

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

RACIAL GEOPOLITICS

INTERROGATING CARIBBEAN CULTURAL DISCOURSE IN THE ERA OF  
GLOBALIZATION

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Literature

by

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2007



The Dissertation of Irmay Reyes-Santos is approved, and it is  
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2007

## DEDICATION

A mis ancestros,  
han preparado el camino recorrido

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At UC, San Diego, working with Students for Economic Justice shaped the political concerns that inspire the dissertation. My roommates and great friends, Benita Brahmhatt, Denise Khor, Lola Hermosillo, and John Waite created a safe space where the experience of being a graduate student and preliminary arguments could be shared. Maria Bernard, Chris Guzaitis, Irene Mata, Jahaira Padilla, and Morelia Portillo provided intellectual and personal companionship at different moments. Rita Urquijo has been a caring mentor and friend since my arrival to the United States. Jinah Kim patiently read the first drafts and highlighted their main arguments. Chuong-Dai Vo has read my work and supported me through the last stages of the dissertation.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

RACIAL GEOPOLITICS

INTERROGATING CARIBBEAN CULTURAL DISCOURSE IN THE ERA OF  
GLOBALIZATION

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

University of California, San Diego, 2007

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My dissertation, “Racial Geopolitics: Interrogating Caribbean Cultural Discourse in the Era of Globalization,” compares late twentieth-century and twenty-first century representations of Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic and Dominican migrants in Puerto Rico in light of a public discourse of neoliberal collaboration among these territories. Some cultural and political critics argue that globalization enables political, economic, and cultural regional connections that tend to be limited by nationalist

practices. However, xenophobic and racist narratives about intra-Caribbean migrants demonstrate that the nation, as geopolitical and cultural construct, continue to shape how Antilleans experience the international economic structures that characterize the current moment. My analysis is grounded in historical and sociological research, and employs a cultural studies framework to examine literature in dialogue with newspaper articles, ethnic jokes, cybernetic media, political writings/speeches, and musical production.

Chapter 1 argues that narratives about Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic speak to the contradictions posed by the subordinate racialized position of these migrants in the workforce and the joint integration of the island in a global market. Chapter 2 examines the racialization and gendering of Dominican migration to Puerto Rico in the context of Dominican and Puerto Rican migrations to/from the U.S. mainland, and recent negotiations of free trade agreements between the United States and Caribbean states. Chapter 3 focuses on 1930s Dominican and Puerto Rican novels to explore how nationalist rhetoric articulated in response to U.S. imperialism in the past illuminates the political dilemmas of the present. Chapter 4 critically engages parallels established in Caribbean political discourse between globalization and mid-nineteenth century proposals for an Antillean Confederation. The conclusion discusses how the short story “Cloud Cover Caribbean” by Ana Lydia Vega represents tense inter-ethnic interactions between three Antilleans in a raft on its way to Miami. It suggests that contemporary cultural and political work for social justice in the region must take into account convergences of colonial, nationalist, and Pan-Antillean discourses in processes of globalization in the circum-Caribbean region.

## INTRODUCTION

### **Racial Geopolitics: Interrogating Caribbean Cultural Discourse in the Era of Globalization**

The discourse of globalization has co-opted and redefined the regionalist imaginary of the Caribbean. Advocates of regional integration have at times referred to globalization—or the implementation of neoliberal economic policies—as the way to achieve historical ideals of cooperation and interdependency among a group of small island territories. However, the incorporation of the Caribbean in the world market has recreated a racialized geopolitical hierarchy amongst Antillean territories. Cultural discourses on the racial demographics of the nation and development narratives mark how Antilleans participate in processes of globalization. The prevailing representations of Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic, and Dominicans in Puerto Rico, engage racial imaginings of the nation that portray migrants as culturally backward, less modern and capable, and blacker than locals. Racialization naturalizes the exploitation of migrant labor in neoliberal economies. The experiences of these migrants show how globalization in the Antilles is characterized by a racialized imagination of individual territories and the region itself.

#### **The Caribbean and Globalization**

The history of regionalist projects in the Caribbean dates back to the nineteenth century. Now, in the twenty-first century, globalization is understood as a way to achieve such projects. Regionalist politics have been historically celebrated for their desire to

decolonize the region through Pan-Antillean collaboration. Regionalism advocates have articulated, at least rhetorically, anti-colonial, anti-imperialist, and anti-slavery politics. They have expressed the need to end economic dependence on wealthier nations and to address the legacies of racism and socio-economic marginality left by slavery. In light of past regionalist projects, Caribbean state officials, activists, and intellectuals have embraced the transnationalist spirit embedded in processes of globalization.

The globalization of the region was one of the main concerns of the 2006 Caribbean Studies Association Conference held in Trinidad and Tobago. In panels and plenary sessions regional integration of the Caribbean seemed to be the most urgent challenge for the region. Discussions of regional integration consistently engaged the United States' government's proposal of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA). Caribbean territories must decide if they will accept the terms of FTAA, either individually or as a region. The Dominican Republic and Central American nations have already taken the step of joining forces with each other and the United States through CAFTA-DR (Central American Free Trade Agreement-Dominican Republic).

At the CSA conference, the discussions mostly emphasized the concerns of Caribbean nations who are members of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) founded in 1972.<sup>1</sup> Proposals suggested during the conference included a common currency, a Caribbean Parliamentary, a Caribbean Court of Law, and intra-regional political representation abroad. Some favored further integrating the political and economic life of CARICOM members while accepting the U.S. proposal of a Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. Proponents of this possibility saw it as the only way to benefit from negotiations with the United States, considering the lack of leverage of

individual nations. Some participants saw the European Union as a possible model for the integration of the region. The European Union was also described as a better partner in economic enterprises than the United States. At the conference, conversations about regional integration questioned its feasibility. However, most accepted and supported regionalism as a political and economic paradigm. The idealized possibility of freeing the region from its dependence on the U.S. and Europe through regionalist projects permeated these conversations.

A historical memory of Pan-Antillean exchanges fosters a climate friendly to transnational collaboration in the region. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century proposals of an Antillean Confederation, intra-Caribbean migrations, and the short-lived West Indian Federation of Anglophone Caribbean territories (1958-1962), exemplify the kind of political work and Pan-Antillean exchanges that haunt contemporary debates regarding the fate of the region. The manifesto Eloge de la Créolité (1989) by Jean Bernabé, Patrick Chamoiseau, and Raphael Confiant is an early example of how desires for regional integration have come to be understood in the context of globalization. Bernabé, Chamoiseau, and Confiant discuss the need to create an Antillean federation or confederation based on a Creole culture shared by Caribbean peoples, despite the differences amongst cultural heritages of specific territories. Their political proposal requires recognition of the Creoleness of the Caribbean cultures, emphasizing how Caribbean cultures emerged from cross-cultural confrontations and adaptations. When the writers argue that, due to a widespread questioning of nations and creation of transnational organizations, “The world is evolving into a state of Creoleness” (112), they imagine themselves as Caribbean peoples at the forefront of such a process. In other

words, despite critiquing the integration of Francophone Caribbean territories in the European Union, Bernabé, Confiant, and Chamoisseau accept the processes of political and cultural integration that in the late nineteen-eighties characterized the globalization of the world. These processes resemble what they have proposed for the Caribbean itself: the construction of a regional political entity where the cultural heritage of every Antillean territory would be respected and commonalities amongst Antilleans would be highlighted.

Antillean state officials and social scientists replicate the Creolistes's naturalization of regional integration. In 2001, Rubén Silié, director of the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences in the Dominican Republic, asserted the need to pursue a Pan-Antillean agenda. According to him: "la historia universal se encamina irreversiblemente hacia la puesta en común de las ideas y diversas formas de integración entre países y regiones" ("universal history moves towards the integration of countries and regions") (13).<sup>2</sup> Silié argued that Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the island of Santo Domingo, must move to integrate; integration is the inescapable consequence of world history. Silié sees in globalization a solution to inter-ethnic conflict in the island of Santo Domingo.

On the surface globalization may seem to embody the politics of anti-slavery and anti-colonial regionalism. Like previous Caribbean projects, the discourse of globalization pretends to transcend the nation and its legitimizing discourses in search of what seems to be the utopian possibilities of transnationalism.<sup>3</sup> However, representing globalization as a way to finally implement regionalist ideals silences the actual marginality experienced by racialized Caribbean populations. In other words,

globalization co-opts a political memory of regionalist projects invested in ending racial subordination and colonialism. The implicit conflation of globalization and previous articulations of Caribbean regionalism in political discourse limits the possibility of having a critical stance towards neoliberalism.

The discourse of globalization has not only co-opted a regionalist imagination, but also redefined the Caribbean as a region. Neoliberalism has constructed a region through the iteration of free trade zones and tourist destinations from one territory to the other. Moreover, particular Antillean cultures have come to represent the region in the market as exotic objects for consumption in the islands and abroad. Every island is represented in tourism brochures as one sample of the same Caribbean package: beaches, sun, and drums. For investors, the Antilles offers cheap labor, tax-free production, and in-place infrastructure. In a globalized Caribbean, Antillean territories collaborate with each other by allowing resources, labor, tourists, and products to move according to the needs of transnational capital. The Caribbean then is construed as a single region by its particular contributions—commodities, workers, entertainment—to the global market.

While historical ideals of regional integration have been co-opted and redefined by neoliberalism, alternatives to globalization have emerged. As I will further explain, Yvette Etienne, organizer of women's cooperatives in Haiti, supports a globalization of the Antilles rooted in the islands' own cultures and economic needs. Venezuela's alternative to U.S.-led neoliberal globalization, or the Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America and the Caribbean (ALBA), revives the anti-imperialist politics of nineteenth-century regionalisms. ALBA proposes the integration of Latin America and the Caribbean in order to address, not the needs of transnational capital, but rather the

everyday reality of marginalized populations. Etienne and Venezuela's ALBA interrogate invocations of globalization in political discourse that describe a world that has overcome racism and colonial systems of governance.<sup>4</sup>

These alternative regionalisms illustrate that the economic practices associated with globalization do not adequately address the legacy of European and U.S. imperialism in the Caribbean.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, the discourse of globalization silences the marginalized position of the Caribbean in international political and economic exchanges, and how U.S. and European economic interests and racial discourses continue to inform the realities of Antillean territories. I have already mentioned how the possibility of collaborating with the U.S. and Europe haunt discussions of regionalism. In the literary texts considered in this dissertation, the United States is represented as an imperialist power in the region.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the tourism economies that have become common in globalized Caribbean territories rely for their profitability, not only on all-inclusive packages or the devaluation of Antillean labor, but also in the exoticization of the region by mostly European and U.S. tourists.

### **What Is Globalization?**

As David Leiwei Li asserts, the term globalization describes a variety of political, economic, and cultural phenomena:

In economic terms, globalization signifies a worldwide domination of free-market capitalism with its local accommodations and resistances. In political terms, it speaks to the changing nature of the nation-state, the emergence of non-governmental organizations and electronic public spheres as these new entities negotiate with border-transcending capital for the governance of peoples and the sustenance of their interests. In cultural terms, globalization signals an individual's inevitable mediation with the regime of commodification and consumption that both universalizes desires and particularizes traditions. (1)



In his assessment of the word globalization, Li refers to neoliberal capitalism's desire to open markets and limit state regulations of capital, the proliferation of transnational systems of governance, and the construction of a seemingly homogeneous global consumer while difference gains market value. This dissertation problematizes the convergence of these definitions in the word globalization. The conflation of political, economic, and cultural understandings of the term can elide how these definitions intersect to produce a discourse that ignores the re-articulation of socio-economic, racial, and gender marginality.

Since the nineteen-nineties, globalization has been used as a political and economic reference to describe a moment when prosperity will reach all the inhabitants of the globe. References to civil rights movements, twentieth-century decolonization projects, the end of official forms of racial segregation, and the fall of Soviet communism have all been cited to justify celebrating the creation of a "global village" where the playing field has been leveled (Friedman 4, 11). Transnationalism describes the construction of a global village based on interdependency. Globalization denies the primacy of the nation as a political and cultural agent (Sassen 96). Its discourse promises to surpass the potential of the nation by delivering the nation's unfulfilled promises of development, employment, welfare, etc.<sup>7</sup> All peoples appear to be close to each other and in collaboration due to technological artifacts, such as television, cellular phones, the internet, and airplanes.

I study globalization as a discursive construct that has tangible consequences in the constitution of the world economy, and the material conditions that shape how individuals and nations experience it. The word represents both neoliberalism and

multiculturalist approaches to difference. In this manner, the discourse of globalization produces, while being reconstituted by, state policy and corporate practices that claim to fulfill its promises. For example, Pan-Antillean transnational political and economic collaboration become easily coded and concretized in terms of neoliberalization. The actual implementation of neoliberal policies in Antillean territories further constitutes the discourse of globalization through its implicit legitimization. Furthermore, the desire to accomplish goals of Antillean regionalisms—historically invested in the recognition of all heritages in the Caribbean and the end of racial subordination—can be understood as the multiculturalist celebration of difference that characterizes the “global market” and state discourse in the region. The multiplicity of practices considered to be synonyms of globalization make possible the previously described conflation between regionalism and globalization in the Caribbean.

Approaching globalization as a discourse enables the interrogation of its articulations. This dissertation does not conceptualize globalization as a natural outcome of the human race moving toward progress. The denaturalization of globalization leads to close examination of its constitution in order to seek contradictions between what it claims and how it is experienced. To question what has become a dominant paradigm creates a space in which to conceive alternative and oppositional possibilities for Caribbean integration that do not rely on neoliberal capitalism and the silencing of racial exclusions.

Through a discursive analysis, I contribute to critiques of the political, economic, and cultural experiences identified as globalization. I examine how its associated qualities—such as population movements, porous borders, capital flows—often rely on, and

produce, the marginality of many.<sup>8</sup> In particular, this dissertation pays attention to the manner in which Antillean experiences of economic globalization, or neoliberalism, are shaped by modes of racial exclusion embedded in Caribbean national discourses. Multiculturalist claims associated with globalization do not entail a commitment to social justice or racial equity, but rather silence how neoliberal economies produce surplus through the re-articulation of racial difference at the national and international levels. The subordination of racialized migrant labor in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico questions the discursive constitution of globalization as a panacea for the region. The lived reality of globalization is partially configured by the exclusionary character of national discourses on race. Consequently, this dissertation initiates my exploration of globalization as a discourse denying the racialized geopolitical hierarchy of nations that characterizes the implementation of its economic component: neoliberalism.<sup>9</sup>

### **Defining Mechanisms of Neoliberalism**

To globalize the Caribbean has entailed implementing neoliberal policies. Neoliberal theory requires free trade among nation-states to permit a “natural” flow of commodities, capital, and labor. Neoliberalism rejects the intervention of the nation in the protection of its resources. Allegedly, the interests of transnational capital must be allowed to flourish without restrictions. In turn, corporate profits will arguably “trickle down” to the less privileged classes and nations. It is argued that neoliberalism will deliver the economic prosperity that the individual nations—especially formerly colonized territories of Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia—have not been able to deliver. Neoliberalism purports to eliminate relationships of dependence between

the wealthier nations and those nations still struggling to construct independent prosperity. The globalization of a territory requires the transformation of its economic structures, according to neoliberal theory's dictates. Geopolitical entities, such as individual nation-states and regional organizations, must accept the parameters of neoliberal economic policies in order to ensure that those they represent will benefit from a globalized market.

To achieve this goal, international financing institutions prescribe open-border policies, restructuring programs, outsourcing of labor, and the privatization of national enterprises. Nation-states must relax their regulation of and taxation on imports and exports. Specialized workforces must be able to move across national borders. National industries—even those administering basic resources, such as water, electricity, and communication systems—are privatized for the sake of efficiency and to cut the state's expenses. Transnational corporations outsource certain segments of their production processes to locations providing cheaper labor. According to neoliberal theory, outsourcing is a beneficial strategy because it increases corporate revenue due to lower production costs while creating jobs in developing nations.

As a lender in international financing institutions, like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the U.S. participates in the global implementation of neoliberal policies. The United States and Great Britain conferred legitimacy on the economic discourse of neoliberalism in the nineteen-seventies and eighties.<sup>10</sup> These nations implemented neoliberal policies that would be profitable in their own countries and supported their implementation in other locations. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund require developing countries to follow the neoliberal model,

even when lender nations themselves do not put all neoliberal policies into practice in their own countries. Those in dire need have to acquiesce to the prevailing economic model in return for funds to service earlier loans. Developing countries undertake structural adjustment programs. They cut their public services, reduce or eliminate their taxation of transnational economic projects—such as free trade zones, tourism industries, and industrial parks— and provide a workforce prepared to participate in these economic activities. These nations focus on furthering export-oriented manufacturing and agriculture, as well as service-based economies.

The discourse of globalization perpetuated by its advocates assumes that all states are included in the global economy on equal terms. A celebration of cultural difference has accompanied neoliberal claims of economic interdependency, and political and cultural democracy around the world. Multiculturalism promotes accepting all forms of cultural difference and incorporating them into the mainstream through consumption.<sup>11</sup> Not only are people going to be included in a global economic scheme, but their cultures are going to be equally valued by the market. This multicultural approach to difference promotes, along with neoliberalism, a general understanding of globalization in terms of freedom, democracy, and equality. Along with neoliberal theory, multiculturalist approaches to difference constitute the basic premises of the discourse of globalization.

### **Multiculturalism**

Globalization purports to dismantle racist understandings of non-European or Anglo-American cultural artifacts and practices. The market rejects the privileging of Europe and the U.S.—or Western civilization—in colonial valorizations of culture. The cultures of all peoples must be celebrated and consumed everywhere, including those of

people who have been historically racialized and marginalized. Corporations produce marketing strategies to reach ethnically and nationally defined market niches. Mass-produced cultural artifacts from the formerly colonized world proliferate as exotic items in the marketplaces of the United States and Europe. In the meantime, McDonalds fast-food restaurants are placed all over the world and modify their menus to fit a variety of ethnic niches.

While multiculturalism claims to equalize, its emergence reveals inherent contradictions in the discourse of globalization. Multiculturalism gained predominance during the consolidation of the U.S. as a neoliberal state in the nineteen-eighties.<sup>12</sup> One of the main strains of multiculturalism in the United States has entailed celebrating the cultural differences of historically marginalized groups. Consequently, it is argued that the United States has addressed its history of state-sponsored racist policies and that people have come to accept the diversity of its population. However, in the nineteen-eighties, racial and ethnic minorities in the U.S. faced the reduction or elimination of reforms and welfare policies put forth to address the demands of civil rights movements. The implementation of neoliberal policies entailed cuts in social spending that affected historically disadvantaged populations. Therefore, widespread celebrations of diversity accompanied a decline in the material conditions of racial minorities.

The discourse of state relations within globalization follows a similar logic. At the international level, the marketability of cultural difference has meant that the world is overcoming colonial denials of the cultural heritage of colonized territories. It has also signified a leveling of the playing field in international politics. Historically the racialized cultural differences and assumed inferiority of colonized peoples has been used

to justify colonial rule. Colonized people's association with cultural backwardness, underdevelopment, and primitivism explained the need for European or U.S. rule. It follows then that if the global market incorporates all cultures, then all geopolitical entities must be equally respected in the political realm. However, as I have suggested, nations experience globalization differently. Wealthy and militarily powerful nations enjoy laxity in their implementation of neoliberalism, while developing countries, mostly former colonies, have a difficult time negotiating the conditions imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Therefore, multiculturalism, on both the local and global scales, does not reflect equal economic and political experiences.<sup>13</sup> Celebrations of difference in the U.S. displace conversations about the struggles of racial and ethnic minorities in the post-Civil Rights era. In a similar fashion, celebrating a multicultural marketplace truncates conversations about international economic hierarchies, and the privileging of whiteness, and European and U.S.-derived cultural practices within globalization.

As a component of the rhetoric of globalization, multiculturalism pre-empts discussions about the exploitation of racialized labor by celebrating cultural diversity. Representations of Haitian-Dominican and Dominican-Puerto Rican relations in the twenty-first century illustrate the contradictions of the multiculturalist discourse of globalization. Government officials engage in transnational economic projects. Racism is often denied in the media and by government officials. Nonetheless, Antillean migrants are racialized in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.

### **Race, Capitalism, and Migration**

Capitalism's attempts to produce surplus benefit from the articulation of racial difference with respect to particular spaces and those who inhabit them. David Harvey's Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference describes how capitalism has characterized itself by creating *places* through geographical expansion. According to Harvey, a *place* is a site where certain social and economic relations are replicated to maintain a status quo for as long as possible (or as long as it is profitable); values and memories are imposed upon a *place* providing its inhabitants with a sense of identity. For the purposes of my analysis, these *places* are geographical entities—nations, regions, borders, free trade zones, etc.—and their respective industries, where working people have to compete for investors interested in the cheaper labor available. A *place* is the consequence of capitalist endeavors to develop new markets and obtain new sources of labor and raw materials. Harvey identifies “otherness” as a product of processes of capital expansion. He asserts:

‘Difference’ and ‘otherness’ are produced in space through the simple logic of uneven capital investment, a proliferating geographical division of labor, an increasing segmentation of reproductive activities and the rise of spatially ordered (often segregated) social distinctions. (295)

Capital expansion relies on the exploitation of particular forms of labor and on unequal relations of production and consumption. The establishment of a *place* requires the production of different forms of “otherness” in order to maintain a certain level of profit at the expense of cheap labor. This dissertation examines how, despite the rhetoric of globalization itself, its geographical imagination consists of discourses of racial otherness that turn nation-states into *places* incorporated in an international workforce. Through the analysis of representations of Caribbean migrants as invaders, I signal how the



construction of racial difference identified with national geographic spaces makes possible the exploitation of labor.

In Colonial Subjects, a comparative study of Caribbean migrations to the United States and Europe, Ramón Grosfoguel expresses a similar understanding of capitalism and racism. Grosfoguel demonstrates that Caribbean migratory movements frequently respond to the economic needs of disadvantaged populations and the demand of racialized—and, therefore, cheaper—labor in metropolitan centers (210). The racialization of Caribbean migrants allows their exclusion from labor markets when deemed necessary, since they are often undocumented workers, or imagined as such. Race functions to produce profitable relations of production within neoliberalism. The racialization of migrants cheapens their labor. They cost the state, corporations, and small businesses less than nationals. Their ascribed blackness renders them less “developed,” less educated, foreign, and unworthy of receiving protection from the state. They inhabit the less desirable workspaces in neoliberalized economies.

### **Race, Development, and Nation**

Migrants are racialized by discourses on the nation. Theoretical considerations of the relationship between race and nation-state have concluded that they are inevitably linked constructs (Goldberg 4; Anderson 7; Balibar 54). The production of a national entity always relies on the construction of difference. Its self definition is only possible through the demarcation of physical and symbolic borders.<sup>14</sup> For its sustenance, the nation produces, as well as it is produced by, a sense of belonging to a limited geographical space and ethnic experience. The nation’s necessary limits thus produce exclusion. Racial difference defines certain people as non-nationals, including inhabitants

of the national territory. The articulation of racism has historically relied on claims of biological and cultural difference. This dissertation examines how race is ascribed to bodies in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.

While examining how migrants are marked in racial terms, I do not examine race as if it existed per se—a marker of difference—but rather as the outcome of processes of racialization.<sup>15</sup> I refer to racial categories as forms of racialized identifications constantly reconfigured by a variety of discourses.<sup>16</sup> Racialization maintains social hierarchies by associating phenotypical attributes and/or ethnic background to certain socio-cultural behavior. By concentrating on processes of racialization, I underline the continuous intersection of a variety of social, political, economic, cultural, and intellectual practices that may not seem to refer directly to “racial” matters, but participate in the institutionalized marginalization of non-white identified and/or immigrant subjects. I do not take for granted the racial categories that tend to be ascribed to Haitian and Dominican migrants in media and social scientific research. In particular, my analysis of representations of Haitian and Dominican migrants demonstrates how discourses on cultural difference and development are used to racialize them.<sup>17</sup>

Understanding the historical role of *mestizaje* in Latin America illuminates the racialization of migrant subjects in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, though, as I will further explain later in the dissertation, both territories produce their own particular version of *mestizaje*.<sup>18</sup> *Mestizaje* describes Latin American nations as racially mixed spaces. In the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, the discourse of *mestizaje* entails an elimination of racial discrimination and conflict, or the creation of a racial democracy. However, the racialized othering of people of Haitian and Dominican descent undermines

representations of Latin American nations as racial democracies. Blackness persists as an exclusionary racial category within national discourses that claim racial mixture or mestizaje. Blackness is equated with cultural backwardness and underdevelopment.

Processes of nation-building in Latin America have articulated discourses of mestizaje to describe and legitimize the “mixed national body” through the discursive whitening of heterogeneous populations.<sup>19</sup> In the nineteenth century, mestizaje became a discursive tool to justify the independence of Latin American territories.<sup>20</sup> Within those new nations, mestizaje promoted ethnic identification with the nation-state based on the geographical boundaries of the national territory. But mestizaje also required privileging certain cultural heritages and racial demographics to demonstrate the capacity of Latin American peoples to govern themselves. Mestizaje acknowledged the presence of non-white identified populations in Latin America, but asserted the cultural, and sometimes biological, supremacy of white-identified or Hispanic heritages.<sup>21</sup> Proximity to whiteness meant being closer to European cultural values and civilization, and justified claims to self-determination and governance. This conceptualization of the nation explained the privileged position of white-identified *criollo* elites in the nation-state as bearers of European civilization.<sup>22</sup> Mestizaje functioned as a discourse of containment. It could discursively neutralize any challenges to the exclusion of non-white-identified national populations from full citizenship.<sup>23</sup> The legacy of these discourses on the nation shaped the consolidation of national projects in Spanish-speaking territories.

This project engages with current discussions of the role played by the discourse of mestizaje in the positioning of non-white identified native populations on the margins of dominant national narratives. However, I expand these debates to consider how the

discourse of *mestizaje* intersects with the realities of intra-Caribbean migration and globalization. My analysis demonstrates that manifestations of a myth of racial democracy conveniently hide racialized inequity in neoliberalized spaces.

Furthermore, Latin American processes of racialization are not only contingent on narratives of *mestizaje*.<sup>24</sup> Cultural discourses on the nation do not emerge in isolation. Understandings of a subject as a national or a foreigner, as well as class status, inform his/her racialization. The manner in which Latin American nations imagine themselves with respect to each other also produces a racial imagining of each territory and its peoples. Dominicans are blackened by Puerto Ricans, while being whitened at home with respect to Haitians. The Dominican is imagined to be racially mixed, like Puerto Ricans, but his/her nationality signifies a relatively closer relationship to blackness in Puerto Rico. The identification of Dominicans with blackness is often coded in not explicitly racial terms. Migration transforms working-class Dominicans into potential criminals, invaders who exploit limited laboral and state resources, and into backwards people migrating from a less “developed” country.<sup>25</sup>

For these reasons, I highlight that representations of Haitians and Dominicans reveal that their racialization depends on the conjunction of 1) international imaginations of a territory in terms of development, and 2) discourses on cultural difference. Narratives of underdevelopment invoked to racialize Haitian and Dominican migrants pertain to international discourses on progress and modernization. In nineteenth-century Latin America, whitening through biological and/or cultural miscegenation became the chosen path towards the acquisition of modern nationhood. In the mid-twentieth century, development through industrialization and education became the way to modernize the

nation. The historical conflation of development with the industrial North – Europe and the United States – turns economic development into a racialized marker. Proximity to the whiteness signified by the U.S. and Europe through development participates in the constitution of a racial imagination of Caribbean nations.

Development narratives describe migrants in terms of deficient education and the more fragile economic status and infrastructure of their countries of origin. Migrants' cultural differences as non-nationals are interpolated as characteristics that limit their participation in a relatively more “developed” society from the one they left. References to the migrants' cultural differences—language, religion, music—function to racialize them as subjects who have not been whitened by Hispanicity and Western modernity. In this manner, articulations of cultural discourses on the nation in the late twentieth century and the early twenty-first century often racialize the migrant as black. However, if racialization is articulated through references to development of cultural difference, instead of through the application of traditional racial categories, racism can be denied, and the myth of racial democracy can persist.

Since development narratives are used to racialize migrants, I argue that the experiences of Haitian and Dominican migrants mirror the position of their countries of origin in a racialized geopolitical hierarchy. The nation-state as a geopolitical entity—defined by its political control of a geographical space—mediates the relationship between transnational capital and its subjects. The nation-state implements policies, constructs infrastructure, and disciplines unruly labor, as well as negotiates economic and political agreements. The negotiating power of a territory in international political and economic transactions depends on its level of development. References to

development in inter-state relations reveal how a racialized imagination of individual Antillean territories characterizes their incorporation in a global economy. Not only does capital expansion produce otherness, as Harvey suggests; the experience of capitalist development itself is informed by discursive articulations of racial difference.

The comparative analysis of representations of the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico shows parallel dynamics in two different locations. In the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, cultural discourses on the nation imagine local populations as whiter than Haitian and Dominican migrants, respectively. The whitening of Dominicans in their country of origin with respect to Haitians, and their blackening in Puerto Rico, suggest that the nation as a geopolitical and cultural entity is defined in relation to its neighbors. At the same time, migratory movements are shaped by the relative economic prosperity of neighboring territories. The eastward movements of Haitians and Dominicans looking for better salaries in neighboring countries shows that Puerto Rico enjoys a more privileged economic position in the triad, while Haiti experiences the worst.

The identification of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico with degrees of blackness and whiteness corresponds to descriptions of their economic situations in terms of development. Regional and national discourses depict Puerto Rico as the whitest of the Antilles, while it has also been a showcase of U.S.-led economic development, modernization, and industrialization. Therefore, cultural discourses on the racial composition of the nation and development narratives inform how Antillean peoples are integrated into the global economy. Instead of achieving ideals of regional integration that rely on anti-slavery politics, globalization has redefined a regionalist

imaginary through the discursive constitution of a racialized geopolitical hierarchy.<sup>26</sup>

### **Disciplinary and Methodological Approach**

The analytical tools of Globalization Studies and Cultural Studies have been combined to address the concrete ways in which cultural discourses are crucial components of the rhetoric and praxis of globalization. The study of globalization has been characterized by disciplinary divides in the field. For the most part, political and economic analyses neglect the study of cultural dynamics.<sup>27</sup> The emphasis on political economy takes on the analysis of economic and political transformations within neoliberalism. In contrast, cultural analysis often ignores how culture constitutes the economic and political conditions that characterize globalization. The analysis of culture within globalization tends to focus on questions regarding “cultural globalization” or “the cultures of globalization.” The main questions of this approach include: Are we constructing a global, almost homogenous, culture? How has the market commodified cultural difference? What has globalization done to culture? Has globalization changed our imagination of time and space?

My approach to globalization is different. I ask: How does culture construct the place of the nation and geographical regions in globalization? How does culture inform different experiences of globalization in a political and economic sense? How does culture illuminate the manner in which globalization is contingent upon location? In order to answer these questions, I combine political, economic, and cultural approaches to globalization. My disciplinary approach is based on the theoretical concern of Cultural Studies with its focus on the relationships between culture, politics, and issues of social justice.

The dissertation highlights the ability of literature and culture in general to “stir things up, pose provocative questions” (Woodhull 220). Culture creates and interrogates historical realities. I define culture as sets of practices that characterize how people interact with each other and their environment. I find cultural discourse emerging from the representation of these quotidian interactions. People articulate cultural discourses through particular uses of language—verbal, visual, musical, tactile. Cultural discourses construct the world through their representations. Therefore, the study of cultural discourse is an opportunity to examine the construction of the nation, regions, migrations, and globalization. Shaped by their historical context, cultural discourses illustrate political concerns at specific moments and locations. The historicized interrogation of cultural discourse can therefore address the political implications of prevailing representations, as well as alternative ones.

I analyze cultural discourses in literature, newspaper articles, cybernetic media, ethnic jokes, political writings, and social science research. The variety of primary texts allows me to place different media in dialogue with each other. In this manner, I can better understand how cultural discourses are negotiated in a specific setting. My training as a literary scholar informs the close readings of non-literary texts as I seek to unravel their discursive constitution of migrant and national subjects. In my analysis I keep in mind the formalistic and practical concerns of each media in order to comprehend its political implications. I ask myself questions, such as: Is the text an opinion piece for a newspaper, the product of journalistic research, or a document put together by a grassroots organization? How does the text engage with a series of cultural discourses? Does it embrace a prevailing discourse? How is the text negotiating various readings of



the nation, migrations, or globalization?

Though I include a variety of cultural texts, literature, in its narrative form, functions as the constant factor throughout the dissertation. Its centrality is in response to the particular characteristics of literary narratives as sites of production of cultural discourse. Literary texts represent the simultaneous articulation of a multiplicity of discourses in the everyday. The consequent dialogue among discourses in a narrative illustrates contradictions and limitations of certain understandings of the world. For the purposes of the dissertation, I explore how literature represents discursive struggles over the imagination of Antillean nations, and, consequently, of the Caribbean as a region. Moreover, literary subjectivities and storylines place individuals in the midst of historical events allowing engagement with potentialities hidden in the past, the present, or the future.

Other disciplines provide analysis of the individual subject and of society. But fictionalized literary characters allow the quotidian implications of political, economic, and cultural processes for a subject to be imagined without having to rely on fact. Literature rehearses ways of being and interpreting the world through fictional representations. Literature can imagine histories and subjects that have not been materialized or that have been historically excluded from prevalent imaginations of the nation, the region, and globalization.

Moreover, the study of literary conventions and concerns in various time periods allows me to speak of historical transformations. Literary narratives can complicate the storylines employed to justify political and economic projects. The four novels, the short story, and the autobiography under examination often engage with contradictory accounts of the same events found in historical and journalistic narratives. These narratives'

engagement with history and literary traditions allow me to illustrate how cultural discourses on the nation ascribed to the past play a significant role in the present. In particular, I take into account the place of Caribbean literatures in nation-building projects in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. My approach to literary texts reflects historical shifts in the state's interest in developing a national project through literature. This dissertation suggests that regional integration through globalization reiterates the exclusionary mechanisms embedded in cultural discourses of the nation. As a result, a racialized regionalist imaginary is produced by processes of globalization.

### **Chapters**

This dissertation starts by examining cultural texts of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. The first two chapters analyze how cultural discourses on the nation racialize migrants and locals in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico in the midst of globalization. These chapters establish the terms of the comparison by stating how race operates in these locations and the particular manifestation of globalization in each territory. The third chapter compares novels canonized in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic in the nineteen-thirties. I highlight how the cultural discourses examined in the first chapters owe their basic premises to a previous moment of nation-building. Unraveling the contradictions of these texts, I seek analytical tools that may shed light on the contradictions of the present. The last chapter examines the writings of advocates of Pan-Antillean political projects in the second-half of the nineteenth century. The final chapter provides an examination of Pan-Antillean projects that questions their equation with globalization in political and academic discourse.

The first chapter, "Crossing the Border: Haitian Migrants in the Dominican

Republic,” illustrates that late nineteenth-century discourses on the nation continue to racialize local and migrant subjects. I examine the novels Solo falta que llueva by Dominican writer Santiago Estrella Veloz and The Farming of Bones by Haitian-American writer Edwidge Danticat. I show how these novels constitute national and migrant subjects, while narrativizing histories of Haitian-Dominican relations. In order to establish their contribution to public discussions, a variety of narratives of Haitian-Dominican relations in the island are traced through the study of journalistic pieces and academic work. The novels under examination engage with the dominant trope of the Haitian migrant as invader, as well as with state-sponsored narratives of Haitian-Dominican collaboration. Their analysis shows how the nation plays a significant role in the imagination of neoliberalized spaces and of their workforces. In addition, visions of transnationalism that differ from those dominant in media and the discourse of the state are highlighted.

The second chapter, “Crossing the Mona Channel: Dominican Migrants in Puerto Rico,” argues that dominant representations of living and working spaces in Puerto Rico inform the racialization of Dominicans in the island. I chose to study the short story “Retrato de un dominicano” by Puerto Rican Magaly García Ramis and the autobiographical text Mona, canal de la muerte by Dominican Luis Freites to examine the persistent literary motif of the Dominican male who migrates to Puerto Rico and then moves to the U.S. mainland. My literary analysis suggests that the racialization of the Dominican in Puerto Rico is constituted by discourses on class, race, place, masculinity, and criminality circulating in the transnational population flow between the island and the United States. The analysis refers to ethnic jokes and newspaper articles to gain the

analytical tools needed to understand Dominican and Puerto Rican subjects articulated in the literary texts. In this manner, I produce a coherent view of the contradictions informing expressions of solidarity and xenophobia towards Dominican migrants in a neoliberalized island.

The second chapter also compares narratives about Haitian migration and Dominican migration. I consider how the racialization of Dominicans and their participation in the Puerto Rican economy roughly resembles discourses surrounding Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic. The comparison shows that cultural discourses on the nation are re-articulated within neoliberalism, even if it is different according to location. The political independence of the Dominican Republic and the status of Puerto Rico as a U.S. territory inform their particular experiences of neoliberalization. In this manner, the construction of a racialized regional hierarchy within neoliberalized islands is made evident.

The third chapter, “Imagining the Landscape of the Nation in 1930s Novelas de la Caña,” illustrates how the Dominican and Puerto Rican nations were imagined in cultural texts canonized by nation-building projects in the nineteen-thirties. The canonization of these novels suggested that they be read as authentic representations of the nation, or, at least, what it ought to be. The third chapter examines how Over by Dominican Ramón Marrero Aristy and La Lllamarada by Puerto Rican Enrique Laguerre imagine the ideal national subject and a national landscape transformed by sugarcane plantations. Through literary analysis, I show that cultural discourses sponsored by the state privileging the white Hispanicity of the nation in the past continue to shape the present. These historical concerns with the nation and race have not been overcome by globalization. The image

of the plantation as representative of U.S. imperialist interests in the Caribbean presents a set of questions for the reader. These historical images can be read as productive sites for analysis to better understand the present: Do hierarchies found in contemporary workspaces resemble the societal structures of the plantation? Has the hegemonic position of the U.S. as economic investor in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico remained unchallenged? Past representations of U.S. intervention in the Caribbean as imperialism complicate contemporary transnational collaborations between the Caribbean and its Northern neighbor. Though the discourse of globalization celebrates transnationalism, cultural discourse reveals the contemporary marginal condition of Antillean labor in the world economy, as well as the subordination of Antillean territories to transnational capital, do not differ greatly from early twentieth-century experiences of U.S. imperialism.

The fourth chapter, “Las Dos Antillas: Regionalist Writings by Ramón E. Betances and Gregorio Luperón,” invokes analytical tools from the past to state the implications of equating globalization with Caribbean regionalist projects. I examine Notas Autobiográficas y Apuntes Históricos by Dominican Gregorio Luperón and various political statements by Puerto Rican Ramón E. Betances. These two writers were nineteenth-century proponents of an Antillean Confederation. I argue that celebrations of globalization in the Caribbean emerge out of a historical idealization of regionalist projects such as those undertaken by these authors. However, my analysis of Betances’ and Luperón’s writings demystifies their projects. In addition, the analysis highlights stark differences between the anti-colonial and anti-slavery politics informing their proposals at the time and the experiences of Antilleans in neoliberal economies. The anti-

colonial and anti-slavery racial politics that have immortalized these proposals are not embedded in globalization. This chapter poses the possibility of imagining regionalisms that do not rely on the logic of neoliberalism. The recent experiences of Haitians migrating to the Dominican Republic and Dominicans migrating to Puerto Rico illustrate that the neoliberalization of the Antilles has not resulted in overcoming histories of colonialism and exploitation of racialized labor.

## Notes - Introduction

<sup>1</sup> CARICOM's members are: Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Belize, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. Its associate members are: Anguila, Bermuda, British Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, and Turks and Caicos Islands.

<sup>2</sup> Rubén Silié frames conversations about the Haitian-Dominican border in a volume produced after the "Seminario Internacional hacia una nueva visión de la frontera y de las relaciones fronterizas" ("International Seminar towards a New Vision of the Border and Frontier Relations") (Santo Domingo, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> In their introduction to Globalization and Race (North Carolina: Duke, 2006), editors Kamari Maxine Clarke and Deborah Thomas discuss how the fields of anthropology and cultural studies initially tended to celebrate globalization for its apparent rejection of nationalism and its related modes of oppression.

<sup>4</sup> In World Bank Literature (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2003), see Amitava Kumar and Phillip Wegner commenting on how we must discuss the political implications of globalization's representation. Understanding globalization as *a fait accompli* or a natural outcome does not allow us to see its internal contradictions or view other alternatives.

<sup>5</sup> Some examples of academics that have addressed the issue of U.S. hegemony in the context of globalization are: Fredric Jameson (Durham: Duke, 1998); Kamari Maxine Clarke and Deborah A. Thomas (Durham: Duke, 2006); Giovanni Arrighi (New York: Routledge, 2005); and David Harvey (New York: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> As the literary texts under consideration attest, understandings of the United States as a hegemonic nation-state in the configuration of past and contemporary political and economic dynamics rely on a variety of approaches. For example, discussing the present, Harvey speaks of an imperialist project based on coercion, instead of relying on the production of consent; Arrighi underlines the usefulness of the world-systems perspective and its focus on a core-periphery structure that, according to him, has not been superseded; and Philip McMichael discusses globalization, with respect to Development Studies, as another manifestation of capitalism and colonial projects, as well as a class-political project. My analysis of cultural discourse contributes to these discussions by exploring how U.S. hegemony is enabled by the discourse of globalization as well as cultural imaginings of resistance to the political and economic systems of domination described by scholars, such as those previously mentioned. The usual absence of cultural analysis from political-economic approaches ignores the manner in which cultural discourse functions to reproduce hegemonic structures and resist them.

<sup>7</sup> See Gautam Premnath (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2003). Premnath discusses how claims of national sovereignty continue to be a mode to struggle against U.S. attempts to intervene in the political and economic life of the Caribbean. Even if those claims are considered to be more "fiction" than reality due to the fact that many have had to submit themselves to the dictates of international financing institutions, nationalist discourses have been successfully employed to struggle against certain policies. I agree with Premnath. Using the nation as a political paradigm may provide language and mechanisms to combat the assumption of globalization. However, I also suggest that there is a need to understand how the nation and its cultural discourses can also be accomplices of globalization.

<sup>8</sup> For example, see Aihwa Ong (Durham: Duke, 1999) and Michel Rolph Trouillot (New York: Palgrave, 2003).

<sup>9</sup> Kamari Maxine Clarke and Deborah A. Thomas discuss the need to address the configuration of race in studies of globalization (Durham: Duke, 2006: 2). Their claim seems to be justified by the volume Critical Globalization Studies, where only two pieces concentrate on the analysis of racial discourse (New York: Routledge,

2005). The volume Globalization and Race attempts to fill a gap in the scholarship. The articles published describe the cultural production of blackness, its meaning, in a variety of spaces. This dissertation also engages with processes of racialization, and imaginings of blackness. However, I seek to uncover how globalization itself is constituted by a series of racial practices that reproduce political and economic hierarchies.

<sup>10</sup> See David Harvey (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

<sup>11</sup> See Suzanne Bergeron (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2003). She argues that the World Bank constructs a narrative of inclusion in response to the marginal position of women, indigenous peoples, and ethnic minorities in the world economy. Her analysis of the World Bank's policies regarding women, especially those in rural areas, or identified as indigenous or ethnic minorities, demonstrates that the assumptions of the narrative of inclusion is that if they become neoliberal subjects—consumers and producers of transnational capital—a better future awaits.

<sup>12</sup> See Vijay Prashad (Social Analysis 49.2) for a discussion about the joint consolidation of neoliberalism and multiculturalism in the U.S. Prashad argues that while Civil Rights movements in the U.S. celebrated their victories in the nineteen-seventies, the state itself was depriving itself of the resources that would be required to address the histories of socio-economic inequities that produced the movements in the first place. The celebratory character of multiculturalism assures the consent of the “people” with the neoliberalization or the demise of the welfare state in the United States. By incorporating a celebration of cultural difference in its rhetoric, the state seems to have also prioritized the historical economic marginalization of racialized minorities.

<sup>13</sup> See Shalini Puri (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) on multiculturalism, corporations, and the popularity of discourses on hybridity. She argues that the cultural hybridity symbolized by the ‘global village’ provides an enabling discourse for the aggressive economic expansion of capital.

