmères were born in this country" (69). By taking the role of a witness, Danticat humanizes the victims of the racial massacre, while

contemporizing the marginal experience of the Haitian sugar-cane worker in the Dominican Republic, therefore insisting on the persistence of history in the now.

Although there is no historical evidence of killings taking place within the contained sugar-cane barracks, Alexis and Danticat narrate the memory of this event as part of what is a more recognizable and persistent rhetoric of Haitian oppression in the Dominican Republic: the *batey* worker. This recourse, which resonates with the work of Dominican writers like Marrero Aristy and Bosch, serves to situate “the Haitian problem” within a contemporary and ongoing discussion, therefore shedding light on the reality of Haitian immigrants in the current Dominican Republic. Like Bosch’s short stories, and Alexis’s novel, Danticat’s writing creates characters that reflect on a notion of national identities as embodied in the figure of the peasant or the worker.

Due to the trauma of the various U.S. interventions on the island, and the subsequent loss of important cultural values (through land re-distribution and anti-Afro-religious campaigns), 20th century narratives are important in the emergence of a socially-committed literature, the main role of which was to denounce United States imperialism. The urgency of imperial critique, however, resulted in the portrayal of the Haitian as a one-dimensional character in both Dominican and Haitian literature: he or she was presented as immigrant working in the sugar-cane factories (as seen in the various texts here presented). The recurrence of this representation, although important for maintaining the contemporary urgency of this problematic, minimized the significance of the

existence of a transnational border community that was attacked and ultimately vanished by the Trujillo regime. The depiction of the sugar-cane worker ultimately perpetuates ethnic Haitians as foreign (he is a migrant worker), provoking a certain alienation effect between the reader and the (potentially foreign) characters. In that sense, Dominican as well as Haitian representation of the massacre equally suppress an important memory: that this event happened in the context of a mixed, multi-ethnic community.

Prestol Castillo's text, perhaps because it was published so many years after the events or because it was written from the perspective of a witness, is the only account of the massacre that seems to truly embrace a sense of horror upon realizing that some of the people being killed could perhaps be Dominican, or at the very least "Dominican-born hybrids" (*El Masacre* 3). Transplanting the genocide to the sugar-cane plantations liberates the rest of our authors from looking at the massacre as a state attack against a multi-ethnic community, and allows them to focus on the events as a clear genocide of Haitian immigrants, which in turn permits them to write within their nationalist rhetoric.

Although the brutality of the 1937 the massacre, as well as other tragedies of the 20th century (namely U.S. military interventions and local dictatorships) have affected both Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the process of remembering the specificities of this occurrence, as seen through this study, has been very different for each nation. Recent Haitian and Dominican massive emigration has also contributed to the complexity of this memory, as a new intersection for Haitian-Dominican border thinking has emerged in the United

States. The study of the 1937 massacre from the perspective of a variety of fictional narrations produced in the three different national territories that make up the modern Dominican imaginary (Haiti, U.S., and D.R.) here presented can offer a productive point of departure for examining the effects of this event on Dominican national (and racial) identities. In her recent study of Haitian and Dominican Diaspora literature, Lucía Suárez proposes literary writing as a form of remembering trauma and violence, therefore challenging the politics of silence imposed by national discourses and the official history (15). In her analysis of the effects of the Haitian revolution on Dominican nationalism, Sibylle Fischer also argues that a reading of history through literature can better inform us on issues that have been suppressed by the often traumatic effects of history (135). I chose fiction to study the 1937 massacre and its resulting nationalist rhetoric because it offers not the tangible specificities recorded in the often deficient official documents available in the various Dominican archives, but the representation of historical experiences as lived and remembered by those who have been erased from the Dominican national narrative of history.¹¹⁶ However, my approach does not seek to posit a contrasting view that places the victims of historical events on one side and the facts regarding the event on another. Rather, this study seeks to present them as two parallel and interdependent ways of remembering or forgetting past experiences.

¹¹⁶ After conducting extensive archival research in the Dominican Republic, I found very little historical documents regarding the events. A lot of documents are located in private archives, and many have just disappeared. In addition, the documents that are available do not present more than the general climate surrounding the country after the events, making it difficult to examine the aftermaths on the ethnic Haitian population. In an attempt to obtain a more complete perspective I contacted the Haitian National Archives, but found it to be indefinitely closed to the public.

Narrating the 1937 Haitian massacre can be perceived only as a historical analysis of a traumatic event. However, in the context of current hostility and oppression affecting immigrants in our current world and, especially considering the rise of anti-Haitianism and hatred in the 21st century Dominican Republic, the “historical” issues currently examined sadly resonate with existing human rights concerns affecting many citizens of our very present world. In that sense, my literary examination does not only sympathize with the *paleros*’ efforts to remember the dead, but also with a strong desire to keep in mind the living.

CHAPTER IV

PERFORMING RESISTANCE: THE DOMINCANYORK NARRATION OF *DOMINICANIDAD*

“Pero Nueva York no fue la ciudad de mi infancia,
no fue aquí que adquirí las primeras certidumbres,
no está aquí el rincón de mi primera caída.
Por eso siempre permaneceré al margen,
una extraña entre las piedras,
aún bajo el sol amable de este día de verano,
como ya para siempre permaneceré extranjera,
cargo esta marginalidad inmune a todos los retornos
demasiado habanera para ser newyorkina,
demasiado newyorkina para ser,
—aún volver a ser— cualquier otra cosa.”

