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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

**Dominicanas Presentes:
Gender, Migration, and History's Legacy in Dominican Literature**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Literature

by

Dixa Ramírez

Committee in charge:

Professor Sara Johnson, Chair
Professor Robin Derby
Professor Fatima El-Tayeb
Professor Misha Kokotovic
Professor Nancy Postero

2011

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Chair

University of California, San Diego

2011

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my committee—Professor Sara Johnson, Professor Lauren Derby, Professor Fatima El-Tayeb, Professor Milos Kokotovic, and Professor Nancy Postero—for their support and invaluable insight throughout this process. I am especially thankful to Professors Johnson and Derby for their editing suggestions. And a deep thanks to Professor Johnson for offering her encouragement, advice, dedication, and mentorship, which guided me from the very beginning.

I would also like to dedicate this dissertation to my family: my parents, Dixa D'Oleo-Tejeda and José Ramírez Valdez, my brother José A. Ramírez, my stepfather Darío Tejeda, and my grandparents, Deidamia D'Oleo and Julio Santana. Thank you for your encouragement and for celebrating my love of books. I also thank the friends who have given me emotional support, love, and much laughter throughout this process.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|------|
| Signature Page..... | iii |
| Dedication..... | iv |
| Table of Contents..... | v |
| List of Figures..... | vii |
| Vita..... | viii |
| Abstract..... | x |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Listening to Salomé Ureña: Dominican National Identity and Geographical Displacement in Canonical and Marginalized Literature | |
| <i>Methodology</i> | 10 |
| <i>Historical Context</i> | 17 |
| <i>Chapter Breakdown</i> | 28 |
| Chapter One..... | 36 |
| Letters to an Absence: A Dominican Women’s Literary Genealogy | |
| Chapter Two..... | 73 |
| Eliding History in Three Trujillo Memoirs | |
| Chapter Three..... | 116 |
| Magic and Patriarchal Legacy in Junot Díaz’s <i>The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao</i> and Viriato Sención’s <i>They Forged the Signature of God</i> | |
| <i>Haiti, Power and Magic</i> | 120 |
| <i>Patriarchal Anxiety and Men of the Occult</i> | 137 |
| <i>Juanito the Rooster in the City: Masculinity in the Diaspora</i> | 148 |
| Chapter Four..... | 153 |
| Transnationalism in Contemporary Dominican Literature | |
| <i>From Intergenerational Struggle to African Diaspora Consciousness</i> | 159 |
| <i>The Transnationalism of Dominican Sex Workers</i> | 175 |
| <i>The Enduring Power of the Patriarch</i> | 186 |
| Conclusion | 195 |
| Dominican Women Writers in the Global Marketplace | |

| | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| Works Consulted | 210 |
|-----------------------|-----|

LIST OF FIGURES

| | |
|---|----|
| Figure 1.1: Rare photograph of Salomé Ureña..... | 40 |
| Figure 1.2: Common retouched image of Salomé Ureña..... | 41 |
| Figure 1.3: Bust of Salomé Ureña..... | 41 |

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

**Dominicanas Presentes:
Gender, Migration, and History's Legacy in Dominican Literature**

by

Dixa Ramírez

Doctor of Philosophy in Literature

University of California, San Diego, 2011

Professor Sara Johnson, Chair

This dissertation argues that geographical displacement has partly defined Dominican national identity as constructed in literary discourses since the country's founding. This entanglement between migration or exile and the nation is most evident in the work of marginalized subjects, including men in the diaspora and women, due to their tenuous relationship to the nation. Each chapter provides a different angle on this issue through several genealogies of alternative, non-patriarchal visions of the Dominican literary and intellectual tradition. My readings of these texts, which include the poetry and epistolary of a nineteenth-century female poet, two recent novels written in the US by Dominican men, an essay that conveys the overlaps between African and Dominican diaspora subjectivities, and popular news from the Dominican Republic and the US,

challenge the notion that traditional Dominican nationalism is based on the union between the woman/Land and the man/People in Latin American national romances. The first chapter charts a matrilineal genealogy starting with nineteenth-century poet Salomé Ureña based on the idea of “absence”—the absence of many Dominicans from the homeland and a missing readership that can truly appreciate the work of excluded subjects—as the unifying thread between Ureña and future Dominican women writers. The second chapter proposes that memoirs by three Trujillo descendants rely on problematic historical erasures and domesticate Trujillo as a kindly *pater familias* in order to elide his cruelty as the nation’s patriarch. At the other end of the ideological spectrum, chapter three argues that Trujillo’s power was so exorbitant that only the language of the supernatural can adequately describe it. It focuses on two recent novels written in the diaspora and notes that Trujillo’s and other leaders’ seemingly occult power is intrinsically patriarchal. The fourth chapter focuses on recent works by Dominican women writers that comment on the various kinds of transnationalism that have transformed the country. I show that, though transnationalism can be liberatory and subversive, it can also reinforce the patriarchal underpinnings of the nation. Finally, the conclusion meditates on how works by Dominican women writers are published and disseminated within national, regional, and global contexts.