<sup>14</sup> Benedict Anderson's description of nations as “imagined communities,” though having received various productive critiques, addresses the construction of national entities through its imagination (London: Verso, 1983). In his introduction, Anderson characterizes the nation, and those whom it claims to represent, as always *limited* (his italics) or, in other words, always defined by boundaries that distinguish it from other cultural and political entities. Etienne Balibar (London: Verso, 1991) has described racism and nationalism overlapping in the constitution of nation-states. The overlap of racism and nationalism limits the territory and people identified with the nation-state (49). An exclusionary logic is produced with the nation itself.

<sup>15</sup> For a more detailed discussion about the racialization framework, see Stephen Small's “The contours of racialization” (Blackwell, 1999).

<sup>16</sup> Carlton Floyd in his dissertation, “Wish You Were Not Here” (University of California, San Diego, 2002), prefers the term identification, instead of identity, to recognize that racialized categories are “mark [s] placed upon a person, place, or thing that is separate from the body so marked” (11). For me, identification entails a recognition of the process of racialization, the imposition of a constructed racialized category upon a body, and the possibility of other forms of imposed or self identification in combination with gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and class.

<sup>17</sup> Etienne Balibar (London: Verso, 1991) discusses the expression of anti-immigrant sentiment in France. He argues that affirmations of cultural difference are deployed to state the impossibility of coexisting with immigrants, even those who have emigrated from former-French colonies. Their cultural difference becomes a way to mark their foreignness and racialization. I undertake a similar discussion in the context of the Caribbean, where migrants move to territories that have colonized others, as well as to territories that have been colonized.

<sup>18</sup> Processes of mestizaje are not narrated in the same manner everywhere nor produce homogeneity amongst Latin American nations. In order to understand how intra-Caribbean migrants are racialized, I examine how representations of processes of mestizaje vary according to location.



<sup>19</sup> Terms such as mestizo and mulatto are often employed to convey the idea of nations that have undergone miscegenation. I would rather use the term “mixed national body” to avoid the dismissal of racialized ethnic groups in the Americas that would entail the use of either one of these terms. It is a “national body” because the idea of a “mixed nation” directly refers to biological/physical miscegenation between peoples who are identified with different racialized groups because of their phenotypical attributes.

<sup>20</sup> For a discussion on mestizaje as a discourse that perpetuates the marginality of non-white identified populations: Peter Wade’s discussion on state policies towards peoples of African and indigenous descent in Latin America (London: Pluto Press), the introduction to the volume Race and Nation in Modern Latin America edited by Nancy P. Appelbaum, Anne S. Macpherson, Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2003), Arlene Dávila’s book Sponsored Identities (Philadelphia, Temple, 1997), and Denise Ferreira da Silva’s chapter “Tropical Democracy” (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> The term “hispanidad” (“Hispanicity”) refers to cultural practices associated with Spain, such as Catholicism and Spanish language. It often entails imagining a connection between Spain and Latin America based on a shared Hispanic heritage.

<sup>22</sup> The term criollo refers to white-identified elites in Spanish America.

<sup>23</sup> Elites have benefitted from the articulation of narratives of mestizaje. However, I recognize that the production of racial meaning is contingent upon negotiations of power within a political system. Also, as Appelbaum, Macpherson, and Rosemblatt state, narratives of mestizaje have been articulated by marginalized peoples in empowering and disempowering ways (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina, 2003). This dissertation explores a variety of representations of racial imaginings of the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, and how these may reproduce marginality. The cultural texts analyzed represent how racial meaning is negotiated in cultural discourse.

<sup>24</sup> Research on race and mestizaje has recognized how U.S. imperialism towards the Caribbean and Latin America has informed racial discourse in these regions. For instance, see Aims McGuinness’s “Searching for ‘Latin America’: Race and Sovereignty in the Americas in the 1850s” (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina, 2003), Juan Gelpí’s Literatura y paternalismo en Puerto Rico (San Juan: UPR, 1993), and Luis Martínez-Fernández’s Torn Between Empires: Economy, Society, and Patterns of Political Thought in the Hispanic Caribbean, 1840-1878. (Athens: U of Georgia Press, 1994).

<sup>25</sup> For other examples of how references to crime, poverty, and cultural deficiency can signify racial difference, see: Robin Kelley’s writings (Beacon, 1998) on the criminalization of African Americans; Balibar’s (London: Verso, 1991) assertion regarding the imagination of Arabs as criminals and criminals as Arabs in France; Arlene Torres’ Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1998) description of how impoverished communities are racialized in Puerto Rico; and Ferreira da Silva’s (Minneapolis: Minnesota, 2007) analysis of the criminalization and blackening of poor Brazilian communities.

<sup>26</sup> Considering Denise Ferreira da Silva’s (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2007) argument about how the racial governs global power structures in the present will be useful to further develop the arguments of this dissertation with regards to what I conceptualize as a racial geopolitical hierarchy of nations and regions.

<sup>27</sup> See Ramón Grosfoguel (Berkeley: University of California, 2003), and Kamari Maxine Clarke and Deborah Thomas (North Carolina: Duke, 2006) for assessments of political-economic and culturalist academic approaches to globalization.

## CHAPTER ONE

### **Crossing the Border: Haitian Migrants in the Dominican Republic**

Since the 1970s and 1980s, the defining mechanisms of neoliberalism—privatization of natural resources, exorbitant external debt, free trade agreements, outsourcing of labor, and open border policies—have been felt in the island comprised of Haiti, to the west, and the Dominican Republic, to the east. In this context, interactions between the populations of Haiti and the Dominican Republic often respond to cross-border political organizing or neoliberal projects that restate the geographical unity of the island, as well as to nationalist histories that underline differences between the countries. The convergence of nationalist and transnationalist paradigms in narratives of Haitian-Dominican relations poses the question: What is the place of the nation within globalization?

The texts under consideration provide contradictory answers to this question. On one hand, media coverage of state practices illustrates that official narratives imagine a present and future characterized by neoliberal transnationalism. Literary texts question the nation-state for its corruption and inability to provide for those who inhabit it. On the other hand, the nation is reasserted in literature and social scientific research. Its racial discourses are pervasively reproduced through representations of Haitians as invaders, despite their historical contributions and ties to the Dominican Republic. And nationalist anti-imperialist politics call attention to the continuation of U.S. hegemony in the Caribbean. These contradictions are not coincidences. They unveil gaps and contradictions within the celebratory discourse of globalization. The nation, and its exclusionary logic, has not been superseded, but rather it mediates the relationship

between capital and workers. Racialized inequality persists in neoliberal transnational projects, despite multiculturalist claims. And, imperialism is not a system of governance of the past.

Though I address these contradictions in this chapter, through the analysis of literature, writings by social scientists, and media, I emphasize how Dominican national discourse racializes people of Haitian descent. In this manner, I suggest that the integration of the island in a neoliberal market is characterized by racialized imaginations of the inhabitants of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. This chapter identifies discourses on the nation dating back to the nineteenth-century appearing in late twentieth and early twenty-first century representations of Haitian migrants located in the Dominican Republic. The Hispanicization/whitening of the Dominican Republic and the Africanization/blackening of Haiti by colonial powers shapes the experiences of these migrants in a neoliberalized economy. Narratives that in the nineteenth century supported an intrinsic racial difference between Haitians and Dominicans continue to explain why Haiti is blamed for social problems in the Dominican Republic. Those narratives have justified internal hierarchies in the Dominican Republic that demonize Haitian migrants and Haitian-Dominicans as black invaders and that reject black-identified Dominicans from the composition of the nation. Their blackening, and assumed racial inferiority and backwardness, have historically operated to justify their exploitation in the workforce. The racialization of people of Haitian descent by dominant national discourses, as well as their assumed undocumented status, helps cheapen their labor in a neoliberalized economy.

## Haitian Migration? Invasión pacífica?: Media and Literature

In order to underline how discourses on the nation are embedded in globalization, I explore contemporary references to the nineteenth-century narrative of a Haitian “invasión pacífica” (pacific invasion) in the Dominican Republic. According to the narrative of the pacific invasion, Haiti will arguably achieve the unification of the island through an invasion of the Dominican Republic undertaken by its migrants.<sup>1</sup> My analysis of newspapers, online publications, and social scientific research examines how intra-island relations are imagined within a neoliberalized island. My approach seeks re-articulations or alternatives to the narrative of the pacific invasion. In this manner, I foreground the historical and discursive context of the literary texts. The novels The Farming of Bones (1998) by Haitian American writer Edwidge Danticat and Dominican-born Santiago Estrella Veloz’s Solo Falta que Llueva (It Only Needs to Rain) (2002) respond to the contemporary racialization of Haitian migrants as invaders of the Dominican Republic. These novels provide a useful site for examining how debates regarding Haitian-Dominican relations negotiate discourses on the nation. The particular subjectivities, story lines, and formalistic components of the novels speak to concerns regarding the significance and questioning of the nation as the island is globalized. The literary texts under examination illustrate that discourses on the racial demographics of the Dominican nation mark Haitians as racially different. At the same time, nationalism seems to inform anti-imperialist politics that target processes of globalization.

Dominant narratives of intra-island relations are shaped by the ideological construct of *antihaitianismo* in the Dominican Republic, which is marked by a privileging of a Hispanic notion of *dominicanidad*. Dominicanidad is conceived as a

national identity characterized by the Spanish language, Catholicism, and Hispanic traditions. It is a racialized construct constituted by nineteenth-century narratives of *mestizaje*, whitening, and Hispanicity. As a national discourse, *mestizaje* acknowledges the presence of non-white identified populations in Latin America, but asserts the cultural, and sometimes biological, supremacy of “white/Hispanic” heritages. In the Dominican Republic, a myth of racial democracy was consolidated in the early twentieth century based on an official recognition of *mestizaje* (miscegenation). This myth serves to dismiss racialized social inequities and racial conflict, and to assert the Hispanicized character of *dominicanidad* in opposition to Haitianness.

The widespread dis-identification of Dominican national discourse with blackness informs the racialization of Haitian migrants as black invaders who will corrupt the Hispanic civilization of the Dominican Republic.<sup>2</sup> The 1822 unification of the island by Haiti, which lasted until 1844 due to Dominican resistance, is the historical referent most commonly cited to justify the fear of an invasion. Dominican historical and literary accounts—such as the tradition “Las Vírgenes de Galindo” (1891) by César Nicolás Penson—tended to depict the annexation as a violent event, the “rape” of the national land, and the source of suffering of Dominicans under the barbaric rule of Haiti. The narrative of the pacific invasion has justified state violence against Haitians. The 1937 Massacre was one of the most remarkable attacks on populations of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic. The Dominican army presided over by Rafael L. Trujillo undertook the murder of thousands of Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans. In a political context marked by assertions of Haitian-Dominican collaboration in the globalization of the island, state violence against communities of Haitian descent continues, and the

narrative of the pacific invasion is re-articulated in media.

For example, the article *Hay que defender el país* (2004) asserts the need to defend the country from Haitians, while differentiating the inhabitants of the western and eastern parts of the island. The whitening qualities of miscegenation are considered an improvement of the racial composition of the Dominican Republic:

La República Dominicana es un país de mulattos cuya coloración cutánea va desde la canela—en diversas gradaciones—hasta el marrón-negro. Aquí todos estamos mezclados, hasta quienes lucen blancos, como yo. Eso ofrece grandes ventajas, porque es de las fusiones de donde nace la mejoría racial y el aumento de la capacidad. (10)

The Dominican Republic is a mulatto country whose skin coloration goes from cinnamon—of different degrees—to brown-black. Here we are all mixed, even those who look white, like me. That offers great advantages, because it is through fusions that racial improvement and growth in capacity are born.

In the cited description of a multi-polar racial identification system based on skin color, the writer starts with *canela* (cinnamon) and ends with *marrón-negro* (brown-black), but not black. The mixed Dominican body can contain blackness, but cannot be black in the same way the Haitian body and its cultural and political practices are:

Fieles a remotos hábitos de cultivo, comprensibles en las extensiones territoriales africanas, pero insensatas en Haití, han arrasado su suelo. La crueldad de sus gobernantes ha continuado igual que la de los jefes tribales africanos. (10)

Loyalty to remote agricultural habits, understandable in African territorial extensions, but nonsensical in Haiti, have destroyed their soil. The cruelty of their rulers has continued just like the African tribal chiefs.

In contradistinction to Haiti, the Dominican Republic is represented as a place where people of all shades coexist in a “civilized” manner—implicitly affirming the existence of a racial democracy—due to racial mixture.

The lack of a process of whitening explains the economic marginalization of Haiti, according to the author: “nuestros vecinos representan una fuerza compacta, orgullosa de su negritude y su cultura Africana, de su vudú y su magia, hasta de su miseria” (“our neighbors represent a compact force, proud of its blackness and African culture, of its voodoo and magic, even of its misery”) (10). In the end, Haitians are also blamed for their exploitation in work sites in the Dominican Republic. Their proclaimed capacity to work without rest, accept low salaries, sleep on the floor, and eat meagerly explain their increasing numbers in various occupations, and the consequent unemployment of Dominicans who are forced to abandon the island. The writer calls for the defense of the national territory based on colonial notions of blackness, the whitened character of *dominicanidad*, and the alleged invasion of work spaces.

Ernesto Sagás, in his book Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic, asserts that *antihaitianismo* is not only the product of racism (124). I agree with him acknowledging that *antihaitianismo* is in essence an elitist discourse employed to undermine efforts to improve the living conditions of working classes: “*antihaitianismo* has had one main objective: the protection of powerful personal and elite interests through the subjugation of the lower (and darker) sectors of the Dominican population ... Prejudice and racism—as expressed through *antihaitianismo* ideology—distract attention from class and economic issues” (Sagás 119). Moreover, due to the depiction of the Dominican Republic as a racial democracy, it has entailed the production of seemingly non-racist nationalist narratives based on history. However, the imagination of the Haitian as invader reveals a racialized understanding of his subjectivity.

## Migration and Globalization

The racialization of Haitian migrants and their characterization as invaders ignores their significant contributions to the Dominican economy. Since the nineteenth-century, sugar cane plantations have recruited Haitian workers. Today, most workers at Dominican *bateyes* are Haitians or descendants of Haitians or Haitian-Dominicans. Their labor is relevant because their lack of rights and benefits augments the profits of the investors in an industry that is no longer competitive (Martínez 2). People of Haitian descent have been forcefully recruited and sent to government-owned and private plantations (Martínez 9). Today the recruitment of Haitian workers continues to happen in the form of illegal trafficking of Haitians who cross the border or of people who are lured by recruiters' false promises (Polanco 37). However, changes in the economy of the Dominican Republic and Haiti in the past thirty years have prompted the creation of other work spaces for Haitians and Dominicans and other migratory trends.

According to La nueva inmigración by Ruben Silié, Carlos Dore Cabral, and Carlos Segura, a large portion of these workers are the urban proletariat and the lower middle classes escaping political turbulence and economic problems in overcrowded urban centers in Haiti. Dominicans also migrate from the countryside to the cities and abroad. La nueva inmigración affirms that

El nuevo modelo [el neoliberal] concentraba el crecimiento esencialmente en las zonas urbanas; lo cual desata, en los años ochenta, el fuerte proceso de migración interna, con una fuerte tendencia de emigración al exterior, dejando espacios para la inmigración haitiana en la agricultura no tradicional, en los trabajos urbanos como las obras públicas, la construcción de viviendas, el turismo y el sector informal, en variadas actividades. (66)

The new model [the neoliberal one] concentrated growth essentially in



urban zones; which promotes, in the eighties, the strong process of internal migration, with a strong tendency towards migration abroad, leaving spaces for Haitian immigration in non-traditional agriculture, in urban work like public works, the construction of houses, tourism and the informal sector, in a variety of activities.

In addition, according to the Haitian-Dominican Cultural Center, approximately half of the workers in Dominican free trade zones are Haitian-Dominicans (“Constituyen” 23). Haitian workers then have occupied positions available in non-sugar cane related economic sectors due to Dominican migratory patterns, but also because their undocumented condition—or the common assumption of the illegality of people of Haitian descent—provides the means for their exploitation.

The neoliberalization that has integrated Haitian migrants in the world economy took place in Haiti and the Dominican Republic at times when both countries faced the weight of their external debts. Amalia Cabezas in “Women’s Work is Never Done: Sex Tourism in Sosúa, the Dominican Republic” asserts that “After three decades of employing the import substitution model of industrialization, in the 1960s international donor agencies urged the country to abandon this model and pursue the tourism route toward economic growth” (94). By 1999, tourism produced thirteen percent of the Gross Domestic Product of the Dominican Republic. In the nineteen-eighties austerity measures recommended by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were implemented and Free Trade Zones (FTZs) established in national territory. On the other hand, Haiti fully entered the global market after the fall of Jean Claude Duvalier’s regime in 1986 when the Haitian economy underwent a neoliberalization process following the recommendations of the World Bank, USAID, and the IMF. Haiti was required to abandon import-substitution policies and to open its border to subsidized imports without

restrictions. In both countries, rural-urban migratory trends and migration abroad increased during this period.

The globalization of the island has also required cross-border economic collaborations. The inter-ethnic experiences of Dominicans and Haitians and the recent partnership of Haiti and the Dominican Republic in neoliberal economic enterprises have shaped recent approaches to the border and to Haitian-Dominican relations. Through a brief analysis of social scientific research, newspaper articles, and online publications, I identify three narratives of contemporary Haitian-Dominican relations: acculturation, neoliberal multiculturalism, and Haitian-Dominican collaboration, which speak to the narrative of the pacific invasion.<sup>3</sup> My analysis does not preclude the existence of other narratives. Its purpose is not comprehensive, but rather to illuminate my reading of the literary texts taking into account their relevance within public discussions of Haitian-Dominican relations more or less contemporary to their publication and distribution. These novels dialogue with cultural discourses articulated in non-literary texts that undermine the narrative of the pacific invasion and imagine a place for the nation in globalization.

In the Dominican Republic, attempts have been made to defend the civil rights of people of Haitian descent through academic research. One example is the narrative of acculturation in the aforementioned book La nueva inmigración (2002). Rubén Silié, Carlos Segura, and Carlos Dore Cabral undertake a research project to find which sectors of the Dominican labor market are often occupied by workers of Haitian descent, how they are exploited for their undocumented condition, and to what degree they could be considered Dominicans in order to assert their right to proper documentation. Their

argument about the civil rights of peoples of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic relies on the acculturation of Haitians in Dominican society, which erases the cultural markers of their Haitianness and proves their *dominicanidad*. For the purposes of the study, these academics interviewed Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans about their linguistic and religious practices implicitly equating *dominicanidad* with Catholicism and Spanish, while identifying Haitianness with Creole, Vodou, and gagá.<sup>4</sup>

The recollection of data does not acknowledge the participation of Dominicans in vodou and gagá rituals or the coexistence of cultural practices identified with both countries. The data analysis makes evident the limitations of the project by downplaying the number of Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans who continue to practice vodou and gagá in order to sustain the acculturation argument: “las informaciones recopiladas por la encuesta que sirve de base a este estudio indica que la mayoría de los descendientes haitianos nacidos en República Dominicana son cristianos, sobre todo católicos, y que, sólo una minoría participa en los ritos de vudú y en las ceremonias de gagá” (“the information collected by the survey that serves as the foundation of this study indicates that the majority of descendants of Haitians born in the Dominican Republic, are mostly Catholic, and that, only a minority participates in the rites of vodou and the ceremonies of gagá”) (164). By arguing that a minority of their interviewees, instead of almost half—44.4 percent practice gagá and 43.3 practice vodou (165)—engage in Haitian and Haitian-Dominican religious practices, the study pushes the argument of acculturation too far, which could be explained by its reliance on a Hispanicized idea of *dominicanidad*. I contend that without a critique of dominant understanding of *dominicanidad*, racialized forms of exclusion of Haitians from the nation and their

materialization in work sites cannot be adequately addressed.

Haitian activist Colette Lespinasse does engage critically with strict notions of *dominicanidad* and Haitianness. In her essay “Prácticas culturales de la frontera” (“Cultural practices of the border”) (2002) she identifies socio-cultural exchanges and constant crossings for recreational, religious, and social activities over the Haitian-Dominican border. If a Haitian-Dominican economy will be built, she claims that a recognition of cross-border cultural dynamics is necessary:

La integración de Haití y la República Dominicana en ese contexto de globalización pasará [. . .] Hasta ahora, estos dos países con un pasado colonial, han construido su vida a partir del malecón, es decir, del mar por donde venían los barcos, los colonos y los esclavos, pero ha llegado el momento de pensar el futuro no desde afuera, sino . . . de la frontera. En esa construcción, lo cultural es fundamental. (275)

The integration of Haiti and the Dominican Republic in that context of globalization will happen. [. . .] Until now, these two countries with a colonial past have constructed their life from the port, in other words, through the sea from where boats came, the colonizers and the slaves, but the time has come to think about the future not from outside, but rather . . . from the heart of the island, in other words, the border. In this construction, culture is essential.

Her proposal undermines a strict differentiation between Haitians and Dominicans, and critiques the persistence of a colonial history of racialized labor exploitation. Her reference to slavery and the boats of the Middle Passage signal a continuation of colonial racial prejudice in the present. She argues that the integration of the Dominican Republic and Haiti is inevitable within processes of globalization. She argues that integration should happen through the recognition of the shared cultural heritage of border communities. However, her acceptance of the integration of the island by globalization does not acknowledge the pitfalls of its neoliberal projects. For this reason, her approach

resembles what I call a neoliberal multicultural narrative. Respect for cultural differences and hybridity has become a mainstream discourse that characterizes efforts for global integration, while silencing at times critical assessments of the neoliberal agenda.

Official Haitian-Dominican efforts to ameliorate relations across the border tend to rely on neoliberal multicultural narratives. These narratives of Haitian-Dominican collaboration promote uncritically the neoliberal agenda or do not address the problems posed by neoliberalism. For example, the state-sponsored Comisión Mixta Bilateral (Bilateral Mixed Commission)—funded in 1996—and the “Seminario internacional hacia una nueva visión de la frontera y de las relaciones fronterizas” (“International Seminar Toward a New Vision of the Border and Frontier Relations”) (2001) have been official attempts to address controversies around Haitian-Dominican relations. Haitian and Dominican state officials involved in these efforts have mostly supported the economic development of the island through neoliberal policies. Haitian-Dominican efforts of economic collaboration during the first three years of Hipólito Mejía’s presidential term (2000-2003) were marked by a reliance on neoliberal strategies that have posited the Dominican Republic as the bridge between Haiti and international financing institutions:

El presidente Mejía se ha empeñado en promover dentro de la comunidad internacional la necesidad de que se apoye el desarrollo de Haití mediante la inversión en el desarrollo y muy específicamente, en un plan para la conversión de la deuda externa de ambos países en una inversión directa que apoye un programa binacional.

President Mejía has eagerly promoted within the international community the need to support the development of Haiti through investment in development and, more specifically, in a plan to turn the external debt of both countries into a direct investment that supports a bi-national program. (Silié “Aspectos” 5)

Aristide himself in a celebration of the bicentennial of the triumph of the Haitian

Revolution thanked Mejía in Spanish for his support of Haiti and treatment of the island as “un matrimonio sin divorcio” (“marriage without divorce”) (quoted in Vásquez par. 4). It is significant that official Dominican discourses do not assume an anti-Haitian stance that would seem archaic in a context marked by the paradigm of transnationalism. Haitian-Dominican collaboration has become the official slogan for both countries.

Some Dominican serial publications have published articles that assert shared religious, cultural, and class interests between Dominicans and people of Haitian descent. Two examples are “Gagá: una expression de vida que une dos culturas” (“Gagá: a expression of life that unites two cultures”) (2003) by Margarita Quiroz and “Virgen de la Altigracia une a los pobres de Haití y República Dominicana” (“Virgen of la Altigracia unites the poor of Haiti and the Dominican Republic”) (2003) by Pedro Ruquoy. Through descriptions of Haitian-Dominican religious traditions and Catholic rituals in various inter-ethnic communities, these articles dismantle discourses of cultural differences between Dominicans and Haitians and the respective blackening and whitening of these religious practices that are usually ascribed to one of the countries, but not both.

In addition, organizations and publications based on Haiti—often in collaboration with NGOs—are activated along with organizations in the Dominican Republic around issues of violence against people of Haitian descent in the island, workers’ rights across the border, and environmental matters.<sup>5</sup> In August 2005, the murder of three Haitians in the town of Haina, Dominican Republic, was the reason for the joint mobilization of MUDHA and Groupe d’Appui aux Rapatriés et Réfugiés (GARR or Support Group for Refugees and Repatriated Persons).<sup>6</sup> The online publication AlterPresse has also

documented Haitian-Dominican collaboration around the issue of migration in articles such as “Migration: Le GARR salue la decision de l’Eglise Catholique romaine” (“Migration: GARR recognizes the decision of the Roman Catholic Church”) by Lisane André, where the Catholic Church in both countries is congratulated for celebrating at the same time the *Journée National des Migrants et Réfugiés* (National Day of Immigrants and Refugees).<sup>7</sup> These publications suggest the existence of narratives of Haitian-Dominican relations that resist discourses of differentiation and of neoliberal cooperation.

### **Literary Interventions**

Narratives of acculturation, neoliberal multiculturalism, and Haitian-Dominican collaboration negotiate the place of the nation within contemporary transnational dynamics in the island. I argue that the novels Solo Falta que Llueva and The Farming of Bones speak to discursive struggles over the significance of the nation by engaging with depictions of the Haitian migrant as invader. They are in dialogue with the literary work of twentieth-century writers like Jacques Roumain, Jacques Stephen Alexis, Juan Bosch, Freddy Prestol Castillo, Jacques Viau Renaud, and Ramón Marrero Aristy. These writers represented, to different degrees, the experiences of people of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic.

More specifically, my analysis places Solo falta que llueva and The Farming of Bones in conversation with nationalist literary traditions in the Dominican Republic. The study of Estrella Veloz’s and Danticat’s novels allows me to highlight that contemporary representations of Haitian-Dominican relations are heirs of narratives tied to past processes of nation-building. While questioning the national project, both novels speak to

previous literary constructions of the Dominican Republic as a nation.<sup>8</sup> My analysis shows that these novels assert the significance of the nation and its historical construction, even when it is clear that transnational realities shape the subjects of the narratives.

The fact that these narratives take the form of novels is relevant because, within processes of nation-building in the Americas, the novel became the chosen genre to “rehearse models of the unity of nations” (Janer 5). In the first half of the twentieth century, the state sponsored the canonization of novels considered to be representative of the nation-in-formation in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. In the third chapter, I analyze two novels canonized in the nineteen-thirties, Over by Dominican Ramón Marrero Aristy, and La Lllamarada by Puerto Rican Enrique Laguerre. Canonical readings of these novels make their analysis useful in terms of illustrating how the genre operated within nation-building projects in these locations. The canonical novel was understood as a vision of the national culture and how the nation must imagine itself with respect to other countries. It represented the perils of imperialism and U.S. intervention and the need to enforce a real political, economic, and cultural independence.

The novels previously adopted by national projects were often linear, realist, and developmental narratives attempting to capture the cultural and demographic essence of the nation, and imagine a productive and independent national family. These narratives corresponded with the faith Latin American nation-states placed in the first-half of the twentieth century in nationalist narratives of economic development. Nonetheless, as Analisa Taylor suggests, “just as the concept of ‘national economy’ sounds anachronistic to us today, the concept of ‘national culture’ which had become so central to our



understanding of Latin American literary and artistic expression has entered an equally nebulous phase” (Taylor 78).<sup>9</sup> The dominant paradigm of transnationalism in the nineteen-nineties and the twenty-first century has turned obsolete, to some extent, state affirmations of the need to protect the nation as political, economic, and cultural agent.<sup>10</sup> Though political campaigns in the Americas still rely on nationalist appeal, the state does not seem to require a symbolic justification of its praxis and identification with the people by sponsoring cultural production such as novels.<sup>11</sup> It has been argued that the concerns of literary production have also changed.

In “Neoliberal Noir: Contemporary Central American Crime Fiction as Social Criticism,” Milos Kokotovich addresses what he sees as a shift in post-war Central American literatures within neoliberalism:

Rather than addressing collective problems and social struggles or exalting the heroic sacrifices made in the present to bring about a better, more egalitarian future for all, postwar works focus on individual desires, passions, and struggles for survival in violent postwar societies with only a grim future. (4)

Kokotovich’s assessment of what he defines as neoliberal noir in Central American literature provide a fruitful start for my literary analysis. The two novels considered in this chapter share three of the characteristics of “neoliberal noir”: disillusionment with the state, their emphasis on the representation and fate of individuals not of a collective, and their denial of an imagined brighter outcome. In this manner, they do not assume the role that the novel has had in the past in the constitution of the nation.<sup>12</sup> These novels imagine the nation-state as a corrupted, repressive, unredeemable organism. The cultural unity that used to justify its existence in previous narratives is put into question. The representation of the individual predominates over any aesthetic interest in describing

and narrating the nation or collective. However, I argue that, despite these novels' questioning of the nation, they articulate the uncomfortable, yet significant, space of the national in the political, economic, and cultural praxis of globalization.

### **Solo falta que llueva**

For instance, the novel Solo Falta que Llueva reiterates the trope of the Haitian as invader that has characterized Dominican canonical nationalist traditions. The narration warns the reader against the integration of Haitians in Dominican society, attempts to recognize blackness as an attribute of *dominicanidad*, and presents cross-border political work that calls attention to the discrimination of Haitians in the Dominican Republic. In a didactic tone, its narrator denounces the exploitation of Dominican resources by transnational companies. Similar to dominant narratives of the nineteen-thirties and nineteen-forties, the novel assumes a nationalist position with regards to Haiti and the United States. Nonetheless, the usual narrative of the pacific invasion is transformed. In the novel the alleged Haitian invasion is imagined as an imperialist strategy of the U.S., Canada, and France in the context of globalization. And, despite its literary concern with the integrity of the nation, the novel is marked by the narrator's skepticism regarding the nation's survival and moral integrity.

The novel consists of a first-person narration by the main protagonist, Dominican writer Homero. The story takes place in the Dominican Republic at the dawn of the twenty-first century. At the beginning of the novel, Homero accompanies North American Giselle on a road trip from the city of Santo Domingo to the countryside to visit her friend Rita Moinard. Upon their arrival, they hear of Moinard's disappearance. Afterwards, Homero gathers information about Rita Moinard's work with *la Trilogía* as

part of a plot to unite both sides of the island. *La Trilogía* is an organization, composed of people of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic, whose purpose is to undertake the unification of the island as planned by Haiti, the United States, Canada, and France. *La Trilogía* is not clearly described in the narrative. The reader only learns that it is constituted by the aforementioned countries. Its intention is to unify the two countries found in the island. Businessman Martín Marín investigates the plot on his own, falls under a spell, and ends up in an asylum for the mentally ill. After providing Marín with information about *la Trilogía*, Moinard is assassinated. Homero investigates the conspiracy, the fate of its victims, and writes a narrative based on his compiled facts.

The narration is characterized by a didactic tone that can be traced to its description on the book's cover: "Una trama política que recrea el debatido tema de la migración haitiana hacia la República Dominicana, escrita sin prejuicios, con el convincente punto de vista de todos los involucrados" ("A political plot that recreates the debated theme of Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic, written without prejudices, with the convincing point of view of all of those involved"). The novel is sold as an unbiased narrative of Haitian-Dominican relations that gives equal weight to different points of view on the subject-matter. In addition, the back cover description of the writer Estrella Veloz as a journalist adds an aura of objectivity to the novel. It emphasizes Veloz's recognition in national and international forums for his journalistic work. Moreover, his journalistic research on Haitians in the Dominican Republic has been published in various magazines and newspapers in the island since the 1990s.<sup>13</sup>

Claiming objectivity, the publicity for the text does not acknowledge the novel's emphasis on the threat of a Haitian invasion. The magazine *Ahora*, in its section of

recommended books, describes the novel in one sentence: “Rita Moinard es un personaje de “Sólo falta que llueva” y testigo de la existencia de una organización llamada La Trilogía, cuya misión fundamental es organizar a sus miembros para que se infiltren en todas las instituciones del Estado” (“Rita Moinard is a character of ‘Sólo Falta que Llueva’ and witness of the existence of an organization called *la Trilogía*, whose fundamental mission is to organize its members”) (“Solo” par. 3). Unlike the book cover, Ahora does not even reference a history of Haitian-Dominican relations. Other publications repeat the same sentence, and add another section of what seems to be the press release for the novel: “la misteriosa desaparición en territorio dominicano de la ciudadana francesa Rita Moinard, a quien parece que se la tragó la tierra, situación que conduce a una investigación realizada por su íntima amiga norteamericana y pintora cursi Giselle Pritman . . . .” (“the mysterious disappearance in Dominican territory of French citizen, Rita Moinard, who seems to have been swallowed by the earth, leads to an investigation undertaken by her intimate North American friend and corny painter, Giselle Pritman”) (“Novela” par. 2). These publicity efforts do not hint at what I consider to be the novel’s main reference to a history of Haitian-Dominican relations: its emphasis on the possibility of a pacific invasion of Haitians. As a consequence, the novel can be sold as an objective account of Haitian-Dominican relations in a transnational context.

Because of the dissonance between what is publicized about the novel and its actual contents, I am looking specifically at how the narrative of the pacific invasion is reconstructed through Homero’s perspective. I see parallels between the objectivity claims of the publicity of the novel and the didactic tone of his narrative. In the novel, Homero undertakes the writing of a quasi-journalistic narrative with verifiable facts. His

didactic narrative becomes a legitimate rewriting of histories of Haitian-Dominican relations. However, his prejudices and assumptions lie beneath the surface and emerge in the moral of the story, which is clear at the end of the novel.

At the beginning of the novel, the story is presented as a historical narrative based on “datos recogidos con entrevistas, documentos, testimonios y cartas, todos de alta confiabilidad” (“facts from interviews, documents, testimonies and letters, all from reliable sources”) (8). The reader does not know how Homero has had access to these materials. However, a series of references to events that have shaped the representation of Haitian migrants in Dominican media since 2000—such as, the burning of a Dominican flag in a *gagá* ritual, discussions about the legal status of Dominicans of Haitian descent, and denunciations of an ongoing unification of the island by the U.S., France, and Canada—support the purported veracity of the narrative and its relevance to current discussions about Haitian-Dominican relations.<sup>14</sup> Homero’s voice also speaks from the authoritative omniscient first-person as the narrator of the story. However, his presentation as an objective source of historical truth is undermined by the novel’s revelation of his privileged social position—and point of view—through his depictions of working class, black-identified, and female bodies.

For instance, his descriptions of cross-class relations elide the hierarchies of power at play within seemingly equal and reciprocal interactions between working-class and upper-middle-class Dominicans. Talking about Marín’s wife, Tania, and the couple who would serve them at their property in the countryside, he does not recognize the position of power the landowners have over the peasants who work for them: “El encargado era un viejo campesino que antes había trabajado con el padre de Tania, a la

que vio nacer y a la que trataba como a una hija. Su esposa era también como de la familia . . . siempre le preparaba sus platos favoritos [a Tania] . . . gesto que era reciprocado con regalos de la ciudad” (“The man in charge was an old peasant who had worked before with Tania’s father, who had seen her being born and treated her like a daughter. His wife was also like a member of the family . . . always prepared [for Tania] her favorite plates . . . a gesture that was reciprocated with gifts from the city”) (25).

*Como de la familia* (*Like a member of the family*) is used to describe the proximity between Tania and her employees as a non-laboral relationship. The work of the peasants is not considered a part of a transaction, but rather a gift. And Tania’s “gifts from the city”— fabrics for the peasants to make dresses for wealthy women in town including Tania— serves to further expand the idea of a familial relationship. Homero ignores the labor involved in the creation of the dresses and the evident need the woman have to obtain monetary resources in different ways, not only by working for Tania. By erasing the labor done by Dominican peasants and workers for landowners and businessmen, the novel then is able to depict cross-class anti-Haitian alliances without considering the possibility of class conflict or Haitian-Dominican solidarity based on shared class interests.

In addition, blackness in the novel is only spoken about directly with regards to non-Dominicans in a sympathetic, but derogatory manner. When Homero describes Madame Pumba, a black Brazilian servant who used to work for Giselle, her skills as a cook are celebrated: “Todos los que probaban su comida se volcaban en elogios de Madame Pumba . . . que se limitaba a reír a carcajadas, mostrando unos dientes blanquísimos que resaltaban su negritud”( “All those who tried her food would eagerly

offer compliments to Madame Pumba . . . who would just respond in an outburst of laughter, showing her very white teeth which made her blackness stand out”) (10). His comment on Madame Pumba reiterates the idea of *como de la familia* that characterizes servant-master relations in the novel. The way she is described establishes a friendly relationship between Madame Pumba and her employers. However, his celebratory description of the servant’s body presents an almost caricaturesque reference to her blackness. Homero’s condescending approach to her subjectivity signals her racial otherness. Moreover, the emphasis on her work in the kitchen highlights how the narrative only imagines working women undertaking gendered tasks associated with womanhood.

Hetero-patriarchal conventions of womanhood also occur in the text in the portrayal of various female secondary characters, not only working class ones. When Homero interacts with Giselle, who is clearly an upper class North American woman, he objectifies and infantilizes her. When Giselle hears the news of the disappearance of Moinard and has to stay in a hotel with Homero while a storm passes, Homero says that “Giselle retomó su copa de Martini . . . apenas mojó los labios, que los relámpagos hacían ver más tentadores. Su carita asustada parecía la de una niña indefensa, casi a punto de llorar” (“Giselle took her Martini glass again . . . barely wetted her lips, which the lighting made look more tempting. Her scared little face seemed to belong to a defenseless girl, almost about to cry”) (38). In contrast with the Dominican peasant and Madame Pumba, Giselle is gendered by Homero as a sensual but helpless woman whom he needs to protect. I attribute the difference in the representation of these women to their association with particular class and racial backgrounds. Nevertheless, they all share their

location in domestic spaces, and their subjectivities are only superficially explored in the narrative.

In contradistinction, the novel presents working class and upper-middle class men in the middle of political turbulence relevant to the welfare of the nation. Homero's distinct descriptions of female and male characters of various class backgrounds are not coincidental. They legitimize his narrative by re-articulating the interests of the ideal citizen: elite, non-black identified/whitened, and hetero-normative man. The fear of a Haitian invasion calls for the unity of all Dominicans without regard to any existing class or racial conflict. The call for unity neutralizes potential challenges by lower-class men to the status quo. As a consequence, Dominican alliances based on anti-Haitianism, not class or race positionality, maintain the privilege of full citizenship enjoyed only by a few. Homero privileges his own perspective as an elite, whitened, and hetero-normative man in the narrative. In doing so, he undermines his claims of historical veracity. The elitism embedded in his historical narrative of a Haitian invasion is further made evident in the relationships established among masculine characters in the novel.

Interactions between businessman Marín and a peasant named Eusebio Fuertes show how anti-Haitian projects are imagined in the text. Fuertes is the person who reveals to Marín the secret of *la Trilogía*. He works for Pastor, a Dominican of Haitian descent and leader of the conspiracy. When Fuertes tells Marín about *la Trilogía*'s plan to unite the Dominican Republic and Haiti, they become allies against what they believe to be an invasion of the country. In order to convince Marín of the urgency of the situation, Fuertes refers to a nineteenth-century history of attempts to unify the island. He explains that the plot has not been revealed due to critiques of Dominican racism towards



Haitians: “[Haití está] adueñándose del país, como parte de un proceso fríamente calculado desde tiempo immemorial, pero nadie se atreve a decirlo por el temor de que le llamen racista o que le digan que tiene concepciones prehistóricas acerca de la division territorial y cultural de las naciones” (“[Haiti is] taking over the country, as part of a process coldly calculated since immemorial times, but nobody dares to say it afraid of being called a racist or told that one has prehistoric notions about the territorial and cultural division of the nations” (84). Fuertes’ statements link “false” critiques of racial discriminations and twenty-first century Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic to other moments that have marked Haitian-Dominican relations: such as the 1822 unification, the 1844 division, and the 1937 Massacre. He does not acknowledge the role played by racism in anti-Haitian narratives and vilifies Haitians for their invasion of the Dominican Republic.

His version is confirmed, though complicated, by General Otilio Campos. Becoming another ally, Campos tells Marín that the conspiracy has been in progress since the late nineteenth century. According to him, it has not been stopped because it is in the planters’ and contractors’ best interest to count on migrant laborers. Campos does recognize the role played by Haitians in the Dominican economy and critiques the economic interests that exploit them. However, despite his awareness of the economic factors that explain the presence of Haitians, he reiterates the narrative of the pacific invasion. He denounces planters and contractors as accomplices in the invasion of the Dominican Republic by Haiti. Campos legitimizes from an official point of view what the peasant had confided in the businessman. Along with Fuertes and Marín, Campos articulates a narrative of Haitian invasion that replicates the fear of racial contamination

that permeated in Dominican dominant discourses of the 1822 unification of the island.

Fuertes does not accept racism as a reason behind his fear of an invasion, but can only differentiate Dominicans and Haitians by relating the former to Africa: “Ellos no pueden separar el llamado de los espíritus de Africa de la percepción de la opresión implacable que sufren desde hace siglos” (“They cannot separate the call of the spirits of Africa from their perception of the relentless oppression that they have suffered for centuries” (83). Fuertes differentiates between Haitians and Dominicans based on the malign practice of African cults in Haiti. According to him, Haitians learn to speak and eat like Dominicans, but, unlike “real” Dominicans, they will not be found in a Catholic Church because of their African beliefs. Their African heritage is one of the qualities of Haitians that justify resisting an invasion.

Marín himself equates Haiti with Africa in a derogatory manner. After realizing that a new immigration law would be implemented in the Dominican Republic, he states: “Si las cosas siguen como van, de momento seremos maricones y africanos—pensó Marín, sumido en la desesperanza” (“If things continue to be the way they are, we will suddenly become faggots and Africans—thought Marín, overwhelmed by hopelessness”) (97).<sup>15</sup> According to him, not only is one of the goals of Haitians to turn Dominicans into Africans and gay men, but were this to happen it would be a disgrace. Marín’s vision of the result of the invasion reflects nationalist discourses that reject blackness and queerness. His statement also presents a monolithic conceptualization of blackness as an undesirable African—and consequently Haitian—attribute. The despair ascribed to Marín functions to sympathetically represent a character who embodies racist and hetero-patriarchal dominant discourses on the nation.

The narrator does not reject the implications of Fuertes and Marín's anti-Haitian arguments, but rather embraces them and presents them as heroes of the nation. Homero himself restates ideas espoused by Fuertes and Marín in his reflection about Haitian-Dominican cultural forms and organizations. Commenting about the rumor of a flag-burning incident at a *gagá* ritual, Homero despectively describes what happens in a *gagá* celebration:

porque la prensa publicó que daba cuenta de que un grupo de haitianos había quemado una bandera dominicana durante un *gagá*, que es un desfile de bailes con tambores en el que los participantes *hablan en lenguas*, glosolalia que se llama eso, y caen como guanábanas maduras cuando uno de los espíritus se les monta, siendo necesario darles una pela con una vara de gandules verdes a ver si se está quieto, que ya está bueno y ese infeliz no aguanta más.

because the press published that the burning of a Dominican flag had occurred during a celebration of *gagá*, which is a parade of dance with drums, in which the participants *speaks in tongues*, glossolalia is how it is called, and they fall like ripe guanabanas when the spirit rides them, making it necessary to give them a beating with a stick of pigeon peas to see if it stays calm, that it is enough and the miserable cannot stand it anymore. (90)

The narrator mockingly describes *gagá* rituals as a grotesque practice, unworthy of respectful attention. He also critiques the complicity of Haitian-Dominican organizations with the plot of the pacific invasion and celebrations of a shared Afro-Antillean heritage between Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

His attitude can be better understood taking into account his avowal of a whitened *dominicanidad* that cannot trace itself to Africa, unlike Haiti's national identity. Cultural forms and organizing efforts that transgress nationalist constructs of *dominicanidad* are deemed dangerous for the integrity of the nation. At a moment when intellectuals and writers have been making visible Afro-Antilleaness in the Dominican Republic, Homero

considers their ideas to be vain efforts that only serve to further the interests of the invaders: “a la utopía se sumaron intelectuales notables, algunos inspirados en lo que decían eran nuestras verdaderas raíces, que según ellos se extendían desde el continente africano” (“various known intellectuals added themselves to the utopia, some inspired by what they called our true roots, that according to them came from the African continent”) (100).<sup>16</sup> Homero does not accept the unification of the island because of a racial difference between Haitians and Dominicans. Following the model previously presented in Dominican media, the narrative of the pacific invasion is restated in the novel through its narrator’s discursive exclusion of blackness as a legitimate component of the nation. The ending of the novel justifies Homero’s fears and ties the ongoing invasion of Haitians to a history of racialized conflict in the island. Homero hears the phrase “solo falta que llueva” (“it only needs to rain”) and “Unas nubes grises comenzaron a acumularse en el firmamento, señal de que en efecto llovería. La suerte estaba echada.” (“Some gray clouds began to accumulate in the sky, signaling that it would in fact rain. The dice had been rolled”) (136). It is significant that his fear is confirmed through the phrase “solo falta que llueva” (“it only needs to rain”) considering that it was first uttered by the main schemer of the plot to unify the island : Mackandal.