—Lourdes Casal, “Para Ana Veldford”

“Emigra quien no puede quedarse...
Nuestra emigración es una expatriación.”

—Silvio Torres-Saillant, “Confesiones de un Dominican-York”

A few years ago while presenting a version of this chapter at FLACSO in Santo Domingo, a young Dominican scholar asked me why was it that so many of “you” insisted on studying race and identity in the Dominican Republic. Puzzled by his question, I asked him to please elaborate in an effort to understand what he meant by “you.” The young man said “you know, you, the *Domincanyork* scholars. It is like you become obsessed with race and the

Haitians when you go to New York, like there is nothing else that can be studied here, like there is nothing more important.” The comment originally made me feel terribly uncomfortable, especially considering that I did not define myself as a *Dominican York*, never having lived in New York City. However, I later thought that perhaps the young scholar had a point. After all, the question of race in the Dominican Republic has long dominated the emerging field of Dominican studies in the diaspora, especially in the United States, perhaps because, as Silvio Torres-Saillant has argued, Dominicans in the U.S. are confronted with a binary racial system that forces them into one category, which for most of us is that of “black.”¹¹⁷ I then wondered why it bothered him so much that “we” were talking about race. Clearly, the intervention of Dominican scholars in the diaspora has had such an impact in the island that it was necessary to once again produce a marginalizing discourse that would divide islanders and diasporic Dominicans, in order to protect the very elusive idea of authenticity that this young scholar implied in his question.

The dynamics reproduced in the “you people” of the young scholar’s question responds to a rhetoric popularized during the Balaguer regimes that proposed a view of the “Dominicanos ausentes” as corruptors of the “national essence, as criminals, drug addicts and an uneducated, powerful trash” (El Nacional, 1986).¹¹⁸ The anti-Dominican York rhetoric that emerged in the 1980s sought to exclude those of us who did not live in the island, *los dominicanos*

¹¹⁷ See Torres-Saillant “Tribulations of Blackness”.

¹¹⁸ See Hoffnung-Garskof’s *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950*.

ausentes, from the national discourse, in order to protect the version of the nation that had dominated throughout the 20th century. However, the economic power of *Dominicanyorks*, in addition to the increasing transnational status of the Dominican community in New York City, has allowed for a powerful and influential interpellation of these very discourses, persistently changing the cultural and political reality of the island by asserting a *Dominicanidad* that rather than *ausente* is very present through what Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel denominates “fronteras intranacionales” (*Caribe Two Ways*).

This chapter examines the experience of Dominican migration to the United States as a significant event in the re-definition of Dominican national and racial identity. Through the analysis of *Dominicanish*, a performance piece by Dominicanyork actress and writer Josefina Báez, I explore how immigrants' confrontation with the U.S. binary racial system and with New York City, as well as the encounter with other ethnic communities, moves them to question the systems of power and oppression that persistently pushed many people to the margins of their home (and host) nation(s) through what I would like to call—following Michel de Certeau—the “performance of everyday life”: one that allows for creating new ways of resisting a system of oppression that persistently erases the (racialized) body of the immigrant from the official discourse of the nation.¹¹⁹ I examine how through acts of resistance performed every day, Dominicans insist on their national link to the island-nation, while persisting in

¹¹⁹ I borrow the term “everyday life” from Michel de Certeau’s text *The Practices of Everyday Life* which I refer to later in this chapter.

obtaining recognition within the United States, defying the dual marginality that threatens to erase them from the narration of both nations.

Staging Migration: Performing Language

The stage is dark; a trumpet plays a slow melody while a timid orange color lights the back of the stage. The sun has risen. A black female body dressed in black enters the stage. Hands placed together above her head, body contouring so as to recreate slow waves, she is a boat, crossing the ocean, at sunrise. She has arrived. The immigrant is born.



Figure 6: *Dominicanish*, performance 2005, New York City

The artist's dramatic entrance into the stage is full of signifiers. Her body symbolizes a boat, arriving at shore. Her shadow, reflected against the orange

background of the stage, evokes the nostalgic image of the American foundational narrative that depicts a land of immigrants composing a miraculous “melting pot” that is multi-cultural, yet homogeneous.¹²⁰ In her opening scene, Josefina Báez recreates the original trip to the United States as an initial positive experience for the immigrant who carries the hope for a new beginning and the desire to catch the “American Dream.” The representation of the sun rising yields to this positive experience for the immigrant subject who appears to be suddenly granted the possibility of erasing a past full of struggles and necessities, and replacing it with the promise of multiple opportunities for progress in the *Land of Possibilities*. But like all fairytales, the immigrant’s American Dream, as staged by Báez, does not come true.¹²¹ Instead, what follows this hopeful, and often intricate journey to the “new beginning” is a series of dislocations and disruptions that emerge from the immigrant’s abrupt encounter with the nation’s official discourse, English language, and the law.