Introduction

Listening to Salomé Ureña: Dominican National Identity and Geographical

Displacement in Canonical and Marginalized Literature

During the 1887 graduation ceremony of the *Instituto de Señoritas*/Young Women's Institute in Santo Domingo, six young women were awarded the degree of *Maestras Normales*/Normal School Teachers, which was a first for women in the country and for much of Latin America at the time. The various speeches presented at the ceremony reveal a tension between the traditional role of women as mothers of future (male) citizens and a progressive role for women alongside men in the public sphere. Salomé Ureña, the school's founder, recited the poem "*Mi ofrenda a la patria*"/My Offering to the Fatherland. The poem suggests that, in order for the nation to flourish, women's education must be a priority:

Hágase luz en la tiniebla oscura
que el femenil espíritu rodea,
y en sus alas de amor irá segura
del porvenir la salvadora idea.
Y si progreso y paz e independencia
mostrar al orbe tu ambición ansía,
fuerte, como escudada en su conciencia,
de sus propios destinos soberana,
para ser del hogar lumbrera y guía
formemos la mujer dominicana
(Ureña, *Poesías completas* 147-8).

Let there be light in the darkness
that surrounds the feminine spirit,
and in her loving wings the freeing idea
will go sure of the future.
And if progress and peace and independence
your ambition yearns to show the world,
strong, as if shielded in her conscience,
master of her own destiny,

to become the home's genius and guide
let us educate the Dominican woman.¹

Ureña uses words like “light,” “freeing,” independence” and “ambition” to connect the nation’s and women’s progress and independence. The graduating students presented a thesis entitled “*La educación de la mujer*”/Women’s Education, reflecting many of the ideals in Ureña’s poem.² They posit that women influenced public opinion and that, as mothers, they were children’s first pedagogues. Thus, it was in the general population’s best interest to ensure that these women, as direct and indirect participants of the nation—that is, without the right to vote or run for government—were well educated.

However, these ideals subtly clashed with those presented by others at the ceremony. For instance, the Minister of Public Instruction, J.T. Mejía, reminded the audience and the graduating class that religion had to remain at the center of women’s education as mothers: “Because of this, when receiving an education, mothers must also be taught religion and morality. Otherwise, either both things disappear from the home or women will learn those vices that dominate certain social spheres” (Rodríguez Demorizi 163).³ Mejía warned that, in their fervor to educate themselves, women must not forget the centrality of religion, because even their secular education would not prevent them from being as “ignorant” as those of the lower, uneducated classes. Mejía directly connected religious ignorance to the perceived general ignorance of the lower classes, which is a reminder that “religion” here represented more than Catholicism; it extended to women’s duties to prioritize virtuous, chaste, and “proper” behavior. Mejía’s speech thus suggested that the education of women was acceptable on the condition that virtuous behavior remain at the core of instruction. Though the Instituto de Señoritas’

curriculum included “exercises about sacred history,”⁴ there was no mention of religion in the young women’s graduation thesis.⁵ The centrality of religion-cum-morality in Mejía’s speech pointed to the difference between his and the young women’s priorities; while the former wove a connection between women’s education and their traditional responsibilities guarding propriety, the graduating women made a liberal connection between the nation’s and their own educational progress.

The graduation and the words of the Institute’s founder are an appropriate way to open a dissertation that seeks to analyze the ways in which Dominican women, their labor (intellectual and otherwise), and their relationship to the nation have shaped national discourses. This unique event in the process of women’s secular introduction into the nation’s body politic is rife with ideological tensions about what women’s proper social role should be. Salomé Ureña herself, as wife, mother, educator, and National Poet(ess), embodied the subtle tensions that the graduation speeches revealed.⁶ Ureña succeeded in an era when and in a field in which ideal male standards should have excluded her.⁷ Despite her status as a woman, she was a sensation in Santo Domingo’s cultural elite and her work remains securely canonized.