According to Homero, Mackandal realizes “que no resultaría fácil, sino que todo era cuestión de sembrar la semilla. Después, según sus propias palabras, ‘solo falta que llueva’” (“it would not be easy, one just had to sow the seed. Afterwards, in his own words, ‘it only needs to rain’”) (100). Mackandal is depicted as a mischievous man with magical powers and resources to get rid of those who put his goal at risk, though he is practically invisible in the narrative. The name Mackandal itself is a historical reference

to a Haitian slave made famous in the 1750s for poisoning planters in Haiti. He became a legend after people saw him escape the flames of colonial punishment in the form of an insect. Stories about him informed slave insurrections that resulted in the 1790s Haitian Revolution (Du Bois 50). The name Mackandal in the novel is a reference to a history of slave insurrections and the Haitian Revolution. His figuration in an antagonistic role highlights how narratives of the pacific invasion reproduce colonial depictions of Haiti's revolutionary history.

Despite Homero's resentment against Haiti, he agrees with *la Trilogía's* critique of the intervention of other countries in the economic and political affairs of the island. The vilified *la Trilogía* recognizes the imperialist interests of the United States, France, and Canada in their involvement with the plot to unify the island. Moinard explains to Marín that the unification of the island would be ideal for these countries because "Es más fácil gobernar un solo Estado que dos al mismo tiempo" ("It is easier to govern one nation-state than two at the same time") (109). Moinard acknowledges that metropolitan nations continue to influence the island within globalization. In his description of the Dominican countryside, Homero critiques the presence of foreign economic investment in the island:

Cruzamos por el pequeño pueblo de Maimón, cuyos habitantes estaban orgullosos de su mina de oro, pero con casitas de madera y semáforos apagados por la falta de energía eléctrica, algo común a otras localidades del país donde todavía la gente se alumbraba con lámparas de kerosene, no importa que tuvieran los recursos naturales cuya explotación beneficiaba mayormente a empresas extranjeras.

We crossed the small town Maimón, whose inhabitants were proud of its gold mine, but [lived] with houses made of wood and traffic lights off due to the lack of electric energy, something very common to other locations in the country where people still used kerosene lamps, it did not matter if

they had the natural resources whose exploitation benefitted mostly foreign companies.(16)

Though he shares an anti-neoliberal/imperial stance with *la Trilogía*, Homero is not remotely interested in their plan of anti-imperial Haitian-Dominican collaboration. Moinard explains that Haitians and Dominicans are collaborating with the plot to unify the island to be able to resist together “los designios de las potencias imperialistas y colonialistas” (“the plans of imperialist and colonialist powers”) (101). However, neither Marín nor Homero express any sympathy for the plan and just continue to dread unification with Haiti. An anti-imperialist agenda of Haitian-Dominican collaboration is dismissed due to a desire to maintain intact the borders of the nation-state and to a fear of racial contamination.

I find this text to be problematic for its racialization of people of Haitian descent. Nonetheless, the novel offers a space to see a variety of discourses in dialogue with each other and examine their political implications. Homero’s simultaneous recognition of the exploitation of Haitian labor, imagination of the Haitian as black invader, denial of racism, and conceptualization of globalization as imperialism and Haitian invasion speak to concurrent debates in the media. The novel is speaking directly to the narrative of the pacific invasion, as well as to narratives of Haitian-Dominican collaboration sponsored by the state, and those articulated by community organizers and intellectuals.

Solo Falta que Llueva places the nation at the center of globalization.

Globalization itself becomes conflated with the fear of an invasion that has been imagined as the end of the Dominican nation since the nineteenth century. The text represents limitations of critical approaches to neoliberalism and its exploitation of

migrant labor that do not take into account discourses on the nation and race. These critiques do not address how the marginal position of migrant workers is explained through their racial difference. The narrator cannot conceive the possibility of an inter-ethnic alliance, even when he shares *la Trilogía*'s anti-imperialist politics, because of his nationalist discourse. Interestingly, we see how the narrative of the pacific invasion poses obstacles to possible alliances between Haiti and the Dominican Republic that would entail another manifestation of regionalism, not under the influence of the U.S. model of globalization. The privileging of Homero's voice also restates dominant narratives of the national subject afforded political agency.

The novel illustrates how discourses on the nation and its racial difference shape the experience of globalization in the Dominican Republic. However, unlike canonical novelistic narratives of the nation, the state is in complicity with the crime, assassination, corruption, and arms dealing associated with the invasion. The complicity of the Dominican and Haitian states with imperialist powers behind the plot dooms Dominicans who cannot build a future for the nation. In this manner, it envisions a nationalist critique of neoliberalism without demonstrating any hope for the nation, while portraying how national narratives which racialize migrant labor coexist with globalization.

### **The Farming of Bones**

The state as a repressive and corrupt entity is also manifest in The Farming of Bones. Through the personal experiences of the narrator, the novel questions the nation-state claims to a territory, race, and culture, and highlights the absence of women from discourses on the nation and migration. The Farming of Bones is told by Amabelle, a Haitian servant in a Dominican upper-middle-class household. Amabelle narrates the

events surrounding the 1937 Massacre of Haitians in the Dominican Republic and the consequent relocation of the protagonist to Haiti. When she was a child, Amabelle had been taken as a servant by Dominican Doña Valencia, who was her age at the time, and her father. Amabelle's parents had drowned at the river that marks the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. They were living in Haiti at the time of the drowning, but participated in commercial exchanges across the border. The novel introduces Amabelle as an adult who has fully undertaken her responsibilities at Doña Valencia's house. She considers the Dominican town called Alegría her home, a community constituted by Dominican and Haitian landowners, sugar cane cutters, servants, and artisans.

Amabelle was engaged in a romantic relationship with a Haitian sugar cane cutter, Sebastien, who migrated to the Dominican Republic during the 1916-1934 U.S. invasion of the country. Sebastien and his sister were executed by the Dominican army during the 1937 Massacre. Amabelle escaped the Massacre by going to Cap Haitien, Haiti, with Sebastien's friend and sugar cane cutter, Yves. The years go by without many changes. She stays in Cap Haitien with Yves family, becomes a seamstress, and continues to suffer from the physical and emotional injuries received during her escape from the Dominican Republic. In 1961, Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, who had ordered the Massacre, dies. Amabelle celebrates and returns for a day trip to Alegría. She also looks for her childhood friend and mistress Doña Valencia. That night she returns to the Haitian side of the border and lies in the shallow river waiting for the dawn.

I examine this novel in dialogue with historical narratives about the Massacre that continue to reverberate in Dominican imaginations of Haitian-Dominican relations. The



title, The Farming of Bones, could be read in relation to the dead bodies left after the Massacre, the process of cutting sugar cane undertaken by Haitian workers, and the physical “cut” (*El Corte* as Dominicans named the Massacre) of Haitians from the Dominican nation. Or it could signify an unearthing of histories about the events that were buried—along with the dead—by official narratives and recovered in the novel. It presents other sources of knowledge besides state-sponsored narratives and legitimate documents.

It is significant that the novel’s narration of the Massacre is built upon rumors that are never completely confirmed. At the beginning of the novel, there are rumors of possible deportations and killings of Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic. Some women tell Amabelle: “You heard the rumors? . . . They say anyone not in one of those Yanki cane mills will be sent back to Haiti”(69). Even though the rumors are true, Amabelle and others do not take them seriously because there is no concrete evidence. On the other hand, other characters believe untrue rumors. When Amabelle visits Valencia in 1961, the latter doubts that she is truly Amabelle because she “spoke to many people who said they watched when she [Amabelle] was killed in La Romana” (294). For twenty-four years, she believed that her servant was dead because of accounts given by first-hand witnesses. Rumors reign in the novel with their uncertainty—some holding truth, others totally false. No one is sure of what happens and why. And various characters like Amabelle and Valencia recognize that their story is just one among many: “but as the señora [Valencia] had said, there are many stories. And mine too is only one” (305). Through Amabelle’s recognition of different narratives surrounding the Massacre, the novel does not claim to represent a historical reality, but rather creates a memory of

what happened that relies on her personal fictional experience.

The reliance of the narrative on personal experience translates into the formalistic constitution of the novel. The novel incorporates chapters in bold letters representing Amabelle's thoughts and visions of her dead lover and parents with chapters on her daily life in Alegría and Cap-Haitien. The juxtaposition of her internal and external worlds only stops during her narration of the Massacre—when survival is the main objective—then starts again when she has settled in Haiti. The chapters in bold tell us about her nights in Alegría when she could experience life without the constraints on her behavior imposed by servitude. She spends the nights with Sebastien and/or dreaming of her parents and their death. After the scene of the Massacre in the novel, those chapters in bold share her coping mechanisms for dealing with the aftermath of the event. She reinvents Sebastien in her dreams. Her unconscious becomes manifested in bold letters. Through these fictionalized memories she lives with those who have died, and she processes what has happened. While the other chapters remind the reader of Amabelle's engagement with a specific historical space and time.

The novel's form permits the experiences of women who have been subject to state-inflicted violence to emerge. The chapters in bold allow the private—dreams, housework, pain—to enter history. In this manner, women's experiences as domestic laborers, lovers, and members of a community and family are also revealed as part of a retelling of the 1937 Massacre and its consequences. The narrator's female perspective shapes the whole story and its interpretation of an historical event.

The literary incorporation of women's experiences through a fragmented narrative participates in the overall questioning of the nation produced by the novel. It

rejects placing men as the main actors of the history of the nation. In historical and literary traditions concerned with the representation of the nation, women have tended to be relegated to the realm of the private—as housewives, objects of desire, and mothers—and are often secondary characters. Therefore, responses to political and economic transformations by women are ignored. Haitian-Canadian poet and scholar Myriam J. Chancy contrasts the absence of Haitian women in historical narratives with their actual cross-class mobilizations against the U.S. occupation and activism for suffrage and educational rights in the 1920s and 1930s. In canonical literary representations of the nation and migration by Dominican writers, men are the protagonists of the stories and, consequently, of history and its discursive construction. The structure of the narrative in The Farming of Bones disrupts the realist and linear literary conventions of canonical texts embedded in processes of nation-building. In doing so, it provides a space for the experiences of women to be imagined with respect to significant historical moments and events. The novel, by its mere existence, inserts an acknowledgment of the role of women in history.<sup>17</sup>

Through the analysis of The Farming of Bones, I address how gender conventions come into play within narratives concerning Haitian-Dominican relations. The dominant masculinization of the citizen and the migrant informs processes of racialization that imagine Haitians as invaders. The invocation of the 1822 unification of the island in narratives of the pacific invasion relies on a violent depiction of the Haitian male soldier in historical and literary texts. The Haitian male migrant is represented as the most visible threat to the Dominican Republic because he is ascribed the barbaric attributes of blackness as well as a violent embodiment of masculinity. Women, on the other hand,

due to their association with the domestic, are mostly racialized with regards to their reproductive capabilities. Media sporadically calls attention to the amount of resources spent by the Dominican state on pregnant Haitian women and the need to stop the mixing of Dominican men with Haitian women. While the image of the Haitian male invader ties his alleged primitive force to his “displacement” of Dominican workers, the experience of Haitian women as migrant workers remains mostly unaddressed.

However, women of Haitian descent along with men have participated in the economic structures of Dominican *bateyes*. And the participation of women in the workforce of the Dominican Republic and Haiti illustrates a gendered experience of neoliberalization.<sup>18</sup> Women of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic enter an already gendered economy. They have fewer rights than their male counterparts, less access to public services, and suffer sexual violence. Many women and, to a lesser degree, men in the Dominican Republic participate of the tourism sector by providing formal and informal services to tourists, such as sex work. Forty percent of the workforce in recently developed non-traditional agriculture for exportation is female. Women usually undertake the preparation and canning of agricultural products, while men supervise and resolve machinery problems.<sup>19</sup> The representation of women’s labor in the nineteen-thirties in The Farming of Bones speaks to the gendered workforces at the time of the novel’s publication. Amabelle’s descriptions of men’s and women’s bodies marked by accidents in the sugar cane plantation give voice to otherwise silenced experiences of women of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic.<sup>20</sup>

Though the representations of women in the novel are a significant aspect of the text, I do not want to idealize the text or place it in direct opposition to Solo falta que

llueva. As a matter of fact, the novel's concern with female characters represents one of its strengths and a contribution to my analysis, but also one of its weaknesses. The novel could be read primarily as a narrative about Amabelle's lost love, and her close relationships with other women, although Sebastien and Yves are always in Amabelle's mind. As I will further explore, Amabelle's bonds with women of different ethnic backgrounds mark her life. These relationships challenge discourses that naturalize conflict between Haitians and Dominicans due to racial differences. However, in the narrative, gender remains an unquestioned category in its seemingly natural capacity for bringing people together. Female and male characters reiterate conventional gender roles in their interactions. The Farming of Bones does not imagine transformations of the status quo in regards to gender roles.

The novel, in a similar fashion to Solo falta que llueva, does not express the possibility of change, or hope, for a national or even a transnational project. The narrative structure does not seek resolution through a completely linear plot, but rather mirrors Amabelle's sense of incompleteness for having lost her first family and a potential family with Sebastien. The fragmented narrative represents her life-long attempts to recover from the physical and emotional wounds left by her experiences of loss. Her flashbacks and reconstructions of the dead manifest her inability to just live in the present. The reconstruction of her memory in bold also represents her future, one limited by her past.

Amabelle cannot imagine a different future because she sees herself dead in life, not being able to fully move on after losing her loved ones. Not having had children, she cannot leave them her legacy, her memory, the stories that have been silenced:

It is perhaps the great discomfort of those trying to silence the world to discover that we have voices sealed inside our heads . . . The slaughter is the only thing that is mine to pass on. All I want to do is find a place to lay it down (266).

Amabelle here refers to a Haitian oral tradition that believes that words are passed to the living by the dead. The novel itself becomes her attempt to leave her memory as inheritance, a memory that others would want to see disappear. Her memory speaks of the stories that do not fit within the narratives of either the Dominican or Haitian nation.

A significant component of Amabelle's memory of the Massacre challenges any historical naturalization of Haitianness, dominicanidad, and discourse of racial difference and conflict in the island. April Shemak addresses the complexity involved in talking about the Massacre in terms of cultural/racial difference and how the text demonstrates the difficulty of understanding the relationship between both countries: "The Farming of Bones attempts to deconstruct the racial, linguistic, and national borders that divide Haitians not solely to celebrate it [the permeable border], but to reveal the tensions that led to the 1937 slaughter of Haitians" (84). In the text, the difficulties of explaining what happened arise because there is not a distinct border, and, at the same time, its permeability cannot be simply celebrated due to a violent past. It would be easy to celebrate the cultural exchanges across the border and the common African heritage of both countries. But the novel emphasizes the need to remember a history of racialized violence in the island as demonstrated by its concern with contradictory versions of the Massacre.

In 1937, the Massacre was explained through various narratives: Haitians said that it had been instigated by the Dominican army; the Dominican government affirmed

that it was carried out by peasants with machetes; others said that the army used machetes on purpose to later deny its involvement. On the other hand, Haitians complained because their government did not do anything about it. In response to past and contemporary narratives of Haitian-Dominican relations, The Farming of Bones reproduces versions of the events preceding and following the Massacre that underline its organization by the Dominican state, the role played by U.S. interests in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, Haiti's Presidents Sténio Joseph Vincent's and Elie Lescot's complicity through silence, and the artificiality of discourses of difference based on elitist notions of blackness as an exclusively Haitian attribute.

Dominican nationalist historical and cultural narratives explain the factors leading to the Massacre based on a belief in strict distinct notions of *dominicanidad* and Haitianess. For instance, in the Dominican newspaper La Nación of November 18, 1942, the Dominican Minister of Interior Affairs MA Peña Battle repeats the anti-Haitian official discourse:<sup>21</sup>

l'haïtienne qui nos importune et nous met sur nos gardes est celui qui constitue la dernière expression sociale au-delà de la frontière. Celui-ci est franchement indésirable. De race nettement africaine, il ne peut représenter pour nous aucun stimulant ethnique.

the Haitian who concerns us is the one who constitutes the lowest social expression on the other side of the border. He is frankly undesirable. Being unmistakably of the African race, he does not represent an ethnic stimulant for us (Price Mars 324).

These colonial discourses about slavery and the inferiority of blacks are replicated in the treatment of an ethnic group and socio-economic class that is supposedly closer to that past than Dominicans. The state reconfigured a Dominican identity vis-a-vis a Haitian one in order to convince its citizens of their patriotic duty. Price-Mars himself mocks this

attitude by challenging the idea that people at the border could differentiate between a Haitian and a Dominican stealing their chickens. According to him—and Lee Turits—people at the border spoke both languages, Haitian Creole and Spanish, crossed the frontier frequently, and coexisted in such a way that it would be difficult to differentiate them (138).

In La République d'Haïti et la République Dominicaine, published in 1940, Jean Price-Mars discusses different versions of the Massacre. He mentions rumors of a justification of the Massacre because some Haitians had been stealing cattle and chickens from Dominicans. According to this version, it was a spontaneous uprising of enraged peasants. Haiti's president Elie Lescot eventually accepted this version and forgave the Dominican Republic.

The novel challenges the explanation for the Massacre based on the theft of some chickens and/or intrinsic cultural differences between both countries through the words of Valencia's husband, Señor Pico, who is a commander of the army: "The operation would be quick and precise. To tell the truth, part of it had started" (42). The operation consists of the murders and mass deportations of Haitians. He confirms the direct intervention of the Dominican state in the perpetration of the Massacre. Later the reader hears the story of a Haitian peasant who was arrested for stealing his own chickens. If the story were considered to be true by other characters, the official version accepted by both governments would not be admissible.

The novel assumes state complicity on both sides of the border in the creation of the conditions that led to the Massacre and its cover-up. It critiques the Haitian government for justifying the event with lies and for promoting migration. Tibon, a



Haitian migrant who accompanies Amabelle on their way to Haiti affirms that “Poor people are sold to work in the cane field so our own country can be free of them” (178). He also talks about the shame of not having heroes like those of the Revolution to defend them. His anger can be explained by the fact that the recruitment policies established by U.S. authorities in Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic included remuneration for the officials and states involved in the recruitment of Haitian laborers for cane fields. Therefore, the manner in which the narrative describes the lamentable process of recollection of people’s testimonies about the Massacre by Haitian government officials is understandable. Yves says: “You tell the story, and then it’s retold as they wish, written in words you do not understand, in a language that is theirs, and not yours” (246). The bureaucratic process of collecting the stories does not represent the storytellers’ own experience, rather the stories are co-opted by a state that will accept the Dominican version of the events.

The versions represented by The Farming of Bones at times point to economic interests that shaped Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic and the exploitation of Haitian workers. The 1937 Massacre of Haitians cannot be understood without placing it within the context of the internal changes occurring in Haiti during and after the U.S. invasion (1916-1934). In the nineteen-twenties and -thirties, cheap labor was needed for U.S.-financed *cañaverales* (sugar cane plantations) in Cuba and the Dominican Republic. The U.S., the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Cuba sponsored migratory movements whose destinations were *bateyes* in the Dominican Republic and Cuba. According to historian Suzy Castor, migration served to send away Haitians who were organizing against land dispossessions; it eventually became a survival strategy for those who had

lost their land.<sup>22</sup> Although migration was an official policy, it became problematic for Trujillo's government since Haitians who wandered across the border, worked and lived with Dominicans, or established their homes outside of the *bateyes* were viewed as a threat to the establishment of a clear frontier between both countries.<sup>23</sup>

The role played by U.S. capital in the exploitation of Haitian labor is suggested by the novel. U.S. supervisors or financial institutions managed the Dominican sugar cane industry: "How can the Yanki cane mills save anyone?" (70), asks a Dominican woman of Haitian descent. She and her son have no legal documentation because, by keeping their papers, the mill owners have them tied to the land. According to the Dominican constitution, the treatment they receive in U.S.-financed sugar mills is illegal because being native born they should be treated like Dominican citizens, not as seasonal foreign workers.<sup>24</sup> Also, when various characters explain their motivation to migrate, the appropriation of land by U.S. investors is represented as a common reason to leave Haiti; for instance, Sebastien's mother, Man Denise, laments that her son and daughter had to go to the Dominican Republic when the "Yankis" took their home and land to build a road (239).

By pointing to the histories of migration and the living conditions of people of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic, the novel undermines the narrative of the pacific invasion outlined in Solo falta que llueva. The Haitian appears as a migrant worker. Amabelle's memory underlines the artificiality of exclusive and derogatory notions of blackness by Dominican cultural discourses that justified the Massacre through the racialization of Haitians as invaders. These discourses of difference also affected black-identified Dominicans and were used to manipulate the public opinion,

blaming Haitians for the economic problems of the country.

Throughout the narrative Amabelle has friendly and familial relationships with Dominicans, Haitians, and Haitian-Dominicans, and communicates with them in their languages: Haitian Creole, Spanish, and even *Alegrian* Creole.<sup>25</sup> Amabelle, Sebastien, Yves, Valencia, Tibon, and others share settings where Dominicans and Haitians coexist. The narration itself deconstructs discourses of difference because the narrator adeptly negotiates cultural registers across the border. For example, Amabelle has a sister-like relationship with Valencia, despite being her servant. But Valencia's treatment of Amabelle reflects her own position of power: "I thought of Señora Valencia, whom I had known since she was eleven years old. I had called her Señorita as she grew from a child into a young woman . . . She on the other hand had always called me Amabelle" (63). Valencia remembers warmly having grown up with Amabelle; however she does not reject her role of *señora* or mistress of the house in their interactions. The kin relation of *hermanas de crianza* [sisters of the cradle] is overridden by a relationship between mistress and servant.

Besides familial relations, the novel introduces inter-ethnic romantic affairs. In her return to Haiti with Sebastien's friend, Yves, Amabelle meets a Dominican woman who is looking for her Haitian boyfriend. The inclusion of an inter-ethnic romantic relationship is relevant because it signals the possible existence of Haitian-Dominican offspring. Also, it is noticeable that Amabelle cannot identify the ethnicity of the woman and her sister at first because "Those two seemed like they might be Dominicanas—or a mix of Haitian and Dominican—in some cases it was hard to tell"(171). Her uncertainty and indecisiveness point toward an awareness that ethnic attributes and familial ties are

shared by peoples from Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

In terms of racialized physical attributes, a visible difference might exist between Haitians and Dominicans only for those Dominicans who could somehow trace their bloodline back to Spain—like Valencia whose father was a Spaniard. Nonetheless, even *doña* Valencia has a dark baby girl, Rosalinda, who survives her light-skinned twin brother, Rafael. Naming and death play important roles in the characterization of the twins and their significance in the story. The light-skinned baby is named Rafael, after Trujillo, which somehow transmits the masculine authoritarian and falsely hispanicized attributes of the dictator to the baby. Valencia regrets her daughter's complexion because she does not want Rosalinda to look like a Haitian: "Amabelle, do you think my daughter will always be the color she is now? . . . My poor love, what if she's mistaken for one of your people?"(12). Valencia recognizes that her daughter is Dominican, yet she does not fit a hispanicized *dominicanidad*. However, Rosalinda's black *dominicanidad* does not entail fragility; on the contrary, it is Rafael who dies hours after his birth. Metonymically, this event could challenge the conceptualization of women and blackness as illegitimate gender and racial attributes of the nation-state. Rosalinda's survival undermines Dominican national narratives that privilege light-skinned/whitened men.

In conclusion, Amabelle's narrative questions the assumptions of the nation-state as an enclosed cultural, racial, and geographic entity, and primary site of political agency. It does so through its emphasis on her experience as a Haitian woman. The text is mostly concerned with her memory of the Massacre as a family member, female migrant, and domestic servant in a Dominican household. Amabelle's memory undermines the racialization of Haitians as invaders enabled by dominant discourses on the nation and

race. The novel represents Haitian migrants as recruited labor and members of inter-ethnic communities in the Dominican Republic.

### **Conclusion**

The common, yet divergent, concerns of these narratives with the imagination of the nation in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries illustrates experiences of globalization in the island. Solo falta que llueva re-articulates the narrative of the pacific invasion within neoliberalism. In The Farming of Bones, the reader revisits a moment when discourses on the nation justified state violence. The Farming of Bones critiques the exclusions embedded in national discourses on the Massacre. Imagining Haitians as black invaders dehumanized those who were subjected to displacement and death. The novel also draws attention to women and adds their voices to a discussion that tends to ignore their experiences. These two texts show that cultural discourses on the nation matter in a context marked by globalization. Moreover, the literary constitution of the narrator of each novel foreshadows their contrasting visions of the nation. The male narrator in Solo falta que llueva embodies historically dominant conceptualizations of citizenship in terms of whiteness, middle-classness, and masculinity. He is a version of the conventional narrator in nationalist realist novels. Amabelle, on the other hand, represents what has been historically excluded from the body politic – Haitian and female. However, both texts share in showing that cultural discourses on the nation continue to mark populations in racial terms and to silence certain experiences within dominant narratives.

Comparing these two novels also illustrates a literary questioning of the nation while restating its continued significance not only as a cultural project, but also a

geopolitical one. Their textual engagement with the narrative of the pacific invasion speaks to how discourses on the nation and on race shape the experiences of people of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic. However, both texts interrogate the integrity of the cultural and political claims of each territory as a nation. These narratives articulate approaches to the nation-state that recognize its contemporary significance, while questioning its power to produce change and to represent each nation's people. These novels imagine the nation-state in collaboration with foreign powers, and as a violent and corrupt entity. The two narrations justify Homero's and Amabelle's suspicious attitude toward collaborations between the Haitian and Dominican states. Neither of these novels manifests faith on a national project or a transnational one.

The novels' skepticism illuminates discussions about co-opting regionalism by proponents of globalization. The Farming of Bones does not imagine inter-ethnic alliances as sites of potential transformation, and only conceives of Haitian-Dominican state collaborations as a mode to oppress the marginalized populations of both countries. Therefore, the text suggests ways to question idealizations or hopes placed on regionalist work in the Caribbean. By emphasizing the personal losses of Amabelle due to oppressive discourses and practices of the nation, the text does not allow for an engagement with any form of regionalism.

Solo Falta que Llueva illustrates how co-opting ta Caribbean regionalism by discourses of globalization, as well as discourses on the nation, limit political possibilities. The transnational dynamics associated with globalization are articulated as imperialism. According to the text, intra-Caribbean collaboration in the context of globalization reinforces imperialist practices. Considering how regionalist projects have

historically claimed anti-imperialist politics, I see the novel indirectly questioning equations of globalization and regionalism in political and academic discourse. The narrator's anti-imperialist stance critiques conceptualizations of globalization as a way to level "the playing field." However, his claims are mostly shaped by discourses on the nation and its racial demographics. In the novel a nationalist anti-Haitian discourse operates with an anti-imperialist one to reject any transnational project. In this manner, the limitations of a nationalist critique of globalization are suggested.

The consequent dismissal of Haitian-Dominican collaboration against imperialist interests by Homero does not permit imagining regional solidarity in the face of globalization. Nonetheless, manifestations of inter-ethnic alliances in media, such as cross-border labor struggles within neoliberal work spaces and in literature—in terms of anti-imperialism, inter-ethnic communities, and solidarity—provide alternative imaginations of regionalism. These manifestations of Pan-Antillean solidarity question the racialization of people of Haitian descent by discourses on the nation in the past and the present, and, consequently, their historical marginalization in Dominican work spaces, including those forged within globalization.

The Farming of Bones and Solo falta que llueva speak to contradictory accounts of Antillean experiences of globalization. These apparent contradictions illuminate the limitations of the implementation of globalization in the Antilles, and its redefinition of a regionalist imagining through neoliberalism and multiculturalism. Narratives of acculturation question the marginalization of people of Haitian descent due to discourses on the racial and cultural composition of the nation. These narratives are sympathetic to people of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic, but can only imagine the legal

recognition of their rights by asserting their embodiment of cultural practices that define the Dominican Republic through its Hispanic heritage. Neoliberal multiculturalism proposes globalizing the island through recognition of its transnational cultural heritage. However, it recognizes that discourses on the nation continue to racialize Dominicans and Haitians in the context of globalization. Narratives of Haitian-Dominican collaboration can support transnational neoliberal projects, while constituting an economic hierarchy between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. In other words, the novels and the non-literary cultural narratives under examination show that the participation of people of Haitian descent in a globalized Dominican economy is informed by discursive intersections of national and transnational projects.

In the next chapter, I explore a similar discursive negotiation in Puerto Rico. I analyze simultaneous expressions of inter-ethnic solidarity and xenophobia towards Dominican migrants in prevalent cultural discourses in the island. On one hand, I examine how Dominicans themselves are racialized as black when migrating to Puerto Rico and how their marginal position as migrants and cultural markers of difference are used to racialize Dominicans outside their country. On the other hand, the chapter recognizes Dominican-Puerto Rican alliances, not only at the state level in the context of globalization, but also based on working class interests.



## Notes - Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup> After the Dominican Republic gained its independence from Haiti in 1844, Dominican government officials, economic elites, and intellectuals manifested fear of a military invasion by Haiti. This fear justified official attempts by the Dominican governments of Santana and Báez to annex the country to Spain or the United States. In the first decades of the twentieth century, Haitian migrants in Dominican sugar cane plantations were imagined by politicians and intellectuals as the personification of the invasion.

<sup>2</sup> As Sylvio Torres Saillant (Callaloo 23.3) suggests in “The Tribulations of Blackness,” *antihaitianismo* emerges as a form of differentiation of Dominicans and Haitians based on racial biological and cultural attributes ascribed to *dominicanidad* and Haitianess after the 1822 unification of the Island and the state-sponsored whitening project of Trujillo in the 1930s.

<sup>3</sup> The narrative of pacific invasion is the only one of my four categories that has been named based on a phrase that is repeated in Dominican descriptions of Haitian migrations to the Dominican Republic. It refers to an ongoing invasion by Haiti, through its migrant population, without needing to engage in an armed conflict.

<sup>4</sup> Gagá is a religious celebration of rural communities in the Dominican Republic. Journalist Margarita Quiroz (2003) describes it as “una festividad a la llegada de la primavera” (“a celebration to the arrival of Spring”) (2-C) organized in Dominican *bateyes* during the Holy Week. According to her, it is composed of rituals derived from vodou that have been modified in the Dominican Republic. Researcher June C. Rosenberg in her book El Gagá (Santo Domingo: UASD, 1979) asserts that it is a syncretic practice involving rituals of vodou, spiritism and Catholicism.

<sup>5</sup> The press has also documented the foundation of the Centro Cultural Dominicano-Haitiano (CCDH-Haitian-Dominican Cultural Center) along with a group of Haitian-Dominican Students, the Movimiento de Mujeres Dominicano-Haitianas (MUDHA-Haitian Dominican Women Movement), the Diálogo Dominicano-Haitiano de las Iglesias Evangélicas (Haitian Dominican Dialogue of Evangelic Churches), among others. These groups educate the populace about what it means to call oneself Haitian-Dominican. They struggle to assert the rights of people of Haitian descent on Dominican soil, while establishing networks of solidarity with organizations in Haiti.

<sup>6</sup> GARR’s official website describes the group as a coalition of community and non-profit organizations in Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and abroad working on the problem of migration, in particular Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic. According to Haiti Progrés, MUDHA and GARR asked the government for justice and denounced the lack of interest of both governments (“République Dominicaine: L’encouragement” par. 3).

<sup>7</sup> AlterPresse has also covered cross-border efforts in its Haiti/République Dominicaine section recognizing the shared ecological concerns of both countries. AlterPresse, and another publication, Haiti Progrés, have demonstrated an interest in labor rights across the border related to economic neoliberal projects. Haiti Progrés has repeatedly reported on labor conflicts in Haiti’s free trade zones. And AlterPresse has reported on the repression of workers at a port that will be privatized in Santo Domingo to build a commercial center and a tourist terminal.

<sup>8</sup> I see them engaging in a dialogue with Dominican texts of the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century, such as Enriquillo, “Las Vírgenes de Galindo,” El Masacre se pasa a pie, Over, and Cuadernos de la Frontera.

<sup>9</sup> Along with other Latin American writers, Dominican literature negotiated after the sixties a general dissatisfaction with the nation as political and cultural project. The interventionism of the U.S. in the region, U.S. support of repressive regimes all over the continent, including the Dominican Republic, and the continued marginality of non-elite populations undermined the claims of the nation-state for legitimacy.

Literature also challenged the aesthetic limitations of nationalist literary traditions. Experimentation and thematic variation were in vogue, as the so-called Latin American Boom documents. It could be argued that post-1965 Dominican literature was already responding to an initial stage of economic globalization. International financing institutions began demanding a series of economic reforms that characterized a neoliberalized Dominican Republic. However, unlike more recent literature, it was not engaging with a state-sponsored discourse of globalization that encompasses political, economic, and cultural claims, or with large Dominican migrant communities in the U.S. mainland and Puerto Rico. The transnational reality of these communities produces a destabilization of symbolic and geographical boundaries of the nation.

<sup>10</sup> I see three factors shaping the demise of the nation as primary site of political, economic, and cultural action since the seventies: 1) widespread skepticism towards the national project in Latin America due to the economic crisis of the seventies, a series of dictatorial regimes, corruption in governmental institutions, and successful attacks on governments informed by socialist politics; 2) the reality of migration and the consequent composition of transnational communities; 3) the implementation of neoliberalism and the predominance of the discourse of transnationalism in the nineteen-nineties.

<sup>11</sup> New forms of mass media, such as the television, have become preferred spaces for the state to produce its vision of the nation. Literature continues to matter, as the government censorship of the novel Los que falsificaron la firma de Dios by Viriato Senci3n in the early nineteen nineties demonstrates.

<sup>12</sup> I am not arguing that all literature previous to the nineteen nineties, or even the nineteen- sixties and seventies, dealt with nationalism. I do not want to reduce earlier literary production to the construction of a national project. My analysis specifically addresses how these novels speak to literary texts that were canonized in the nineteenth century, and the first half of the twentieth century for their representation of the Dominican nation vis a vis Haiti. Through their engagement with imaginations of Haitians as invaders of the Dominican Republic, Solo falta que llueva and The Farming of Bones are engaging with those canonical representations and their reverberations in the present.

<sup>13</sup> For instance, Estrella Veloz's article "Los haitianos, como las moscas, est3n donde quiera" ("Haitians, like flies, are everywhere") made the front page of magazine Cañabrava on June 1999 and documents the abuses suffered by Haitian workers in the Dominican Republic, as well as Haitian-Dominican commercial exchanges that benefit populations of various Dominican cities. His report takes a sensationalist tone when he asserts that Haitians reproduce like mice (9) and, like flies, can be found everywhere. The article points to the impoverished socio-economic position of Haitians in the Dominican Republic and dehumanizes them through an animalistic comparison.

<sup>14</sup> Alvarez Castellanos' article "Deshaitianizar el pa3s" (2004) mentions the burning of a Dominican flag in a gag3 ritual. On Feb. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2003, newspaper Hoy published a legal discussion by various Dominican lawyers entitled "No son dominicanos" ("They are not Dominicans"). Various lawyers urged the country to take care of the problem of migration to avoid the unification of the island by France, Canada and the United States.

<sup>15</sup> An immigration law was proposed in 2002 to address migratory matters in the Dominican Republic. It was a response to the case presented in the InterAmerican Court on the illegal repatriation of people of Haitian descent and some Dominicans to Haiti in the late 1990s, and the violation of the human rights of Haitians in the Dominican Republic. The law was not passed. Its text can be found in an appendix of the Seminario sobre modernizaci3n y cooperaci3n fronteriza (Seminary on Modernization and Border Cooperation) entitled "Proyecto de Ley General de Inmigraci3n" ("Proposal of General Immigration Law").

<sup>16</sup> The mention of Dominican intellectuals interested in notions of afro-dominicanidad or on black Dominican populations is a reference to the work of people like Blas Jim3nez, Sylvio Torres-Saillant, and Ernesto Sag3s.

<sup>17</sup> In various interviews, Danticat has recognized the importance of the stories told by the women of her family in her story-telling techniques and development of plot lines (Charters, Publishers Weekly 245.33: 43).

<sup>18</sup> Both Haiti and the Dominican Republic are characterized by a lower participation of women in the workforce than men due to less education and work experience, child care responsibilities, and gendered expectations. In Haiti, women are more active in agriculture than in other Caribbean countries, where many have found jobs in service sectors, manufacturing plants, and sex work related to tourism; a significant number of Haitian women also engage in petty trade and depend on remittances from family members abroad. They also migrate to urban centers to work in domestic service and export processing plants.

<sup>19</sup> See World Bank's "A Review of Gender Issues in the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica" (2002), Sun Sex and Gold by Kamala Kempadoo, and Amalia Cabezas' research for discussions on the particular position of Caribbean women in local economies.

<sup>20</sup> Antillean women—to a lesser extent than men—have migrated since the 1920s along with their families to sites where laborers were needed. They accompanied their husbands or undertook work as domestics where the petroleum industry, the development of tourism, or construction projects provided them with jobs. Work in the plantation system has never been strictly gendered either. Plantation owners used female slave labor in the cutting and processing of sugar cane, in addition to using them to reproduce their labor force (Beckles 212).

For a detailed discussion on Dominican nationalist official discourses, see Néstor Rodríguez's article "La isla y su envés: representaciones de lo nacional en el ensayo dominicano contemporáneo" (2003). Rodríguez discusses anti-Haitian nationalist discourses by a series of Dominican intellectuals and politicians, such as Trujillo, Battle, and Balaguer.

<sup>22</sup> There is controversy around this issue. However, all the considered sources assert that migration increased after the U.S. invasions. The novel clearly establishes a connection between Haitian migration in the nineteen-twenties and -thirties, and U.S.-financed plantations.

<sup>23</sup> The border between the countries had been a constant controversy since the nineteenth century. Since the 1920s, Dominicans and even European migrants were sent to colonize/whiten the border and get rid of Haitians in certain sectors. For Trujillo, a closed border was necessary to maintain strict control of citizens, implement taxation and other economic policies, and restrict possible plans of insurgency against the regime on the other side of the frontier (Turits 5).

<sup>24</sup> The documentation of Haitian-Dominicans as citizens of the nation-state is limited by legal interpretations of the Dominican and Haitian constitutions. Since the Haitian constitution gives citizenship based on familial ties to Haiti, the Dominican state argues that it cannot provide documents to the citizens of another country.

<sup>25</sup> *Alegria* is the fictional town where Amabelle lives in the Dominican Republic. The coexistence of Haitians, Haitian-Dominicans, and Dominicans modifies the Haitian Creole spoken by the immigrants, which becomes an *Alegrian* Creole. Language is a relevant matter in Haitian-Dominican relations considering that it was used to differentiate Haitians and Dominicans during the Massacre. In the twenty-first century, language continues to be used to justify anti-Haitian narratives. It also demonstrates cross-border concerns in publications that include writings in Spanish, French, English, and/or Creole, such as GARR's reports, *Alter Presse*, and *Haiti Progrés*.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Crossing the Mona Channel: Dominicans in Puerto Rico**

“Crossing the Mona Passage: Dominican Migrants in Puerto Rico” seeks convergences and divergences between cultural politics in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. The first chapter demonstrates how black-identified Haitians and Dominicans in the Dominican Republic are quickly rejected as potential nationals for their perceived Africanness. I argue that people of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic are racialized by discourses on the nation, while participating in the globalization of the island. My analysis of representations of Dominican migrations to Puerto Rico also asserts that the nation matters even if interrogated by transnational realities. The governments of the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico have been fostering transnational commercial relations and addressing the issue of Dominican migration in the context of neoliberalism. Free trade agreements and migrations question the physical and cultural boundaries that define national spaces. However, the political and economic status of the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico shapes economic treaties and the direction of these migratory movements. And cultural discourses on the nation inform how migrants are racialized and further exploited.

Through the analysis of ethnic jokes, newspaper articles, and a popular song, I illustrate how Dominicans are racialized in Puerto Rico. In Puerto Rican cultural discourse, Dominicans are often depicted as invaders, uneducated men, a threat to the local work force, a burden on the U.S. welfare system, thieves, and drug dealers. My cultural analysis attests that their association with particular criminal activities, besides

undocumented migration, responds to the manner in which black-identified men and working class communities have been criminalized in Puerto Rico. In addition, the analysis of ethnic jokes demonstrates that discourses on underdevelopment are activated to racialize migrants in particular.

The political status of the island, as a U.S. territory, explains its representation as a territory fully “developed” through industrialization. Discourses on the economic development of the island assume racial connotations in dominant representations of Puerto Rico as “the whitest of the Antilles.” Nonetheless, as the literary analysis attests, in Puerto Rico, black-identified Dominicans could be read as national subjects due to official recognition of blackness within the nation. I suggest that the possibility of accepting blackness as an attribute of the nation in dominant discourse allows the simultaneous expression of anti-immigrant sentiment and sympathy towards Dominicans in media.

The analysis of literary narratives further complicates my understanding of how cultural discourses on the nation shape inter-ethnic relations in Puerto Rico. I build on the examination of non-literary texts to illustrate how representations of Dominican migrants in Puerto Rico speak to the contradictory treatment of the nation within globalization. I study the short story “Retrato del dominicano que pasó por puertorriqueño y pudo emigrar a mejor vida en Estados Unidos” (“Portrait of the Dominican who passed for Puerto Rican and was able to migrate to a better life in the United States”) (1995) by Puerto Rican Magaly García Ramis, and Dominican Luis Freites’s autobiographical text Mona, Canal de la Muerte (Mona, Death Passage) (1995) to examine the persistent literary motif of the Dominican male who migrates to Puerto Rico and then moves to the

U.S. mainland. These narratives illustrate how dominant constructions of the nation shape everyday social interactions in Dominican-Puerto Rican communities in the island and abroad. At the same time, they interrogate the boundaries of the nation through their imagination of Dominican-Puerto Rican alliances, and national subjects shaped by population and cultural flows between the island and the continental U.S. Therefore, I argue that these texts illustrate dismissals and assertions of the nation within a context marked by globalization.

### **Colonialism and Globalization**

In the case of Puerto Rico, speaking of the nation as a cultural and political entity is complicated by the political status of the island. Puerto Rico is a Free Associated State (Estado Libre Asociado) of the United States. It is not an independent political entity or a territory fully incorporated in the U.S. Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens and elect their own governor, legislature, and mayors. The island's laws are submitted to the veto of the U.S. President and the federal government. Its commerce is controlled by the United States.<sup>1</sup> Unlike U.S. states, Puerto Ricans do not vote for the President and do not have voting representatives in Congress. As a political entity, the island represents the United States, though the state, administered by local politicians, claims to represent a collective culturally defined as Puerto Rican, not American.

The incorporation of Puerto Rico as a territory of the United States in 1952 entailed the implementation of a program of economic development through industrialization. The island became a showcase and model of development for Third World elites who might be attracted by the Soviet model, and later by the Cuban (Grosfoguel 57). Historians and economists have argued that Puerto Rico was the testing

ground for the conditions that characterize late-twentieth-century models of economic development throughout the globe: export-processing activities, U.S. hegemony, crippling of local agricultural and industrial projects, cuts in government spending, and the proletarianization of rural and female subjects (Ríos 142; Briggs 195; Maldonado Denis 28).