Soon after her entrance, the stage lights up and the artist’s mouth starts to move, fast and abruptly, talking about itself, as if it existed apart from the body that stands immobile, suddenly forcing the audience to confront meaning in very different ways.¹²² The first few minutes of the monologue employ the Brechtian

¹²⁰ In her book, *Immigrant Acts*, Lisa Lowe conducts a thoughtful examination of the American Narrative as it relates to immigrants. She argues that “it is through the terrain of national culture that the individual subject is politically formed as an American citizen: A terrain introduced by the Statute of Liberty, discovered by the immigrant, dreamed in a common language and defended in battle by the independent self-made man” (Lowe 2).

¹²¹ I use the term “American Dream” to refer to the American narrative of success that promotes the possibility of progress and financial mobility of the individual, no matter what his/her racial, ethnic or economic background may be.

¹²² Audience reactions are based on my observation and perception of three different life performances of *Dominicanish* that took place in New York City between 1999 and 2002, as well

alienation effect, producing feelings of confusion and anxiety.¹²³ Words in a semi-familiar language seem to flow without any obvious connection: “every sin is vegetable. Begetable. Vege tabol” (*Dominicanish* min. 3) while the audience seems puzzled yet interested in what this mouth is molding as it produces unfamiliar sounds. The performance of language proves powerful because the performer is able to persuade the audience to listen to her experience and perhaps indulge her in considering an entirely new way of looking at society and history, if only for a brief period of time. Báez’s gestures constitute, as Brecht intended, a political manifesto that grabs the audience’s attention at the same time that it is feeling alienated and estranged through the emotions produced by the actor’s performance. Within the first five minutes of her performance, Báez recreates and deconstructs the American narrative, proposing instead an alternative history of migration that reveals the gaps, incongruences, and contradictions that have shaped her immigrant experience in the United States. In so doing, she proposes performance art as a place for understanding and negotiating individual and historical spaces of resistance, opposition, and negotiation.

as on personal interviews conducted among members of the audience during various video screenings of the performance piece.

¹²³ *Verfremdungseffekt* or the *alienation effect* is one of the principal ideals in Brecht’s theory of Drama. It requires the audience and actors to retain a degree of critical detachment from a play and its performance. Brecht used various theatrical devices to shock the audience, and keep them conscious of the fact that it was a theatrical performance they were witnessing and that he wanted them to respond in a distanced, objective manner. Through using these techniques, Brecht aimed to involve the audience in the process of the play’s production and what it was communicating. This is Brecht’s method of teaching the audience to adopt a more critical way of seeing real life. See John Willet’s *Brecht on Theater*.



Figure 7: *Dominicanish*, Dance Theater Presentation 2000.

The first lines of the narrative reproduce the original experience of an immigrant body that has been forced to adapt to a new language: “I thought I would never learn English. No way, I will not put my mouth like that. No way. Jamás ni never.

Gosh. To pronounce one little phrase one must become another person, mouth all twisted. Yo no voy a poner la boca así como un guante” (Báez 22). The non-English-speaking immigrant’s first trauma in the new country is the demand to learn this new foreign language. Báez’s performance of this linguistic trauma is highly corporeal as her mouth physically embodies the dislocation of the experience. Baez’s mouth moves constantly, her body is bent out of shape as she attempts to grasp the mystery of the new language: “Past Perfect perfect past ING A as in Michael M as in apple...me mine... do does doesn’t...” (*Dominicanish* min. 4). The exaggerated gestures of the mouth, as the performer pronounces these words, show the forced dislocation that result from the imposition of the new (immigrant) identity.

The young woman that is being represented in this performance piece, whom I will call girl Josefina, has been suddenly transplanted from La Romana, Dominican Republic, to New York City, where English is now demanded from her. She recurs to the images of cultural colonization: “Don’t get me wrong yo sé un chin...Me Tarzan, you Jane,” in order to find a resource, a memory from which to reinvent herself in the new space (Báez 2000, 23). But no matter what she does, Josefina’s body rejects this imposition.¹²⁴ This refusal can be seen in the apparent disjunction of the body and the mouth. While the speech attempts to assimilate into the mandatory language, slowly losing the accent, the hands

¹²⁴ “Don’t get me wrong, I know a little bit (of English): Me Tarzan, You Jane”. This particular quote appeals to the memory of American television programs shown in Dominican television during the 1970s and 1980s.

and feet move to Kuchipudi, a dance from Southern India.¹²⁵ The feet travel in small circles, keeping her, while moving, locked within the same space. The limits of mobility exemplify how the immigrant becomes trapped within a social order that demands assimilation and conformity: “repeat after me, repeat after you...” (Báez 26). This first scene successfully reconstructs the experience of migration and (forced) acculturation of the immigrant subject as she is confronted by the official language and the Law. *Dominicanish* is then offered as an authority for retelling the initial experience of the immigrant in the new nation through the representation of the authentic immigrant (traumatic) encounters with the host nation. Performance art is here presented as a space for opposition where transgression and resistance become true possibilities.