Starting with Salomé Ureña, this dissertation constructs a literary canon that reveals that geographic displacement has been a defining component of Dominican national identity since the nation’s founding in 1844. Though this should not be surprising to a Caribbean(ist) audience, due to the unique historical proliferation of migration in the region, Dominican national identity has not been analyzed or understood in this manner. The reason for this oversight is that it is works written by women and other marginalized subjects that evoke complex, anti-patriarchal and inclusive national

narratives, which can be ascribed to their tenuous relationship to the nation. By “marginalized subjects,” I refer to those who do not fulfill the normativized gender, race, and class categories befitting a traditional Hispanophilic, patriarchal idea of the Dominican nation. Among these are working-class migrant women who support their families, men who are not considered masculine enough, and non-heterosexual subjects. Certain women and many men who are marginalized by traditional nationalist discourses, including subjects living both on the island and abroad, have been fervent proponents of the same ideologies that exclude them from entirely belonging to the homeland. Because of this reality, I also consider the ways in which some male-authored texts start to envision alternatives to the patriarchal nation. These works suggest that the practice of “being Dominican” is often equivalent to the maintenance of a patriarchal, race-conscious status quo, and that “national identity [is] essentially masculine identity” (Franco xxi).

However, there is an absence of a proper readership that can actually *register* these alternative visions of a nation whose construction discursively and materially has relied on its exiles and migrants. The reason for this absence of a proper readership is that literary and cultural methodologies developed in concert with traditional connections between gender, race, and class. Thus, there is a scarcity of adequate analyses of these women’s and marginalized subjects’ work. Like an inclusive version of the nation that is not based on what Dominicans are not—Haitian, black, non-Christian, etc.—this readership would be wide-ranging and open-minded. Its absence has meant that the extent to which geographic displacement has emblemized Dominican national identity since the nation’s founding has gone undetected.

As a response, I develop and adopt strategies for interpreting discourses that reveal the entrenchment between gender, nationalism, and geographic displacement. One of the key components disclosed through this discerning lens is that the Dominican literary and political tradition, for all its richness and diversity, is patriarchal in its dissemination of the notion that only men can propel socio-cultural change. In this manner, men's progressive and revolutionary capacity extends to their migration and exile, while women, in migrating or living in exile, are closer to subverting their roles as guardians and symbols of tradition. Another idea that emerges from a careful consideration of the works and biographies of women and other marginalized subjects is that the extra-national space—that is, the space of exile or migration, which has recently developed into a diaspora—is ambivalent. It can echo and even surpass the nation's racist and patriarchal ideologies or it can fuel the attainment of a kind of race and gender consciousness that leads to a dramatic reevaluation of one's place in the homeland. In this sense, I consider my exploration of the topic as contributing to the discussion of how diaspora subjects challenge and transform their homelands' national identities.

My analyses of these texts and the lives of their authors reveal that the main continuous thread between Ureña's late nineteenth century and the present is the ideological, and, later, material reliance on Dominicans living outside the island. The second continuity that I find is that this relationship has been gendered from the outset because the groups of geographically displaced subjects have themselves been gendered in particular ways. This continuity leads to the main discontinuity: the historical specificity of each geographically displaced wave. When Ureña refers to an exile, the image is inextricable from men like her exiled father and husband, who were often part of

the cultural and political elite. At the other end are present-day writers who comment on and engage with the current vast, and relatively feminine, Dominican diaspora. And these two kinds of geographic displacements differ markedly from that of Trujillo descendants Flor de Oro, Angelita, and Aída Trujillo analyzed in chapter two. Forced into exile after the dictator's assassination, these women's nostalgia for a homeland that no longer exists prompts them to problematically rewrite history. These continuities and discontinuities are all framed by an attempt to consider and periodize the interconnections between gender, national identity, and geographic displacement.