The recent migration of Dominicans to Puerto Rico is related to the implementation of similar economic policies in the Dominican Republic by the United States. Dominican migration to Puerto Rico and the U.S. mainland increased significantly after the 1965 U.S. invasion of the Dominican Republic.<sup>2</sup> The 1965 Immigration Law in the United States promoted the distribution of larger numbers of visas. Dominicans took advantage of the opportunity to migrate to the United States in significant numbers to escape unemployment/underemployment and political repression. Since the economic model supported by the U.S. and international aid agencies required political stability, researchers have suggested that the U.S. allowed the entrance of large numbers of Dominicans to the mainland to contain political dissidence (Torres-Saillant and Hernández, 38-39). As the previous chapter states, the implementation of neoliberal policies in the Dominican Republic since the nineteen-seventies has also propelled Dominican migrations. However, those migratory movements have not been sponsored by the U.S. government.

The Puerto Rican economy has declined after the elimination of tax exemptions and extension of the federal minimum wage to the island. The cheaper labor found in other locations motivates industries to move to places like the Dominican Republic. In the nineteen-eighties and -nineties, commerce, the service sector, and, in particular,

public administration became the three main employers<sup>3</sup>; informal economies are also a significant site of employment for many. The service sector in the island, as in the United States, has become a source of mostly part-time employment without many benefits, including health care, for an impoverished workforce. But Dominican migrants continue to encounter in Puerto Rico economic and living conditions that resemble those of the U.S. mainland. The circulation of U.S. dollars allows migrants to send remittances home. Dominicans often participate in work spaces devoid of social prestige and benefits, such as coffee plantations, construction, domestic work, and the service and informal sectors of the economy. They often migrate to the U.S. mainland in search of better opportunities.

### **Placing Dominicans in the Puerto Rican Economic and Racial Landscape**

The racialization of Dominicans in the island normalizes their economic marginality. I study these processes of racialization with respect to narratives of criminality. In the Brazilian context, Denise Ferreira da Silva documents how narratives of *mestizaje* explain the racialization of black-identified Brazilians—“black, *mestiço*, and *blackened* white Brazilians” (441)—through the trope of illegality tied to the category of “the poor.” Race is not explicitly invoked to justify police violence in shanty-towns, but rather criminal activities associated with poverty, and she argues that “the ‘silencing’ of race under class produces a region of the Brazilian social space which is an effect both of race and class subjection” (442). Therefore, references to the criminal poor entail the racialization of certain spaces that experience the burden of poverty, racism, and state violence.

People of Dominican descent in Puerto Rico enter the realm of illegality through



their assumed undocumented status, and their discursive association with spaces already criminalized and racialized for their disadvantaged socio-economic status.<sup>4</sup> In “La migración caribeña en Puerto Rico” (“Caribbean Migration in Puerto Rico”), Jorge Duany states: “En Santurce y Río Piedras, los dominicanos tienden a vivir en vecindarios con altas concentraciones de pobres, negros y extranjeros” (“In Santurce and Río Piedras, Dominicans tend to live in neighborhoods with high concentrations of poor people, blacks and foreigners”) (7). His depiction of the racial, ethnic, and class demographics of Santurce reflects the history of the area and social hierarchies based on color that hinder the social mobility of non-white identified peoples in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. However, my analysis complicates Duany’s use of racial terms to describe Santurce’s population. Besides recognizing that black-identified Puerto Ricans and migrants, more than white-identified ones, tend to inhabit impoverished spaces, I ask: How is Santurce’s population defined as black? What is taken into account when applying racial terms in Puerto Rico?

In order to answer these questions, I take into account how discourses on *mestizaje* in Puerto Rico produce the whitening and blackening of local populations that have been defined as racially mixed (or *mestizo*) by official national discourse. In Puerto Rico, the lack of state-sponsored exclusionary policies based on race has permitted a limited recognition of African ancestry in narratives of *puertorriqueñidad*, as well as informed a dominant narrative of racial democracy. The cultural imagination of *puertorriqueñidad* distributed by state-sponsored Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña (ICP-Institute of Puerto Rican Culture) consists of the Hispanicization of the demographic and cultural components of the nation through *mestizaje*, which erases

racial distinctions between the island's inhabitants. Arlene Dávila, in her anthropological study Sponsored Identities: Cultural Politics in Puerto Rico, highlights how in the history of the ICP the national subject has been the light-skinned Hispanic jíbaro from the mountains with “a tinge of Indian heritage” (71). Dávila argues that the standards imposed by the ICP to authenticate any cultural group reinforce Hispanicized notions of “traditional” cultural practices of Puerto Ricans, while limiting “Afro-Puerto Rican” practices to very specific zones, like the town of Loíza and the coast. In the end, Spanish language and Christianity are the two main qualities shared by all Puerto Ricans.<sup>5</sup>

Citing the book El Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña 1955-1973: 18 años contribuyendo a fortalecer nuestra conciencia nacional (The Institute of Puerto Rican Culture 1955-1973: 18 Years Contributing to Strengthening our National Consciousness) (1978) by Dr. Ricardo Alegría, the ICP's official website continues to establish the predominance of Hispanicity over other cultural traits; Spain is imagined as the immortal component of the triad (Historia par. 14). The possibility of racial inequity, and a history of sexual subjugation of indigenous and African peoples, disappear from this official version of puertorriqueñidad due to a Hispanic Christian heritage that has shaped the “valores más profundos y trascendentales” (“more profound and transcendental values”) (Historia, par. 13) of Puerto Ricans. Arguably, those values have permitted the process of mestizaje that defines puertorriqueñidad. However, class markers are employed to racialize Puerto Ricans. For this reason, like black-identified Puerto Ricans, Dominicans' experience of racism cannot only be explained by asserting their phenotypical blackness, but rather requires an analysis of the process of racialization that turns them black and poor in public discourse.

In her sociological study “La Gran Familia Puertorriqueña ‘Ej prieta de beldá” (“The Great Puerto Rican Family is Really Really Black”), Arlene Torres demonstrates how racial designations correspond to socio-economic status in Puerto Rico. She argues that references to class are employed in Puerto Rico to euphemistically talk about race, and, at the same time, deny racist practices: “The cultural mapping of the landscape in Puerto Rico is critical because it is racialized and class based” (289). Torres explains how people from the capital of the island, San Juan, are considered to be more cultured than people from the rest of the island, and people from the interior are considered to be more educated than those from the coast. These regional distinctions are racialized: “‘*Jibaros*,’ country peasants, reside in the rural areas, and darker-skinned people live on the coast” (295). At the same time, residential areas within particular towns follow a similar logic:

Most Puerto Ricans, particularly those who do not reside in the area, believe that poor, dispossessed, and dark-skinned Puerto Ricans reside in *arrabales*, sectors of towns or villages with substandard housing, and in *caseríos*, public housing complexes. . . . Puerto Ricans quickly associate the name of an *urbanización* [suburb] with the class status of the people who reside there . . . the people there are not categorized as *gente negra*, black people. The residents of *urbanizaciones* are perceived to be socioeconomically better off, better educated, and *más culto* [more refined] than residents in *caseríos*. In fact, the working poor in the *urbanizaciones* are not always economically better off than those living in *caseríos*. However, their social status is higher precisely because they are located in a particular sociogeographical space. (296)

The association of socio-economic standing with spatiality shapes how Puerto Ricans imagine nationals in racialized terms. As a consequence, references to class status might be used to refer to the marginality of nationals in non-racial terms, while being a crucial aspect of the process of racialization.

Representations of black-identified people in the island often rely on humor.

Through humor, they negotiate official recognitions of blackness and the use of class markers to produce racial meaning. My analysis of the song “El negro” (“The Black Man”) by merengue performer Giselle illustrates how humor operates in the articulation of cultural discourses on blackness. In the nineteen-nineties, Giselle’s song rearticulated anxieties caused by the assumed socio-economic background of black-identified Puerto Ricans. The song provides me with tools to understand how ethnic jokes about Dominicans participate in their racialization through mockery of their economic difference and “underdevelopment.”

The popular song “El negro” (“The Black Man”) tells in a humorous tone the story of a presumably white-identified woman—like Giselle—whose mother does not want to accept her black boyfriend. She attempts to convince her mother by arguing that her “negro, es un negro de caché” (“black man, is a black man with class”), who wears Chanel cologne and is well dressed. His refinement is meant to whiten her boyfriend and make him acceptable for his mother-in-law. The girlfriend draws upon the potential in Puerto Ricans’ racial imagination of turning a brown-skinned person into *trigueño* (wheat-colored), instead of mulatto or black, by highlighting her/his markers of education and refinement. The mother-in-law’s intransigence highlights the reality of dark-skinned Puerto Ricans whose skin color does not always permit their whitening even if they embody markers of socio-economic privilege. Their aspirations continue to be somewhat limited even if performing middle-classness.

Giselle’s song engages with contradictions of Puerto Rican discourses on race. First, a narrative of *mestizaje* allows for the whitening of the population and humorous treatments of racial identification in the island. On the other hand, Puerto Ricans can be

blackened and placed in a lower position of the social and economic hierarchy if their skin color, hair texture, phenotype, socio-economic status, and spatial location allow for their identification with blackness. I also see these processes of racialization and the use of humor to articulate racial discourse at play in ethnic jokes about Dominicans. The ethnic joke illustrates the racialization of Dominican migrants, imagined to be racially mixed and Hispanic like Puerto Ricans, without referring to racial categories.

As my analysis of ethnic jokes demonstrates, cultural discourse imagines Dominicans as people lacking proper education, poorer than Puerto Ricans, not familiarized with technological advances, and only capable of menial jobs. The migrant personifies prevalent ideas about the “underdevelopment” of the Dominican Republic, and the Caribbean as a region that have been sanctioned by the state in its historical attempts to celebrate the U.S. model of development. These development narratives have racial connotations. The joke differentiates Dominicans from Puerto Ricans based on their lower position in the workforce, but also with respect to dominant imaginations of Puerto Ricans as whiter than other Antilleans. The U.S. citizenship of Puerto Ricans and industrialization of the island inform these processes of racialization.

In The Game of Humor, by Charles R. Gruner, humor is studied under the frame provided by the theory of superiority. This theory proposes that people laugh at each other to express their superiority over others. Gruner argues that “couched within the humor frame, the hostility [towards an ethnic group] is reduced to play, and satisfies our basic urge to ‘win’ over anyone or anything in a purely ‘symbolic’ way” (79). According to Gruner, the ethnic joke is a game that displays the superiority of the enunciator over a specific group of people. Behind the laughter lies an aggressive and competitive impulse.

Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel in Caribe Two Ways, Luis Rafael Sánchez in “Dominicanos,” and Juan Carlos Quintero Herencia in “La superioridad del isleño” state that the ethnic joke about Dominicans in Puerto Rico functions to rearticulate puertorriqueñidad at the expense of the Dominican. I argue that collective expressions of puertorriqueñidad through the ethnic joke imply the superiority of this ethnic group over Dominicans. And the laughter produced by the joke is a playful expression that masks the violent character of discourses ascribing a lesser value to dominicanidad.

The ethnic joke targeting Dominican migrants in Puerto Rico is a discursive site where classed assumptions are employed to denigrate a racialized community without engaging in an explicit racist practice.<sup>6</sup> Ethnic jokes about Dominicans circulate widely through social interactions in family gatherings, schools, work spaces, and public spaces, and through popular culture in the island. They reiterate representations of Dominicans in terms of poverty, and a lack of education, and technological knowledge, though their humorous character opens the possibility to show sympathy for the migrant. The following joke, told by Elvia Santos on December 24, 2004, in Cidra, Puerto Rico, illustrates one of the most common structures of ethnic jokes: ¿Por qué los dominicanos se ponen una peseta en la oreja? Pa’ escuchar 50 Cents. ¿Por qué se ponen un pote de ketchup? Pa’ escuchar salsa. ¿Por qué ponen la computadora al lado de una ventana? Pa’ buscar Windows (“Why do Dominicans place a quarter on their ears? To listen to Fifty Cents. Why do they do the same with a ketchup bottle? To listen to salsa. Why do they put the computer by the window? To search for Windows”). The question and answer structure prompts tentative responses from an audience that keeps reproducing the classed assumptions behind the ethnic joke. The Dominican is imagined as a subject who

, unlike Puerto Ricans, does not understand technological artifacts or have the ability to think like most people. The collective laughter produced by the “true” answers to these questions masks the mockery. After all, one could laugh and still express sympathy for the immigrant’s experience.

However, the laughter produced by the ethnic joke operates through the exclusion of the Dominican from a Puerto Rican community reconnected by the joke itself. This group dynamic does not rely only on oral interactions. Now, Puerto Rican transnational communities are articulated through the internet, where ethnic jokes about Dominicans appeal to audiences far apart in geographical terms. For instance, the email “Teléfono dominicano con cámara” (“Dominican phone with camera”) sent to Puerto Ricans located in the island and in the United States in 2004, reads:

TELEFONO CON CAMARA INTEGRADA  
 OHPEROBUENO EISTE MODELO ESTA EN ESPECIAI POR LA  
 MODDICA SUMA DE TRES PESO CON CUATTRO CEINTAVOS  
 DOMINICAINOS...NO DEJE PASAI ESTA OFERTA TU.

TELEPHONE WITH INTEGRATED CAMERA.  
 OH WELL, YOU KNOW. THIS MODEL IS A DEAL FOR THE  
 SMALL AMOUNT OF THREE DOMINICAN PESOS AND FOUR  
 CENTS. DON’T LET THIS OFFER GO BY, YOU.<sup>7</sup>

The email offers an extremely cheap Dominican phone with camera. The grammatical content of the ad—misspelling of words, subverted syntactical structure, addition of i’s to various words, and the use of the phrase “oh pero bueno” (“oh well, you know”) without spaces between words—reflect stereotypical portrayals of Dominicans as uneducated people, and common parodic exaggerations of Dominican ethno-linguistic attributes. Moreover, the price of the phone, \$3.04 Dominican pesos, further highlights the poverty of Dominicans who have to create their own camera phone.

The Dominican camera-cell phone consists of a regular phone attached with duct tape to a 35mm camera (Figure 1). The visual image accompanying the text of the email as an attachment signifies mainstream conceptualizations of the Dominican Republic, and therefore Dominicans, as underdeveloped. Though one could read guile in the Dominican creation of a camera-phone, the parody of Dominicans' manner of speaking places the expected Puerto Rican reader in a superior position with regards to Dominicans. The ethnic joke works under the assumption that the economic limitations that would motivate Dominicans to undertake make-shift projects—like the telephone with camera—are not experienced by Puerto Ricans. Puerto Ricans' U.S. citizenship is imagined as a guarantee of their ability to consume modern products. The ethnic joke asserts representations of the nation that imagine Puerto Rico as more developed than other Caribbean territories due to its political relationship with the United States. Even in a transnational context, the ethnic joke allows for the imagination of a community based on a particular understanding of the nation.

Ethnic jokes illustrate how the socio-economic status of most Dominican migrants in the island becomes a motif of Puerto Rican discourses on their ethnic difference. However, it is not clear how Dominicans are racialized as black. How could we assert their racialization when race is rarely employed in a direct manner publicly to denigrate them? In media reports about Dominican migration resides an explanation of how the racialization of Dominicans operates in Puerto Rico. In light of Arlene Torres' research, I acknowledge how negative depictions of Dominicans follow the logic of racializing discourses in the island that associate poor Puerto Rican communities with criminality.



When treating Dominican migration to Puerto Rico, media and literature have been interested in the depiction of economically disadvantaged and racialized Puerto Rican urban spaces, such as Santurce, Barrio Obrero, Seboruco, Herrera, la Calle Loíza y el Barrio Gandul, as well as working class neighborhoods in New York City. Media analysis illustrates how the racialization of certain communities in Puerto Rico informs discourses on Dominican migrants. For instance, the article “Arrestan a 60 indocumentados” (“Sixty Undocumented (people) were arrested”) provided by the Agencia EFE to El Mundo (March 11, 1988) describes how state agencies undertook an operation in “los residenciales públicos de San Juan y otros lugares de mayor incidencia criminal” (“the state’s housing projects in San Juan and other places of high criminal activity”) in order to capture undocumented migrants. Most of those arrested were of Dominican descent (10). It is significant how the article criminalizes the places where the migrants were found and, as a consequence, the migrants themselves. The criminalization of public housing projects is informed by a racialized understanding of their inhabitants. The graphic image accompanying the article clearly racializes the bodies of Dominican migrants found in those urban spaces through their caricaturesque depiction (Figure 2). The Dominican finds him/herself racialized through his/her criminalization as an undocumented migrant and will most probably experience the racialization of the impoverished Puerto Rican communities receiving him/her.

Another significant aspect of the graphic image is the presentation of one woman in a group of male migrants. In “La migración de mujeres dominicanas hacia Puerto Rico” by Luisa Hernández Angueira, she states that Dominican migration has always been mostly female, and the ratio of female migration versus male migration increased in

the nineteen-eighties (74). However, the most popular image of the Dominican migrant is a male subject. The silencing of women's migration might respond to an overall dismissal of specifically female realities in academic work on intra-Caribbean migrations and to common associations of drug-related and violent crimes with men. Migration is mostly considered to be a masculine activity. The ethnic joke for instance assumes masculinity in its formulaic presentation of "un dominicano" ("a Dominican man"). And the general use of the masculine article and modifier to speak of a collective in Spanish elides possible references to women in newspaper articles reporting on Dominican migrants. Moreover, crimes associated with housing projects—drug dealing, robbery, murder—have been masculinized in media. As a consequence, in representations of Dominican migrants, it is simple to conflate the migrant with crimes already ascribed to racialized men in marginalized communities.

My analysis of Giselle's song, ethnic jokes, and journalistic texts provides an overview of how Dominicans are racialized in Puerto Rico. I have shown how the racialization of people according to location and social status that Torres describes functions with regards to Dominicans. The song "El negro" illustrates that class markers are used to implicitly racialize Puerto Ricans and entertain the possibility of whitening through class mobility. Ethnic jokes show how Dominicans are identified as extremely poor and unable to adapt to a modern, technologically-savvy, Puerto Rican society. The joke imagines Dominicans as embodiments of underdevelopment in contrast with a highly industrialized Puerto Rico. Understanding that the racialization of Puerto Ricans is contingent upon class, I conclude that Dominicans are also racialized in humoristic depictions of their assumed backwardness. Furthermore, my reading of the newspaper

article “Arrestan a 60 indocumentados” supports and expands Torres argument tying race and place in Puerto Rico. I show that class markers, dominant representations of working class masculinity, and the criminalization of impoverished communities intersect to racialize both Puerto Ricans and Dominicans. Nonetheless, the underdevelopment and undocumented status ascribed to Dominicans heightens their socio-economic marginality. Discourses on the racial and economic difference of the Puerto Rican nation with respect to the rest of the Caribbean participate in the cultural imagination of Dominican migrants in the island.

Despite the racialization of these migrants, media and literature show the potential for inter-ethnic solidarity. Even the ethnic joke as a social practice that constructs a national community through the act of mocking the migrant does not entail a collective articulation of anti-Dominican discourses. The ambiguity embedded in humor permits expressions of solidarity. Laughter can be a manifestation of familiarity. As I have shown in Giselle’s song, humor creates a discursive space where official acceptance of blackness in Puerto Rico as well as its rejection is possible. Her boyfriend in the song is imagined as Puerto Rican, but is still not completely incorporated in the national family (i.e. the family of his girlfriend). The humor of the ethnic joke reflects a similar discursive process. The laughter expected during and after an ethnic joke contains discursive negotiations of the place of Dominican migrants in Puerto Rico. The ethnic joke can be a site where both sympathy and hostility towards Dominicans is articulated. In this manner, the ethnic joke embodies contradictions of cultural discourses on Dominican migrants in Puerto Rico.<sup>8</sup>

I have found articles published during the nineteen-seventies and -eighties in El

Mundo, one of the most widely distributed Puerto Rican newspapers at the time, that defend the legal rights of these migrants, suspect their actions, and support their claims for political asylum. In other words, sympathy and suspicion coexisted in journalistic representations of Dominicans. In the nineteen-eighties, when neoliberal policies were consolidated in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, representations of Dominican migrants as invaders increased. On January 3, 1987, the newspaper Nuevo Amanecer reported, under the sensationalist headline “Dominicanos invaden a Puerto Rico” (“Dominicans Invade Puerto Rico”), that in the period of 1982-1985 undocumented migration by boat from the Dominican Republic had increased 400-500% (6). The article compares Dominican migration to Puerto Rico and Haitian migration to Florida affirming that the former is a more significant movement numerically and therefore must be treated as an urgent matter. It also presents common views of these migrants in public discourse:

Los dominicanos se integran fácilmente a la sociedad puertorriqueña. Siempre están dispuestos a aceptar los trabajos que los puertorriqueños rehuyen: hacen trabajos de limpieza y tareas domésticas, y, frecuentemente, actúan como ‘rompehuelgas’ en las fábricas. Aún así, muchos dominicanos no encuentran trabajo y se ven forzados a convertirse en carteristas, asaltantes y prostitutas, incrementando el ya alto índice de criminalidad de la isla.

Dominicans integrate easily into Puerto Rican society. They are always willing to accept the jobs rejected by Puerto Ricans: they do janitorial work and domestic tasks, and, frequently, act as “strikebreakers” in factories. Even then, many Dominicans cannot find work and are forced to become purse-stealers, thieves and prostitutes, increasing the already high index of criminality in the island. (6)

Dominicans are perceived as hard working people willing to take the worst jobs to integrate themselves into Puerto Rican society. However, their willingness to work less remunerated jobs also marks them as rivals of Puerto Rican workers trying to improve

their working conditions. Those who cannot be absorbed by the local economy are imagined as criminals adding to the criminalized landscape of the nation. Simultaneous representations of Dominicans as hard workers, strike breakers, and criminals exemplify the ambiguity embedded in the ethnic joke. Feelings of sympathy and hostility towards Dominicans coexist in a national landscape marked by a shrinking labor market and the criminalization of poverty in the island.

Since the late nineteen-nineties, media has begun addressing themes of interest to Dominicans in the island. For instance, on March 8, 2005, the main newspaper in the island, El Nuevo Día, produced a special entitled “En la red del tráfico humano” (“On the web of human trafficking”) to discuss the plight of Dominican migrants on their way to Puerto Rico, in the island, and abroad. This special article contextualized Dominican migration within other networks involved in the traffic of migrants throughout the world. Other issues of relevance for Dominican communities—claims of police brutality, deportations, gentrification—are also treated frequently on the pages of the aforementioned newspaper, which suggests the recognition of a significant Dominican readership.

Puerto Rican media’s interest in representing the plight of Dominicans in the recent past mirrors state relations between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico within globalization. At the transnational level, the modernization of Puerto Rico under U.S. rule has turned the island into the ideal spokesperson for CAFTA-DR (Central American Free Trade Agreement-Dominican Republic), an agreement endorsed by the President of the United States, George W. Bush, on August 2, 2005. Soon after the law was approved, Puerto Rico’s governor went to the Dominican Republic to lobby for the

acceptance of the free trade agreement by the Dominican Congress. Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic were the only countries that had not yet signed (Hernández Cabiya 93). Puerto Rico's involvement in the negotiations could be read as an act of good faith. The government of the island had in the nineteen-nineties fostered commercial ties with its neighbor that led to daily ferry trips between the two territories, academic exchanges, among other policies.

However, being a U.S. territory, Puerto Rico would profit from the free trade agreement getting cheap imports and an advantageous position for its exports. The political status of the island places it in a privileged position, though still a colonial one, in the agreement. Narratives of transnational collaboration that ignore the racialization of geopolitical hierarchies within neoliberal agreements produce visions of the future that ignore how globalization does not entail moving beyond the nation. For example, the political relationship between Puerto Rico and the U.S. explains why renowned Puerto Rican political analyst Juan Manuel García Passalacqua imagines Puerto Rico as the mediator/interlocutor between the Caribbean and the United States while the region is integrated in a globalized economy. A Puerto Rican Free Associated Republic sharing national defense with the U.S., but autonomous in every other matter, would make possible his vision of Puerto Rico as the leader and spokesperson of the region: “Nuestra extensa tradición democrática y electoral, nuestra relativamente desarrollada infraestructura, y las ventajas que disfrutamos como resultado de un crecimiento económico comparativamente más vigoroso, convertirían la *República Asociada de Puerto Rico* en el centro de gravedad de la region” (“Our long democratic and electoral tradition, our relatively developed infrastructure, and the advantages enjoyed as a result

of a more vigorous economic growth, would turn the *Free Associated Republic of Puerto Rico* into the center of gravity of the region") (135). In his book Dignidad y Jaibería (1993), he argues that Puerto Ricans must first recognize their Afro-Antilleanness to imagine a productive relationship with other Antilles and must globalize themselves by engaging in inter-regional economic exchanges, especially with Europe.<sup>9</sup> In 2003, at a conference presentation at the Caribbean Studies Association convention in Belize, he asserted that Puerto Ricans had already accepted their Afro-Antilleanness and could take on the role of leading the globalization of the region as a Free Associated Republic.

Passalacqua's proposal is plagued by various contradictions. One of them involves his claims about Afro-Antilleanness and globalization in Puerto Rico. As my chapter demonstrates, Puerto Rican approaches to racial identification consist of symbolic struggles between affirmations of African-derived traditions and the continued privileging of whiteness in social interactions and official national discourse. In his political proposal Passalacqua does not recognize how the neoliberal economic structures of globalization—at the national and transnational levels—rely on discourses of racial difference. The role played by the Dominican Republic as mediator between international aid organizations and Haiti, in a context marked by the dictates of U.S. hegemony, provides a useful framework to consider Passalacqua's statements. As I have discussed in the previous chapter, the racialization of Haitian migrants in the Dominican Republic mirrors international discourses on these two countries. I suggest that the position of Puerto Rico as an intermediary entity between transnational capital, the United States, Europe, and the Caribbean would be informed by the islanders' assumed whiteness with respect to other Antilleans, such as Dominicans. The role played by the island's

government within CAFTA demonstrates that its association with the U.S. places it in a better position within the agreement. And, as my analysis demonstrates, this political and economic privilege asserts dominant identifications of the island with whiteness through development narratives that highlight its U.S. citizenship and industrialization.

Looking at representations of Dominican migrants in ethnic jokes, media, and literature sheds light on the discourse of globalization sponsored by the state and academia. My analysis points to racialization processes in the island that challenge idealized imaginations of an almost-independent Puerto Rico in a regional globalized economy. In addition, Arlene Torres' analysis of the racialization of low-income neighborhoods and certain geographical areas in the island becomes very productive for achieving an understanding of how Dominicans, Dominican-Puerto Ricans, and Puerto Ricans' presence in racialized spaces shape inter-ethnic exchanges. Puerto Ricans, who are described by official discourse through narratives of *mestizaje* and Hispanicity, are blackened by their identification with spaces like Santurce. The racialized imagination of national spaces is imposed on the Dominican arrivals, whose ethnic difference has located them in the lowest-strata of the workforce and therefore in Puerto Rican marginal communities. Dominicans also imagined as Hispanic *mestizo* bodies experience then the blackening of low-income Puerto Ricans, as well as vulnerability in work spaces due to their assumed undocumented status and ethnic difference. Convergences and divergences found in the racialized experiences of working class Puerto Ricans and people of Dominican descent—Dominican-born, Dominican-Puerto Rican, and U.S. Dominicans—in urban spaces explain the coexistence of inter-ethnic solidarity and xenophobia within representations of Dominican migrants.



My comparative analysis of “Retrato del dominicano” and Mona, Canal de la Muerte addresses how the nation is reasserted even if its integrity is questioned by the reality of migration and inter-ethnic alliances. García Ramis and Freites place Dominican-Puerto Rican relations within urban contexts marked by population movements between the island and the U.S. The comparison seeks literary representations of racialization processes experienced by Dominicans and Puerto Ricans in inter-ethnic urban communities in Puerto Rico and the United States. Their common experience of racialization seems to be the basis for inter-ethnic alliances that interrogate symbolic boundaries of the nation, as well as a site where cultural discourses on the nation can be seen in action. After all, the ethnic difference of the Dominican is a source of conflict in spaces where racism is denied by local ideas of racial democracy and transnational relations.

### **Literary Imaginations of Puerto Ricans and Others**

Literature and cultural critics have significantly treated the subject of Dominican-Puerto Rican relations and Dominican migration to Puerto Rico. Some of the most well-known texts written by Puerto Rican writers are the play Indocumentados: el otro merengue (1989) by José Luis Ramos Escobar, the novel Cualquier miércoles soy tuya (2004) by Mayra Santos Febres, the short stories “Yolanda” (1998) by Lizette Gratacós Wys, and “Retrato del dominicano que pasó por puertorriqueño y pudo emigrar a mejor vida a Estados Unidos” by Magaly García Ramis (1995), and the collection of short stories Encancaranublado by Ana Lydia Vega. Puerto Rican writers have often focused on the experiences of the male migrant, the strategies employed by migrants to reach the island and obtain legal documentation, their location in Puerto Rico and/or the United

States, inter-ethnic relations, and the voluntary or forced possibility of returning to the Dominican Republic. All of these texts also share a concern with the boat ride between the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, which is the most frequent image Puerto Ricans have of Dominicans in media: the boat of Dominicans found by the Coast Guard and repatriated, or just found with or without its dead passengers.

In addition, Dominican writers in Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic and the U.S. mainland have articulated a vision of Dominican-Puerto Rican relations shaped by their migratory experiences. On one hand, we find the compilations of critical essays Mirada en tránsito (1999) by Eugenio García Cuevas and Puerto Rico y Santo Domingo también son . . . (1999) by Miguel Angel Fornerín. These texts document points of contact between Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic in terms of their history, culture, social dynamics, and population movements. The novels Marina de la Cruz (1994) by Félix Ma. Mendoza, Viajes suicidas (1996) by José Francisco Cheas, and Mar de sangre (1996) by Elba Domenech Soto explicitly describe terrifying attempts of migrating by boat and tend to be based on facts or someone's experience (Torres-Saillant "No es lo mismo," 27-28). And, the autobiographical texts Mona, Canal de la Muerte (1995) by Luis Freites and Puerto Rico: una ruta incierta al norte, la travesía en yola (1993) by Raúl Martínez Rosario are worth adding to this list of works for their contribution to the discursive imagination of Dominicans in the island through personal narratives, although neither received critical acclaim.

These two autobiographies tell the story of a Dominican man who travels to Puerto Rico by yola [boat], lives in the metropolitan area, and finds a way to migrate to the U.S. mainland. Eventually, they both return to the Dominican Republic. It is

remarkable how both texts underline the dangers of the boat ride to Puerto Rico. Death and uncertainty characterize the boat ride experience. The image of the boat in the Mona Channel constitutes the covers of both books. Martínez Rosario's book cover depicts a sinking boat full of people and the sharks surrounding a man representing the fate awaiting many migrants, while Freites's cover illustrates the personified image of death haunting the Mona Channel region. These fears are replicated in the Dominican press where stories of shipwrecks and editorials concerned with the large outbound undocumented immigration of Dominicans are frequently found.<sup>10</sup>

### **Retrato del dominicano**

The short story "Retrato del dominicano que pasó por puertorriqueño y pudo emigrar a mejor vida a Estados Unidos" by Magaly García Ramis recalls a common motif in narratives of Dominican migration: the experience of passing for a U.S. citizen of Puerto Rican descent. This story situates Dominican migrant Asdrúbal in Santurce. He plans to migrate to New York without legal documentation. His Puerto Rican friends—or the "muchachos" ("guys") of the neighborhood's high school—teach him how to pass for a Puerto Rican man at the airport and help him obtain a false identification along with the "right" attire to deceive the immigration officer. The story ends when the Puerto Ricans take a picture of Asdrúbal as the immigration officer at the airport allows him to continue to the plane. The success of Asdrúbal's performance of puertorriqueñidad undermines racialized distinctions between Dominicans and Puerto Ricans and the ability of the state to control population movements. It also asserts the existence of class-based solidarity between Dominicans and Puerto Ricans sharing a space like Santurce. However, an exploration of the comic tone of the narrative reminds us of the tensions embedded in the

ethnic joke. Humor understates the violence produced by derogatory affirmations of ethnic and racial differences.

As literary scholar Rita de Maeseneer asserts in “Sobre dominicanos y puertorriqueños: movimiento perpetuo?” (“About Dominicans and Puerto Ricans: perpetual movement?”), the title of García Ramis’ story—“Retrato del dominicano que pasó por puertorriqueño y pudo emigrar a mejor vida a Estados Unidos”—reminds the reader of the conventions of the picaresque novel. Asdrúbal’s resembles the characterization of the pícaro himself due to his marginality and witty manner of passing for what he is not to overcome disadvantaged circumstances (60). The picaresque genre is characterized by the humorous depiction of the struggles of an individual who must enter the realm of illegality in order to ensure his/her survival. Asdrúbal does so by entering the United States mainland falsely identified as a Puerto Rican U.S. citizen, instead of an undocumented Dominican.

De Maesener reads the picaresque conventions of the story in terms of a universalist conceptualization of migratory movements and human utopic desires: “La referencia al género picaresco incita a reflexionar sobre el deseo eterno del hombre de migrar, la búsqueda de una utopía que muchas veces se convierte en distopía, los mecanismos del dinero que mueven el mundo, ahora y entonces” (“The reference to the picaresque genre motivates a reflection on the eternal desire of men to migrate, the search of a utopia that often becomes dystopia, the mechanisms of money that move the world, now and then”) (60). However, the story specifically refers to the experience of a Dominican migrant in Puerto Rico in the nineteen-eighties. I complicate De Maesener’s reading and bring it back to bear on the story’s concerns with a specific

location and time by reading its picaresque aspects in relation to the social function of the ethnic joke in Puerto Rico.

I read the title with respect to the ethnic joke taking into consideration the placement of the story within García Ramis' collection of stories Las noches del riel de oro. The collection is divided into various sections. Each section is meant to reproduce images of Puerto Rican society and history. According to the narrator, she has searched for “los retratos de imágenes guardadas, escondidas, que muestran mayormente las sombras; retratos tan necesarios para complementar esos otros casi solo de luz que uno quiso pasar por los únicos verdaderos” (“the portraits of kept images, hidden ones, that show mostly shadows; pictures so necessary to complement those other ones almost only of light which one tried to pass as the only real ones”) (59). Every picture is a testimony of a lived experience that has been hidden because it did not fit into a dominant narrative, be it a personal or a national one. “Retrato de un dominicano” (“Portrait of a Dominican”) is placed in a section titled “Retratos urbanos” (“Urban Portraits”). The section “Retratos urbanos” reveals inhabitants of the city who are left behind, who go unseen, in their own marginality: the undocumented Dominican, the lower-middle class woman living for those weekly meetings with her married lover, the poor and mentally-ill whose emotional and material needs are not met with a monthly check, and children’s experiences of social inequity in the public school system. Every “portrait” shows urban experiences of ethnic, socio-economic, and/or gender subjection.

The context provided by these other stories informs my reading of the title and its implicit comic tone. “Retrato de un dominicano” is the only one in the section “Retratos urbanos” where a happy ending is suggested, and a light humoristic tone is employed.

The other three are quite somber in their telling of events, and their endings are clearly pessimistic. There is no resolution for any of the other characters, only persistent waiting or death. But Asdrúbal's story, the first one, is drastically different in its use of humor and happy resolution. I argue that its remarkable humorous components should be interpreted in light of the everyday use of the ethnic joke to talk about Dominican migrants in Puerto Rico. These jokes provide a lens for understanding how the picaresque-like literary techniques are useful in the representation of a specific Dominican-Puerto Rican urban experience.

Puerto Rican-Dominican relations are constituted in an environment where the ethnic joke differentiates locals from these migrants through humor, but permits simultaneous expressions of solidarity. If one follows the logic of the ethnic joke, the idea of a Dominican passing for Puerto Rican seems almost impossible. The ethnic joke imagines Dominicans representing everything Puerto Ricans do not: underdevelopment, poverty, and ignorance. As a consequence, the picaresque-like phrase "Retrato del dominicano que pasó por puertorriqueño" ("Portrait of the Dominican who passed for Puerto Rican") could be read in function of the absurdity of such an idea and the consequent laughter produced by its impossibility. However, the phrase might also highlight the incredible amount of skill and guile needed by an individual to undertake the deception. An audience familiar with the ethnic joke may read the title in these two ways. The reader could engage in the usual mockery of the migrant, while recognizing his/her resourcefulness. Considering how the story is placed within a representation of urban spaces in Puerto Rico, I let the ambiguity of the ethnic joke in the island inform my reading of the short story. Humor, as irony, mockery, comedy, sets the tone for the

narrative and determines its interpretation.

I argue that the picaresque humorous tone of Asdrúbal's story, like the ethnic joke, produces an understatement of his experience in Puerto Rico. In the end, the laughter produced by the ethnic joke hides the violence of its racialized imagination of the migrant. In the story, humor plays down the violence of Asdrúbal's assimilation. At the same time, irony in the story underlines the marginal condition of the migrant even after achieving his goal of passing as Puerto Rican. The last part of the title, "y pudo emigrar a mejor vida a Estados Unidos" ("and he could migrate to a better life in the United States"), assumes an ironic tone when the narrator reveals that Asdrúbal does not know English and expects to work as a taxi driver in the United States. Behind the happy ending suggested by a superficial reading of the title, one can foresee a textual critique of the hopes instilled by the "American dream."

If irony informs how the reader interprets the ending of the story, mockery shapes the text's representation of how Asdrúbal's Puerto Rican friends teach him how to pass for Puerto Rican. The story in a humorous manner questions dominant imaginations of puertorriqueñidad. As Martínez-San Miguel asserts, the story seems to be a "recetario" ("recipe") of how to become Puerto Rican (173). Some of the advice given by the Puerto Ricans consists of

No camines tan derecho, como si te hubieran metío una vara por el culo; déjate ir, tu sabes, mano, suéltate los hombros [. . .] Y deja de abrir tanto los ojos. Ustedes los dominicanos miran a veces como asustados, con los ojos como pescao de *freezer* [. . .] eso de Asdrúbal está camarón [. . .] Tienes que tener un nombre de aquí, con una identificación, por si acaso, pana, tienes que llamarte Luis, José, Willie, Ilving, lo que tú quieras. Y tienes que recortarte a la moda, quítate la sereta esa.

Don't walk so erect, as if someone put a stick up your ass; let yourself go, you know, brother, loosen your shoulders . . . And don't open your eyes so much. You Dominicans look around sometimes like you're scared, with eyes like frozen fish . . . that name Asdrúbal is ridiculous... You have to have a name from here, with ID, just in case, brother, you have to call yourself Luis, José, Willie, Ilving, whatever you want. And you have to get a stylish haircut, change that haircut. (108-109)

The story is a recipe for a particular puertorriqueñidad: that is working class, urban, youthful, and masculine. The recipe is the product of a particular class and gendered experience that is, to some extent, shared by the Puerto Ricans and Asdrúbal. The Puerto Ricans' mockery of Asdrúbal's manner of walking, looking around, naming himself, and cutting his hair demonstrates their familiarity with him and coexistence in a community.

However, Martínez-San Miguel reads the story as an exaltation of Puerto Rican generosity, while the Dominican continues to be an Other through his difference. She identifies how the Puerto Ricans' suggestions signal Asdrúbal's ethnic difference (174). Their familiarity is based on sharing a class and gendered experience, but the ethnic difference and undocumented status of Asdrúbal continues to mark his outsider status. While Asdrúbal has to look around himself to avoid the police, the guys tell him how a Puerto Rican man directs his sight around men and women:

No mires tanto pa' los la'os ¿vite? Los puertorriqueños no miramos alrededor, excepto lejos, a menos que pase una buena hembra o, cualquier hembra ¿vite? Pero entre machos, uno no está mirando a los otros machos, uno mira pa' allá. Eso, vira la cabeza hacia donde yo te hablo, pero mira pa' lejos

Don't look around so much, you see? Puerto Rican men don't look around, except far away, unless a good-looking female goes by or just any female, you see? But, among machos, one does not look at other machos, one looks over yonder. That's it, turn the head towards where I am talking, but look far away (108-109).

The Puerto Ricans question his masculinity. They mock him without realizing that, as an



undocumented migrant, Asdrúbal must constantly examine his surroundings in order to avoid an encounter with the police.

Despite the guys constant mockery of Asdrúbal, the story also questions the Puerto Ricans' sense of superiority and national pride. I argue that the humor employed to describe the process of assimilating Asdrúbal plays a joke not only on his difference, but on the Puerto Ricans as well. Martínez-San Miguel correctly calls attention to the story's representation of the effects of U.S. colonialism on what have become signifiers of puertorriqueñidad (i.e. names like Willie and Ilving) (174). Their Puerto Rican name for Asdrúbal, Willie Rosario, ironically shows the arbitrary constitution of puertorriqueñidad by the guys, who claim Hispanicized versions of U.S. names as their own. The Puerto Ricans' treatment of Asdrúbal is always shaped by their investment in a particular imagination of the nation. Nonetheless, the nation envisioned by them is not an enclosed and clearly demarcated entity; it has been politically and culturally shaped by the U.S. This reality explains why Dominican men in the story question the masculinity and arrogance of the Puerto Rican guys in the context of a dependent relationship with the U.S. Asdrúbal's partner in the hot dog cart, Dominican Diosdado, tells him:

Nosotros caminamos muy derechos, porque somos hijos de una república. Los de aquí no. Eso me lo dijo un líder sindical hace tiempo. Los puertorriqueños, estos muchachos del barrio, caminan un poco jorobaditos, y como arrastrando los pies, como si no les importara nada y es que ellos ya son ciudadanos y no les preocupa el futuro.

We walk very erect, because we are sons of a republic. Those from here, are not (sons of a republic). A labor leader told me that a while ago. The Puerto Ricans, those guys from the barrio, walk a little hunched over, and like dragging their feet, as if they did not care about anything and it is because they are already citizens and don't worry about the future (108) .

The Puerto Rican guys make fun of Asdrúbal's masculinity because of his fear and

demeanor, but Diosdado questions their masculinity for their lack of pride and for their complacency in their colonial relationship with the United States.

In addition, despite the Puerto Ricans' objectification and differential treatment of women, and their mockery of Asdrúbal's very short "pelo malo" ("bad hair"), Asdrúbal and his friend Gerardo note that Puerto Rican masculine youth go to women's beauty salons, "y se dejan el pelo más largo, o con la colita atrás, o como los mulatos del norte, con peinados pegaítos abajo y abultados arriba que hacen que la cabeza parezca una goma de lápiz" ("and leave their hair longer, or with a tail in the back, or like the mulattos of the North, with hairdos cut very short on the bottom and high on top that make the head look like a pencil eraser") (109). In the eyes of Asdrúbal, Puerto Rican men's ways of taking care of their hair undermine their claims of gender difference. They are feminized in their beautifying practices. Puerto Rican men's ethnic difference becomes the object of mockery for Dominicans. But the Dominicans' point of view remains marginal. In the story, none of the Dominicans make fun of Puerto Ricans in their presence. Their legal status puts them in a vulnerable position with respect to their Puerto Rican friends.

These tense, but friendly, Dominican-Puerto Rican relations challenge dominant narratives on the nation, the state, and race. In the process of transforming Asdrúbal into Puerto Rican Willie Rosario, the Puerto Ricans reject in an irreverent manner official signs of puertorriqueñidad. At the airport they exchange Willie's medal of Dominican Virgin of Altagracia for the Virgin of Carmen: "Willie se asustó. —No es la patrona de Pueltojrigo dijo—Sí, olvídate de eso, esta es la que es, nadie usa la otra, la official, aquí to' el mundo que tiene a la Virgen es la Virgen del Carmen" ("Willie got scared.—She is

not the patron saint of Pueltojrigo, he said—Yes, forget about that, this is the one that matters, no one uses the other one, the official one, here everyone who has the virgin has the Virgin of Carmen") (111).<sup>11</sup> Their location in Santurce, along with a Dominican community, points toward their marginal status with respect to the nation-state. By the time they get to the airport, Willie can perform the ethnolinguistic and behavioral qualities ascribed to puertorriqueñidad by his friends. The exchange of the virgin, and Willie's reaction, highlight that these Puerto Ricans do not fit into official narratives of the nation. Asdrúbal passes for Willie embodying their alternative idea of puertorriqueñidad. When he deceives the immigration officer, the state recognizes and makes official his performance of a national subject.