Black Skin, Indian Mask. Báez’s Performance of Race

Yes, we are- we Negroes- backward, simple, free in our behavior. That is
because for us the body is not something opposed
to what you call the mind.
We are in the world.
—Frantz Fanon, Blacks Skin, White Masks—

The artist’s statement: “Black is Beautiful” pronounced in deliberately heavy accented English, symbolizes how the immigrant body as

¹²⁵ Kuchipudi is a classical dance from the Andhra Pradesh region, in the southeast of India. The technique of Kuchipudi makes use of fast rhythmic footwork, body movements, mime, hand gestures and subtle facial expression, which are combined with more realistic acting, occasionally including dialogues spoken by the dancers.

represented in *Dominicanish* becomes labeled in two significant ways: as an alien and as a Black woman. In his book *Black Skin, White Masks* Frantz Fanon recreates the experience of awareness of the black body as a moment of racial and historical realization. He states: "Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity. It is a third person's consciousness... I am the slave not of the idea others have of me but of my own appearance" (Fanon 115).

Dominicanish is an embodiment of this consciousness analyzed by Fanon because Báez stages the contradiction that her physical appearance, her accent, and her national identity represent, in order to embrace that which others (perhaps the audience) often perceive of her, therefore appropriating the power of self-identification. *Dominicanish* is then, as I see it, a performance of identity or rather, of multiple identities. The author/actor/performer introduces its audience/readers to various stages of identities for the immigrant subject: (1) The girl Josefina who encounters English right after moving from La Romana to New York; (2) Josefina, the woman who becomes an actress/dancer/performer and finds in theater a home; (3) Dominican-York, Caribbean-Black, Josefina, who is also Hindu and who loves black music. All these identities are embodied in front of the audience in a performance of everyday life that seeks to confront (and accept) the multiple contradictions that co-inhabit the immigrant's body, therefore freeing herself of Fanon's *enslavement to his appearance*.

Being black and being Dominican appear, at the moment of girl Josefina's arrival to the United States, as contradictions, a legacy of a rhetoric that, as demonstrated throughout this dissertation had been imposed by the dominant

discourse of *Dominicanidad* since the emergence of the nation. Despite the fact that the majority of Dominicans are *mulattoes* (of African and Spanish descent), the Dominican nation has been historically constructed as a mythic mestizaje of white and Indian blood, with some minor African influence. Dominican historian Frank Moya Pons has written extensively about the issues of racial consciousness or what he considers to be the lack thereof in the Dominican Republic. He argues that in the United States, racial consciousness is “activated” in Dominicans and so they “discover that they are black” (Moya Pons, *Manual de Historia Dominicana* 303). Although I find this explanation rather simplistic as it proposes an idea of racial identity based solely on the U.S. binary opposition, I agree with Moya Pons in that there is a process of racial awareness that emerges mainly from the experience of confronting a different type of racism in the United States. In addition, there has been a tradition of alliance-building among Latinos and Caribbean and African-American groups in New York City as a survival mechanism and a political strategy for confronting the systems of oppression and the state.¹²⁶ It is precisely out of these experiences that Báez’s performance of race is born.

Dominican racial vocabulary uses terms like *indio* or *moreno* (Indian and brown) to describe blackness, reserving this last word, as we have seen throughout this study, to name the enemy of the nation: the Haitian immigrant.

¹²⁶ Although alliances have been formed among oppressed groups in the United States, it is important to note that these alliances have also been problematic. In his book *The Presumed Alliance: the Unspoken Conflict between Latinos and Blacks*, Nicolás Vaca argues there have been historical conflicts between African American and Latino groups in the United States due, in part, to competition within the job market and the political arena (Vaca 2004).

As a result, the Dominican Republic in its formation was conceived as hybrid nation where there could only be one race: the Dominican race. This construction privileged Hispanic language, history, and culture and claimed the long-lost Taino indigenous heritage. In this complex racial context, to claim one's Dominican and Black identities represents a contradiction, as well as a challenge of the rhetoric of Dominican national identity.

Upon her arrival, girl Josefina found herself confronted with these seemingly self-exclusive identities and so she opted to do the impossible: embrace her blackness, while maintaining her Dominican national identity. This *double consciousness* produced mainly by an encounter with African-American culture and political movements, constituted at first, a strategic alliance for surviving in the new host nation.¹²⁷ But as time passed, it became an important part of her new life. The artist writes: "Discos del alma con afro. Con afro black is beautiful. Black is a color. Black is my color... Repeat after them, my teachers the Isley Brothers" (Báez 26-27). The phrase "Black is a color, black is my color" functions as a speech act that grants Báez the ability to challenge monolithic ideas of race and ethnicity by proposing the possibility of converging multiple (and seemingly contradictory) identities in relation to national and transnational identifications. Báez's performance succeeds in proposing multiplicity as a more

¹²⁷ I borrow the W.E. Du Bois's term as employed by Paul Gilroy in his book *The Black Atlantic* to describe the tensions between race and nationality of the modern Afro-Diasporic experience. Báez's experience as a Black-Dominican-york deals with these tensions which to her, as I prove, become a way of transcending the limits of identification, location, and rigid cultural structures.

genuine and realistic idea of identity, therefore openly challenging Dominican and American national discourses of race.