Helping Asdrúbal, the Puerto Ricans also play a joke on U.S. authorities. They might ascribe puertorriqueñidad to U.S. names and commercial products, but have no allegiance towards the nation itself. They challenge the boundaries defining U.S. citizenship through their alliance with the Dominican. When the immigration official asks Willie where is he from, his friends take a picture from the gate:

en ese preciso momento Willie oye que lo llaman y se vira para ver a los muchachos que con una camarita en la mano le gritan—Sonríe pa' la foto del album de la clase graduanda.—

Y en ese instante, a la vez, Willie, sonriendo a los muchachos le dijo al de inmigración.—De Pueltojrigo—y se despidió ondeando el brazo. El Mister le dijo—gracias pase—y él se viró, y caminó medio jorobadito, arrastrando los pies como si no le importara nada, sacó una peineta de cinco puntas y se la pasó por su pelo recortado en forma de goma de lápiz y se fue por el pasillo rumbo al Jumbo Jet que lo llevó a Nueva York

at the precise moment Willie hears people calling him and turns around to see the guys screaming at him with a camera at hand—Smile for the picture of the graduating class.—

And, at the same time, Willie, smiling at the guys, told the

immigration officer.—From Pueltojrigo (Puerto Rico)—and bid farewell waving his arm. The Mister told him—thanks, go ahead—and he turned around, and walked slightly hunched, dragging his feet as if nothing mattered to him, took out a five-toothed comb and passed it through his haircut in the shape of a pencil eraser and went down the corridor on his way to the Jumbo Jet that took him to New York. (112)

The picture for the fictional senior class album completes his performance of puertorriqueñidad. It connects him to a Puerto Rican community. The immigration official, marked either as an Anglo-American or simply a representative of the U.S. through the Anglicism *Míster*, accepts Willie's performance without asking for his fake identification card. The picture memorializes the visual image that allowed him to pass for Puerto Rican in front of the state representative.

In addition, the picture captures a racialized, classed, and gendered visual imagination of puertorriqueñidad. First, Asdrúbal embodies what the narrator calls "un color de piel acaramelado, boricua" ("a caramel-like skin color, boricua") that helps him pass for Puerto Rican (107). The caramel color is, according to the narrative voice, a Puerto Rican quality. This statement leaves the reader with various questions: Does the narrator assume that other skin tones are not truly Puerto Rican? Is it an ironic commentary on ideas of puertorriqueñidad, on how they are always informed by the particular positionality of those enunciating them? What would happen if Asdrúbal were white or black, instead of brown? Is there an assumption that most Dominicans are white or black, unlike Puerto Ricans? These questions go unanswered in the narrative. However, it is clear that a dominant view of Puerto Ricans as the light-skinned *jíbaro* does not predominate in the story. The version of puertorriqueñidad presented by the guys and accepted by state authorities in the airport relies on a particular class, race, and

gender experience of Puerto Rico, not official but recognized in the public eye.

Though humor in the story understates the violence of assimilation and discourses on Dominican ethnic difference, “Retrato de un dominicano” puts into question the tenets of official national discourses and racialized distinctions between Dominicans and Puerto Ricans. As we can see in Asdrúbal’s Puerto Rican hair cut, the story defines puertorriqueñidad through references to local articulations of masculinity informed by exchanges between urban youth cultures in the island and the continental U.S. In the story, Asdrúbal’s brown skin and “pelo malo” (“bad hair”) are the right signifiers of puertorriqueñidad.<sup>12</sup> His “pencil eraser hairdo,” better known as a high top fade, is a signifier of nineteen-eighties hair styles associated with black-identified men in the island and the United States. His hair, skin color, and performance of urban working class young masculinity suggest a performance of puertorriqueñidad that would be read more in terms of blackness than whiteness within Puerto Rico’s racial spectrum. The Puerto Ricans make him look like one of them as they participate in an urban youth culture in-the-making through encounters with African Americans, Puerto Ricans, and other Caribbean peoples in marginal communities in the United States. In this manner, the representation of puertorriqueñidad in the story questions the primary tenets of its official Hispanicized imagination. At the same time, the process of assimilating Asdrúbal reasserts the significance of cultural discourses on the nation in the late twentieth century.

The nation and its mechanisms of exclusion shape transnational experiences within globalization. Discourses on the nation racialize local and migrant inhabitants of marginal urban communities. These experiences, in places like Santurce, inform

transnational modes of youth culture associated with the production of cultural forms such as rap, hip hop, and reggaetón. Inter-ethnic political activism has also emerged from Dominican-Puerto Rican relations shaped by, not state neoliberal collaboration, but rather class and racialized experience. The campaign “Santurce no se vende” (“Santurce is not for sale”) undertaken in 2003 by various community groups is one example.

This campaign entails the collaboration of the *Coalición para la Defensa de Santurce* (Coalition in Defense of Santurce), which is composed by *Comité de Derechos Humanos Dominicano* (Committee of Dominican Human Rights), the *Junta de Acción Comunitaria San Mateo de los Cangrejos* (Community Action Council of San Mateo de los Cangrejos), *Pro Rescate del Viejo San Juan* (Pro-Rescue of Old San Juan and *Movimiento de Unidad Obrera Dominicana* (Movement of Dominican Workers Unity), among other groups (“Santurce no se vende” par. 1-7). The community struggles against the gentrification of the neighborhood by a state-sponsored private enterprise. Many residents have been asked to relocate or to sell their properties for low prices that would not allow them to afford another residence in a housing market unaffordable for low-income buyers (Rosario 13). The campaign has been publicly advocating for a project more inclusive of the needs of the community (Vázquez Zapata 4). “Santurce no se vende” is an example of inter-ethnic collaboration in a place that has been stigmatized as a Dominican neighborhood, and deprived of participating of government projects that privilege the interests of corporate business.

### **Mona, canal de la muerte**

The text *Mona, canal de la muerte* by Luis Freire describes similar collaborations between Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, not in the island, but in New York. His story

foreshadows Asdrúbal's potential encounters with other Dominicans and Puerto Ricans in the United States. As I will further discuss, those interactions in the United States inform Dominican-Puerto Rican relations in the island due to transnational familial, communal, and cultural networks. The experiences of migrants in Puerto Rico and the U.S. mainland make visible parallels between the substandard housing and educational resources that characterize impoverished communities in both places.

While García Ramis' story relies on humor, Freites' first-person construction of a migrant subjectivity highlights the violence the narrator is subjected to as an undocumented worker. Mona, Canal de la muerte is presented as an autobiographical narrative by Luis Freites, but its facts or even publication information cannot be verified. I found the text at the Caribbean Collection of the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras campus. The edition seems to be a low-budget one, without any information on the author, editor, publisher's location, or year of publication. The narrative suggests that the events occurred around the decade of the nineteen-eighties. The narrator allegedly spends fifteen years abroad. The library catalog states that it was published in San Juan on 1995, though question marks suggest that the year and location are not definitive.. Since I have not been able to verify the origin of the text or its autobiographical character, I will speak of the narrative voice as the narrator, instead of assuming that it is the author.

The narrator places his own personal story along with anecdotes about other Dominicans who have attempted to migrate or have migrated to Puerto Rico. Throughout the text, he inserts his analysis of the emotional needs of the migrant and the external factors limiting his social advancement. His personal experience is meant to speak to a Latin American audience, especially a Dominican one. The narrative is organized in three

sections. The first one describes how people migrate from coastal towns in the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico. The second section tells the experience of the narrator in Puerto Rico. And the third section concentrates on his stay in New York and final return to the Dominican Republic.

The tone of the narrative is serious, frequently religious. He relies on his Catholic faith to endure the challenges posed by the migratory experience and to ask young Dominicans to not leave their country. I note in his text a universalist approach to migration, that allows him to identify with others in similar situations. In various locations, the narrator constructs his migrant subjectivity based on a universalist understanding of human migratory movements. For him, migrants, like himself, represent “el espíritu universal” (“the universal spirit”) of humanity’s constant attempt to better its circumstances (V). His universalism explains his solidarity with migrants in his own country. For instance, he respectfully recognizes the reasons behind the migration of a Haitian woman, Madame Liz, to his town: “Madame Liz había emigrado de Haití su patria hacia la República Dominicana para evitar el calor tan fuerte de la situación haitiana. Ese calor solo generaba más miseria, desempleo y pobreza, al igual que en otros pueblos de Caribe” (“Madame Liz had migrated from Haiti, her homeland, to the Dominican Republic to avoid the strong heat of the Haitian situation. This heat only generated more misery, unemployment, poverty, like in other countries of the Caribbean”) (18). His depiction of Madame Liz highlights how the community appreciates her ability to heal physical and spiritual illnesses. She is portrayed as a productive and accepted member of the community. He even identifies with her impulse to look for means of subsistence somewhere else and need to escape from “the heat”—a



metaphor for poverty and political instability—in Haiti.

His solidarity with other migrants is based on what he sees as their sad and disadvantaged reality away from home and in other people's lands. In Barrio Obrero, Puerto Rico, he enters the workforce becoming the janitor at a local bar: "Alguien tenía que hacer este trabajo y la persona más indicada era uno necesitado de trabajar, que no tuviera otras posibilidades, como por ejemplo un extranjero indocumentado" ("Someone had to do this work and the most appropriate person was someone who needed to work, who did not have any other possibilities, like an undocumented foreigner") (46). He finds himself at first grateful for having a job. Eventually, he realizes that his salary only covers rent and some of his nutritional needs, condemning him to live "en la miseria y pobreza" ("in misery and poverty")(46). He also has to hide from the police whenever they go to the bar. Then, he decides to leave his job and has to accept that his supervisor would not pay his last week of work. He resigns himself to suffer injustice because "Dífcilmente a un extraño le pongan las cosas en bandeja de plata ("It would be difficult for a stranger to receive everything on a silver platter")" (43).

Fear and resignation characterize migrants' subjectivities, according to the narrator: "Muchos evitamos problemas policiales o judiciales ya que la experiencia nos dice que . . . más de la mitad de los inmigrantes que están presos son por cargos ficticios" ("Many of us avoid problems with the police or the law because experience tells us that more than half of immigrants in prison are in there on false charges") (47). Note here that he does not specify his position through ethnicity, location or any other specific category. He is talking about immigrants, as a collective to which he belongs, and assumes that all must endure the same conditions.

However, after migrating to the United States, his concerns most specifically address his particular experience as a Dominican migrant. He is able to migrate to New York after marrying Dominican Stefanía; she had become documented by paying a Puerto Rican man to marry her.<sup>13</sup> His documented status does not bring him better economic opportunities in Puerto Rico. He is still treated like a foreigner, an immigrant. He realizes then that not having legal documentation is not the only reason for his marginality. His identification as a foreigner, a non-national, limits his economic opportunities. Cultural discourses on the nation shape his experience even when he has been incorporated as a member of the nation-state. As a consequence, Stefanía and Freites decide to move to New York to see if their economic situation changes.

In New York, he ends up doing janitorial work again. At first, it seems ideal because he does not need to communicate in English to work. However, in the workspace, he experiences U.S. racism: “Mi supervisor inmediato se sentía feliz gritando a sus subalternos, incluyéndome a mí. Este señor sentía placer humillando a los trabajadores especialmente negros y latinoamericanos, dándonos gritos y poniéndonos apodos cargados de racismo” (“My immediate supervisor was happy screaming at his subordinates, including myself. This man felt pleasure humiliating the workers, especially blacks and Latin Americans, screaming at us and calling us names charged with racism”) (72). The workspace becomes a site where different Latin Americans interact with each other and with the local African American population. There they all share a process of racialization that situates them in the lower strata of U.S. socio-economic hierarchies. The official use of race in the United States to describe people might explain why the narrator recognizes racism in anti-immigrant discourses in New

York, while not seeing it in the manner he was treated in Puerto Rico. In New York, he does not refer to the universal mistreatment of the migrant to explain his situation, but rather to his racialization, economic exploitation, and experience as somebody who does not embody the normative imagination of a national, a U.S. citizen.

The inter-ethnic experience of U.S. racism informs Freites approach to other immigrants. In particular, he becomes the close friend of Puerto Rican Joel and his family. In New York, both “eramos extranjeros. El, a pesar de su ciudadanía norteamericana sufría en carne propia los desprecios que nos hacen a los latinoamericanos” (“were foreigners. He, despite his North American citizenship, suffered the same disdain directed towards Latin Americans”) (78). The narrator concludes that Puerto Ricans in New York are racialized and treated like foreigners, despite their legal relationship with the U.S.

Joel’s family history becomes in the text an example of what happens to many Latin American immigrants in the United States. Joel cannot achieve his dream of returning to the island or even afford to pay for the college education of his son. Eventually, Joel’s son is imprisoned for drug possession. However, the narrator doubts the credibility of the police officer’s testimony: “Según su hijo [de Joel], los cargos y las pruebas eran fabricadas por la policía, ya que se la tenían dedicada y jurada por ser hispano. Los policías lo habían pateado estando el mismo esposado en el suelo, gritándole que los hispanos no valian nada en los Estados Unidos, y luego cuando estaba inconsciente le habían sembrado la droga” (“According to his son [Joel’s], the charges and evidence had been fabricated by the police, because they had it against him for being Hispanic. The police had kicked him while he was handcuffed on the floor, screaming at

him that Hispanics were worth nothing in the United States, and then when he was unconscious they had planted the drug")(86). The reality of police brutality and criminalization of Latino urban youth further limits the prospects of Joel's son in the future. Joel's son's unfair imprisonment and his unaccomplished dreams motivate the narrator to develop a critique of the consequences of U.S. racism on Latino youth.

Associating the United States with socio-economic and racist subjection, the narrator does not expect to spend his whole life there. Fifteen years later, when his hair is turning white, the narrator and Stefanía decide to return to the Dominican Republic. On their way to the Dominican Republic, the couple stops in Miami for a short visit. In Miami, the narrator expresses solidarity towards Cubans as other embodiments of the universal spirit of the migrant. The narrator articulates an anti-imperialist hemispheric consciousness. According to the narrator, Miami is the back door of the United States, from which you can see the geopolitical socio-economic hierarchy of the Americas. One side is characterized by wealth and great technological resources--the United States; on the other side, Latin America, he finds unfulfilled dreams and misery (102). His analysis of continental economic differences recognizes the militaristic imposition of U.S. hegemony in the continent: "Por allí ha salido más de una vez el tío Samuel, correa en mano, a poner caracter en el vecindario" ("From there (Miami) Uncle Sam has left more than once, belt in his hand, to impose discipline in the neighborhood"), whenever U.S. interests are endangered (102-103). He describes Latin American countries as sources of wealth and labor for the improvement of other societies, like the United States. Meanwhile, Latin Americans have to migrate to the United States, suffer poverty, and accept the worst jobs in a society where they are not appreciated (99). In the end, "El

sueño dorado de la emigración por el canal de la Mona” (“The golden dream of migration through the Mona Channel”) (96) remains an unaccomplished dream.

His final decision to return to the Dominican Republic reflects his new understanding of the “American Dream” represented by the Mona Channel. The Channel is not a signifier of hope anymore. The narrator renames it as the “Death Channel,” that takes its survivors to a place where they will be marginalized as foreigners and Dominicans. Near the end of the narrative, he directly speaks to the reader, assumed to be a potential Dominican migrant: “Cuando nunca se ha tenido actitud y voluntad de progresar en tu propio país, sin siquiera intentarlo honesta y decididamente, entonces no pienses que tus sueños e ilusiones se harán realidad como tomar fácilmente el camino de la esperanza a través del canal de la Mona” (“When one has never had the attitude and will to progress in your own country, without even trying honestly and determinedly, then do not think that your dreams and illusions will come true by easily taking the path of hope through the Death Channel”) (109). He asks Dominicans to stay in their own country, work for their own development and not throw everything in the hands of Uncle Sam—be it commodities or people. According to the narrator, the spirit of the dead, who tried to cross the Channel in vain, continue to haunt the coastal towns of his country. He expects that as the images of easy wealth in the United States are shattered, Dominicans will assume their responsibilities with their own country and the Mona Channel will rest (113). Despite his transnational experience of migration and inter-ethnic alliances, as well as universalism, the narrator reasserts the value of the nation. Nationalist sentiment marks the conclusion of the text and its advice to young people.

Mona, canal de la muerte is a more straight-forward text than García Ramis’ due

to its didactic purposes. Its autobiographical claims to authenticity and reality legitimize the narrator's ideas on migration, racism, imperialism, and inter-ethnic relations. In "Retrato del dominicano," the humorous tone hides, to some extent, the violence of Asdrúbal's attempt to pass in its articulation of the tensions present in the ethnic joke. But both stories imagine Dominican-Puerto Rican urban spaces, critique U.S. state policing of marginalized locals and immigrants, and depict similar racialization processes of Dominicans and Puerto Ricans in the island and New York. Dominican-Puerto Rican relations in these two literary texts are characterized by tensions due to Dominican's vulnerable position vis-a-vis Puerto Ricans in the island, and class-based solidarity in their confrontations with the state.

The growing body of literature concerned with the representation of Caribbean migrations illustrates the contradictions of the present moment. These two narratives question the nation as a stable entity or organizing principle of solidarity. As we have seen in Asdrúbal's performance of puertorriqueñidad, cross-cultural experiences in the metropole speak to the realities of Caribbean communities across the ocean and vice versa. Asdrúbal's friendship with the Puerto Ricans in San Juan might become a survival strategy in the United States too, where both ethnic groups undergo processes of racialization. In Mona, canal de la muerte, a universalist approach to the migrant experience predominates. But simultaneously these texts highlight how the nation matters in neoliberal contexts, despite aesthetic, political, and economic emphasis on transnational imaginations of Antillean spaces.

These representations of the experiences of people of Dominican descent in Puerto Rico and the U.S. mainland show how the nation, as a political and cultural

construct, shapes communities in globalized contexts. “Retrato de un dominicano” illustrates that a cultural imagination of the national subject informs quotidian experiences of the migrant and his engagement with the state. Asdrúbal must learn to pass for Puerto Rican to avoid the mockery of his Puerto Rican friends and in order to achieve his goal of migrating to the U.S. His performance of puertorriqueñidad shapes how the state engages with him. After embodying markers of puertorriqueñidad, Asdrúbal is able to benefit from the right of easily migrating to the U.S. afforded to Puerto Ricans by their U.S. citizenship. The narrator in Freites’ narrative also witnesses how cultural discourses on the nation limit his economic opportunities, despite being a documented resident of Puerto Rico. And he also reasserts the value of the nation for its subjects at the end of the narrative. The privileges granted to national subjects seem to offer a safe haven for the narrator after fifteen years of struggling against racism abroad. Despite his universalism, the narrator relies on nationalist sentiment to warn people against migration.

Furthermore, literary depictions of racialized and criminalized spaces also reassert the nation in the context of globalization. Discourses on the landscape of Puerto Rico and its demographics tend to racialize and criminalize the inhabitants of Santurce. In García Ramis’ story, alliances forged between Puerto Ricans and Dominicans in Santurce respond to the consequent marginalization of this geographical space. Mona, canal de la muerte introduces a similar dynamic. In New York, Dominicans and Puerto Ricans share communal and work spaces subjected to state violence and racism. Their experience is the product of dominant constructions of the U.S. nation in terms of whiteness.

In distinct ways, cultural discourses on the nation in Puerto Rico and the United States privilege whiteness as a quality of national subjects. My reading of “Retrato de un dominicano” acknowledges that Dominican-Puerto Rican youth’s embodiment of Afro-diasporic cultural practices respond to similar processes of racialization in the island and New York. In the United States, Dominican and Puerto Rican migrants become racialized through their association with jobs lacking social prestige, state housing projects, criminality, welfare programs, and African Americans. In Puerto Rico, as the ethnic jokes and journalistic coverage demonstrates, Dominican migrants are racialized through references to socio-economic situation, development narratives, location in marginal communities, ethnic difference, and legal status. In the end, the nation matters within globalization and its significance suggests that whiteness continues to be a signifier of national belonging, modernity, development, and progress.

### **Dominican and Haitian Migrants: A Comparative Perspective**

In conclusion, Antilleans who relocate to urban and foreign work spaces have their bodies racialized while being incorporated in the world economy. The discourse of globalization negates how the nation-state as a political organism negotiates the mechanisms involved in the implementation of neoliberalism in a particular location. Within the national territory, discourses on the nation inform how a subject experiences globalization through his/her positionality in the national family, which informs his/her participation in the international division of labor. International discourses representing nations within hierarchical sets of relations based on development or modernization also inform the racial differentiation of migrants from locals. The distinct migratory routes and racialization of Haitian and Dominican migrants suggest how Haiti, the Dominican



Republic, and Puerto Rico are imagined in the region with respect to degrees of economic development. Their racialization illustrates how the economic standing of the “host” countries corresponds to regional racial imaginings of these territories which blackens Haitians and whitens Puerto Ricans.

In their movement to Puerto Rico, Dominicans resemble the migration of Haitians to the Dominican Republic, a country offering higher salaries than Haiti. They also participate in lower-strata work spaces. In the agriculture sector, Haitians have historically worked in sugar cane plantations in the Dominican Republic, and Dominicans have been hired since the nineteen-seventies, sometimes from the Dominican Republic, to work in coffee plantations in the western mountain region of the island. Since the nineteen-eighties, both migrant populations have increased their presence in urban spaces, where they undertake domestic and janitorial work, informal service economy enterprises, and construction work. Moreover, the borders between the Dominican Republic and Haiti, and Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, are policed for undocumented population movements, traffic of people and commodities, and the alleged crime, in particular drug trade, that travels in the same direction as migration.

The violent policing of these borders relies on the racialization of the geographical spaces that contain these territories. Puerto Rico is imagined as a mixed racial/ethnic population unified by its white culturally Hispanic character. A myth of racial democracy erases race as a marker of difference from public discourse, though there are racial categories used informally. A lack of state-sponsored exclusionary policies explicitly based on race has opened a discursive space for official recognition of Afro-Puerto Rican traditions, though limited to certain areas. In the Dominican Republic,

the myth of racial democracy is also constituted by narratives of *mestizaje* and Hispanicity. However, race is a category openly employed to differentiate Dominicans from their Haitian neighbors and local population.

As I have demonstrated in the previous two chapters, these particular imaginations of the demographic landscape of the nation have shaped discourses about Antillean migrants. In the Dominican Republic, since Dominicans cannot be black, Haitians are ascribed extreme violent attributes of blackness in explicit racial terms. The state itself has promoted racist anti-Haitian nationalism and implemented it through its policies, such as the 1937 Massacre and its recurrent illegal deportation campaigns. In Puerto Rico, discourses on Dominicans cannot directly make use of such rhetorical devices to describe the Dominican migrant population. Like Puerto Ricans, Dominicans are identified with *mestizaje* and Hispanicity. Dominicans undergo racialization processes experienced by working class Puerto Rican populations, though heightened by their always presupposed undocumented status, underdevelopment, and ethnic difference. Blackness, along with social stagnation, is ascribed to Haitian and Dominican migrants, their descendants, and to native populations unable to embody dominant imaginations of the ideal citizen.

My analysis illuminates the contradictions of globalization. The discourse of globalization celebrates transnationalism. As media coverage documents, the Dominican state and the U.S.-Puerto Rican state participate in the articulation of this discourse through economic and academic collaboration. These transnational phenomena seem to support a regionalist approach to politics and economics, and overcome the physical and symbolic boundaries that constitute the nation. Globalization becomes a signifier of

regionalist projects. Nonetheless, my analysis of ethnic jokes, media coverage on Dominican migrants, and the literary narratives under consideration suggests that the mechanisms of exclusion of the nation continue to operate within globalization.

Through a Cultural Studies framework, I produce a snapshot of how discourses on the nation and race operate in Puerto Rico at a given moment in time. My analysis of Giselle's song "El negro" and ethnic jokes shows that both locals and migrants are racialized by cultural discourses on the Puerto Rican nation. The humoristic tone of these cultural texts allows me to explore ambiguities embedded in the incorporation of blackness in official representations of puertorriqueñidad. Humor negotiates contradictions between denials of racism and the use of class markers to racialize people. These contradictions explain how a variety of discourses on people of Dominican descent have been articulated in journalistic coverage. The journalistic coverage both confirms how class, location, and ethnic difference racialize Dominicans, as well as exemplifies manifestations of Dominican-Puerto Rican solidarity. In their imagination of Dominican-Puerto Rican relations, the literary texts engage with these contradictory representations. Literary imaginations of puertorriqueñidad and Dominican-Puerto Rican alliances question understandings of the nation as an enclosed whitened entity. However, it is also clear that cultural discourses on the nation justify the exploitation of migrant labor through their racialization, and shape how the state interacts with its subjects as well as the emergence of inter-ethnic alliances. Therefore, I argue that the redefinition of the Caribbean as a region by globalization—through free trade agreements, industrial zones, and tourism—ignores how the profit produced by neoliberal policies relies on the exclusionary mechanisms of the nation.

Considering the contemporary significance of cultural discourses on the nation, the next chapter examines 1930s novels that have been canonized for their representation of the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. Though produced in the early twentieth century, I have chosen these texts to explore the appeal of nationalism in more recent literary texts, such as Solo falta que llueva and Mona, canal de la muerte, that engage with U.S. imperialism in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century. Their canonization entailed turning these texts into representatives of nationalist politics. The analysis of novels in chapter three responds to my interest in examining how processes of nation-building were represented and undertaken through cultural texts at the time. As I discussed in the first chapter, the novel became a preferred medium to articulate national projects in the first half of the twentieth century. At that time, the nation emerged as the source and inspiration of anti-colonialist/imperialist critiques of U.S. capital. These texts also resisted the racialization of Antillean workers within transnational economic projects, while privileging Hispanicity and proximity to whiteness in their imagination of national subjects. Therefore, my analytical journey into the past examines the potential and limitations of nationalism then and now.

## Notes - Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup> In 1952, Puerto Rico's status received the name of Estado Libre Asociado (Free Associated State). Under the new status, Puerto Ricans do not achieve sovereignty, but rather are allowed to elect their local representatives and rule domestic affairs as long as they respect federal law. In December 2005, the Bush administration acknowledged officially its power to determine unilaterally any changes to the status of the island.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the political and economic factors influencing Dominican migration to the United States, see Ramona Hernández's and Sylvio Torres-Saillant's The Dominican Americans (Westport, Conn: Greenwood, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> See Palmira Ríos (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> In the chapter, I employ terms like Dominican, Dominican-Puerto Rican and people of Dominican descent. I understand these concepts to be somewhat arbitrary forms of identification considering the slippages of meaning between them. Dominican-Puerto Ricans refers to second- or third generation Dominicans in Puerto Rico, people who have lived in the island long enough to identify as partly Puerto Rican, as well as to the children of a household composed by parents of different ethnic backgrounds. Often, Dominican-Puerto Ricans face the negation of their puertorriqueñidad through the emphasis on their Dominican heritage. People of Dominican descent refer to anyone who has Dominican ancestry. I tend to employ Dominican to speak of people who were born in the Dominican Republic.

<sup>5</sup> In the nineteen-fifties, the seal assumed by the ICP revealed its institutional silencing of the violence of Spanish colonialism. The seal glorifies the conquest. The Spanish, with his Spanish grammar, Christian cross and ship, is foregrounded with respect to the Taíno and the African. The African member of the ethnic triad is not imagined as a slave but rather romanticized as representative of the Puerto Rican who works the land. The continued use of the seal and its distribution in not only letterhead or posters, but also the internet, reasserts the ICP's 1950s vision of puertorriqueñidad today.

<sup>6</sup> Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel in her book Caribe Two Ways: cultura de la migración en el Caribe insular hispánico (San Juan: Callejón, 2003) acknowledges how the joke functions to mock the socio-economic positionality of the migrant and his racial/ethnic background in order to differentiate between the local population and the migrant one. However, her analysis does not explain how class and race intersect each other in the production of a Dominican otherness in Puerto Rico. I propose that the only way to understand this process is to contextualize it within the discursive silencing of local blackened and impoverished communities through a dominant narrative of *mestizaje*. In this narrative, class is the sole element explaining socio-economic difference; racial subjection is either ignored or secondary.

<sup>7</sup> "Oh well, you know" is a preliminary translation of the phrase "oh pero bueno," which characterizes Puerto Rican depictions of Dominican slang.

<sup>8</sup> See "Dominicanos en Puerto Rico viajan a votar" (El Mundo 16 May 1986: 3); Germán E. Ornes's "Espera decisión de Washington sea inicio de nuevo trato para exiliados dominicanos" (El Mundo 4 May 1961): 1; Bienvenido Ortiz Otero's "Decreta libertad 5 dominicanos entraría ilegalmente a la Isla" (El Mundo 10 December 1978: 5-A); Miguel Rivera's "Policía sigue búsqueda de 5 dominicanos" (El Mundo 8 December 1970: 6-A); Fidel Rodríguez Alicea's "Indocumentados huyen de gobierno de Balaguer" (El Mundo 31 May 1986: 5).

<sup>9</sup> Juan Manuel García Passalacqua's book title Dignidad y Jaibería (San Juan: Cultural, 1993) cannot be easily translated into English. While *dignidad* translates literally into dignity, the second term, *jaibería*, does not have a counterpart in English. Jaibería in Puerto Rican political debates refers to what is described as a strategy employed by Puerto Ricans to resist their colonial situation and avoid being crushed by U.S. repressive tactics. Puerto Ricans can take advantage of federal programs and continue to assert their

puertorriqueñidad. The term jaibería comes from the back and forth movement that characterizes the jaiba's—a crab-like creature—manner of walking. Some have argued that jaibería is a postmodern political strategy for its decentering of sites of oppression and resistance. For a more detailed discussion, see the introduction to Puerto Rican Jam (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1997) by Frances Negrón Muntaner and Ramón Grosfoquel.

<sup>10</sup> Some examples of media coverage are: Diana De Miguel's "Xenofobia policiaca amenaza a los emigrados dominicanos en Puerto Rico" (Diario Libre February 17, 2004: 10); "Ex cónsul propone contratos temporales." (El Caribe February 26, 2002: 9); "Investigan a militares por viaje de náufragos." (Hoy August 14, 2004: 6).

<sup>11</sup> Pueltojrigo is a common pronunciation of Puerto Rico in the island.

<sup>12</sup> "Pelo malo" (bad hair) is a derogatory term used to describe curly hair.

<sup>13</sup> Despite the fact that three out of five migrants are women, the migrant tends to be imagined as a masculine subject. Gendered assumptions of migratory movements silence women's strategies for bettering their social position and their labor. Freite's text briefly addresses through Stefania other routes to obtain access to the U.S. territory. In the autobiography, arranged marriages are a transnational business, whereby a Puerto Rican man or woman marries a Dominican in his/her country, and then applies for their citizenship status to be able to bring them to the island or New York. The Dominican pays a sum to cover those expenses and pay for the Puerto Rican's services (53-57). These marriages rely on existing networks between Dominicans in their country and abroad, and local populations willing to partake of the business, despite of the legal risks if discovered by the Immigration and Naturalization Services of the United States.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Imagining the Landscape of the Nation in 1930s *Novelas de la Caña***

A comparative analysis of the novels La Lllamarada (1935) by Puerto Rican Enrique Laguerre and Over (1939) by Dominican Ramón Marrero Aristry provides insight into the imagining of the landscape of the nation during the 1930s. In the first half of the twentieth century, these novels were canonized by nationalist state projects invested in anti-U.S. imperialist politics. The canonization of these novels relied on their literary representation of the nation under siege by the U.S. plantation. By analyzing how the novels constitute the nation through their imagination of the national landscape and ideal national subject, I examine how these texts construct first-person narrations, descriptions of the landscape, and peoples associated with the sugar cane plantation. Their narrative perspective reasserts the subjectivity of the propertied, educated, white-identified, and hetero-normative man as bearer of the political agency of the citizen.

The analysis argues that the canonization of these novels relies on the whitening and masculinization of the nation in their textual proposal of a territory free from U.S. capital. However, I complicate canonical readings that seek coherence in the text to produce a fixed idea of what the nation ought to be as a political and cultural entity. The analysis also underscores discursive tensions within the texts that are produced by their simultaneous celebration of mestizaje and privileging of physical and cultural attributes ascribed to whiteness. The texts themselves illustrate narratives that do not gain predominance within the novels but might suggest points of rupture with dominant visions of the nation.

Engaging with tensions within these narratives, this chapter addresses the following questions: Would strengthening the nation-state enable a progressive response to neoliberalism? Is a nationalist anti-imperialist stance productive to mobilize populations with regards to globalization? The study of these novels presents an opportunity to explore various answers to these contemporary concerns. The novels articulate an anti-imperialist position that may provide insight into the present, as well as contradictions within nationalist discourses that illustrate their limitations. These limitations prevent the interests of racialized populations from being fully taken into account and given voice within the political realm. The plantation's inscription in the landscape is informed by already existing hierarchies that assign a role to these nationals in the plantation economy. Thus, the reading of these canonized novels makes visible how the dominant nationalist project reiterates local and transnational discourses on race.

### **The Past Illuminates the Present**

These novels address two contemporary realities: claims regarding the weakening of national sovereignty by transnational capital and the allure of nationalism in politics and culture. As was argued in the past two chapters, though academics have moved theoretically beyond the nation in imagining resistance to capital and colonialism, globalization does not signify that the world has empirically superseded the national in its political, economic, and cultural affairs. The conceptual articulation of the nation, as well as its empirical self, is a crucial site of contestation in struggles seeking more equitable international relations of consumption and production in the present moment.

The nation continues to matter as a potential site of resistance to globalization. It is not a surprise to find in international forums, such as the United Nations, claims based



on national sovereignty as a way to resist the imposition of economic and military policies convenient for wealthy nations, or novelistic critiques, like Solo Falta que Llueva which shows the exploitation of nationals and national resources by foreigners. The survival of nation-based modes of resistance to international power structures speaks to their potential in struggles for social justice.<sup>1</sup>

As Solo falta que llueva attests, the anti-imperialist component of Caribbean nationalisms articulated in the novels provides a possible political framework for the present and the future of the region. Nonetheless, as was shown in the first two chapters, uncritically relying on nationalism to configure an anti-globalization stance is a limited and dangerous approach. National narratives of mestizaje and Hispanicity dating back to the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries function to differentiate labor in a contemporary context. The novels La Lllamarada and Over illustrate how those discourses shaped the socio-economic hierarchies of the plantation in the nineteen-thirties. Therefore, to critique globalization as imperialism from a nationalist framework is not sufficient. If the nation is to be at the center of anti-neoliberal projects, a questioning of its historical complicity with capital must be undertaken.

### **The Canon: Literature and Politics**

As canonized literary texts, La Lllamarada and Over provide crucial insight on the configuration of nationalist politics in the face of foreign capital. Building a canon carries serious political weight. As Juan Gelpí states in Literatura y Paternalismo in Puerto Rico, “la constitución de todo canon es a la vez una actividad literaria y una estrategia política” (“the constitution of every canon is simultaneously a literary activity and a political strategy”) (15). In these cases, through their canonization, these novels are incorporated

into the symbolic strategies employed by the nation-state for its consolidation. Their textual treatment of land tenure, class and racial conflict, the exploitation of peasants and workers, and independence replicates some of the main concerns addressed by state-sponsored discourses on nationhood.

Nationalist discourses tend to consolidate a naturalized relationship between territory, race-culture, and state in order to justify the existence of a political organism. They equate the way people imagine themselves as a cultural national collective—sharing a delimited territory and certain ways of living—with the structures of a state that assert the existence of such collectives as an autonomous political and economic entity. For instance, Ana Lisa Taylor in “The Ends of Indigenismo in Mexico,” describes how, in the twentieth century, until the 1980s, the national popular state in Mexico shaped how the “state had stimulated and disseminated narratives of a unified and ethnically homogeneous *pueblo* under its authoritarian cloak” (77). In the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, as well as throughout the Americas, these national narratives legitimized the economic policies of the state, even explicitly dictatorial governments, through its cultural identification with the people. In the Dominican Republic, the Trujillo dictatorial regime from 1930-1962, and, in Puerto Rico, the Free Associated State government put in place by the U.S., and sponsored by many nationalists, autonomists, and annexionists, in 1952 would incorporate some of the symbolic strategies characteristic of the “national popular state.”

Literature, in particular the novel, was a crucial symbolic space where nationalist discourses were articulated and immortalized due to the canonization of texts that reflected the nationalist, and often anti-imperialist, agenda of the state. The novelistic

form of Over and La Lllamarada is suitable for being coopted to the task of nation-building due to a Romantic Latin American literary and critical tradition that tied the novel with the consolidation of a modern nation-state.<sup>2</sup> Through their canonization, these literary imaginations of a national space were read with respect to the political program proposed for the established state in the Dominican Republic, and a future state, in the case of Puerto Rico. These narratives were incorporated into the cultural policies of emerging state formations, but operated in different ways depending on the historical conditions of each territory.

### **Historical Context**

Puerto Rico is an exceptional case in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean due to the imposition, and, to some degree, acceptance in the island of U.S. colonial rule after the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898. In 1917, Puerto Ricans became U.S. citizens through the Jones Act. The island was subjected to military and civil governance appointed by the President of the United States until 1948. Any political organizing against the colonial regime was violently persecuted. The 1930s saw various massacres of civilians supporting the independence of the island, and incarceration and torture for political activists like Pedro Albizu Campos.

Pro-independence movements posed a threat to the economic and military plans of the U.S. for the island. In the first three decades of occupation, U.S. corporations established sugar plantations in the island. U.S.-based financial institutions and plantations took over the lands of many small landowners. The sugarcane planters relied on U.S. capital for their daily operations and on the new technologies brought by U.S. corporations to produce sugar. Moreover, the economic class that had previously

benefitted from exporting coffee declined due to restrictions imposed by the U.S. government. In the novel La Lllamarada, the representation of these economic processes is exposed. The physical and emotional violence that characterized the experiences of Puerto Ricans in the plantation signified the real displacement of the coffee producer—also imagined as the ideal national subject—from the market by economic interests behind the expansion of the cañaveral.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the United States also had economic and military interests in the Dominican Republic due to its fear of European interests in the country and the strategic position of the country with regards to the Panama Canal. In 1904, U.S. investors bought the country's debt from Dutch bondholders and consequently U.S. officials took control of the Dominican Customs Receivership (Hall 12). The U.S. expected to receive payment for the debt by imposing a high percentage tax on imports and exports. In this manner, the U.S. could justify intervening in the Dominican Republic whenever political instability did not permit adequate collection of dues.<sup>3</sup> During those first two decades, U.S. corporations also invested in plantations mostly owned in the past by Cubans, Spaniards, and Italians who could not survive drops in sugar prices and the increasing foreign debt of the country (Hall 10).

In response to political strife, the United States occupied the country during the period from 1916 to 1924. The occupation government released property titles to land traditionally held in common by Dominican peasants. As a consequence, U.S. corporations increased their land ownership for the production of sugar (Roorda 17). In 1930, Dictator Rafael Leónidas Trujillo assumed control of the government. His government rejected the intervention of the U.S. in the political and economic life of the

Dominican Republic. In 1940, the Trujillo-Hull Treaty ended the U.S. Custom Receivership. In the 1940s and 1950s, Trujillo, through intimidation and taxation, managed to nationalize—and profit from—a large segment of the sugar economy. His nationalist policies also targeted people of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic. In 1937, he ordered a large scale attack on Haitians living in the country in order to secure the border that divides the island and undertook a whitening of the country.

### **Cultural Context**

The Trujillo regime found it advantageous and convenient to support the publication of Over in the Dominican Republic.<sup>4</sup> Published in the nineteen-thirties, Over participated in a novelistic tradition, la novela de la caña, that could be read as a justification of Trujillo’s nationalist stance towards the U.S.-owned sugarcane plantations and people of Haitian descent. According to Berta Graciano, the novela de la caña is characterized by its critique of U.S. imperialism, by realist depictions of the landscape, and by its concern with the space of the bodega or plantation store (29).

La Lllamarada undertook a similar task and was also sponsored by official cultural institutions. The novel was critically-acclaimed immediately after its publication and adopted into school curricula. Laguerre’s work was read as a manifestation of what intellectuals had been calling for, a truly Puerto Rican literature. At the time, Enrique Laguerre received an award from the distinguished cultural organization Ateneo Puertorriqueño. Ateneo is a cultural and educational institution dating back to 1876, that, after the U.S. invasion, had assumed the task of promoting Puerto Rican culture and “values” in the face of the assimilationist policies of the state.<sup>5</sup> Along with other cultural institutions, Ateneo articulated a cultural nationalism that was adopted by the proponents

of the Commonwealth. La Lllamarada became one of the icons of the Commonwealth in the nineteen-fifties.

Canonical readings of La llamarada and Over explain the nation-building project of Trujillo in the Dominican Republic and of pro-autonomy and pro-independence advocates in Puerto Rico.<sup>6</sup> These canonical readings were informed by the historical role played by the novel as a genre in the consolidation of nation-states in Latin America. As Doris Sommer documents in Foundational Fictions, producing national novels allowed new Latin American nations in the nineteenth century to showcase their cultural and, therefore, political maturity. The production of novels legitimized their consolidation as nation-states that claimed to rule a territory composed of a racially mixed, but culturally homogenous, people. The novels' institutionalization through state-sponsored publications, serial publications in newspapers, and their incorporation in curriculum permitted the widespread distribution of a vision of the nation to its inhabitants.

The nineteenth-century novel in Europe and Latin America emerged in the midst of and addressed transitions in political systems. In Europe, the novel spoke about the growing power of the bourgeoisie and transitions from monarchical rule to republicanism. In Latin America, the novel represented a transition from colonization to independence, as well as from instability after independence to the consolidation of a state through institutions that regulated the life of its citizens. In the nineteen-thirties, the novel in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico participated in the process of legitimizing transformations in the structures of state governance.<sup>7</sup> Canonical readings of Latin American fiction sought to explain the breadth and significance of the changes by seeking historical truth within the realist aesthetics of the novel.

The realism of Latin American nation-building novels explains their extensive descriptions of geographical and cultural landscapes. Canonization turned these descriptions into accurate representations of the physical territory ruled by the state and of its inhabitants. The narrators of these novels describe in an almost ethnographic manner the cultural practices of different socio-economic classes and racial groups. The concrete placement of the plot within a moment of historical relevance lends credibility to these descriptions. In this manner, the canonization of these novels relied, to some extent, on claims about their authentic representation of the spirit of the nation through their textual inclusion of all populations.

Furthermore, the developmentalist character of the narratives also legitimizes them as texts that provide historical knowledge and justification of nation building projects. These narratives consist of the introduction to a setting and characters, a crisis produced by struggles over political and economic power, and a resolution. The main protagonist is placed within a particular moment in the history of the nation. He undergoes personal transformations parallel to those experienced by the national territory. The protagonist represents the nation in transition. As Doris Sommer asserts, his marriage often signifies the ideal reproduction of national subjects, as well as the resolution of a social conflict that threatens the consolidation of a nation-state. His offspring signal the decline of a previous political order and the birth of a new one.

The novels La llamarada and Over embrace this literary tradition. History and literature have been conflated in criticism and writings that engage with a nationalist political project through these novels. Both novels rely on allegedly autobiographical first-person narrative voices to assert a degree of legitimacy and support the accuracy of

their depiction of the national reality. In particular, they are both read as novels concerned with the realities of the sugarcane plantation.<sup>8</sup> It is common to find critics arguing that La Lllamarada is “a documento histórico que recrea la vida de los llanos costeros durante la Gran Depresión”(“is a historical document that recreates life in the coastal plains during the Great Depression”)(Costa 128). Critics also place an emphasis on Over’s description of the working conditions of Haitians, West Indians, and Dominicans in sugar plantations of the past and the present: “in the Dominican Republic a form of slavery still exists ... In the novel Marrero paints a vivid picture of the dehumanization of the employees of the great sugar company in the Dominican Republic”(McDonald 37). The literary value resides in the novel’s ability to represent the reality of the nation in a trustworthy manner. The novel’s realism allowed their adoption by nation-building projects.