As Black and Dominican identities are negotiated through linguistic representation, Báez's corporeal language seems to contradict her speech. The apparent disjunction between body and speech is accentuated through the use of Kuchipudi and other Indian movements, which also serve to further challenge the official discourses of national identity, race, and ethnicity. East Indian language and culture serve, as I see it, to oppose Dominican racial codes (Indian, brown) through transgression and humor. Báez, while performing her Dominicanish identity, dances to Kuchipudi, and uses South Asian cultural references, therefore embodying not the Native Indian myth that was imposed on her by the Dominican national narrative, but an Indian (South Asian) identity that seems, in the Dominican context, strange and out of place.

By "playing Indian" Báez renders Dominican Native claims as silly and unreal, while proposing a more realistic encounter with East Indian culture through her Caribbean and New Yorker identities: "Forgotten deities looked at me recognized me in the process they became tumeric yellow I jet black...unleash the starched sari let its prints and colors play wild ragas foreplaying the juciest kalankhan foreplaying the juciest dulce de leche" (Báez 37).¹²⁸ To be Indian can, as seen through this performance, also mean being

¹²⁸ Here I borrow the term from Phil Deloria's book *Playing Indian* in which the author brilliantly argues how the United States independence movement was grounded on claims of *Indianness*. Deloria argues that this assertion helped "define custom and imagine themselves as a legitimate part of the continent's ancient history." (25). For Dominicans "playing Indian" allowed

Black, American, and Caribbean. At the same time, *Dominicanish* proposes that all the other identities can be subverted so that to be American may also mean being Caribbean and/or Indian. Báez's work privileges the infinite possibilities that multiplicity of experiences can create in a subject, while challenging the ideas of clear national/racial/ethnic identities.



Figure 8: "Bindi" photograph by Lu Sánchez

Báez's use of Kuchipudi, Hindi, and Indian cultural practices also alludes to the reclaiming of an often forgotten part of the Caribbean identity: the Indo-

them to claim authenticity, obtaining legitimacy as nation independent of Haiti (although within the same insular territory) and gaining US support. See also chapter one of this study.

Caribbean heritage. In the mid 1800s, thousands of East Indians were brought to the Caribbean as indentured servants. Many stayed, forever changing the dynamics of racial and cultural identities in the Caribbean (more specifically in the English-speaking islands). However, as cultural critic Shalini Puri argues, Indo-Caribbean legitimacy as 'truly Caribbean' is often questioned while tensions between Afro and Indo Caribbean people continue to escalate (Puri 2004).

Twentieth-century intellectual dialogues on Caribbean racial and cultural identity, such as the Négritude movement, often privileged African influence on Caribbean culture, while ignoring Asian and Middle Eastern immigrant contributions. Baez's performance moves from the individual to the collective experience as she raises questions about her Afro-Dominican-York identity while embodying a larger Pan-Caribbean identity. Her performance seeks to reconcile the tensions produced by the hybridity of the Caribbean region, through the simultaneous performance of African and Indian races/cultures and the use of English, Spanish, and Hindi languages. The contradictions that Josefina once viewed as her own individual tribulations represent, in the performance of Caribbeanness, a collective contradiction: being Caribbean already implies living in constant negotiation between races, languages, countries, and cultures.

The Caribbean identity embodied in Báez's work is mediated through New York City, which functions as a space of intersection for different immigrant cultures. Josefina cannot see herself as part of a larger (Caribbean) identity until she finds herself surrounded by this multiplicity found in New York. The city functions as an imaginary nation in which races, nationalities and ideologies can

be negotiated and subverted through daily exchanges. Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel in her book *Caribe Two Ways: cultura de la migración en el Caribe insular hispánico* assertively shows how New York is transformed through Caribbean migrations into another Caribbean space from which national entities are renegotiated. Only by being a Dominican-York is Josefina able to reinvent herself as Indian, Black, and Caribbean. Finally, her multiplicity of identities become a possibility for negotiating a position within the national spaces because hybridity, as Puri states, does not necessarily imply a dismantling of national identity, but rather a strategy for resisting hegemony from within the nation(s):

Although the refusal to recognize national borders in much liberal and leftist post-nationalist discourse undoubtedly stems in part from a genuinely utopian declaration of solidarity with the nation's Others, the strategic wisdom of the refusal is questionable... A more productive transnationalism that could both attend to the politics of location and de-essentialize it would ask: "How do I, even as a dissident, participate in nationally mediated structures of power and oppression?" (24).

Báez proposes art, specifically the performance of everyday life, as a location for mediating these interrogations and gaining space within the nations (U.S. and the Dominican Republic) that seek to push her to the margins of history, politics, aesthetics, and representation.

Staging History: The Dominican York Rejection

Yo, un hijo del Caribe, precisamente antillano.
Producto primitivo de una ingenua criatura borinqueña y un obrero
cubano,
nacido justamente y pobremente en suelo quisqueyano.
Recorrido de voces,
lleno de pupilas que a través de las islas se dilatan,
vengo a hablarle a Walt Whitman,
un cosmos,
un hijo de Manhattan.

—Don Pedro Mir, “Contracanto a Whitman”

The first massive Dominican migration to the United States occurred in the mid-1960s as a result of series of U.S. occupations of the island following the termination of a 31-year dictatorship.¹²⁹ Political, economic and cultural imperialism and colonization of the United States on the island of Santo Domingo opened doors to migration and transnational encounters. Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof in his dissertation *Nueva Yol* (and now, in his book *A Tale of Two Cities*) examines this phenomenon, arguing that the Dominican migration to the U.S. is a great example of how a group of people becomes racialized into a “minority” in the United States and subsequently criminalized and pushed to the margins of society. Despite this fact, Dominican migration has steadily grown over the last thirty years, becoming one of the largest ethnic groups in New York City.

¹²⁹ The United States occupied the Dominican Republic in 1916-24 and again in 1965-66. However, there are shorter political and economic interventions that dictate the destiny the country throughout the 20th century. See Calder and Moya Pons.

Hoffnung-Garskof explains: “Dominican settlers in New York are simply a new generation of *cimarrones* or runaways from a national life that never really considered them and never really aroused their interest” (*Nueva Yol* 37).

Drawing on Hoffnung-Garskof’s construct of the Dominican *cimarrón* (that is, on the idea of forceful freedom) I propose we look at Báez’s *Dominicanish* as a performance of maroon migration, as a forced dislocation that produces the constant displacement of the immigrant subject.

Báez’s contradictions as staged in her immigrant (maroon) performance of everyday life establishes an interesting way of looking at the relationship among colonization, imperialism, and migration, the latter being, of course, the direct result of the former two. The *Dominicanyork* as performer of *cimarronaje* is a subject in contra (diction), in constant search of freedom from the systems of oppression that persist in denying her access to full citizenship. She is a subject that is only acknowledged through the actual act of moving (migrating, running away). This argument illuminates the relationship between notions of marginality and illegality. The act of migrating, as understood in this framework, has the implicit notion of becoming an “illegal alien.” This is in part due to the fact that Dominican migration, like most current Latin American migration to the United States, has been deemed as unlawful, therefore criminalizing immigrant subjects.¹³⁰

¹³⁰ This stigma grew during the 1980s and 1990 when a series of articles and television shows devoted a lot of attention to the issue of illegal migration of Dominicans “yoleros” who traveled to Puerto Rico in small boats or yolas via the Mona Canal. Many of these people die, while survivors are many times deported. There was a link between the issue of migration and the rise of drug trafficking which sought to depict Dominican immigrants as drug dealers. This can be

The notion of cultural *cimarronaje* is constructive because at the same time that it embraces the “illegitimate” position of the Dominican immigrant in front of the law and of the State, it confronts this illegality with the rights to freedom and justice. The Dominicanyork is a cimarrón subject, for she is constantly running from the yoke of the State that persists in enslaving her. Furthermore, the Dominican immigrant is a subject that exists at margins of both nations as an undesirable person who is often erased from the national discourses. The immigrant condition is perceived as a handicap to active political life within the nations. Having an accent, for instance is often perceived as an impediment for succeeding in the United States. In the Dominican Republic, on the other hand, those who live abroad are often seen as traitors or not ‘Dominican enough’ as to be allowed to make social or politics contributions. The immigrant is thus not accepted back in the island for she is seen as poor, black, and uneducated. Yet she does not find a place in her new nation for the same reasons.

Báez’s work shows how the *cimarrón* condition, which in this case is signified in the label Dominican-American or more specifically, Dominicanyork, does not secure access to two nations, but rather the erasure from both, even within the context of the existence of a dual nationality law. In the performance text the author asserts: “But you see there is no guarantee. Ni aqui ni allá. Not even with your guiri guiri papers. Here, there, anywhere. There is no guarantee without accent or PhD” (48). Being Dominican-York means living *on the hyphen*;

found in US as well as Dominican media. See Hoffnung-Garskof’s *A Tale of Two Cities* and Torres-Saillant’s *El retorno de las yolas*.

that is, being neither Dominican or American.¹³¹ This condition of in-betweenness that constitutes maroon subjecthood accentuates the idea expressed in the poem by Lourdes Casal that opens this chapter: that once an immigrant, one will always be an immigrant.

Dominicanish reconstructs the transformation of a Dominican subject into a Dominicanyork subject, finding a vocal and bodily language for clearly outlining the complexity of this condition. As Báez's performance shows, there is not one single way of being Dominican but rather a multiplicity of positions that need to be constantly negotiated in order to fight essentialist definitions and gain political agency. Báez's work proposes embracing this hyphen-maroon marginality through everyday life performances as a way of subverting the system and gaining political power. The immigrant proposed through *Dominicanish* can become a powerful subject by performing small acts of resistance in her daily activities: speaking Spanish or Spanglish in the public sphere, drawing murals in the streets, discussing issues of her homeland within the local political structures, performing religious and cultural rituals at school or work, etc. New York City can be (and often is) converted into a home for the immigrant through these daily performances that resist the seductive and oppressive narrative of assimilation, which is also a narrative of erasure. Báez's work is a representation of everyday life performances of immigrants who resist erasure by possessing the city and

¹³¹ I borrow Gustavo Pérez-Firmat's term "life on the hyphen" although my thesis differs from his in a fundamental issue. To the Cuban-American author, life on the hyphen is an advantage that grants the immigrant the ability to become a cultural translator as he/she has access to both cultures. My argument, on the other hand, is that the hyphenated condition seeks to erase the immigrant from both nations by using lack of authenticity as an argument. An immigrant is no longer as authentic to the nation of birth because he/she left while he/she is not as authentic to the new nation because he/she was not born there.

forcing it to recognize their bodies within the current socio-political space. The body of the immigrant, Josefina, discovered once as space of double marginality, becomes in New York City and through performances of everyday life, a means for representing political resistance. Her language, *Dominicanish*, becomes the means for articulating the immigrant experience.