For instance, La llamarada’s concern with representing the landscape of the nation and the effects of the plantation in remaking it explains its canonization and its incorporation in the populist political undertakings of the 1940s and 1950s in Puerto Rico.<sup>9</sup> In the 1930s, Puerto Rican intellectuals were engaged in the production of cultural nationalisms in response to U.S. colonial rule (Roy 4). The canonization of La llamarada participated in these political and cultural processes. These cultural nationalisms became the safe haven of oppositional politics against the U.S. in the island, and consequently found a space within the institutions of the Commonwealth that responded to both local elite and U.S. interests. La Lllamarada became a manifestation of a populist cultural nationalism that did not pose a concrete threat to U.S. colonial rule—and therefore was not targeted by the disciplinary agencies of the U.S. state— but continued to resist it



through a process of nation-building based on nurturing puertorriqueñidad and achieving greater political autonomy. The ideal national subject represented as the coffee planter of the mountains legitimizes the political claims of a white-identified class of small landowners in decline after the invasion. And it supports the populist discourse of the first governor of the Commonwealth, Luis Muñoz Marín, who sought identification with the jíbaro, the peasant from the mountains idealized by nationalist narratives.<sup>10</sup>

In the face of U.S. imperialism, discourses on the nation were required to present a unified collective of Puerto Ricans tied by cultural and racial attributes. Similar to the discursive strategies of anti-Haitian Dominican nationalism, Hispanicity predominated over other racial and cultural attributes and was the connective cultural tissue holding together a phenotypically heterogeneous population. In Puerto Rico, blackness was and is an accepted trait of Puerto Rican peoples and culture. But it tends to be limited to certain coastal regions and not considered a significant element of puertorriqueñidad.

In the 1940s, the publication of Over was convenient for Trujillo's plans of expanding his monopoly over the national economy.<sup>11</sup> His populist discourse entailed claiming to be "Benefactor of the Fatherland." Ernesto Sagás argues that during Trujillo's rule, anti-Haitianism became a state-sponsored discourse that presented Trujillo as the protective father of the country.<sup>12</sup> The 1937 Massacre of Haitians signified the violent consolidation of anti-Haitianism as national discourse. Ordered by Trujillo, the Massacre was part of an effort to hispanicize Dominican nationhood and colonize the border with 'real' Dominicans and white immigrants. In this manner, he expected to establish a clear frontier between Haiti and the Dominican Republic.<sup>13</sup> The Dominicanization of the border was justified by the belief that a Haitian invasion was in

progress. Over's open critique of U.S. administrators on plantations and its nationalist claims to the land's resources could be read with respect to the need to reconstitute the nation, under the protection of a paternal figure like Trujillo.<sup>14</sup> Trujillo, replicating the symbolic strategies of the national popular state described by Taylor, sponsored intellectual and cultural work that legitimized his vision of the nation and its need of a ruler like himself. The anti-imperialist and anti-Haitian discourses that constitute the nationalism sponsored by Trujillo predate some of the arguments introduced by the narrator in Solo falta que llueva.

The novel in the twenty-first century is not adopted by the state in the way in which novels like La Lllamarada and Over were incorporated within projects of national consolidation. In a contemporary moment, the project of nation building itself has lost its allure as a paradigm for political, economic, and cultural action. Sponsoring the construction of a national literary corpus that would legitimize such a project becomes obsolete in such circumstances. However, the historical relationship of the novel as a genre and processes of nation building in Latin America continue to haunt novelistic production in the region as Solo falta que llueva demonstrates in its re-articulation of tropes that characterize texts like Marrero Aristy's.

### **Comparative Analytical Framework**

My interest in La Lllamarada and Over in this chapter relies on their textual imagination of the national landscape. Through the novel's cultural representation of the land, the structures of power working in the constitution of the nation at a particular moment in time can be explored. In "Las rutas espacio-temporales del paisaje-archivo fronterizo de Freddy Prestol Castillo," Carlos Altagracia explains how

el paisaje es un producto cultural antes que un producto de la naturaleza, que meramente espera a ser descifrado. El paisaje es el producto de la combinación de significados contruidos desde el ámbito de la imaginación que los organiza a base de referentes culturales particulares. Esos significados, y las metáforas usadas para comunicarlos, son tan reales como los referentes físicos que los provocan.

The landscape is a cultural product, more than a product of nature, that awaits to be merely deciphered. The landscape is the product of the combination of constructed meanings by the imagination that organizes them based on particular cultural referents. These meanings, and the metaphors used to communicate them are as real as the physical referents which provoke them. (2)

For him, in order to grasp a geographical space, one must engage not only with the space itself but with cultural understandings of the space and the relations of power constituting it. To describe the land is to speak about those who inhabit, work, own, and manage the land, meaning the hierarchies that characterize how the land is used, owned, and imagined.

In his article, Altagracia concludes: “color, tierra y espacio quedan vinculados en las representaciones de las naciones y en las concepciones culturales e históricas que organizan la narración cartográfica”(“color, land, and space remain tied in representations of nations, and in the historical and cultural concepts that organize cartographic narration”)(19). He argues that discourses on the nation—like maps—tie a certain space, land, and color to determine what and who constitutes the national geography. At the same time, modes of employing the national land and other natural and human resources also inform the imagination of the landscape of any geopolitical entity, be it a colony, nation, or empire. In the case of the Caribbean, as Nicole Waller asserts, in Contradictory Violence: Revolution and Subversion in the Caribbean, “Land in particular was a crucial issue in the restructuring of Caribbean societies after the abolition of

slavery” (72). In the conceptualization of emancipated societies, and later independent nations, land in the Caribbean became a site of material and symbolic struggles for resources and political agency. To imagine the national landscape involved inscribing in it a way of thinking about how it would be inhabited and governed. The land is the most basic source of nourishment for nationals, without which the nation-state would not be able to assert its existence; and its resources—food, minerals, raw materials—are a natural source of wealth for the financing of the apparatuses of the nation-state and its affirmation of sovereignty at the international level.

La Lllamarada and Over, and their canonization, are concerned with the modification of the national landscape by the plantation economy. The plantation is a manifestation of U.S. imperialism, but also an infringement on national sovereignty through its physical transformation of the tangible territorial component of the nation’s imagination:

Its inexorable territory-claiming nature made it—makes it still—advance in length and depth through the natural lands, demolishing forests, sucking up rivers, displacing other crops, and exterminating native plants and animals. At the same time, ever since it was put into play, this powerful machine has attempted systematically to shape—to suit to its own convenience, the political, economic, social and cultural spheres of the country that nourishes it until that country is changed into a *sugar island* (Benítez Rojo 72).

As Benítez Rojo asserts, it is a societal structure imposing itself in physical and ideological ways into the national landscape and psyche. He also argues that the logic of the plantation persists in the Caribbean. Neoliberal projects, it could be argued, through their remaking of the region with free trade zones and tourism, perpetuate and exploit the societal structures put in place by plantation economies.

The possibility of invoking the nation to critique the exploitation of national resources by transnational capital in the past and the present is explored in my literary analysis. Attention is paid to the representation of the national land under siege by the U.S. plantation. In comparing how Over and La llamarada rely on the structural and ideological model of the Latin American nation-building novel, I examine: the construction of a first person narrative voice, how the future of the nation relies on the fate of the narrator, representations of the plantation as disease and fire, and representations of the family as hope for the nation. In this manner, I highlight the novels' engagement with anti-imperialism and privileging of whiteness as a quality of the nation. And the aesthetic characteristics that explained their canonization are illustrated. In addition, internal contradictions within the texts are sought and revealed. Canonical representations of a nation united against the plantation are undermined by the contradictions embedded in the narrators' racialized description of national subjects and depictions of class conflict.

### **Literary Analysis**

La Lllamarada (1935) by Puerto Rican writer Enrique Laguerre introduces itself as a narrative written by its protagonist José Antonio Borrás. As a recently graduated agronomist, Borrás becomes an agricultural labor supervisor on a plantation financed by a U.S. central in 1930s Puerto Rico.<sup>15</sup> He narrates his experiences on the plantation, where he witnesses the abuse and exploitation of peasants while having to be an accomplice of the administration's efforts at maximizing profit. After having indirectly provoked the death of a rebellious worker, Segundo Marte, Borrás' guilt turns into anger against the administrators. As a result of expressing his emotions, he gets fired. At the

same time, after years of a conflictive relationship, his dying father asks him to return home and take his place in the administration of the family's *cafetal* (coffee plantation). Borrás marries Pepiña, the sister-in-law of a prominent family of French émigrés, and brings her to the cafetal. He expects to have healthy children with her. The cafetal represents the return to the land that will enable him to confront the effects of the U.S. plantation and restore a harmonious relationship amongst the land, peasants, and landowners.

The novel Over (1939) by Dominican Ramón Marrero Arristy is also a first-person narration by a young man who works for a U.S.-owned corporation. The narrator Daniel Compré, an aspiring writer, becomes a *bodeguero* (store clerk) at a Dominican *batey* in the 1930s. In the course of his story, Compré responds directly to the U.S. manager of the central. Besides financing some local sugarcane producers, the central administers its own land and sends Compré to one of its *bateyes*. Hoping to create a better future for himself, Compré marries the daughter of an independent store-owner. They live together at the central store. However, she unexpectedly miscarries, and he must pay for the expenses of his wife's treatment at the hospital. His wife's illness makes it impossible for him to produce the over or surplus that the central expects. He is eventually fired. Their marriage ends, and Compré starts drinking with other town men, living in the streets, and taking refuge with a prostitute. In the end, hopeless, he decides to leave town in order to avoid returning to the plantation for the next *zafra* (harvest), like everyone else.

### **Narrators and the Nation**

These two narrators are young men who face the responsibility of building their own futures, and, by extension, the future of the nation. Like the nation, they are shaped by the plantation and must find a way to survive it or perish. At the beginning, they explain how they are integrated into the world of the sugarcane plantation. Borrás in La Llamarada is on his way to the plantation by train. He meditates on all the sacrifices he had to make to obtain a degree in agronomy, his regrets for the young and poor girlfriend he left behind, and his father, a coffee planter who did not support him getting a college education and from whom he is thus estranged. Contrastingly, but with similar results, Compré in Over wanders around town trying to figure out how to sustain himself after his father, a business man and small landowner, disowns him. He cannot resolve his homelessness and unemployment “porque si se tiene orgullo no se pide, y hoy nadie ofrece; porque si se busca trabajo no se halla, y además, porque en este pueblo cualquier extraño le roba el alma a todos” (“if one has any pride, one does not ask, and today no one offers; because if one looks for a job, one cannot find it, and because in this town any stranger steals the soul of everyone”) (1). According to him, he has no options because there are no available jobs; a person of his somewhat privileged condition is not supposed to ask for economic aid; people are not willing to help anymore; and the U.S.-owned central has changed people’s way of being. Compré recurs to the plantation as his last resource, while Borrás believes that the plantation will make all his dreams come true.

These two beginnings introduce the reader to the psyche of the narrators. Their incorporation into the social space of the plantation signifies their transition into

adulthood. They must now confront the world and survive on their own. The nation is also in transition, not able to achieve full adulthood or independence. The nation and the men are held captive by the plantation. As the narrators tell their personal stories, they tie their fates to the destiny of the nation. These parallels underline the textual privileging of Borrás and Compré as sites of political agency within the nation-state. They can enunciate the nation. Their full subjectivity as national subjects is asserted through their role of narrators. The reader's acquaintance with their most intimate thoughts allows her/him to see Borrás' and Compré's transformations and understand through the first-person narrative their personal experience of the spiritual and economic conditions of the national territory.

In "Enrique Laguerre y la memoriosa construcción del blanquito en La Lllamarada," Lola Aponte Ramos undertakes a psychoanalytic analysis of the construction of memory by the novel's protagonist through the process of writing and of La Lllamarada's erasure of narratives by women and working class subjects. Her analysis convincingly ties the act of writing to Borrás' attempt at "hacerse el blanquito" ("becoming a white man"). Aponte's definition of whiteness requires land ownership and an education; in other words, being full participants in what Western civilization offers, being civilized. The two narrators, to different degrees, embody these qualities. The fictional act of writing these personal narratives itself whitens them by identifying them with socio-economic privilege and education. They are the true citizens of the nation who are called to constitute it symbolically and literally. Through the novels' canonization, these literary subjects become national subjects.

Since the narrators speak for a national experience, they are read by the canon as



true representatives of a unified national body. Functioning as social-protest novels, their narratives claim to represent the plight of the national worker.<sup>16</sup> However, as Doris Sommer observes, in literature engaging with national populist discourse, “the People, the humble, are most often identified with the limited middle class” (263). The imagination of the national landscape in these novels is shaped by the narrators’ relatively, though not extremely, privileged backgrounds. Through their access to the literate world, they do not merely represent the nation, but construct it based on their own assumptions and desires. For this reason, the narratives bring to light and encourage questions about their untold stories. Their canonization ignores the limited reach of their social protest by silencing the particularities informing their enunciation of the nation.

### **Plantation and the Nation**

These two narrators imagine the national landscape through lens provided by their intermediary role between foreign capital and the working classes. Due to Borrás’s responsibilities for supervising agricultural work in the fields, and Compré’s position as clerk of the plantation’s store, they are middle-men in the social structures that characterize labor and social relations on the plantation. For the workers, Borrás is a representative of the administrators of the plantation. He decides how the work is undertaken, gives orders to the people working on the ground, and has the responsibility of persecuting any form of resistance to the plans of the central. His socio-economic background and status on the plantation allow him to share a privileged social space with landowners and the old elites, whose social standing has been undermined by their dependence on the machinery, prices, and financial resources of the U.S.-owned central.

Compré does not enjoy Borrás’ more privileged position in the plantation

economy. However, he occupies a higher position in the batey hierarchies than do the field workers. Compré represents the interests of the central because he is the guardian and seller of all of the commodities needed by the field workers: food, clothes, and utensils. He also enjoys a guaranteed meal every day provided by the central, while the field workers are never sure of their subsistence. And he is in charge of producing “over” by deceiving his customers. His association with the bodega further highlights his relative proximity to the plantation’s daily administration. The bodega in the batey signifies one of the exploitative tactics of the central. Since the workers get paid with vouchers, instead of cash, they can only purchase what they need at the bodega. Therefore, their pay returns directly to the central.

Borrás’ and Compré’s responsibilities on the plantation require them to keep a physical and emotional distance from the workers. They must primarily satisfy the demands of the administration to keep their jobs as supervisor and store clerk, respectively. Borrás must stop any demands of the workers for better working conditions, even if he himself acknowledges the truth behind their claims. He constructs his social circle to consist of other store clerks, and the batey’s policeman and administrator of vouchers. He must ignore his moral predicament to be able to steal from the workers to produce the required over. The intermediary positions that provoke moral crises in the narrators informs how they imagine the landscape of the nation and the plantation. Their psychological turmoil is mirrored in the description of the geographical space transformed by the *cañaveral* (cane fields).

The emotional crisis that leads to the dismissal of Borrás and Compré from their respective positions has at its roots their misconstrued conceptions of the space of the

plantation. Borrás' first sight of the lands at the service of the central in Puerto Rico reflects how his dreams of an independent and productive adult life reside in working there:

Muy pronto pude distinguir la Central con su alta chimenea negra y sus blancos edificios. Según avanzaba la guagua, mis ojos recorrían las húmedas llanuras del valle, los verdes cañaverales cuyas raíces se hundían en el terreno alagadizo y moreno. De frente, tras la Central, la sierra, sobre cuyo verdor se agarraban las pintorescas casitas de los campesinos.

Very soon I was able to distinguish the Central with its high black chimney and its white buildings. As the bus advanced, my eyes traversed the humid plains of the valley. The green sugar canes whose roots went deep into the brown and easily flooded terrain. In front, behind the Central, the mountain range, over whose greenery the picturesque houses of the peasants attached themselves.(34)

The landscape of the cañaveral presents a beautiful, colorful, and pleasant view. Natural shades of green and brown dominate the scene and stand out against the plain white and black of the Central's buildings. Borrás' image juxtaposes the organized modernization of the Central and its cañaverales in the valley and the traditional way of living of the peasants in the mountains. At the beginning of the novel, the proximity of these two different geographical and productive spaces does not produce any anxiety, but rather mirrors Borrás' own emotional state at the moment. The cañaveral will nourish his brilliant future, while the mountains signify an idealized past, the traditions espoused by his family as coffee producers. He gladly narrates the landscape of the cañaveral and its place in the national territory. The cane fields represent his future, while the mountains represent the past that he leaves enthusiastically but nostalgically wants to keep in sight.

Compré has a more skeptical approach to the Central. As he walks towards the Central to try to find a job, he states: "Cierto que frente a mí está el central de avenidas

hermosas y casitas de ensueño, pero solo ofrecen su ‘tiempo muerto’ como un portazo a todo el que solicite trabajo” (“It is true that in front of me is the central with beautiful avenues and dream houses, but they only offer their ‘dead season’ like a door slam to everyone who applies for work”) (I). Once again the disciplined organization of the space of the central presents an appealing image to the viewer. However, Compré, more than Borrás, is somewhat aware of the limitations of working on the plantation. He knows that during the “dead season” between harvests many workers are given an unpaid vacation. He has also heard of the racist and rude attitude toward locals exhibited by the Central’s main administrator, Anglo-American Mr. Robinson. Nonetheless, the landscape of the central promises a better life, one where food is available and where a life partner may exist who can take care of him after a day of work:

[The central’s employees] Rinden sus tareas en los diversos departamentos de la compañía y cuando terminan sus jornadas, vienen a sus casas, besan a sus jóvenes esposas, acarician a sus niños, toman el baño, y luego, ponen la radio a tocar y leen un periódico, . . . !Eso es vivir feliz y humildemente!

(The Central’s employees) undertake their work in various departments of the company and when they finish their work days, they go to their houses, kiss their young wives, caress their children, take a bath, and then, play the radio, and read a newspaper, . . . That’s a happy and humble life!  
(I)

The U.S. Central brings into the national landscape the project of modernization through machinery, capital, and operational mechanisms that maximize the profit of sugar production. Spatially it is marked by the need to portray the benefits of modernization. The relationship between the Central and its workers is reflected in its landscape which articulates a paternal-filial relationship. From the outside, it seems to offer the worker good housing and a secure salary. For Compré, the central’s landscape presents the

possibility to enter modernity—its organization of time and space with respect to work and leisure—but through his own proletarianization.

Even with these initially envisioned possibilities, after working on the plantation for a couple of months, Borrás and Compré imagine it as a system that destroys the natural resources of the nation and its people's modes of subsistence. The plantation is another manifestation of the reconfiguration of Antillean spaces as a result of U.S. imperialism, either through militarization, economic investment, or colonialism. Borrás looks at a forest of *ausubos*, a native tree, which have been “*señalados por el hacha, en beneficio de la caña*” (“marked by the axe, in benefit of the sugarcane”) and cannot avoid feeling resentment “*por aquel cañaveral de hojas flexibles e hirientes como un millón de espadas*” (“toward that cane field of flexible and hurtful leaves, like a million swords”)(87). The cane itself comes to signify the foreign exploitation of natural resources; the natural landscape has been replaced with a cash crop. Sugarcane represents the economic violence exerted by those who profit from it, as well as the physical violence experienced by the natural landscape modified by hand to fit the modes of production of the plantation.

Compré denounces the plantation as a space that does not allow the national land to nourish its subjects. The naturalized relationship between the land and those who work it has been disrupted. The workers are not receiving the products of their labor and the land that is rightfully theirs as nationals. He describes the workers as displaced farmers who have been left without any choice by the reign of the U.S. plantation. Because the market is under central's control, the workers have no choice but to work in the cane fields. The capitalist logic of the central even forbids its starving workers from growing

food staples in any vacant lots: “pobre gente, agricultura casi toda, que se extasía ante tanto monte sin cultivado” (“poor people, farmers almost all of them, amazed before so much uncultivated land”) (IV). Compré notes that the central kills regional economies and does not respond to any interests but its own, which are those of U.S. investors. For nationals, the space of the plantation becomes characterized by disease, misery, hunger, destruction, and moral depravity.

### **Fire**

The narrators start representing the plantation in these terms when they realize their own subjection to the mandates of the central and the exploitation of those beneath them. The titles of the novels, La Lllamarada and Over, are the two tropes used throughout the texts to signify the malaise brought by the plantation. The fire or blaze reoccurs in La Lllamarada (the blaze) as the word used by Borrás to describe the hate that characterizes social interactions in the cañaveral. The title La Lllamarada characterizes the dysfunctional social exchanges of those inhabiting the cañaveral, as well as the concrete threat posed by workers’ potential radical response to the daily violence of the central. Borrás sees the hate expressed by Florencio Rosado, another supervisor of the Central, towards the workers as a blaze that consumes him (265). Moreover, he himself experiences the blaze. He finds himself struggling between his moral call to be an ally to the workers and his ambitions for social advancement. The blaze takes the form of disease, a delirious fever, that makes Borrás hallucinate about a circle of fire in the cañaveral: “¡Incendio en el cañaveral! ¡Incendio! Me cercaba el círculo de fuego; avanzaba sobre mí” (“Fire in the cane fields! Fire! The circle of fire surrounded me; approached me”) (237). The disease is an embodiment of his feelings of self-

consumption. Borrás' complicity with the repressive and exploitative character of the administration does not let him enjoy the promises of economic and personal success ostensibly offered by the plantation to an educated man like himself.

His hallucinations are a premonition of the real blaze started by a worker named Segundo Marte. Inspired by communist ideals, Marte attempts to obtain better benefits for the plantation workers through a strike. The corruption within the labor union neutralizes his efforts. As a consequence, Marte's hate for the plantation and its administrators, what Borrás describes as his internal blaze, motivates him to set the cane fields on fire. The sequence of fires set by Marte represents a threat to Borrás' job security, which triggers an almost obsessive response from Marte. Borrás' own hate or blaze provokes the murder of Marte, in spite of his sympathy for Marte's struggle.

Like Borrás, Compré does not want to embody the hate that, like a fire, seems to consume the soul of the plantation's inhabitants. However, the over forces him to take a stand for his own survival: "No creí jamás que a tan corta distancia de mi casa, y después de haber formado tan bonitos planes sobre mi porvenir, me vería en la necesidad de servir a éstos y de obedecer a otros a quienes he de considerer mis amos absolutos" ("I never believed that at such short distance from my house, and after having made plans for my future, I would find myself in the need of serving these and obeying others whom I must consider to be my absolute masters.") (IV). Compré sees his whole existence revolving around the need to produce over. First, he has to count everything the central sends. He must take into account the difference between what he will be expected to pay for and what has actually been sent to him. He suffers constant distress and fears being submitted to an audit by the administration. Compounding his situation, he also

experiences the insults and scorn of the workers who treat him like a thief. The need to produce over turns him into a hostile and exploitative man who sees his moral burden reflected on the workers who come to buy provisions at the store. Like the blaze, the over becomes the novelistic trope that characterizes the landscape of the plantation and embodies the conflict and hate.

In Marrero Aristy's novel, the over represents the mechanisms put in place by the plantation to maximize its profits, while producing an unhealthy and destructive life in its environs. The anxieties produced by the requirement of the over, and Compré's inability to fulfill his economic and emotional responsibilities as a husband, produce a moral debacle that turns him into a man seeking refuge in alcohol and prostitutes. His young wife suffers from his unhappiness and silence. While pregnant, she becomes sick, is hospitalized, and they lose their child. Compré's salary and benefits at the central merely cover her care in the workers' wing of the hospital. He struggles to produce over to cover the expenses of her hospitalization. Every day is a nightmare. Under constraints similar to those in *La Lllamarada*, the protest fires set in *Over* that destroy the cane harvest are no surprise. Compré himself wishes for fire to consume everything contained within the boundaries of the central.

The blaze, the over, and the desire of an all-consuming fire describe a national landscape under siege by the U.S. plantation. The fire is also fed by unresolved social conflict. As the narrators' intermediary positions attest, within the plantation socio-economic hierarchies are established hierarchies that replicate the internal structures of power of the nation itself. The texts describe six classes of people on the plantation: the U.S. owners of the central, the high-level administrators, the local cane field landowner,



the supervisors, the clerks, and the workers. Through their descriptions, the demographic landscape of the plantation is constituted. The landscape is conflictive due to the contradictions of a national discourse that celebrates the racial heterogeneity of the nation, but privileges whitening as its constitutive aspect. The narrators embody these national discourses. As educated white-identified national subjects, they are victims of the central, but are also afforded the privilege of speaking for the masses who are denied subjectivity in the novels.

### **The Racial and Gendered Constitution of the Nation**

Borrás speaks of Puerto Rico's racial and ethnic heterogeneity in his description of the subjects exploited by the U.S. plantation. The impoverished working people of the cañaveral embody a variety of skin color shades and cultural practices. Like an ethnographer, he records the customs and linguistic practices of the workers on the plantation. On the other hand, he also describes how the European-descended landowner class suffers from the dubious managing and financing practices of the central. In this context, all Puerto Ricans are unified by their common confrontation of U.S. colonial rule and by paternal-filial relationships between social classes. Borrás' narrative relies on nationalism to resist the colonial status of the island and therefore fits the requirements of cultural and political discourses of the time. However, the attributes of civilization ascribed to the landowner class justify that class's position as enunciator of a national project in Puerto Rico. Their proclaimed whiteness legitimizes their claims in the island and with the colonial government. Nonetheless, the narrative voice didactically argues for a national acceptance of race mixture by calling attention to the academic success of Borrás' "mixed-race" peers. Through physical and cultural descriptions of Puerto Ricans

from different backgrounds, the text recognizes *mestizaje* as an integral component of *puertorriqueñidad*, while reiterating the privileging of whiteness in national discourse.

The workers must be saved by the benevolent and educated class of native landowners—like Borrás—who allegedly treated them like family members on the idealized and historical coffee haciendas. However, the novel pathologizes the life of the worker and his family. Borrás blames the workers' poverty on what he describes as irresponsible sexual and reproductive practices. According to Borrás,

Son hombres pálidos y enclenques. Efectos del clima, del artritisismo o de negligencia. Muchos parecen ilotas, con su dejadez. Los pobres carecen de medios para combatir los efectos del trópico, por las inadecuadas orientaciones que padecen, por la esclavitud moral, espiritual y física en que viven. Es una gran lástima.

The field workers are pale and thin men. Effects of the climate, arthritis, and negligence. Many seem helots, with their laziness. The poor do not have the means to combat the effects of the tropics, due to the inadequate orientations they suffer, due to the moral, spiritual, and physical slavery in which they live. It's a pity. (191)

The peasants, unlike him, cannot survive the climate of the tropics. Nature, not circumstance or oppression, defines their subordinate position. His condescending tone demonstrates his sense of superiority.

Borrás' discursive treatment of the workers explains why none of the manifestations of the blaze seem to offer hope. He interprets them all as manifestations of a destructive hate, not of class conflict or struggles for social justice. In this manner, Borrás dismisses histories of slave resistance in previous manifestations of the plantation in the Caribbean. His reference to slavery operates in two ways: on one hand, it denounces the coercive and repressive practices of the U.S. central; on the other hand, it ascribes to the workers a lack of will to rebel and an innate inability to enjoy spiritual

freedom. His narrative of the space of the plantation, and the nation itself, erases genealogies of resistance not led by white-identified *criollos*.<sup>17</sup>

This rhetorical move, made possible by his conceptualization of the blaze as undisciplined hate, constitutes what Aponte Ramos calls the act of forgetting, which in the narrative is expressed through two discursive mechanisms: “de un lado subrayar su propia superioridad física y racial; y de otro lado, asegurarse que el espacio de contrapunto—lo negro—no pierda ni su identidad ni su *locus*” (“on one hand, to underline his own racial and physical superiority; and on the other hand, make sure that the space of counterpoint—the black—does not lose its identity nor locus”) (907). Aponte Ramos notes how the novel includes the point of view of black-identified Puerto Ricans. In particular, the character of don Chelores, a very respected servant on the plantation, shares with Borrás histories of black struggles for emancipation and independence in the Caribbean. Don Chelores underscores how people like himself, after emancipation and the end of Spanish colonial rule, continued to be subjected to political and economic disenfranchisement by local elites. Borrás listens and remembers how his own lineage ignores the black ancestry of his family. However, as will be shown in the analysis of the concluding chapter of the novel, his imagination of resistance does not incorporate the historical experience transmitted by don Chelores to the young man. His resistance against the ever-expanding and disease-ridden landscape forged by the sugar plantation does not rely on a genealogy of black resistance. His resistance will be contingent on the values and economic interests of a white-identified landowner class, whose origins are marked in the text through references to Europe.

Borrás’ investment in the European ancestry of the native landowners, such as his

own French and Spanish heritage, reveals processes of racialization experienced by the inhabitants of the cañaveral. Though the workers are a heterogeneous mass in terms of phenotype, it is clear that they are ontologically identified with blackness through their alleged physical and spiritual slavery, and pathological behavior. Moreover, Borrás' celebratory identification of the landowner class with whiteness, civilization, and Europe is highlighted by the counterpoint provided by black-identified, uneducated, and extremely poor nationals. Every time Borrás describes a landowner, his/her family European background is mentioned. Their landowners' families had come from France, Corsica, Spain, and Mallorca. The Moreau family embodies their civilized way of living that seems to be congenital (76). For this reason, Borrás marries into the Moreau family. His love for French, but criollized, Pepiña is justified by her perfection, beauty, Christian values, refinement, and potential to produce healthy children. The young criollas, whose racially mixed background or Americanization he underscores, do not measure up to Pepiña. He describes them as unhealthy, pretentious, or flirtatious, unfit to be wives and mothers.

In Over, Compré's privileging of whiteness must be understood in the context of Dominican Republic's struggles as an independent republic subjected to U.S. imperialism, the racial ideologies of the 1930s, and Haitian-Dominican conflictive relations. The struggles echo the nationalist concerns of Solo Falta que Llueva with respect to the U.S. and Haiti. The plantation in Compré's narrative becomes a foreign space in two ways. The novel represents the plantation as a U.S. enterprise that requires foreign labor from Haiti and the Anglophone West Indies. Compré describes the workers in the batey:

El nativo que vive en la finca es un sujeto gastado, sin equilibrio mortal, incapaz de reaccionar en sentido alguno. . . . Esas gentes vienen de Haití y de las islas inglesas todos los años, con la idea de trabajar para volver a SUS casas dentro de seis meses y no pueden—aunque no tuvieran la esclavitud de siglos en el alma y aun poseyeran capacidad—pensar en reformas, porque no son de aquí y la suerte del país no les interesa. (IV)

The native who lives in the plantation is a worn out subject, without moral equilibrium, incapable of reacting in any way . . . . Those people come from Haiti and the English islands every year, with the idea of working to return to THEIR homes in six months and they cannot—even if they did not have the slavery of centuries in the soul and still possessed the ability—think of reforms, because they are not from here and the luck of this country does not matter to them.

In his references to the workers, Compré tends to underline their blackness and their mostly foreign background. His paternalistic description of the workers is informed by dominant discourses on race in the Dominican Republic. The blacks are Haitians and Anglophone West Indians, which reiterates a dominant discourse that erases blackness from the national landscape and equates the nation with the triad whiteness/Hispanicity/Christianity. The foreign worker does not seem to have the will or even an interest in changing his circumstances. Their racialized stagnation explains, according to Compré, why the communist activism feared by the central and the government would never take place in the Dominican Republic.

At the same time, Compré recognizes the racism of the central's administrators. Compré introduces the character of Mr. Robinson, the central's Anglo-American manager, by describing his arbitrary, disrespectful, and authoritarian treatment of locals who work for the central. He is characterized by his "costumbre de no mirar ni saludar a quien no pertenezca a su raza" ("his custom of not looking or greeting anyone who does not belong to his race")(II). As a consequence, his whiteness marks his position of power

in the central. The derogatory depiction of Mr. Robinson in terms of his whiteness and weight reveal Compré's understanding of the central's U.S.-owners and managers. When Compré approaches the central for the first time, he sees "una especie de fardo blanco que asoma su volumen por aquella avenida" ("a kind of white sack whose volume looks down that avenue") (II-2). The administrators are, according to Compré, ordinary "Americans" who take a job abroad to improve their not enviable circumstances in the United States. Their whiteness is associated with foreign take-over of the nation, racism, exploitation of local labor, and greed. Therefore, Dominicans are not black like Haitians, nor white like the Anglo-Americans. Compré imagines his compatriots as a product of racial mixture, therefore subjected to the Mr Robinson's racism for not being pure white.

### **Marriage, Reproduction, and Whiteness**

Compré's and Borrás' marriages illustrate their ideal imagination of a national family and its racial demographics. In their imaginations of a unified nation, Borrás and Compré imagine the role of women in such a project. Women in both texts are a rhetorical and reproductive device through which the national project might be accomplished. As potential mothers of national subjects, they are expected to give birth and nourish the present and the future of the nation: their husbands and children. These gender conventions produce the feminization of the land as a site of reproduction of citizens and thus the sustainability of the nation. Ultimately, women are equated with the land for their shared reproductive capacity. Both the fate of the women and the land depend on the actions of men. Compré and Borrás are the men who must plant the seeds—literally and symbolically—in the land to produce resources for the nation and in their wives to produce national subjects. Their attempts at creating homes and families

foreshadow the fate of the nation.

The in-laws of these narrators represent a healthy beginning for a national family. Compré's father-in-law is "un mulatto avejentado, comunicativo y de alma sana" ("old mulatto, easy going, and with a healthy soul") and his future mother-in-law is "una mujer blanca, muy bella" ("a white woman, very beautiful") (II.I). This couple owns their own small business at the margins of the central. They are constantly under siege for posing a challenge to the central's monopoly on the market accessible to its workers. They represent the national spirit and local enterprise being threatened by U.S. imperialism. Their daughter represents the synthesis of racial mixture in the Dominican Republic. Compré immediately desires her: "No era blanca, ni yo lo hubiera querido, era una indiecita radiante, color canela" ("She was not white, nor would I have wanted it, she was a bright indiecita (little Indian), cinnamon-colored") (II.I).

Through the description of his unnamed future wife, Compré expresses his rejection of racism and references to whiteness as a main signifier of beauty; however, the term indiecita carries with it the historical dismissal of African heritage in the Dominican Republic. David Howard, in Coloring the Nation, describes how the image of the blanca (white) and the india clara (light Indian) woman sells or is prized in the Dominican Republic (85). The term india traces Dominican's lineage back to the indigenous inhabitants of the island and erases the more significant contribution of African-descended people to the constitution of the country.

In its totality, the narrative of his wife's family reiterates constructions of mestizaje as whitening. Compré chooses her over the women in the batey: two Dominicans "desvencijadas y ajenas" ("worn down and detached")—possibly due to their

work—(II.I), and the rest are “haitianas feas y grajosas” (“ugly and sweaty Haitians”) (II.I). She, unlike the Dominican women in the batey, has not had to work in the fields and enjoys the relative privilege of being the daughter of a self-employed man. The repressed potential of the nation resides in families like hers.

Despite having found the right marriage, Compré is denied a happy ending. His complete dependence on the plantation for survival hinders his attempts at creating a functional family. He marries the “indiecita,” who lives with him in two rooms of the central’s store. But his happiness is disturbed by his economic reliance on the central: “Porque está bien que el hombre se conforme con tener casa, comida y mujer, para llenar su existencia; pero mujer, comida y cama propias, sujetas a su voluntad. Y yo, ¿qué tengo?” (“Because it is fine for men to be satisfied with having house, food and woman, to fill their existence; but woman, food, and bed of their own, tied to their own will”) (IV). The fact that he does not own the means of production disrupts their life and draws attention to the ever-present prospect of poverty. In addition, his constant feelings of guilt and anger for the injustices committed in the batey create a rift in his marriage. He describes his wife as a little girl who cannot understand his feelings and interpretations of the world surrounding them.

Compré expects her to comply with the conventional role of the obedient and silent wife because she has not acquired the level of education that makes him the provider. He ignores her and spends time drinking rum and conversing with other store clerks. When she attempts to ask for attention, he demands: “No me fastidies! Si te instruyeras, si quisieras servirme de algo, no tendría necesidad de amigos para pasar un rato” (“Don’t bother me! If you educated yourself, if you wanted to be of use to me, I



would not have the need of having male friends to hang out with") (IV). By the end of the novel, he regrets the way he treats her, which is implicitly explained by his own psychological distress and his need to steal more from the workers to cover not only his expenses, but hers too. The plantation corrupts the economic and emotional stability needed for the constitution of a family that can populate the landscape of the nation.

The loss of their baby and Compré's wife's weakened constitution signify the losses of the nation to imperialist interests. The plantation spoils anything that enters its territorial boundaries. Nothing is allowed to grow naturally, but rather is corrupted. Only the cane continues to grow harvest after harvest. When Compré loses his job, he and his wife move in with her sister's family in town. The dependency of townspeople on the plantation renders him useless to his family. He cannot return to the plantation and, consequently, is unemployed. He leaves his wife and begins living in the streets. He reencounters a friend from his childhood who nostalgically remembers his life working on merchant boats that took him to places like New York and Cuba. Compré suggests leaving to find a better future somewhere else. Compré's friend and the narrator himself consider succumbing to the urge that motivates the migrant to leave native soil in Mona, canal de la muerte.

Compré does not leave the country, but decides to leave the town. He still has some constructive energy inside of himself that he recognizes cannot flourish in the town but might be productive somewhere else. One day, Compré does not drink or go to see his lover, only known as the prostitute. Instead, he listens to a voice in his head:

La historia de tu pueblo, la de tu region, es la de la caña . . . No te apegues a esto que ya no es tuyo. !Tú mismo ya no eres de aquí! Ya diste tu **over**, ¿qué esperas? Creo que solo te retiene la obsesión de que ya no eres nada.

!Has visto tantos hombres gastados, destruidos! !Has visto tanto bagazo! . . . Que ya no te explicas—no quieres aceptar—que tú no estés igual. Pero, ¿no ves el camino? !Acecha el sueño del monstruo que ahora duerme, y marcha antes de que comience la nueva molienda! !Vete, hermano!

The history of your town, of your region, is that of the sugarcane . . . Do not attach yourself to this which is not yours anymore. You yourself are not from here anymore. You gave your **over**, what do you expect? I believe that the only thing that keeps you here is the obsessive belief that you are no longer anything at all. You have seen so many men worn down, destroyed. You have seen so much bagasse! . . . That you cannot explain yourself—you do not want to accept—that you are not in the same condition. But don't you see the road? Watch the dream of the monster while it sleeps, and leave before the new harvest starts. Go, brother!

While Borrás imagines the potential of constructing a nation in the landscape of the mountains, the only option left to Compré is to escape from the region that has been transformed by the sugarcane, and go to an undetermined location. He needs to leave before the zafra starts and calls him again, since there are no other work opportunities.<sup>18</sup>

Borrás also leaves the plantation, but he foresees a bright future. He returns to the mountains with his wife Pepiña. He constitutes the interior of the island as the productive space of the nation in the novel because the coast has been surrendered to foreign interests: “Mi existencia está prendida del paisaje . . . Cada cerro . . . se me presenta de aliado. De mis bejucos haré una cuerda resistente con que estrangular a mis enemigos” (“My existence is tied to the landscape . . . Each mountain . . . becomes my ally. Of my vines, I will make a resistant cord to strangle my enemies”) (372). What his somewhat successful, or according to Luz María Umpierre, escapist, project silences is how his retreat to the mountains erases his privileged position as a white-identified, male, national landowner. He is able to leave the plantation and not fear for his future because he owns the means of production, the land. Moreover, the cafetal promises a better life

for peasants, those who work for him, through the nostalgic remembrance of a past when everyone lived from what the earth offered. However, the history shared by don Chelores would tell us that workers and black-identified Antilleans have not done better working for criollos in the past. The silence makes possible a harmonious and hopeful ending which explains the canonization of the text. The novel's ending represents the path towards the fulfillment of the national dream where all national subjects enjoy the freedoms of sovereignty and do not experience the foreign exploitation of their labor and resources.

In a context where Puerto Rican agriculture was being limited by the encroachment of U.S.-owned sugarcane plantations which use the fertile lands leaving the people to rely on imported food products, the novel supports the return to the land.<sup>19</sup> The narrator and protagonist, Borrás, agrees with the words of a peasant: “Creo que tenemos que regresar al Puerto Rico de antes. A usar lo que nos da la tierra . . . solo la tierra puede salvarnos” (“I think that we must return to the Puerto Rico of the past. To use what the land offers . . . only the land can save us”) (169). The path to salvation here refers to the act of producing the food needed by Puerto Ricans, especially peasants, and leads to the well-being of the people and the survival of the nation. Going back to the land cuts ties of dependence to the metropole and reminds Puerto Ricans of their true cultural character.

While the nation is created through a commitment to its land, new national subjects are going to be produced too. The last section of the novel announces the arrival of Borrás' wife, Pepiña, on the coffee plantation as an event blessed by nature and in conjunction with the land's productive forces: “Toda la naturaleza serrana entonó himnos

de gozo a nuestro amor y la luna embrujó nuestras almas. Dentro de poco, vendría la primera florecida del cafetal y la oblación perfumada de los limoneros” (“Nature in the mountains sang hymns of joy to our love and the moon bewitched our souls. Soon, the first flowers of the coffee plantation would come as well as the perfumed gift of the lemon trees”) (378). Pepiña’s reproductive capabilities are imagined in relation to the land and parallel her potential reproduction of the human component of the nation.

### **Conclusion**

Both Borrás and Compré imagine a national landscape under siege by the U.S. plantation. It sustains itself through harmful sets of social relations: the blaze, the over, the desire of an all-consuming fire. The plantation emerges through a cycle of destruction of the geographical, demographic, and spiritual landscape of the nation. Furthermore, within the plantation, socio-economic hierarchies are established that replicate the internal structures of power within the nation itself. National discourses on mestizaje and Hispanicity in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico articulate a privileged position for whiteness with respect to blackness. The narrators in both novels face the contradictions of presenting a discourse celebrating the racial heterogeneity of the nation, while privileging whitening as its constitutive aspect. Despite these similarities, it is clear that the imagination of the national landscape differs from one text to the other. I ascribe the differences in racial ideologies portrayed by Compré and Borrás to the particularities of their national context and their countries’ relationship with the United States.

Over and La Lllamarada illuminate contemporary issues that were also addressed in the past, such as: the racialization of Antillean workforces, the overwhelming U.S. economic and political interests in the region, and the articulation of nationalist

discourses claiming sovereignty. These novels speak to a present of imposed tourism economies and free trade zones through their aesthetic investment in representing the violent implementation of the plantation and its disciplined and attractive facade. Like the plantation of the past, these economic systems require drastic changes in physical and demographic landscapes—through the development of new infrastructures and the need for racialized and gendered workforces. The racialization imagination of the Antilles that characterized U.S. interventions in these two countries is not very different from contemporary imaginations of the place of each country within a globalized world.

The emphasis on a nationalist political paradigm made evident through the canonization of these 1930s texts by cultural institutions and the state provides a possible tactic for resistance. I read Solo falta que llueva as heir of a nationalist novelistic tradition. The emphasis on imperialism provides contemporary globalization researchers with an awareness of the inequalities embedded in a global context marked by the widespread celebration of transnationalism. Examining these national narratives speaks to the continued colonial status of Puerto Rico under U.S. jurisdiction and to the dependence of the Dominican Republic on foreign financial aid with the resultant contractual obligations of private and state-sponsored loans. However, it is clear in Over and Solo falta que llueva that anti-imperialism can be accompanied by discriminatory discourses towards racialized workers, in particular immigrants.

The empowering of the narrators' subjectivities in the novels reiterates that the nation is not an ideal site of resistance to globalization. The nation's own racialization of working peoples is not very different from how white-identified wealthy nations, like the United States and the European states, imagine the peoples of the region. Moreover, the

whitening of the narrators replicates the colonialist imagination of a somewhat enlightened native class as whitened through modernization and Western education. Based on these internalized contradictions, any resistance to globalization coming from a nationalist perspective would require an internal critique of the nation's logic of exclusion and capitalism. A predominant discourse of globalization in the early twentieth century silences the reality of how transnational capital and the nation, as a political and cultural entity, operate together in the articulation of racialized socio-economic hierarchies.

### Notes - Chapter Three

<sup>1</sup> See Imre Szeman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> See Doris Sommer (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1993).

<sup>3</sup> In 1899, the assassination of President Ulises Heareux provoked a political conflict among various caudillos and led to economic crisis. The projects of infrastructure of his government and its sugar economy depended on foreign loans. A decline in sugar prices and inability to pay the debt posed the threat of European intervention to secure payment of bonds released by a Dutch company.

<sup>4</sup> Marrero Aristy was a journalist, deputy, diplomat, and State Secretary under the Trujillo regime, despite having professed socialist ideals earlier in his life. He was assassinated by the regime in 1959.

<sup>5</sup> See Ateneo Puertorriqueño's official website (<http://www.puertadetierra.com/edificios/ateneo/ateneo.htm>).