Dominicanish developed out of the everyday struggles for survival in an urban space, the contact with other cultures, languages and art forms, as well as from the often unpleasant encounters with the official discourse of the city and the law. The subway, Latin Jazz, Salsa, Kuchipudi, Hinduism and soul music are all representations of this daily encounter with New York City, which becomes the stage for confronting the immigrant's contradictions. However, the city is not a friendly place. It is a rather evasive space that must be conquered everyday all over again.

Báez's text shows how strategic alliances among the various groups that inhabit the city must be created in order to survive the challenges that the city poses. The artist states: "Hablo como boricua y me peino como morena" [I talk like a Puerto Rican and I do my hair like a Black woman] (43). Josefina, the immigrant, becomes a trans-ethnic subject that negotiates, through her performance, the confrontation between many cultural contradictions. She embodies New York City in order to reconstruct it as a space where she, the trans-ethnic/maroon subject, can be represented. But very soon she concludes that New York, like the Dominican Republic, is a space dominated by the powerful and that her home is in neither place. Home for the immigrant is "where

theater is” (*Dominicanish* min 34); that is to say, home is the space of constant recreation where the immigrant negotiates, through culture-making, his/her place as an agent of political change:

Crooked Cupid a woman named city hips swing male or female. Hips swing creating our tale... No one to blame or complain but go Just go let go go fast but go. Crooked City. A woman named cupid. City glorifying the finest brutality in blue. City nuestro canto con viva emoción. City a la guerra morir se lanzó. City. Suerte que la 107 se arrulla con Pacheco....Me chulié en el hall. Metí mano en el rufo. Craqueo chicle como Shameka Brown. City. *I pulled the emergency cord* (Báez 53, emphasis added).¹³²

In embodying the hyphen, the marginalities that inhabit the underground of New York City, Josefina Báez has created her authoritative space. Furthermore, in confronting the city through the very language of her racially-marked body, she has subverted the system that sought to subdue her, making of herself a universal subject on the stage. She is no longer the marginal for she represents the *contact zones* between all other voices. She is not weak for she has the power to “pull the emergency cord”; she performs the act of resistance by making the audience “stop” to listen to her minority language, Dominicanish.

In his text *The Practices of Everyday Life* (1984) Michel de Certeau argues that marginality has become universal because the marginal have developed tactics that lend political dimension to everyday practices (24). Báez’s bodily and linguistic performances are tactics of political resistance because she

¹³² Báez juxtaposes verses from the Dominican National anthem and then she states “Thank God that in 107 we dance to Pacheco.” Johnny Pacheco is one of the most important Dominican musicians of the 20th century.

embodies the otherness imposed on her and performs it within a public space. Furthermore, the immigrant's performance of memory, of culture and language, the games, songs, and stories that are told everyday, are "acts" of daily resistance against the norm. To sing the Dominican anthem on 107th Street (as represented in the previous quote) is to subvert the power of national discourse. To use graffiti in the New York City subway to protest Dominican politics on the island is more than a transnational practice, it is a political tactic of resistance; an act that reproduces alienation for those who cannot understand it, for those who Báez calls the "monolingual subjects." De Certeau concludes:

The formality of everyday practices is indicated in these tales which frequently reverse the relationships of power... This space protects the weapons of the weak against the reality of the established order. It also hides them from the social categories which 'make history' because they dominate it... Both rhetoric and everyday practices can be defined as internal manipulations of the system. (24)

When Báez juxtaposes the Dominican anthem to her description of the city, she reconstructs an imagined space inhabited by the immigrant where memories and the present are intertwined with the experience of oppression. Furthermore, when she uses her middle finger to symbolize the placement of a bindi on her forehead, while stating "glorifying the finest brutality in blue" (min 32), she makes history as De Certeau proposes. The language of her body, juxtaposed to the rhetoric of her speech creates a space for manipulating the official discourse and stating a new "truth" in a non-official language. Her speech act "I pulled the

emergency cord” is what Judith Butler terms the performance of power.¹³³ It is a form of authoritative speech that places the interlocutor in the place of the actor. By “pulling the emergency cord,” Josefina is making the world that names her stop, in order to listen to her discourse. At the end of the performance piece, when she concludes “Here I am chewing English and spitting Spanish” (Báez, 2000, min. 45), the irreverence of her speech produces a new immigrant language: Dominicanish. This is a language that has the ability to shock as well as to empower. It is a speech act that demands a space for her art, and her writing, at the same time that it excludes and alienates those who do not want to or cannot understand.