<sup>6</sup> The novel is not the only genre that was canonized. In Puerto Rico, the writings of Antonio Pedreira, Margot Arce, René Márquez, Julia de Burgos, and Abelardo Díaz Alfaro were incorporated within the canon. In the Dominican Republic, Freddy Prestol Castillo, Virgilio Díaz Grullón, Sócrates Nolasco, Franklin Mises Burgos, and Aída Cartagena Portalatín can be found within the canon at the time.

<sup>7</sup> Doris Sommer (Boundary 2 11.1-2) documents how Over fit the political agenda of Trujillo at the time of its publication. Berta Graciano Santo Domingo (Alfa y Omega, 1990) also speaks of the aesthetic characteristics of the "novela de la caña" in the Dominican Republic. Her reading claims that Over is representative of the genre. Antonio Pedreira and Margot Arce participated in the canonization of La Lllamarada in Puerto Rico. Marithelma Costa (2001) provides a more recent articulation of similar readings. Luz María Umpierre documents canonical readings of La Lllamarada in Ideología y novela in Puerto Rico (San Juan: Biblioteca de Autores Puertorriqueños, 1939).

<sup>8</sup> One example of how academic work invested in nationalist discourse turns a literary piece into a representation of reality that must be canonized is Marithelma Costa's (Newark: Juan de la Cuesta: 2004) assessment of La Lllamarada. She has argued that La Lllamarada is the "novela del cañaveral" of Latin America because, according to her, Cuba and the Dominican Republic did not produce anything similar. The ability of the novel to describe the cane fields earns it a respectable position among the great Latin American novels about the land. In this manner, she inserts Puerto Rico within the greater canon, and geographical area, of Latin America. However, her assessment silences other Caribbean literary references that speak more to Laguerre's text than the canon of Latin American novels.

<sup>9</sup> See Marithelma Costa (Newark: Juan de la Cuesta: 2004).

<sup>10</sup> See Juan Gelpí (San Juan: Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1993), Marie Rosado and Zilka Janer (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2005). A variety of sectors—upper-, middle-, and working-class intellectuals, women, labor activists, and radical independence movements—participated in the conceptualization of a cultural nationalism (Janer 9). They took the form of campaigns to end the English-only policy of the state and the education system, claims of Puerto Ricanness, or outright attempts at ending U.S. colonial rule. All faced the violent and deathly-repressive tactics of the state. The writers and critics whose intellectual work became legitimized and perpetuated as representative of the articulation of puertorriqueñidad are known as la Generación del Treinta.

<sup>11</sup> The republication of Over in 1963 speaks to another moment of nation-building: the end of the dictatorship and the election of Juan Bosch. This new regime, however, sought instead to undertake an agrarian reform in light of its reformist social-democrat tendencies. See Doris Sommer (Boundary 2 11.1-2).

<sup>12</sup> According to historian Richard Lee Turits in “A World Destroyed, a Nation Imposed”(Hispanic American Historical Review 82.3), the border between the two countries remained a semi-open area where Haitians, Dominicans, and Haitian-Dominicans coexisted until the 1930s in relative harmony in “a bicultural and transnational frontier world collectively made by ethnic Dominicans and ethnic Haitians”(2).

<sup>13</sup> Ernesto Sagás, in Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic (Gainesville: UP of Florida, 2000), states that anti-Haitianism has gained predominance in the Dominican Republic because of the legacy of racist thought left by Spanish colonialism; Spanish and, later, Dominican preoccupation of losing the eastern side of the island to France or Haiti; and the consolidation of an anti-Haitian Dominican nationalism in the mid- and late-nineteenth century. This nationalism began as resistance to the 1822 unification of the island under Haiti, that ended with the separation of both countries in 1844, and to Haiti’s intermittent attempts at reuniting until the 1860s. Moreover, it also whitened the nation through a distancing from Haiti’s history of revolutionary anti-slavery politics for the purpose of either gaining recognition as a nation-state from colonial powers or justifying its annexation to Spain or the United States.

<sup>14</sup> See Doris Sommer (Berkeley: U of California, 1982).

<sup>15</sup> The central was the factory where sugar cane was processed. It also referred to the administration of the factory. The central produced sugar for exportation as well as financed sugar plantations. It could also own some plantations. Since it financed small plantations, the land owners could sometimes be submitted to the direct supervision of the central to ensure payment of the debt.

<sup>16</sup> See Alán Belén Cambeira (CLA Journal 45.2) and Jean Franco (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), and Doris Sommer (Berkeley: UC, 1983).

<sup>17</sup> I employ the term criollo in the chapter to refer to a local landowner class that traces its roots back to Europe.

<sup>18</sup> This ending suits the economic projects of the Trujillo regime and permits the incorporation of Marrero Aristy, a former communist activist, within the government. As Sommer (Boundary 2 11.1-2) asserts, though the novel could be read as a critique of Trujillo’s policies with regards to Haitian migrants and communism, its ending leaves a vacuum of leadership which could be filled by the Benefactor of the Fatherland, Trujillo. He would purportedly protect the national landscape against U.S. economic interests and foster productive spaces where Dominican men and women can properly produce whitened citizens.

<sup>19</sup> See Esther Irizarry (Boston: Twayne, 1982).



## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Las Dos Antillas: Regionalist Politics in the Writings of Ramón E. Betances and Gregorio Luperón**

“Las Dos Antillas” examines writings by mid- and late-nineteenth century advocates of an Antillean Confederation. Various texts by Dominican Gregorio Luperón (1839-1897) and Puerto Rican Ramón E. Betances (1827-1898) are analyzed to problematize contemporary references to regionalism—and its previous articulations—as a panacea for the region. To revive regionalism, as a mode of political-economic action in the context of globalization, requires recognition, not simplistic idealization, of historical struggles surrounding the conceptualization of projects of Antillean integration.

The previous chapter discussed nationalist discourses articulated within canonized novelistic texts produced by Dominican and Puerto Rican writers in the 1930s. The analysis demonstrated both the limitations of nationalist politics as well as their contributions to debates regarding globalization. The texts considered, the novels Over and La Lllamarada, allowed for a better understanding of the significance of anti-imperialist critiques based on claims of national sovereignty in the twentieth century. On the other hand, I also argue that nationalist politics continue to produce an insufficient response to social inequality due to their embedded racial hierarchies.

Having analyzed the implications of nationalist politics in the previous chapter, this chapter examines what regionalism has to offer as an alternative for the Antilles in a globalized Caribbean. Political scientist Jorge Benítez Nazario states that the political integration of the region is unavoidable within globalization. Considering current debates

regarding the discrimination of Dominicans in Puerto Rico, Benítez Nazario asks:

¿Cómo incide este fenómeno sobre los procesos de integración política regional que se nos presentan como retos económicamente necesarios para el futuro de nuestro contorno geopolítico y nuestra eventual capacidad de competitividad? ¿De qué manera, nuestra intolerancia hacia el vecino, culturalmente similar pero nacionalmente distinto, se convierte en el impedimento para que emerja una voluntad real de integración interestatal . . . ?

How does this phenomenon affect the processes of regional political integration that are posed today as economic challenges necessary for the future of our geopolitical contour and our eventual capacity for competition? In what manner does our intolerance of the neighbor, culturally similar but nationally different, become an obstacle for the emergence of a true will of interstate integration? (97)

He proposes that regional integration is needed to guarantee the competitiveness of Puerto Rico. Interestingly, Benítez Nazario ties a political/economic project of integration of the region to the acceptance of a shared cultural heritage. According to him, political, racial and cultural “intolerance” (to use his own term) of Dominicans further impedes a needed project of regional political integration. Therefore, an engagement with racialized imaginations of the nation as they are manifested in cultural discourse must be undertaken in order to dismantle one of the obstacles to regionalism.

This chapter responds to questions that emerge out of Benítez Nazario’s proposal: Why is regional integration an imperative? What kind of integration? Why is “tolerance” or openness to ethnic difference needed? Is it possible within globalization? Since the nineteen-nineties, similar questions have emerged in the writings of cultural workers, academics, and political actors in the Antilles. The second chapter showed how Puerto Rican political analyst Juan Manuel García Passalacqua imagines Puerto Rico as the mediator/interlocutor between the Caribbean and the United States while the region is

integrated in a globalized economy. Haitian activist Yolette Etienne speaks of how a globalization of the region must be undertaken through the collaborative work of Antilleans themselves struggling to survive economic and political marginality. She argues that Antilleans “can effectively enter globalization through a model of our own choosing” (125). But her proposal requires that Caribbean peoples work together toward regional integration.

A memory of regionalist projects appears to echo throughout and inform these concerns. An idealization of regionalist projects proposed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries permeates the political imagination of the Caribbean. Despite the predominance of nationalist narratives as anti-colonial discourse, ideas of a confederation of independent Antillean territories that have overcome the racial hierarchies of colonialism have haunted the political imagination of Caribbean peoples looking for independence into the twenty-first century (Ojeda-Reyes 31; González 43). For small islands without highly profitable resources and economies, independence also presents the challenge of imagining a way to survive without the economic support of another state. As a consequence, it is no surprise to find contemporary references to regionalism in writings about politics and culture in a globalized twenty-first century region.

Regionalism seems to be the natural response of the Antilles to the economic challenges posed by globalization—and its manifestation in the U.S. proposed Free Trade Agreement of the Americas. Nonetheless, a regional project that follows the logic of globalization is doomed to fail to meet the expectations of Caribbean working peoples.<sup>1</sup> As was demonstrated in the first two chapters, globalization relies on racialized hierarchies within and amongst nations. Regionalism as it has been historically

articulated in the region, as a project invested in racial justice, is incompatible with neoliberalism. At the same time, it has not been articulated as a fully redeeming project in itself.

This chapter examines writings by well known regionalism advocates of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean in order to underline the incompatibility of globalization and their proposals. These projects have been historically committed to racial justice. Close attention is paid to conceptualizations of anti-slavery and anti-imperialist politics by regionalists, like Betances and Luperón. The analysis also demystifies the allure of regionalism and allows for the questioning of celebrations of globalization as its consummation. By recognizing Hispanofilia and Francofilia in the work of nineteenth-century regionalists, I state the need to consider how a contemporary regionalist project would imagine its relationship to Europe and the United States, as well as the place of nationalisms within such a project.

With a focus on historical documents, speeches, letters, and essays, the chapter concentrates on Luperón and Betances as iconic figures of regionalism in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. Studying their work allows discussion of regionalism while maintaining the geographical boundaries of this dissertation. Luperón's and Betances' collaborations connect the histories of the islands of Hispaniola (Haiti and the Dominican Republic) and of Puerto Rico. By choosing Luperón and Betances, I am not denying a previous history of regionalist politics. They inherited the legacy of anti-slavery regionalist politics that emerged out of the challenge to white supremacy and colonialism in the continent posed by the Haitian Revolution.<sup>2</sup> In particular, their writings illustrate how Haiti became a representative of anti-slavery and anti-imperialist regionalist politics

in the nineteenth century.

Joint analysis of their political agendas contributes to the growing body of scholarly work that attempts to recover histories of Pan-Antillean exchanges in the nineteenth century, such as the research undertaken by David Geggus, Sybille Fischer, Sara E. Johnson, Dayo N. Mitchell, Félix Ojeda Reyes, and Angel Rama. In the case of studies of the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, the emphasis on Betances' and Luperón's treatment of Haiti interrogates how historical narratives sponsored by the state in these territories tend to silence the reverberations of the Haitian Revolution in Antillean anti-colonial struggles.

Despite my attention to the particular political positions of Betances and Luperón, I do not intend to produce a comprehensive overview of their work or of nineteenth-century regionalisms. That is beyond the scope of the project. The objective of the chapter is to illuminate discussions about regional integration in the form of globalization in the twenty-first century Caribbean. The analysis speaks to the concern of the first two chapters of the dissertation on the racialized incorporation of Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico within a regional geopolitical hierarchy supported by processes of globalization. Through these discussions, the conclusion arises that not only must scholars and citizens ask themselves if the Caribbean should function politically and economically as a region, but rather what would be the political premises of regionalism in the context of globalization?

### **Anti-slavery Politics, Anti-imperialism, and Regionalism**

Nineteenth-century regionalism in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, as articulated by Luperón and Betances, engaged in anti-slavery politics and anti-imperialism. Their

regionalist politics sought independence for the Antilles through the creation of independent nations that would constitute a regional political entity, an Antillean Confederation. These nations would assert the equality of all races. None of these men concretized how the Confederation would be organized. Nonetheless, it is remarkable that Luperón and Betances illustrate their commitment to racial justice through their representation of Haiti, as a self-proclaimed black republic, and their collaboration with Haitian officials. Analyzing their work is significant when considering how, as Sybille Fischer suggests, struggles against racial subordination were silenced when anti-colonial and abolitionist politics were primarily channeled through national projects.

In Modernity Disavowed, Fischer's study of representations of the Haitian Revolution in Antillean historical and cultural narratives, asks the reader to

think of what might have been lost when culture and emancipatory politics were finally forced into the mold of the nation-state; and to think of what might have happened if the struggle against racial subordination had carried the same prestige and received the same attention from posterity as did the struggle against colonialism and other forms of political subordination. (3)

Fischer suggests that nationalist struggles did not subvert racial inequality, and that the prevalence of the nation as the political entity that followed independence did not entail a commitment to end racial subordination, despite the abolition of slavery throughout the continent in the period from 1804 to 1888. Abolitionism did not—nor intended to—achieve racial equality. Consequently, as was demonstrated in the previous chapters, discourses on the nation that privilege whiteness have historically informed the racialization of labor in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico.

Having been adopted as an anti-colonial project by most Antillean territories

during processes of decolonization, the nation has been put to question in the late twentieth century. Discourses on national sovereignty continue to be articulated in international politics despite these challenges. And, the realities of Antillean territories are deeply affected by U.S. economic and military hegemony in the region, as well as European and Asian corporate interests. The nation-state has proven to require the exclusion of local and neighboring populations who do not embody the prescriptive relationship between geographical boundaries, culture, and race that constitutes nationhood. Racialized socio-economic hierarchies continue to shape the fate of Antilleans.

While citizens are experiencing a prevalent disillusionment because the nation has not accomplished a project of liberation, regionalism then emerges as a reawakened possibility. The transnationalist discourse of globalization taps into the declining faith of the nation and a memory of regionalist politics. Conceptualizations of regionalist politics by Luperón and Betances assume an anti-slavery agenda. Their racial politics do not only seek abolitionism, but rather address generalized forms of racial subordination. Their regionalism relied on valorizing blackness and articulating trans-territorial modes of political action. Their trans-territoriality sought to improve the chances of the Antilles to prosper after colonialism. As independent territories, Antillean islands were expected to face challenges posed by limited geographical and natural resources, as well as colonial legacies of economic dependence from European metropolises. Anti-colonial regional projects imagined articulating a trans-territorial front that would sustain the independence of each territory and protect them from the U.S.'s increasing intervention in the region.

Globalization's multiculturalist rhetoric seems to address the concerns of

previous regionalism discourses on racial and ethnic difference, and colonialism. As a consequence, the discourse of globalization finds a fruitful place to consolidate neoliberal economic policies. But regionalism does not present an all-inclusive and coherent path of action. In exploring Luperón's and Betances's political thought, how they articulated in distinct ways, alternatives to nineteenth-century dominant models of nationhood in Latin America, as well as how they reasserted European allegiances will be examined. In this manner, uncritical celebrations of regionalisms from the past and the present are put into question, and meditation on what should be the premises of regionalist politics in the twenty-first century ensue.

### **Historical Context: The Nation, Foreign Capital, and Regionalist Struggles**

The critical engagement of Betances and Luperón's regionalism with Spanish American national narratives cannot be fully understood without considering how elites in the Americas imagined the Haitian Revolution and Haiti as an independent state. The 1804 triumph of the Haitian Revolution and the consequent birth of the self-proclaimed black nation, Haiti, questioned justifications of slavery based on racialized attributes. The political independence of Haiti challenged the animalistic and barbaric qualities ascribed to non-whiteness by U.S. and Latin American discourses on the nation. In a more concrete manner, the success of the Haitian Revolution presented the real possibility of successful insurrections by non-white populations against the socio-economic and political supremacy of *criollo* white-identified elites in the emerging Spanish-American republics. Erasing Haiti from historical narratives and the political landscape of the continent became a necessary process for the configuration of national narratives in the Americas. Through economic embargo, migratory restrictions, and lack of political



recognition, European and American nations attempted to silence the radicalizing potential of the Haitian Revolution for the continent. References to Haiti as a political ally in the work of Betances and Luperón critically engage the racial premises of processes of nation-building in Latin America.

The previous chapter discussed how, in the nineteen-thirties, Dominican and Puerto Rican political elites explained the political and cultural constitution of the nation through narratives of *mestizaje* and Hispanicity: “It is not surprising that the national folk figures of Cuba (the *guajiro*), Puerto Rico (the *jíbaro*), and the Dominican Republic (the *campesino cibaño*) are depicted as light-skinned, Hispanic peasants—the supposed embodiments of the national soul” (Sagás 3). These narratives date back to nineteenth-century discourses in circulation in Spanish America. These narratives were employed to describe the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico as whitened through racial mixture and to justify different territories attempts to become independent nations—or, in the case of the Dominican Republic in the mid-nineteenth century, possibly autonomous territories of Spain or the United States. In the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, claims of Hispanicity deny other cultural heritages, produce homogeneity, and ignore the possibility of racial subjection and consequent racial conflict. They elide the existence of, while simultaneously reifying, racial inequity.

French attempts to gain a salient place in the political future of the Americas also informed manifestations of both nationalism and regionalism in Spanish-speaking America. In “Searching for ‘Latin America:’ Race and Sovereignty in the Americas in the 1850s,” Aims McGuinness discusses mid-nineteenth century intellectual tendencies in Spanish-speaking nations in the Americas that connected these territories to France

through the notion of a 'Latin race,' which had to be unified to avoid U. S. expansion in the Americas. The increasing presence of U.S. investors and travelers in Panama after the 1848 conquest of California and the ensuing gold rush provoked tension in the region springing from fears of U. S. imperialism. The unification of all non-Anglophone territories under the rubric of Latin America served to present a continental challenge to the U. S. Moreover, France benefitted from these discourses as it tried to construct unsuccessfully a transoceanic canal in Panama or Nicaragua and to invest in the region. Betances and Luperón encouraged political and economic collaborations with France.<sup>3</sup>

Their search for an ally in France was a response to the threat posed by the U.S. in the Caribbean and continental Latin America, and the colonial presence of Spain in the Caribbean. Their anti-imperialist stance also informed regionalist political activities supported by Betances and Luperón. For instance, both men actively collaborated with the Pan-Antillean Junta Central Republicana de Cuba y Puerto Rico (1865) (Central Republican Council of Cuba and Puerto Rico) in New York that sought the abolition of slavery and independence within the remnants of the Spanish Empire in the Caribbean. Betances and Luperón participated in and supported the organization of the insurrections known as "Grito de Yara" in Cuba and "Grito de Lares" in Puerto Rico that attempted to free both islands from Spanish rule simultaneously. Moreover, Betances, Luperón, and Hostos collaborated in the production of the newspaper Las Dos Antillas (The Two Antilles) in 1875 in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic. Cuban and Puerto Rican exiles and émigrés located in Puerto Plata under the protection of Luperón expressed their desires for political independence through this newspaper (Rodríguez-Demorizi 18-19). Las Dos Antillas changed its name to Las Tres Antillas (The Three Antilles) and Los

Antillanos (The Antilleans) to avoid political persecution and to better articulate a broadened scope for its regionalist anti-colonial spirit (Castro Ventura 165). The Council provided a place for people such as Betances, Luperón, Eugenio María de Hostos, Máximo Gómez, and José Martí to develop their imagination of regionalism. The ideal of an Antillean Confederation that would comprise all Caribbean islands emerged from their political work.

Luperón and Betances are known as strong supporters of the Antillean Confederation, a proposal for the political unification of the region. The Confederation was a manifestation of regionalism taken to its farthest consequences. In examining a selection of texts produced by Luperón and Betances, the premises of the regionalist projects of these men can be unearthed. Luperón's 1892-1896 three volumes of Notas Autobiográficas y Apuntes Históricos (Autobiographical Notes and Historical Sketches) provides innumerable opportunities to examine the political discursive space of the Caribbean from the 1860s until the 1892 celebration of the "discovery" of the Americas. Of Betances' extensive and not fully compiled writings, three pieces have been selected as exemplars: an 1882 letter published in Paris in a volume entitled "Los detractores de la raza negra y de la República de Haití" ("The detractors of the black race and the Republic of Haiti"), his 1870 biographical presentation on Haitian leader Alexandre Petión, and his 1872 proclamation "La abolición de la esclavitud en Puerto Rico y el gobierno radical y monárquico de España" ("The abolition of slavery, and the radical and monarchical government of Spain"). Ramón E. Betances' political writings advocate for Pan-Antillean anti-colonial projects invested in overcoming the legacy of colonial discourses on race in the Caribbean. The analysis of these texts highlights the anti-slavery and anti-imperialist

agendas of their regionalist projects, as demonstrated in their treatment of Haiti, as well as the potential limitations posed by their intellectual affinities with Spain and/or France.

### **Ramón E. Betances**

To some extent, the significance of Betances' regionalism lies in the fact that, despite his status as a nationalist hero in Puerto Rico, his racial politics challenge exclusionary mechanisms of national narratives that began to be consolidated there since the nineteenth century. In Puerto Rico, the trend of anti-colonial nationalism that prevailed until the twentieth century was shaped by the racial policies of the Spanish colonial government in the previous century. Under Spanish rule until 1898, Puerto Rico experienced whitening campaigns throughout the nineteenth century. The 1815 *Cédula de Gracias* privileged white settlers by granting them more land and resources at the moment of relocation (China 67). According to José Luis González's analysis of Puerto Rican culture in "El país de los cuatro pisos" ("The country of four floors"), immigration laws brought to the island "ingleses, franceses, holandeses, irlandeses, etc.—; y, en una segunda etapa, a mediados de siglo, de una nueva oleada compuesta fundamentalmente por corsos, mallorquines y catalanes" ("English, French, Dutch, Irish people, etc.—; and, in a second stage, in the mid-nineteenth century, a new wave composed fundamentally of Corsicans, Majorcans, and Catalans") (23) who dramatically changed the racial demographics of the island and its socio-economic structures. Measures like the 1803 code regulating interracial marriages and the 1848 *Bando Contra la Raza Africana* (Black Code)—the former in response to the Haitian Revolution and abolitionist politics, and the latter to the abolition of slavery in the French colonies—were developed to restrict the physical and social mobility of enslaved and free peoples of color (Kinsbruner 36, 42).

These policies informed the emerging constitution of a Puerto Rican identity and pro-autonomy politics. In the autonomist imagination, Puerto Rico was the legitimate daughter of Spain, deserving recognition of its particular social milieu and autonomy from the mother country, but not wanting independence.<sup>4</sup> Anti-colonialists in the island often disseminated a Puerto Rican identity that would explain differences between them and Spaniards, but would also highlight the dominant features of Hispanicity in Puerto Rican culture. Under United States colonial domination, after 1898, their writings incorporated *mestizaje* in Puerto Rico as the mixture between Spanish and indigenous peoples, with an insignificant black presence.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast, Ramón E. Betances valorizes the blackness of the Antilles and speaks about cross-racial alliances to obtain abolition of slavery and independence for Cuba and Puerto Rico. His experience as an exile, which sent him to New York, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and finally Paris, placed him in politically charged contexts that required a transnational vision, instead of a project mostly concerned with the imagination of a national subject. Lastly, his imagination of Haiti as a forebear, along with Simón Bolívar, of national independence for the Spanish-speaking Caribbean demonstrates Betances critical stance toward criollo nationalisms that reject blackness from their political and cultural histories. His anti-colonial politics do not require a discourse, such as *mestizaje*, to imagine a racial mixture progressively moving toward whiteness.

References to Haiti in Ramón E. Betances' writings and speeches are a remarkable aspect of his political discourse. Those references provide a clearer understanding of how, in his 1870s and 1880s writings, Betances imagined the

constitution of independence and the end of racial subordination in the Antilles. The following analysis studies the implications of those references with respect to the particular racial politics embedded in his celebrated articulation of Antillean regionalism. Betances conceptualizes anti-slavery politics that seek not only abolition, but rather that the full rights of citizenship be accessible to people of African descent in the Americas. He refers to Haiti's independence and proclaimed blackness to provide a justification for such a proposal. Furthermore, Betances also speaks of Haiti's ability to combat European colonial armies, which further demonstrates the intellectual and political abilities of Afro-diasporic peoples and suggests the possibility of successful anti-imperialist endeavors. One example of how Betances' references to Haiti tie regionalism to anti-slavery politics is a 1882 letter published in Paris in a volume titled "Los detractores de la raza negra y de la República de Haití" ("The detractors of the black race and the Republic of Haiti"). Living in Paris, Betances collaborated with Haitian intellectuals and government officials located there. In 1882 French journalist Leo Quesnel published an article in the Parisian "Revue Politique et Littéraire" explaining the alleged inferiority of the black race and, therefore, of Haiti. Haitians residing in Paris, such as Louis Joseph-Janvier, organized a volume in response to Quesnel's claims about Haiti. They asked Betances and famous abolitionist Víctor Schoelcher to prologue the text.

Betances undermines Quesnel's argument by underlining Quesnel's unsympathetic attitude towards the plight of slaves: "Tal vez se ha acostumbrado a ver, sin estremecerse, cómo se mata a un negro sin violar la ley que le protege" ("Maybe he has gotten used to seeing, without shivering, how someone kills a black man without violating the law that protects him") (98). He recognizes and rejects how the law operates

to subject blacks to the violence of slavery. His statement relies on moral qualms often expressed by supporters of the abolition of slavery. Betances' letter in the volume can readily be read as another piece of abolitionist literature.

However, his admiration of Haiti and recognition of the cognitive capacities of blacks suggest a more radical set of racial politics. His respect for Haiti's revolutionary history functions to assert the equality of blacks with respect to Europeans and a history of successful anti-imperialist politics. In order to undertake a historical critique of Quesnel's article, Betances cites his affirmations about blacks and Haiti, and contrasts them with quotes from U.S. abolitionist Wendell Phillips' laudatory 1869 speech on Haitian revolutionary soldier Toussaint Louverture. In response to Quesnel's arguments about the cowardly nature of the black race, Betances quotes Phillips' admiration for the military successes of the Haitian revolutionaries against the main three colonial armies of Europe:

él (Toussaint) forjó un rayo y lo lanzó, ¿contra qué? Contra la sangre más orgullosa de Europa, la española, y la rechazó vencida. Contra la sangre más guerrera de Europa, la francesa, y la holló bajo sus plantas; contra la más esforzada de Europa, la inglesa, y también ésta se retiró a Jamaica.

he (Toussaint) forged a thunderbolt and threw it, against what? Against the proudest blood of Europe, the Spanish, and vanquished it. Against the most combative blood of Europe, the French, and trampled it under its feet; against the most enterprising of Europe, the English, and this one too retired to Jamaica. (100)

The ability of Haitians to gain independence through a revolution that entailed combating the greatest powers of Europe undermines Phillips' claims about blacks. In this manner, Betances asserts the humanity of black slaves and the need to achieve their emancipation. At the same time, his example places Haiti on equal terms with respect to white-

identified European powers. He asserts Haiti's political legitimacy at a moment when Haiti is still struggling to be respected as an independent black-identified nation.

Through his defense of Haiti, Betances reveals the assumptions behind his anti-slavery politics. He recognizes the rights of blacks to determine their political future and participate as citizens in the life of a nation. The Haitian Revolution also provides him with the opportunity to connect struggles for racial equality and anti-imperialism. His act of signing the letter as *El Antillano* (The Antillean) suggests that both anti-slavery and anti-imperialist politics shaped his imagination of a regionalist project. He claimed an Antillean identity that saw the fate of Haiti tied to the destiny of the rest of the region and found in Haiti a source of inspiration to claim racial justice and the end of colonialism everywhere. In this manner, Betances does not participate in continental attempts to erase the memory of the Haitian Revolution or in projects of nation-building that seek to whiten national subjects.

On the contrary, in Betances' political thought Haiti is a forebear of political independence, regionalism, and abolitionism in the Caribbean. In an 1870 speech about the life of the Haitian leader Alexandre Pétion, he traces the struggle for national independence and the abolition of slavery in Cuba during the Ten Years War (1868-1878) to early-nineteenth-century collaborations between Simón Bolívar and Pétion in South America. At the time, Pétion sent Haitian troops to support Bolívar's attempt at gaining South American independence. Pétion demanded that slavery be abolished in the independent territories. Betances demonstrated great admiration for the alliance between Pétion and Bolívar, and recognized the role played by Haiti in the attainment of independence and the abolition of slavery in Latin American territories. His political



work is sustained by his faith in similar enterprises. Based on the achievements of Bolívar and Pétion, Betances foresaw the future independence of the Cubans: “Tales son nuestros precursores, !oh cubanos! ¿Puede creerse que estamos condenados a morir esclavos?” (“Those are our precursors, oh Cubans! Could one believe that we are condemned to die slaves?”) (62). A regionalism based on a history of collaboration around anti-colonial/imperialist and anti-slavery politics, and inspired by Haiti, would permit the final liberation of Cuba, and the rest of the Antilles, according to Betances. By highlighting the political alliance of Pétion and Bolívar, he used their example to promote alliances between whites, free people of color, and slaves in Cuban struggles for independence.

Betances’ anti-slavery regionalism draws into question narratives in circulation at the time in Puerto Rico that sought to legitimize claims of autonomy or independence by praising the Hispanicity of the island. Elite narratives of *mestizaje* as whitening and affirmations of the Hispanic character of Puerto Ricans are implicitly challenged in his 1872 proclamation “La abolición de la esclavitud en Puerto Rico y el gobierno radical y monárquico de España” (“The abolition of slavery, and the radical and monarchical government of Spain”). His experience of Spanish political repression explains his political denunciation of Spain, even after the abolition of slavery. Having attempted the abolition of slavery in and advocating independence for Puerto Rico in 1868 by supporting the revolt that has come to be known as the Grito de Lares, Betances was forever forbidden to return to Puerto Rico. Some of his collaborators were caught and severely punished with exile, prison, or death. The proclamation unearths a history of political violence against abolitionists and pro-independence movements that Betances

praises for being the force behind the abolition of slavery. He decries expressions of gratitude towards Spain for the abolition of slavery, affirms the black heritage of Puerto Ricans, and claims the right of all Puerto Ricans to enjoy the benefits of citizenship in an independent island.

Betances' emphasis on the continuity of slavery and the slave trade in the Spanish colonies after they had been abolished in the rest of the Caribbean limits any expression of hispanofilial sentiments in his work. In "La abolición de la esclavitud en Puerto Rico y el gobierno radical y monárquico de España," ("The abolition of slavery in Spain and the radical and monarchical government of Spain") he warns Spain of its own destiny. Betances argues that Spain, as a colonial power and slave trader, must pay for three hundred years of crimes:

que la institución disolvente, desorganizadora de la esclavitud, acabará de consumirla [a España], y que sobre todos sus hechos ha de pesar, con todo el peso de mil y mil crímenes acumulados durante más de tres siglos, la justa reprobación del mundo civilizado.

the dissolving, disorganizing institution of slavery, will end up consuming it (Spain), and on all its deeds will weigh, with the weight of thousands and thousands of crimes accumulated during more than three centuries, the fair reprobation of the civilized world. (77)

He argues that Puerto Ricans should not be thankful to Spain for the decree that ordered the abolition of slavery, but rather must recognize how other countries had for years imposed the diplomatic pressure needed to abolish slavery. Betances asserts that it is a victory of the Puerto Rican people who had been asking for the abolition for decades. Puerto Ricans, according to him, had to recognize that people, like himself, sacrificed their freedom, lives, and homeland to obtain it. In other words, Betances does not ascribe glory or good intentions to the Spanish government. He cannot concede redemption to

the country represented as the motherland in the writings of Puerto Ricans seeking autonomy.

Betances' political denunciation of Spain foresaw how the colonial government would continue to exploit the labor of people of African descent. He did not envision Spain handing equal rights to blacks after emancipation because he was aware of how Chinese indentured workers were treated in Cuba: "nada improbable parece que, bajo otro nombre, reaparezca la esclavitud, y que sea, como para los chinos libres de Cuba, ese Reglamento de trabajo, el ku-klux-klan de la libertad" ("nothing improbable would be that, under a different name, slavery reappeared, and became, like for the free Chinese of Cuba, that Reglamento of work, the Ku Klux Klan of freedom") (77). If indentured workers—who are not legally defined as slaves— experience slavery-like conditions under the Spanish colonial government in Cuba, then Betances expected a set of policies to be constituted to maintain the exploitation of blacks in Puerto Rico. His reference to the U.S. based Ku Klux Klan suggests that he ascribed to Spain a violent white supremacist ideology that sought to contain the freedom of people of color after emancipation. Betances foresaw the implementation of vagrancy laws meant to keep freed workers tied to the plantations.

Betances' anti-slavery politics implicitly rejected identifying himself and Puerto Rico with Hispanicity. He sought in his work to obtain "no solamente la abolición de la esclavitud, sino el reconocimiento, para el esclavo, de todos los derechos del ciudadano" ("not only the abolition of slavery, but rather the ascription, for the slave, of all the rights enjoyed by citizens") (73). Seeing the experience of Chinese workers, he did not find in Spain the will to extend citizenship to blacks. He only saw in Spain the main obstacle to

the fulfillment of his political projects. Moreover, his lack of identification with Spain was compounded by his affirmation that Puerto Rico was demographically constituted for the most part by the “raza de color” (“people of color”) (77). In racial terms, he did not imagine an island mostly characterized by its Hispanic heritage and population, as some autonomists like Salvador Brau and Manuel Alonso argued at the time. And, consequently, his anti-slavery project was meant to deliver better living conditions to a majority marginalized by Spanish rule. Instead of asking Spain for better political conditions for its daughter-island, Betances advocated for a regionalist alliance that would lead Puerto Rico to independence and extend citizenship to all Puerto Ricans.

However, Betances’ rejection of Spain does not mean that he did not look to European traditions for the formation of his political thought and support for his cause. His education in Paris in the 1840s, his participation in the 1848 revolt that abolished slavery in the Francophone territories and established the Second Republic, and his final relocation in France in the 1870s, informed his thinking and defined his political allegiances. He spent the last two decades of his life in Paris, where he further admired some of the political trends of the country and represented France as the ideal ally of Latin America and the Caribbean. His work clearly rejects Spain and its legacy of slavery and colonialism in the Caribbean, while affirming his Francofilial sentiments. Félix Ojeda-Reyes asserts that, similar to Latin American criollo elites, he sought models to emulate, as well as resources, in England and France (32).

At the time, intellectual trends in the former Spanish colonies in the Americas reiterated the shared Latin roots of French and Spanish American cultures in order to articulate a continental anti-Anglo-Saxon imperialism stance. French support of

abolitionist and anti-colonial struggles in the Caribbean also explain why Betances treated France as a useful ally. In the letter for “Los detractores de la raza negra” he states what he sees as a need to foster the nexus between Latin peoples—meaning the French and the independent republics: “Ciertamente, no hay pueblo que goce de simpatías más profundas. No digo solo de Haití, sino en América del Sur, que los franceses. Esas simpatías valen la pena de ser cultivadas” (“Certainly, no other nation enjoys the deepest sympathies. Not only from Haiti, but also from South America, than the French”) (100).<sup>6</sup> It is in Paris where Betances, along with Luperón, helped constitute the Unión Latino Americana (Latin American Union), that counted on the support of French investors interested in placing capital in Latin American countries. In 1880, Luperón was at the center of the creation of the Unión Latino Americana in Paris, what he imagined to be a precursor of a unified political organism of Spanish America that would achieve the dream of Simón Bolívar (vol. 3 133). Both Betances and Luperón supported the French project for a transoceanic canal in Central America. Collaborating with France became another mode for containing the expansionist desires of the U.S. The question then arises: If the Confederation had been achieved, would French economic interests in the Americas be devoid of imperialist connotations? Betances’ Francofilia appears to be a potential limitation for those regionalists projects had they come to fruition.

Despite his admiration of France, Betances’ proclaimed Antillean identity, one that did not reject the contributions of Afro-descendant peoples in the Caribbean, is what shaped how he imagined the inhabitants of Puerto Rico, his homeland. Haiti was the place around which Betances wove his political proposal and through which he proved

the value of recognizing blacks and their contributions to the region. Assertions of the legitimacy of Haiti and its successful collaborations with struggles for independence and abolitionism in the Americas lend his regionalist politics validity. Trans-territorial collaboration had proven to be productive. Haiti's existence also supported Betances' articulation of anti-slavery politics that sought equality for blacks, not only the abolition of slavery. His respect for Haiti also explained his implicit denial of the Hispanicity claimed by some Puerto Rican intellectuals and his affirmation of blackness.

Betances' anti-slavery and anti-imperialist regionalism manifested itself through his active political life and rhetorical devices. His writing and speeches mirror the regionalist spirit that shaped his advocacy for an Antillean Confederation. In exile, he gathered support and resources for revolutionary activities in a variety of locations—New York, Haiti, St. Thomas, the Dominican Republic, Paris. At the same time, Betances' multiple relocations provided him with knowledge and sources that he used to support his political cause. In the aforementioned texts, Betances' inter-textuality—incorporation of Wendel Phillips' work—and historical references demonstrate that his regionalism was founded on the concrete collaborations between people invested in achieving the emancipation of colonies and slaves in the continent. His words engage the spirit of what he envisioned inspiring: the consolidation of a Pan-Antillean political organism.

### **Gregorio Luperón**

In contrast, the 1895 and 1896 Puerto Rican publication of the volumes that compose Gregorio Luperón's Notas Autobiográficas y Apuntes Históricos (Autobiographical Notes and Historical Sketches) denote the writer's support of some of the premises of anti-Haitian Dominican nationalism. Remarkably, the three volumes have

not been the object of analytical inquiry within studies of the cultural production of the Dominican Republic or the Caribbean. The text is mentioned and sometimes quoted in nationalist historical accounts of Luperón's political life.<sup>7</sup> However, the aesthetics and ideological concerns of the narrative are not comprehensively discussed, which allows for a limited understanding of its content. A much needed detailed analysis of the volumes is beyond the scope of this project; instead textual elements relevant to this discussion will be touched upon along with a brief examination of how Luperón replicates the investment of elite Dominican nationalist thought by affirming the Hispanicity of the Dominican Republic.

In the Dominican Republic, narratives of *mestizaje* and *hispanidad* were shaped by eighteenth-century interactions between the Spanish and French sides of the island, and the unification of the island under Haiti. In 1795, Santo Domingo was ceded to the French in the Treaty of Basilea, but Dominican elites hoped to return the territory to Spanish hands. At the time,

To promote nationalist feelings, elites emphasized the “Spanishness” of the Santo Domingo colonists versus the French, and later, the Haitians. Like the Spanish, the elites of Santo Domingo thought that they were white (at least somatically speaking), Catholic, and had a Hispanic culture. The Haitians, on the other hand, represented for them the opposite (and the worst of traits): they were black, they practiced voodoo, and they had an African culture with a thin French veneer. (Sagás 29)

In 1809, Santo Domingo was returned to Spain. In 1822, disillusion with the Spanish colonial authorities provoked the end of colonialism in Santo Domingo. During the same time period, the annexation to the Republic of Haiti by Haitian President Jean-Pierre Boyer occurred. The annexation is portrayed by Dominican historical narratives as an invasion of the territory by uncivilized Haitian soldiers. However, historical documents

show sectors of the population voluntarily flying the Haitian flag and asking for Haiti's protection, as well as people of color celebrating the abolition of slavery.<sup>8</sup>

The annexation encountered a series of obstacles, and Santo Domingo gained its independence in 1844.<sup>9</sup> Elite national narratives continued to restate the racial and cultural differences between Haiti and the Dominican Republic and the threat of a possible annexation due to various Haitian attempts in the 1840s to recuperate the eastern side of the island. After the truce of 1850, the possibility of a Haitian invasion was retained in the Dominican national imagination. This fear justified the annexation of the Dominican Republic by Spain in 1861, which caused the War of Restoration that ended in 1865. In the early twentieth-century, fear of an ongoing invasion of Haitian migrants became the narrative of the pacific invasion —discussed in the first chapter.<sup>10</sup>

In The Imagined Island: History, Identity and Utopia in Hispaniola, Pedro L. San Miguel describes nineteenth-century Dominican national narratives based on anti-Haitianism:

The definition of 'Dominican' became 'not Haitian.' This dichotomy could be seen in nearly every sphere: Haitians practiced voodoo, Dominicans Catholicism; Haitians spoke Creole, Dominicans Spanish; Haitians were black, Dominicans were of mixed race or white. More than this, Haitian culture and society were seen as an extension of Africa, whereas Santo Domingo clung to its pure Spanish origins. In short, the ideology of Dominican nationality has been markedly influenced by a sense of contrast, of 'otherness': Haiti. (39)

Haiti is the point of departure for definitions of national identity, and *hispanidad* and *mestizaje* are the two elements marking Dominicans' difference vis-a-vis Haitians. For this reason, nineteenth-century Dominican narratives on *mestizaje* diverge on the specific explanation of the process, but retain racial mixture and Hispanicity as essential



characteristics of *dominicanidad*. Gregorio Luperón also speaks of racial and cultural mixture, but he associates it with both the Dominican Republic and Haiti. He does not imagine mestizaje to be a path towards whitening, but rather toward indigeneity.

According to him, Haiti and the Dominican Republic must collaborate. Nonetheless, he also assumes a Hispanophilic imagination of the nation that at times translates into articulating an anti-Haitian position.

The Notas Autobiográficas reflect the anti-colonial and nationalist struggles of the Dominican Republic, the Caribbean, and Latin America in the second half of the nineteenth century. Luperón's writings document shifts in modes of colonial and neo-colonial relations between Latin America, the United States, and Europe. Pedro Santana's 1861 diplomatic negotiations to submit the Dominican Republic to Spain, Báez's 1869 plan to annex the Dominican Republic to the United States or lease/sell the Samaná Bay to U. S. investors, political alliances with anti-colonialists from the Caribbean, Europe and the Americas, and the external debt contracted by various Dominican presidents with English, Dutch, and U.S. lenders constitute the political landscape described by the text. With this backdrop, the manner in which Luperón negotiated his nationalist allegiances with Pan-Antillean anti-colonial and anti-slavery politics can be explored and more deeply understood.

As an anti-imperialist political actor, the reach of Luperón's political action and discourse was not restricted by the geographical boundaries of the nation. While trying to develop a narrative of the Dominican nation, Luperón documented the anti-slavery and anti-colonial/imperialist agenda of regionalisms. In the end, his political allegiances illustrated the transterritoriality of his politics. Haiti is represented by Luperón as an ally

of regional anti-colonial/imperialist struggles.<sup>11</sup> His political relationship with Haiti exemplified his appeal to transterritorial political work. In his narrative of historical events that marked the Dominican Republic between 1861 and 1896, Luperón's first chapter consists of descriptions of the geographical space occupied by the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Although the island contains both countries, he ascribes particular demographic and cultural qualities to each territory. These qualities describe what constituted each nation-state. At the same time, he acknowledged the shared geographical, historical, and demographic experience of both nations. Both nations enjoyed a place blessed by Providence as reflected in their natural beauty and resources. Colonialism, however, left a deep mark in the island: "Desgraciadamente pasaron por ella, cual horrorosas tormentas, dominaciones inicuas, dejando por herencia a las nuevas generaciones, los vicios y los odios de la esclavitud y la tiranía, a tal extremo, que todavía están sus habitantes padeciendo las consecuencias de esos horribles azotes" ("Unfortunately passed by her, like horrendous storms, iniquitous dominations, leaving the vices and hatred of slavery and tyranny as heritage for new generations, to such extremes, that its inhabitants are still suffering the consequences of those horrible scourges") (vol. 1 26). He explains tyrannical and corrupt governments experienced by both countries after their independence as a continuity of the bad example set by previous rulers: the colonizers. In this manner, he established the basis for a potential alliance based on anti-colonialism.