Dominicanish concludes with a deconstruction of the homogenous and normative ideas of the immigrant identity, proposing liberation from all fixed ideas that make us think of the immigrant as a static subject. In addition, *Dominicanish* embraces the contradictions that the politics of location, nationality, ethnicity, and race create, in a hopeful gesture towards shattering the silences of the marginal communities and a successful exercise of talking back.

To conclude, I would like to come back to the very first scene of the performance piece, when girl Josefina enters the stage as a boat. My retrospective look at this scene sees a rather complex representation of the immigrant as a ship, as a subject in a constant stage of transitions. Baez’s work proves however that the immigrant’s “trans” identities, which are often used to alienate her are in fact mechanisms that when appropriated can serve to confront

¹³³ See *Bodies that Matter*.

the systems of oppression and to demand attention. Furthermore, the performance shows that contradictions, hybridity, and multiplicity are not necessarily opposite of national identities. On the contrary, they offer a way to reinvent notions of race, ethnicity and nationality, therefore contesting the monolithic ideas that engender racism, prejudice and oppression.

CONCLUSION

From very early on when I began to think about this project, I imagined I would write it from the island. Something about closeness to the land, and the people, in addition to the convenient access to archival sources, made sense to me. So in May 2005 after completing my proposal, I moved to Santo Domingo with my husband, John. At the beginning of our stay we faced many challenges. My diasporic identity became sometimes a mark of difference but also of privilege. With support from friends, as well as from academic institutions such as FLACSO, soon enough I found myself to be part of a vibrant intellectual community, and was able begin my enterprise. Chapters 1 and 4 were written there, in the middle of long daily 'apagones' or powerouts and the many other interesting 'imprevistos' or unforeseen events that regulate urban Dominican reality. But in December 2006, our stay was cut short when John and I found ourselves in the middle of a humanitarian emergency that threatened our lives. Within hours, we had to be escorted to the airport by U.S. embassy representatives, leaving behind all our possessions and many of our dreams. That day my project became decisively and forever incomplete. For many months after our return to Ann Arbor I struggled with the reality of exile, a word I had never imagined could describe *me*, an immigrant from Trenton, N.J. In the bitter winter of Ann Arbor, which felt a hundred times worse after living in the

island for a while, I puzzled over the idea of living my own *Dominicanidad* so far from the island and even from other diasporic communities. The writing of chapters 2 and 3 is in a sense a very important part of that personal quest. While writing chapter 3, I re-discovered the inclusive discourse of solidarity that Juan Bosch drafted during his own long exiles (1938-1961). His perception of *Dominicanidad* as something that transcended geographic borders and that included the diasporic voices of those deemed *ausentes*, gave me strength to write my own humble contribution, *desde el exilio*.

In the last 10 years, U.S. and European media have published numerous articles examining the “question of Dominican identity” and the controversial issues surrounding Haitian-Dominican border relations. The coronation of Denny Méndez, a black Dominican immigrant, as Miss Italy in 1996, and the subsequent electoral triumph of another Dominican woman, Mercedes Frías, as a deputy of the Italian parliament in 2006, added another dimension to a dialogue that had mostly existed between the island and the U.S. diaspora. As a result, a series of controversial discussions have emerged among Dominican thinkers in the island and in the diaspora regarding the legitimacy of *Dominicanos ausentes*'s narration of *Dominicanidad*. It appears that the *return of the yolas*, to borrow Silvio Torres-Saillant's term, has succeeded in blurring the lines between *here* and *there*, questioning the official version of Dominican national identity.

My examination of the narrative project of *Dominicanidad* throughout each of the chapters demonstrated that the discussion of what constitutes *Dominicanness* has been a project of Diasporic transcendence for nearly a

century, and that the transnational quality of Dominican politics and culture has been, and is, a significant element in the ongoing discussion of *dominicanidad*. The emergence of strong Dominican Diasporic narratives in the last two decades, as evidenced in the work of Julia Álvarez, Josefina Báez, Junot Díaz, and Nelly Rosario, to mention a few, has allowed for the narration of alternative forms of history and the questioning of the dominant rhetoric of *Dominicanidad*. These various narratives of exile have created the opportunity for framing a new form of *Dominicanidad* rooted in democratic ideas and in the possibility of Caribbean solidarity.

As I conclude this long journey, the contradictions of *Dominicanidad* I examined in each of the chapters become more apparent and urgent. Early in February 2008, President Leonel Fernández ordered La Guardia Nacional (GND) to the northwestern borderlands to pacify the frontier following a series of accusations of cattle theft, a story that seems too familiar, and scary. While tensions in the border seem to rise, as I write these last pages, Dominicans continue to emigrate to the U.S. and Europe, escaping the oppressing systems that continue to rob them of their very basic human rights. Yet, in their new land they constantly face discrimination and exclusion, battling a dual-marginality that seems to follow them across the sea. In the middle of this growing democratic crisis, this project then hopes to remind readers of the significance of questioning the *forces of history* from within and from without the national space, in order to avoid the historical amnesia that allows the same narratives of exclusion to re-emerge.

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