According to Luperón, their geographical proximity meant that the economic and political circumstances of one country affected the other. Therefore, the countries must collaborate to ensure the well being of each other. He argued that these two countries

must “garantizar mutuamente su independencia y su integridad nacional” (“guarantee the independence and national integrity of one another”) (27). His argument shaped how he sought support from Haiti when the Dominican Republic found itself in danger of colonial and imperialist interests. His anti-colonial solidarity with Haiti was expressed through collaboration with Haitian allies during the War of Restoration (1863-1865) against renewed Spanish rule and the revolts against Santana y Báez, who sought foreign protection over the Dominican Republic. First, he worked closely with Haitian presidents Fabrè Nicolás Geffrard and Nissaget Saget and allies who would provide asylum and resources when Luperón led military forces against the colonialist projects of Santana and Báez in the 1860s and 1870s.<sup>12</sup>

Luperón extended his transterritorial approach to politics to the rest of the region. In 1875, he hosted pro-independence Puerto Ricans Eugenio María de Hostos and Ramón E. Betances in Puerto Plata; Betances’ and Hostos’ politics at that time had been informed by their exile from Puerto Rico due to abolitionist and anti-colonialist activities. Luperón constantly collaborated with Cuban and Puerto Rican émigrés who had fled Spanish censorship and colonial rule and who advocated for the abolition of slavery. He was also be a significant ally of the 1868 Grito de Yara in Cuba and the Grito de Lares in Puerto Rico, which were sponsored by the Junta Republicana de Cuba y Puerto Rico established in New York. The consequent beginning of the Ten Years War in Cuba required his assistance at various times to protect revolutionaries located in the Dominican Republic, like Maceo, and to provide arms and logistical support. His own numerous exiles due to internal conflicts between Dominican political figures took him to Haiti, New York, Mexico, Jamaica, and St. Thomas during this period and informed

his vision of the Americas. His 1881-1883 diplomatic mission to France entailed working side by side with Betances.<sup>13</sup>

These experiences and political projects inserted him into struggles for the independence of the Antilles, against racial subordination, and for the creation of regionalist political entities in the Caribbean and Latin America. He was deeply invested in the development of transterritorial political organizations that would allow the region to confront the threat of Spanish colonialism and U.S. imperial interests. His regionalism directly participated in anti-slavery politics by recognizing Haiti as a necessary ally and articulating the need to recognize people of all racial backgrounds within transterritorial political projects. In his 1888 presidential campaign, he continued to advocate for the need to “estrechar esos preciosos vínculos con los pueblos latinoamericanos . . . , sin excluir ninguna raza” (“embrace those precious bonds between Latin American peoples . . . , without excluding any race”) (247). He did not envision developing relationships among Latin American nations that only involved white-identified political elites. In this manner, he implicitly recognized the political rights of non-white-identified populations.

His description of the racial composition of the Dominican Republic and Haiti illustrated his rejection of national narratives that privileged whiteness. Luperón even imagined Haiti and the Dominican Republic as places undergoing the same process of racial mixture. According to Luperón, demographically, both countries had experienced miscegenation between Europeans and Africans, which had produced a mixed race: “Son éstas la europea y la Africana, que al cruzarse entre sí, han producido otra raza mixta, participando de ambas, según la preponderancia de una u otra sangre, la cual tiende por la ley de los climas a volver a la raza primitiva de la isla” (“These are the European and the

African, which after crossing with each other, have produced a mixed race, which by natural law tends to become the primitive race of the island") (27). Luperón then imagined a process of *mestizaje* whose product was a return to the indigenous race of the island due to the environment. This version of *mestizaje* undertakes the task of establishing a connection between the inhabitants of the recently created nations and the native population. His treatment of whiteness as other than the norm explains his recognition of the shared space, history, and racial legacy with Haiti, and a particular view of Haitian-Dominican relations. He questioned the racial basis of anti-Haitian Dominican national narratives that referred to Haiti's blackness as a reason to reject the possibility of the political unification of the island. His narrative followed, to a certain degree, the logic of *mestizaje* which saw the African element vanishing in any whitening processes.

Luperón's political thought was deeply embedded in narratives of the nation that became widespread in the Dominican Republic. He professed a strong preference for the prevalence of Catholicism and Hispanic cultural forms in the Dominican Republic, dismissing non-white identified traditions from his vision of the nation. The objective of the text itself provides a clue to understand his professed nationalism. His narrative intended to produce a history of the Dominican Republic since the War of Restoration and to underline Luperón's personal contribution to the making of the nation.

These two goals shaped the narrative and its content. References to Notas Autobiográficas y Apuntes Históricos tend to emphasize either its autobiographical qualities or its value as a historical document. However, it is not solely a piece of autobiographical literature because it is committed to a historical narration of the nation,

and it is not a straight-forward historical account because it is always mediated through Luperón's construction of his own subjectivity.

Both dimensions of the text require consideration and analysis. The personal narrative would not exist without Luperón's desire to intervene in the creation of accurate historical narratives of Dominican history and vice versa. At the beginning of the first volume, Luperón introduces his reasons for writing:

Esta obra no es la historia completa de la titánica Guerra de la restauración de la República Dominicana; mas será un auxiliar poderosísimo para los historiadores que la escriban. En ella encontrarán, como en una fuente viva, la narración de sucesos ciertos . . .

This work is not a complete history of the titanic War of Restoration of the Dominican Republic; but it will be a powerful auxiliary for those historians who write it. In it you will find, like in a live fountain, the narration of true events . . .

Luperón and his allies fought the 1863-1865 War of Restoration against Spanish and Dominican forces because of the 1861 annexation of the Dominican Republic to Spain. He acknowledged the limitations of his narrative with respect to covering the War of Restoration against Spain, which is the focus of the first volume and the historical moment when the narrator enters the country's political debates. Even given his expressed limitations, he expects his writings to help historians in the future. In order to do so, the narrative was composed by his autobiographical account alongside letters, government documents, and speeches pertinent to the subject-matter. Moreover, he also hoped to achieve a personal purpose:

Sirve también este libro de alegato en causa propia, del personaje que motive y que hace esta exposición, tan gratuitamente calumniado por aquellos que tanto empeño tienen en apagar la gloria del pueblo dominicano; y que jamás ha tenido por ideal sino la felicidad de la Patria, a la que espera ver libre y gloriosa.

This book also serves as declaration in favor of the character who motivates and makes this exposition, freely calumniated by those who are so invested in extinguishing the glory of the Dominican people; and (this character, Luperón himself) has never had as an ideal anything else but the happiness of the mother land, which he hopes to see free and glorious. (6)

In 1895, Luperón finds himself exiled from the Dominican Republic by the government of Ulises Heureaux, a former ally.<sup>14</sup> In his St. Thomas exile, he uses the text to clear his name in response to his Dominican Republican enemies' allegations. Luperón constructs himself as the "personaje" ("character") of the narrative, as well as its writer, whose contributions to the glory of his country need to be highlighted in light of his current political situation.

Despite his Pan-Antillean alliances, the nationalist aspects of the text reiterated at times Hispanicized narratives of dominicanidad and dominant discourses on the 1822 unification of the island explaining his articulation of a strict ethnic difference with Haiti. He preferred previous Spanish rule in the Dominican Republic to Haiti's unification of the island. In his summary of Dominican history before its 1844 independence, Luperón recognized the "generosidad y nobleza" ("generosity and nobility") of Spain and Haiti, while perceiving them both as conquerors of the island. But his narrative of the unification replicated dominant ideas of the event as an invasion. His understanding of the unification as a form of Haitian domination is explicit in his use of the word "slavery" to describe the twenty-two years of Haitian rule in the island.

Luperón's description of Spanish colonial rule is celebrated by affirming the alleged lack of self-interest by Spain in granting the Dominican Republic's independence in 1821 and by affirming the filial relationship between Spain and its former colonies: "España no tiene enemigos en las naciones que fueron sus colonias en América, sino

hijos emancipados, que son para los españoles, verdaderos hermanos" ("Spain does not have enemies in the nations that were its colonies in America, but rather emancipated sons, who are true brothers for the Spanish") (31). The trope of Spain as a generous mother country—due to a Hispanic linguistic, cultural, racial, and religious legacy in the Caribbean—is a common reference in Luperón's writings. Hispanicity explains the gratitude of Caribbean territories to Spain for having civilized these territories. Therefore, his narrative depicts Dominican struggles to achieve independence from Haiti as a necessary deed to maintain the moral health of the country and its Hispanic civilization:

El pueblo dominicano defendía más que su independencia; defendía su idioma, la honra de sus familias, la libertad de comercio, la moralidad del matrimonio, el odio a la poligamia, mejor destino para su raza . . . Era la lucha solemne de costumbres y de principios diametralmente opuestos, de la barbarie contra la civilización . . .

The Dominican people defended more than its independence; (the Dominican people) defended their language, the honor of their families, the freedom of commerce, the morality of marriage, hate of polygamy, better destiny for its race . . . It was the solemn struggle between customs and principles diametrically opposed, of barbarism against civilization ...  
(34)

Hispanicity shapes the text's interpretation of historical events and poses a distinction between Haiti and the Dominican Republic based on a hegemonic nineteenth-century racialized dichotomy: civilization versus barbarism. This dichotomy motivated elite Latin American theories on the need to eliminate the cultural practices and physical presence of non-white populations in order to become fully civilized nations.<sup>15</sup> Luperón's use of Hispanic attributes to describe the civilized character of the Dominican Republic vis-a-vis the barbarism of Haiti resembles dominant national narratives that privilege Hispanicity in imaginations of Dominican national subjects. While Haiti and the Dominican Republic



are both racially mixed societies, it is the Spanish legacy in the Dominican Republic that defines its civilized character.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Betances and Luperón's regionalist politics demystify any idealization of their collaborations. Haiti was a collaborator, and inspiration, in the writings of people invested in anti-slavery regionalist politics, while dominant projects of nation-building silenced or denigrated it. However, its treatment by regionalists like Luperón, who enjoyed the asylum of more than one Haitian ruler and general, is not extricated from the racial exclusions embedded in nationalist projects. For this reason, examining their references to Haiti and European-Caribbean relations provides an opportunity to examine the limitations of the idealized project of a Confederation. Transterritoriality was neither a clear path of political action nor an ideal one in itself. Caribbean regionalists showed at times a tendency to privilege European thought and projects in their political conceptualizations. Their Hispanofilia and Francofilia at times ignored the imperialist interests of European countries, such as France, in the Americas. Reading Luperón and Betances poses questions about the ability of regionalism by itself to provide a solution to social inequality in the region. The analysis suggests the following questions be asked when imagining regionalism as a political approach for the Caribbean: Would regionalism entail surpassing the exclusionary mechanisms of the nation? Would regionalism support anti-slavery and anti-imperialist politics? Would regionalism rely on support from foreign capital?

Furthermore, this chapter has demonstrated that it would be a mistake to celebrate globalization in the Caribbean as another mode of regional collaboration. Histories of

regionalisms in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean have been embedded in the anti-slavery and anti-imperialist politics that shaped the writings of Luperón and Betances. In particular, their treatment of and collaboration with Haiti illustrates how both their visions imagined the end of racial subordination as one of the requirements of regionalism. The project of a Confederation entailed recognizing the political rights of people of African descent in the Americas and the need for cross-racial alliances. Interestingly, in post-emancipation Antillean societies, Passalacqua, Benítez Nazario, and Lespinasse state the need to end racial discrimination to produce Haitian-Dominican and Dominican-Puerto Rican relations that benefit all under globalization. Despite its celebratory discourse, the praxis of globalization reasserts the dependence of the region on foreign capital and the continued racialization of Antilleans in the world economy.

## Notes - Chapter Four

<sup>1</sup> I speak of Caribbean working peoples as those who would be the most marginalized by a neoliberal regionalism. Though Antillean elites may manage to accumulate the wealth produced by neoliberalized economies, the gap between the poor and the wealthy increases everywhere. Middle classes find more obstacles for social ascension, or to maintain their social status.

<sup>2</sup> See Sara Johnson's dissertation "Migrant Recitals: Pan Caribbean Interchanges in the Aftermath of the Haitian Revolution" (Dissertation, Stanford, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> British abolitionist organizations supported anti-slavery campaigns in the Caribbean. Betances collaborated with some of them. Britain had abolished it in 1833 and pursued its abolition in all slave-holding territories. However, British capital participated in the exploitation of natural resources in Latin American nations after independence. By the late nineteenth century, British investors had also financed economic projects in Latin America, and, even settled in the region.

<sup>4</sup> See Salvador Brau's 1884 prologue to a second edition of El Jíbaro (Hato Rey: Cultural, 1986) by Manuel Alonso.

<sup>5</sup> See Arlene Dávila in Sponsored Identities (Philadelphia: Temple, 1997) for discussion about the Tainization of cultural practices originated by people of African descent in the island. Taíno culture is more accepted as a historical reference in popular national discourse.

<sup>6</sup> Academic writings on Betances have addressed how Latin American, French, and British trends of thought shaped the development of his Antillean regionalists' ideals. See collection of essays Pasión por la libertad (San Juan: U of Puerto Rico Press, 2000).

<sup>7</sup> Some examples of research about Luperón's political work are Luperón: Héroe y Alma de la Restauración by Ismael Hernández Flores (Santo Domingo: Lotería, 1983), Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi's "Luperón y Hostos" (Santo Domingo: Taller, 1975), Andanzas Patrióticas de Luperón by Santiago Castro Ventura (Santo Domingo: Manatí, 2002), Diómedes Núñez Polanco's Anexionismo y Resistencia: Relaciones dominico-norteamericanas en tiempos de Grant, Báez y Luperón (Santo Domingo, 1997), and Hugo Tolentino Dipp's Perfil Nacionalista de Gregorio Luperón (La Habana: Casa de las Américas, 1977),<sup>2</sup> and Gregorio Luperón: biografía política (La Habana: Casa de las Américas, 1979).

<sup>8</sup> See Franklyn J. Franco's socio-historical analysis of slavery in the Dominican Republic titled Los negros, los mulatos y la nación dominicana (Santo Domingo: Nacional, 1977).

<sup>9</sup> See Franklyn J. Franco's explanation of the historical factors leading to the unification and its ending in Los negros, los mulatos, y la nación dominicana (Santo Domingo: Nacional, 1977).

<sup>10</sup> David Howard in Coloring the Nation (Oxford: Signal, 2001) describes how dominant Dominican discourses of Haitian-Dominican relations refer to a "silent invasion" undertaken by Haiti through its migrants.

<sup>11</sup> See the first volume of Notas Autobiográficas and Castro Ventura's Andanzas Patrióticas (Santo Domingo: Manatí, 2002) on Luperón's maternal Haitian ancestry.

<sup>12</sup> See Luperón, héroe y alma de la restauración: Haití y la revolución restauradora (Santo Domingo: Taller, 1975) by Ismael Hernández Flores.

<sup>13</sup> Betances is the representative of Dominican interests in Europe during the 1880s. He resigned the position due to disagreements with Heureaux's regime. For a historical study of Betances' diplomatic work in Paris, see Luis E. González Vales' "Betances en París: historia de una misión diplomática."

<sup>14</sup> See Santiago Castro Ventura in Andanzas Patrióticas de Luperón (Castro: Manatí, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> Literary scholar Jean Franco in her Introduction to Spanish-American Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) discusses how notions of civilization and barbarism shaped nationalist projects in Latin American nations.

## CONCLUSION

This dissertation has interrogated Caribbean cultural discourse in order to address the pitfalls of adopting globalization as the concretization of Pan-Antillean ideals. A memory of regionalist projects, such as those endorsed by Ramón E. Betances and Gregorio Luperón, are implicitly invoked by globalization advocates to assert the need to integrate the Caribbean in the world economy. In the more recent past, manifestations of a regionalist will are found in the literary work of Ana Lydia Vega, the existence of CARICOM, and the writings of people like Yvette Etienne, Edouard Glissant, Jorge Benítez Nazario, and Rubén Silié. A variety of Antillean regionalisms permeate discussions about means for achieving better political and economic conditions in the era of globalization.

Through analysis of the short story “Encancaranublado” (“Cloud Cover Caribbean”) by Puerto Rican writer Ana Lydia Vega, the conclusion meditates on future avenues of research. The literary analysis adds complexity to conceptualizations of late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century Antillean regionalist projects.

“Encancaranublado” critically engages transnationalist projects in the Caribbean, while imagining Pan-Antillean alliances springing from shared experiences of racial, class, and regional marginality. Postdoctoral research will allow me to attain a better understanding of how Antillean regionalism has been and could be constructed in the context of neoliberalism. However, in order to explain how I see the current project evolving, the following pages frame the literary analysis by providing a summary of the work done so far in the dissertation.

At the 2006 Caribbean Studies Association Conference, many panels included conversations of how to respond as a region to the challenges posed by globalization. Participants did not question the transnationalism ascribed to globalization, but rather discussed its feasibility in a region constituted by islands, distinct linguistic traditions, and a diversity of political status. Currently Antillean political actors—state officials, non-profit organizations, local economic enterprises—and academics have welcomed neoliberalism as a vehicle to achieve regional integration. However, the discourse of globalization co-opts a regionalist imagination that has been historically identified with anti-slavery and anti-colonial/imperialist politics.

The current discourse on globalization in the context of Haitian-Dominican and Dominican-Puerto Rican relations is assuming and undertaking a redefinition of historical ideals of regional integration. The Caribbean as a region is re-imagined through the implementation of neoliberal policies. As Antillean economies are neoliberalized, sweatshops, hotels, tourists, and transnational capital shape the geographical landscapes that constitute the Caribbean. Neoliberalization does not result in an end to foreign-U.S. and/or European influence, but rather often reinstates the marginal status of the Antilles in the world economy. Simultaneously, as representations of intra-Caribbean migrants demonstrate, Antilleans undergo processes of racialization in neoliberal economies. Cultural discourses on the nation situate Antilleans in particular living and work spaces based on their racial identification. Therefore, using globalization as a means for integrating the region will reproduce racialized constructions of Antillean territories.

Defining what the term globalization means is necessary to understand its celebratory naturalization in political discourse. Globalization is a term used to refer to a

variety of political, economic, social, and cultural phenomena. The term can signify transnational economic collaboration, as well as the commodification of “Third World” people and their cultural artifacts in the world market. While undertaking the dissertation, I came to understand globalization as a discourse constituted by neoliberal theory and multiculturalist approaches to difference. Neoliberalism and multiculturalism have been understood by some scholars, like Saskia Sassen (2005), as two aspects of the same process.

In The Many Scales of the Global, Sassen speaks of economic globalization—neoliberalism— and cultural globalization—multiculturalism—as realities taking place in major metropolitan and financial centers. Sassen’s perspective speaks to the concrete effects of globalization in particular spaces, despite the mobility and invisibility of capital flows. She notes how “great concentrations of corporate power and large concentrations of ‘others’” (160) coincide spatially. Her research calls attention to the concrete manner in which capital and racialized labor meet in urban spaces. She sees multiculturalism emerging from the relocation of migrant labor in “global cities.” According to Sassen, migrations to global cities are themselves products of the material conditions that characterize economic globalization.

Neoliberal theory states that, in order to enjoy the benefits of economic globalization, developing countries must eliminate market regulations and tariffs that protect local economies, must privatize national industries, and must cut state welfare programs. Opening markets facilitates the large flows of capital that, according to Sassen, re-shape significant metropolitan areas to accommodate the world economy creating “global cities” like New York. Migrants—many of them racial and ethnic minorities—

out of economic necessity follow the flow of capital. In this manner, as Sassen describes, capital and racialized workers become often unwitting participants in the construction of global cities. Migrants enhance productivity thus helping to sustain economies through their underpaid labor in the service sector and informal economies. Migrants also change cities' landscapes when their cultural differences are incorporated into urban markets. Sassen sees the global city as a multicultural place characterized by ethnic enclaves, restaurants, and shops due to the presence of migrant labor. She understands multiculturalism, or cultural globalization, as the product of migratory movements, cross-cultural encounters, and commodification in neoliberalized cities.

In addition to understanding neoliberalism and multiculturalism as concrete qualities of global cities, I also understand them as conjoined discourses promising economic and cultural inclusion for all. Not only are people promised inclusion in a global economic scheme, but their cultures are promised equal value in the market. It is assumed that if the global market incorporates all cultures, all geopolitical entities must be equally respected in the political realm. Globalization then arguably should level the playing field of political, economic, and cultural relations.

My understanding of multiculturalism as discourse, not only as a term describing the current marketability of ethnic difference, allows me to recognize how it is inherently tied to the implementation of neoliberalism. Multiculturalist discourse claims the inclusion of marginal subjects into the political, economic, and cultural mainstream. Multiculturalism silences the exploitation of racialized labor that maintains global cities' functioning. Neoliberalism's reliance on low-paid and racially-marked workforces, despite its professed interest in leveling the playing field for all economic actors, goes



unaddressed. Thus global cities are characterized by the unquestioned naturalization or normalization of neoliberalism made possible through multiculturalist discourse.

Furthermore, global cities are not the only places shaped by these discourses; neoliberalism and multiculturalism inform processes of globalization throughout the world. Neoliberalism and multiculturalism constitute the discourse of globalization as a narrative of inclusion.

Suzanne Bergeron (2003) has noted that institutions, like the World Bank, construct a “narrative of inclusion” in their documents that promises to incorporate those who have been historically marginalized—such as, women and ethnic minorities—in the world economy. Narratives of inclusion exist, not only in World Bank documents, but also in media representations of processes of globalization and inter-state relations, and in social scientific research in the Caribbean. Through transnational collaborations, these narratives promise to deliver what the nation has failed to address in the region: women’s equality, the end of racism and xenophobia, economic independence from Europe and the United States. However, the discourse of globalization requires the nation to cease being the paradigmatic site of political, economic, and cultural action. It argues that political and economic interdependence will produce more equitable international relations.

As a Cultural Studies scholar, I contribute to discussions about globalization by examining the ways cultural discourse constructs our experience of globalization, including its political-economic conditions. Through analysis of cultural texts, the first two chapters of the dissertation posed challenges to understandings of globalization as an all-inclusive project. The racialization of Haitian migrants and Dominican migrants demonstrates that achieving regional integration through globalization reiterates already

existing forms of racialized socio-economic stratification. Modes of racial exclusion embedded in discourses on the nation impact and help shape the incorporation of Antillean workers and of territories in the world market. Furthermore, development narratives mark the ethnic and racial differences ascribed to Haitian and Dominican migrants. References to “underdevelopment” are used to explain their socio-economic marginality as individuals and as representatives of their place of origin. Therefore, the study of migrants’ experiences reveals cultural imaginations of a racialized geopolitical hierarchy composed by Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico.

By choosing to compare migratory movements taking place within the Caribbean, the traditional privileging of North-bound migrations in academic research was addressed and contributes to the work undertaken by academics such as Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel, Jorge Duany, Rubén Silié, Ramona Hernández, Ernesto Sagás, Carlos Dore Cabral, César Rey, Ramón Grosfoguel, and others. With respect to the existing research on Haitian and Dominican intra-Caribbean migrations, I examined how processes of racialization mark the working body in the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. In addition, I suggest that the inter-ethnic alliances that spring from intra-Caribbean encounters are productive sites for imagining the basis of regionalist projects that do not necessarily follow the tenets of neoliberalism.

The first two chapters also illustrated that anti-imperialist nationalist politics have been articulated to speak of the Caribbean’s continued marginality within globalization. By analyzing the novels Over by Ramón Marrero Aristy and La Lllamarada by Enrique Laguerre, the implications of articulating nationalist critiques of globalization were examined. At a moment when nationalist discourses were consolidated in the Dominican

Republic and Puerto Rico—the nineteen-thirties—literature engaged in the representation of a national landscape endangered by U.S.-financed plantations.

These texts articulate basic tenets of Dominican and Puerto Rican dominant nationalist thought. Thus references to national sovereignty in later and current attempts to curb the implementation of neoliberal policies in the Caribbean are reflections of a previous nationalist tradition. Invoking nationalist politics at the dawn of the twentieth and the eve of the twenty-first centuries suggests that globalization has not resulted in a temporal break with U.S. imperialism. In this regard, nationalist responses to neoliberalism participate in the questioning of its narrative of inclusion. While neoliberalism presents many challenges, nationalist thought can be a problematic paradigm for political action due to its history of exclusionary mechanisms. Over and La Lllamarada showed that the racialization of Antillean labor in globalization can be traced to past moments of nation-building. Nonetheless, my analysis of these novels focused on their internal contradictions in order to debunk the premises of nationalist thought their dominant narratives support.

While the third chapter examined the political potential of nationalism, the last chapter explored the historical legacy underpinning and supporting celebrations of globalization as Antillean regionalism. The discourse of globalization pretends to transcend the nation and its legitimizing discourses in search of what seem to be the utopian possibilities of transnationalism. In the context of the Caribbean, the proposals of globalization advocates resemble the political discourse associated with anti-slavery and anti-colonial regionalisms. The memory of nineteenth-century regionalist movements seeking political independence and emancipation, and the constitution of an Antillean

Confederation, seem clearly to inform celebrations of globalization in the context of Haitian-Dominican and Dominican-Puerto Rican relations. The implicit conflation of globalization and previous articulations of Caribbean regionalism in political discourse limits the possibilities for assuming a critical stance towards neoliberalism.

Examining texts by Gregorio Luperón and Ramón E. Betances, the assumptions that supported their political work in the nineteenth century were unearthed. My reading of their political writings undermines the possibility of supporting the globalization of the Caribbean as the concrete manifestation of Antillean regionalist projects. Globalization does not pursue Betances' and Luperón's anti-slavery and anti-colonial politics. Its economic structures rely instead on the racialization of labor based on discourses on the nation. At the same time, I signal how their work suggests that a series of questions must be asked and answered if a regionalism committed to social justice is to be concretized.

The last two chapters highlight the political implications of nationalist, anti-imperialist, and regionalist discourses in the present. The anti-imperialist discourses expressed in Solo falta que llueva by Santiago Estrella Veloz, Mona, canal de la muerte by Luis Freites, and "Retrato del dominicano" by Magaly García Ramis illustrate that literary concerns with U.S. hegemony over the region in the past have not disappeared. Though the anti-imperialist nationalist politics discussed in the third chapter need to be critically engaged due to their exclusionary racial discourses, they provide tools to understand and address the reality of globalization in the Caribbean. In a similar fashion, the regionalist projects put forth by Luperon and Betances, despite their weaknesses, can be productive interventions in contemporary discussions about Pan-Antillean collaboration. As the literary work of Ana Lydia Vega, Edwidge Danticat, Luis Freites,

Mayra Santos Febres, Ana Lara, and Magaly Garcia Ramis suggests, a regionalist imagination must be based on attempts to end racial subordination and colonialism that characterized those previous projects.

At the Caribbean Studies Association conference, some participants expressed concerns with regards to accepting, as a region, free-trade agreements with the United States or relying on the European Union to sustain a critical stance towards the U.S.'s designs for the continent. Other regional initiatives were highlighted, such as the Alternativa Bolivariana para América Latina y el Caribe (ALBA) proposed by Venezuela in collaboration with Bolivia, Cuba, and Nicaragua. PetroCaribe, an agreement that guarantees a reduced price for Venezuelan oil to Antillean nations, is an example of what ALBA proposes. According to its official website titled "Portal Alba"(May 2006), ALBA seeks to reduce poverty, reduce the exploitation of labor, and reduce modes of social exclusion in Latin America, as well as end the subordinate position of the region with respect to the U.S. ALBA seeks to operate as a transnational project based on a politics of solidarity between Latin American and Caribbean nations that will benefit the poorest ones. It openly critiques neoliberalism. As a Bolivarian-inspired project, its roots are traced back to early nineteenth-century anti-colonial proposals to integrate the independent territories of Latin America into one political entity.

Besides state-driven efforts at rethinking how the Caribbean should achieve regional integration, individuals question the premises of globalization, while affirming ideals of Antillean regional collaboration. In her essay "Jumping Over Fire," Yvette Etienne, who helps organize women's cooperatives in Haiti, speaks directly about the need to formulate a globalization of the Caribbean that is rooted in the region and its

needs: “We’ll use the same term [globalization], but we give it another content and value to let us chart our own paths for ourselves and our children” (125). Etienne conceptualizes a project of regional integration or globalization that seeks alliances amongst poor countries to resist the designs of the wealthier ones. This project would not accept the exploitative logic of globalization, as we know it, and would assume an agenda of gender equality.

In order to accomplish the integration of the Caribbean, Etienne states that national culture must shape resistance. She argues that Haitian cultural practices have allowed Haitian people to avoid the imposition of foreign ways of being, working, and living. According to her, for economic development to work, it must be based on one’s culture:

True development means that there’s space for our own cultural elements: how we feel, how we eat, how we express our happiness, how we express our pain, how we want to work. This doesn’t mean that we won’t integrate at a global level, but that we maintain what’s unique to us and use it in a way that serves us. (123)

Her imagination of regional integration relies on asserting Haiti as a cultural and political entity. Etienne sees the need to integrate the region, while protecting and using the Haitian cultural assets that constitute Haitian identity to accomplish this goal.

### **“Encancaranublado”**

Etienne’s proposal demonstrates that neoliberal globalization is not the only regionalist project shaped by the nation. Alternative Pan-Antillean projects rely on the nation as a political entity to concretize them through transnational agreements. She also suggests that the nation’s cultural heritage is a necessary component of a Caribbean globalization process. Through a brief analysis of the short story “Encancaranublado” by

Puerto Rican writer Ana Lydia Vega, some of the challenges that must be addressed when articulating Antillean regionalisms dependent on existing national entities are revealed.

The short story “Encancaranublado” exemplifies the persistence in the late twentieth century of nineteenth-century proposals for an Antillean Confederation, which I argue, remain in the political imagination of the Antilles in the twenty-first century. Being in a collection of stories dedicated to the Antillean Confederation in 1989, the story speaks to the reverberations of the nineteenth-century ideal in the contemporary political imagination of Caribbean peoples invoking the experiences of Caribbean migrants. In Ana Lydia Vega’s “Encancaranublado” blackness unifies a fictional trio of Caribbean immigrants in the United States. A Haitian named Antenor, Diogenes the Dominican, and the Cuban Carmelo find themselves in a boat to Miami sharing the burden of being “antillano, Negro y pobre”(14) (“black, Caribbean, and poor”) (107).<sup>1</sup> These three states of being lie at the heart of their decision to try to cross the dangerous waters that separate their territories of origin from the “American dream.” Their encounter with the white-American Coast Guard also establishes equality among them. Through the encounter, the reader perceives a homogenizing construction of blackness from a white-American (neo)colonial perspective.

The events taking place in the boat and how they are narrated shows how the migrants share certain socio-economic conditions and racial/ethnic identifications. The polyglot narrator stresses a series of commonalities among these migrants. The narrator employs three different languages—Spanish, English, and Haitian Creole—and references to different cultural traditions. However, the narrator’s voice embodies a Pan-

Antillean experience in the manner in which it describes the movement of the boat as a Dominican *merengue* (107), while a “maraqueo haitiano”(15) (“touch of Haitian maracas”) (108) responds to Carmelo’s stories, and a “milagro conjunto de la Altagracia, la Caridad del Cobre y las Siete Potencias Africanas”(16) (“joint miracle involving the Virgin of Altagracia, the Caridad del Cobre and the Seven African Powers”) (110)—which refers to the religious beliefs of each country—saves them from the sharks. The narrator of “Encancaranublado” embodies a sense of Caribbeanness that crosses national borders, including linguistic and cultural differences. This regional consciousness is what Jorge Benítez Nazario (2001) sees as a requirement of desirable Pan-Antillean projects. However, the tense interactions among the migrants suggest that this project will have a hard time gaining support in this boat.

Considering their boat trip in relation to the historical legacy that positions them in such a vulnerable space helps contextualize their experience and its meaning. The maritime place—a boat in the middle of the sea with no secure destination—where Antenor, Diogenes, and Carmelo meet is a consequence of the legacies of colonialism in the region. Fernando Valerio-Holguín in “Encuentro poscolonial y diáspora caribeña: *Encancaranublado* de Ana Lydia Vega” shows that

El encuentro poscolonial [en el cuento] es revelador de las relaciones de poder entre los norteamericanos, como sustitutos de los colonizadores europeos, y los inmigrantes caribeños, ya que las mismas condiciones creadas por el colonialismo y el neocolonialismo son las que los arrojan al mar.

The post-colonial encounter reveals the relations of power between North Americans, as substitutes of the European colonizers, and Caribbean immigrants, since the same conditions created by colonialism and neocolonialism throws them [immigrants] into the sea. (92)



These immigrants represent three countries that have suffered the direct colonial and/or neocolonial presence of Europe and the United States and that continue to struggle in different ways with global economic systems that privilege mostly capitalist First World countries. The incorporation of an Anglo-American as agent of racial oppression and the U.S. as the migrants preferred destination speak to the circumstances which characterize a Caribbean being globalized at the time of the story's publication. The short story imagines inter-ethnic interactions between Carmelo, Diogenes, and Antenor as they confront the reality of U.S. imperialism. The analysis emphasizes the conflictive relationships amongst the trio, the weak solidarity expressed by the two Spanish-speaking immigrants, and their racist and xenophobic exclusion of the Haitian. Haitian blackness is not respected as a valuable presence in the boat, although the trio share Afro-Caribbean attributes and economic marginalization.

*“Encancaranublado”* narrates how Carmelo and Diogenes create a solidarity based on their shared language and their exclusion of Antenor, the Haitian. Before the Cuban arrives, the Dominican has a dialogue with Antenor, the boat owner, in which they build a common experience based on their blackness, Caribbeanness, and poverty. As soon as the Afro-Cuban Carmelo is rescued, the two Spanish speakers ignore Antenor and start sharing their experiences. When they get hungry and thirsty, both attack Antenor with racial and elitist epithets to steal the little food and rum he has left: “Levanta el corcho, prieto”(16) (“Nigger, come up off that box”) (108) says Carmelo, and Diogenes calls him madamo: “Levanta el cagadero, madamo”(16) (“Get your black ass off there, madamo”) (108). When Antenor ignores them, they push him almost throwing him out of his own boat. Later, to disguise his anger with Carmelo for his

offensive joke about Santo Domingo, the Dominican looks for the canteen by Antenor's feet. He again attacks Antenor physically and verbally saying that "Trujillo tenía razón"(17) ("Trujillo was right") (110) referring to the Massacre of Haitians in 1937. Haitian blackness becomes a justification for ignoring, insulting, and attacking Antenor.

Diogenes and Carmelo emphasize their own differences in discussions of their respective national political and economic conditions, but they still attempt to maintain a "Hispanic" solidarity by making the boat owner, Antenor, the other. An understanding of blackness that is tied to the peripheral migration of Haitians to other Caribbean territories is evident in their common quest of the American dream. Diogenes defines Haitians using the derogatory term *madamo*, which is a typical example of the discrimination Haitians have had to face in the Dominican Republic. On the contrary, Antenor imagines the Dominican Republic as a place invaded three times by the Haitians, which emphasizes an understanding of Haiti, not as a mere source of cheap labor, but as a strong nation that distinguished itself by its determination to forge its own future. Nonetheless, Antenor's self-imagination as a man of Haitian descent does not change how his Spanish-speaking companions treat him.

Though Diogenes and Carmelo pair up against Antenor, their experiences as nationals from different countries help explain why they cannot agree on the meaning of some circumstances. Instead of enjoying a harmonious relationship, the Dominican offends Carmelo by longing for the Batista era. The Dominican nostalgically remembers the Fulgencio Batista era in Cuba talking about "los cotizados traseros cubanos de fama internacional"(18) ("recalling the internationally renowned ends of Cuban women") (109), but for Carmelo his remark is offensive because it reminds him of the violent

repression undertaken by U.S.-sponsored dictator Fulgencio Batista and how Cuba was sold to the world by U.S. investors as a tourist paradise. Both share the memory of that specific period, but their knowledge about it has been defined by their national boundaries.

The tension between the two apparently similar Spanish speakers persists based on certain stereotypes they carry into their relationship. In return for Diogenes' comment about the Batista regime, Carmelo makes fun of the poverty evident in Santo Domingo: "Cómo está Santo Domingo después del temporal? Dicen los que saben que no se nota la diferencia . . ." (18) ("How is Santo Domingo looking since the hurricane? People who know the city say you can't tell the difference") (109). Carmelo marks the Dominican Republic as an underdeveloped location with respect to other Antillean nations. The weakness of their solidarity is evident in their contradictory understanding of their respective histories.

In addition, the Dominican and the Cuban talk about sugar cane plantations from different perspectives. Both recognize plantations as common place, but for the Cuban they signify constant harsh labor "Pica caña y caña pica de sol a sol" (16) ("cut that cane, boy, day in, day out") (108), and for Diogenes it reminds him of Haitian migration to the Dominican Republic because "En mi país traen a los dichosos madamos y a nosotros que nos coma un caballo" (16) ("where I'm from they bring in all the madamos from Haiti to do the cutting. The rest of us can lie and rot") (108). Carmelo's experience refers to the importance of sugar cane production in socialist Cuba for trade with the Soviet bloc. Diogenes complains about the employment of Haitian laborers in Dominican *bateyes*. He reiterates dominant narratives that blame Haitians for the lack of jobs for Dominicans and

other national problems.

Amidst inter-ethnic conflict, Antenor, Diogenes, and Carmelo fall off the boat. After they all fall into the shark-filled water because of their fight, the Coast Guard arrives to “save” them. The Coast Guard captain describes them as a homogenous group, because of their ethnic origins and condition as migrants: “Get those niggers down there and let the spiks take care of ‘em” (20). The "spik" is a Puerto Rican, who as a U.S. citizen works with the Coast Guard, however, his legal status does not in the captain’s eyes make him any different than the immigrants being pulled from the water. The Puerto Rican gets them clothes with his “brazo negro” (20) (“black arm”) (110) and warns them about their destinies in the United States: “Aquí si quieren comer tienen que meter mano y duro. Estos gringos no le dan na gratis ni a su mai”(20) (“If you want to feed your belly here, you’re going to have to work and I mean work hard. A gringo don’t give anything away. Not to his own mother”) (111). The dream of the promised land fades away. However, they all seem to be in the same position. All of them rejoice by listening to Spanish, even the Haitian “celebró pues le parecía haberla estado oyendo desde su más tierna infancia y empezaba a sospechar que la oiría durante el resto de sus días”(20) (“welcomed the sound. He seemed to recall it from his tenderest childhood memories and was beginning to suspect he would hear it for the rest of his life”) (110).

Because of the way in which they are all treated by the captain and the Puerto Rican, the Haitian becomes included in the group. In addition, his possible previous contact with Spanish due to the nearness of the Dominican Republic and his future establishment in communities in the U.S., where Spanish is spoken by various minority groups, seem to point to an acceptance of his presence within U.S. Spanish-speaking

Caribbean communities. But Diana L. Vélez in “We Are (Not) in This Together: The Caribbean Imaginary in ‘*Encancaranublado*’ by Ana Lydia Vega” correctly questions their destinies when they arrive to the United States: “does the racism they will face in the U.S. operate as a unifying factor as it does in the story? If we read beyond the ending, are all three men going to face the same kind of prejudice once on land?”(832). Vélez notes the different legal and social treatment they would receive in the U.S. according to their national origin. The migrants cannot be expected to build solidarity, a notion of shared Caribbeanness, in the promised land, and to forget their own enunciation of pernicious discourses of difference among Caribbean peoples. Perhaps they would establish alliances based on class, language, and/or ethnic/racial attributes to survive in the margins of U.S. society. But it is not clear how they would deal with their own processes of othering, especially in the case of discrimination of Haitians by Spanish-speaking Caribbean migrants.

“*Encancaranublado*,” as the title itself might suggest, complicates the manner in which inter-ethnic/racial solidarity and class-based alliances could be forged throughout time. These migrants might unite to resist the oppressive nature of their interactions with U.S. mainstream society, but the legacy of xenophobic and racist discourses of the nation, and imperialist interventions would likely cloud the possibility of asserting a necessary notion of Caribbeanness to effectively organize collective efforts of resistance.

### **Future Research**

Though the story was published in 1989, its questioning of regionalism is pertinent to contemporary debates surrounding globalization in the Caribbean. This dissertation documented how transnational capital profits from the racialization of labor

undertaken by discourses on the nation. However, my reading of “Encancaranublado” does not only reiterate my understanding of how discourses on the nation function in a neoliberalized Caribbean. It also implies that the construction of regional integration in any form, as U.S.-led globalization, Antillean Confederation, or ALBA, may be limited by racialized imaginations of Antillean territories. If three Caribbean men cannot be imagined smoothly negotiating their differences and collaborating to survive together, how can we imagine a variety of territories doing the same to survive in a neoliberalized world economy?

That question cannot be answered here, but it suggests potential paths for research that may elucidate future political possibilities for the Caribbean. One could consider the possibility of imagining a regionalism that does not require nations in order to be accomplished. After all, according to Sara Johnson’s dissertation “Migrant Recitals: Pan Caribbean Interchanges in the Aftermath of the Haitian Revolution,” “Pan-Caribbean interchanges antedated and were a key component in the development of Caribbean nations and the evolution of their corresponding artistic artifacts” (17). It is theoretically possible to imagine a regionalist project that would be sustained by a sense of Caribbeanness grounded on Pan-Antillean struggles and cultural production implicated in the construction of the nation. To some extent, “Encancaranublado” may be pointing in this direction. The narrator’s Pan-Antillean sensibility, and assertions of the shared Antilleaness of Antenor, Diogenes, and Carmelo, suggests that there is a cultural and historical basis to consolidate a regionalism rooted in the history of the Caribbean.

The stronghold of nationhood, as a mode of identification, cannot be underestimated. As a consequence, if regionalism were to be articulated as the ideal

political paradigm, the nation must be interrogated to avoid restating the racialized geopolitical structures put forward by globalization in the Caribbean. A series of questions must be taken into account in processes of regional integration critical of globalization: Would it be possible to assert the Pan-Antillean memory of each territory and a regionalist project invested in anti-slavery and anti-colonial politics, while sustaining the nation? Will the Caribbean look north to the United States, or Europe, for a model of economic integration? Or, will it look within itself and the rest of the Americas for other possibilities?

Meditating on these questions, I want to further explore the constitution of the Caribbean and the hemisphere as regions in the context of globalization. In "Doing Cultural Studies Inside APEC," Rob Wilson describes how neoliberalism and multiculturalism have constructed the Asia-Pacific as a region. Exploring how the Caribbean is re-imagined with respect to projects of hemispheric collaboration holds great interest and promise. The Caribbean is a significant player in the implementation of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, that is allegedly preparing the continent to face the competition of prosperous Asian economies. Furthermore, developing alternative imaginations of the continent and the Caribbean must be underscored. Examining how the Caribbean as a region may expand its self-imagination by seeking alliances with Europe, Asia, and South America, instead of directing its view to the United States, will guide my future inquiries.

In order to address these concerns, the scope of the dissertation will be expanded and not limited to the islands of Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico. Further research into twentieth century narratives of nationalism and regionalism may help shed light on the

cultural memory informing the constitution of global geographies. My future work will be enriched by engaging media representations of FTAA, ALBA, and CARICOM, as well as the literary works of writers such as Mayra Santos Febres, Maryse Condé, Myriam Chancy, Samuel Selvon, and Elizabeth Núñez. I will address how narratives of nationalism and regionalism intersect as a variety of political projects propose ways to imagine the Americas. The Caribbean will be my point of departure to map cultural visions of the hemisphere that inform political and economic dynamics into the twenty-first century.



### **Notes - Conclusion**

<sup>1</sup> I use the translation published in the anthology Her True-True Name.



Figure 1 "Teléfono dominicano," E-mail sent to the author (24 September 2004).



## Arrestan a 60 indocumentados

Agencia EFE

Efectivos de la Unidad de Operaciones Tácticas de la Policía arrestaron el miércoles en la noche a 60 indocumentados en un operativo especial en los residenciales públicos de San Juan y otros lugares de mayor incidencia criminal.

El capitán Agustín Cartagena, director de Operaciones Tácticas, informó de que los indocumentados fueron detenidos y llevados al cuartel de esa división, y posteriormente referidos a la oficina de Inmigración y Naturalización de Estados Unidos en San Juan.

Cartagena indicó que los indocumentados no pudieron presentar las tarjetas de identificación que los acreditan como residentes legales del país.

Agregó que la mayoría de los detenidos eran de nacionalidad dominicana pero que también habían argentinos y uruguayos, entre otros.

Se informó de que los algunos detenidos fueron sorprendidos trabajando en establecimientos comerciales y en las vías públicas. Este operativo se concentró en el residencial Las Margaritas, en el Barrio Obrero, la calle Lofza y la parada 19 de Santurce.

Figure 2 "Arrestan a 60 indocumentados," El Mundo (March 11, 1988: 10).

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