Exile has a long history in the Caribbean region and its letters: "While it is true that the movement of people across borders or boundaries . . . is to be found in all regions of the world, perhaps there is nowhere that this truism is more evident than in the experience of people of Caribbean backgrounds" (Goulbourne xiii). Geographic displacement as an idea and experience has had an enormous influence on the work of Caribbean writers and intellectuals who have defined their respective nations and the region as a whole. This is evident in interviews with contemporary writers like Jamaica Kincaid, Maryse Condé, Dany Laferrière, among many others, who often explain that their migration or exile has nourished their literary and scholarly output. This is also the case of deceased intellectuals and writers like Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire, and Marie Chauvet, whose work either centralizes or, in the case of Chauvet, necessitated exile. One may also think of José Martí and Eugenio María de Hostos, nineteenth-century national heroes in their respective Cuba and Puerto Rico, whose bodies of work are unthinkable without their extensive experiences living in exile throughout the Americas. According to Dominicanist scholar Silvio Torres-Saillant, "[e]xile was and still is a

constant element of the Caribbean experience, and the literary implications of that historical fact have been examined time and again at least since Braithwaite's 1957 essay "Sir Galahad and the Islands" (*Caribbean Poetics* 25). The Dominican Republic is no exception to this regional characteristic. In spite of the recent claims by conservative nationalists that *dominicanos ausentes*/absent Dominicans or *dominicanos en el exterior*/Dominicans in the exterior are a threat to the stability to the nation, "[e]xile literature is often part of a nation-building project, despite its location outside of the geographic patria" (Concannon, Lomeli, and Priewe 39). This describes many of the texts written from the Dominican immigrant community in the US, one that is mostly composed of migrants and not exiles in the strictest sense.

Because this dissertation discusses Dominicans' geographic displacements, it might be useful to briefly discuss some of the differences between exile, migrant, and diaspora subjectivities. Determining whether someone is a "migrant" or an "exile" rests on the motivation behind the geographic movement. According to Edward Said, "[b]ecause the exile sees things both in terms of what has been left behind and what is actually here and now, there is a double perspective that never sees things in isolation. Every scene or situation in the new country necessarily draws on its counterpart in the old country" (60). This is partly because an important element of exile, as opposed to migration, is affective. Despite this seeming difference, some scholars who have come to recognize that migrants may well be called "economic exiles" since the urgency of escape is not confined to political repression.

It is difficult to delineate the differences between an exile and an immigrant emotional experience. This is especially the case considering the variety of reasons

behind the various Caribbean migrations. Recent migration scholarship that focuses on immigration to the US is sensitive to the complexity of immigrants' connections to their homeland. The old convention of assimilation common to Ellis Island tales of immigration and based on white European immigration when the trip across the Atlantic lasted days, takes a different shape when it relates to non-white immigrants in an era of fast travel and communication. If one adopts outdated theories of immigrant assimilation, the exile differs greatly from the immigrant in that the former's status precludes the possibility for integration or full settlement in the new country. S/he yearns for the homeland, since this constant "looking back" and idealization of the homeland has always been particularly emblematic of the exile experience. However, exiles' return is contingent on the homeland's change. In contradistinction, immigrants more often focus on self-transformation. While Cuban exiles have been known to fantasize about their homecoming after Fidel Castro's death, Dominican and Mexican immigrants in the US, for instance, are led by discourses of toil that prioritize economic and social improvement.⁸ Though the dream of immigrants—at least in the case of Dominicans—is often that their hard work will lead to a return to the homeland in a higher socio-economic position, what often ends up happening is that they remain in the new country and their children have the possibility of acquiring a higher socio-economic status within the new country. This has resulted in a significant number of second and third generation Dominicans whose frequent identification with African Americans challenges Dominican concepts of race.⁹

Another term that is relevant to my discussion of Dominicans' geographic displacements is "diaspora." In this dissertation, the term refers to the result of the

geographic dispersal of peoples with a common origin. For instance, the African Diaspora refers to the immense group of people of African descent scattered all over the world. This term captures the various waves of dispersal, including the descendants of African slaves. The Dominican diaspora, which refers to the many Dominican-identified persons worldwide, is recent relative to the African and Jewish diasporas. The word diaspora is particularly useful to describe Dominican-identified subjects who never migrated. As Fatima El-Tayeb suggests in reference to Europeans of color: “While ‘migration’ does not grasp the experience of a population that is born into one nation, but never becomes fully part of it and ‘minority’ does not quite encompass the transnational ties of that same population, ‘diaspora’ can bring both aspects together” (*European Others* xxxv). Thus, the diaspora experience can be defined as “global articulations of identity that [are] not geographically confined” (Grosfoguel, Cervantes-Rodríguez, and Mielants 27). While it may seem that I use the phrases “diaspora Dominican” and “migrant Dominican” interchangeably, I am careful to use each one depending on whether or not I include Dominicans who were born and live outside of the island. Hence, the term “diaspora” embraces people whose families may have been in place for generations but who continue to affiliate themselves with an ancestral ethnic, racial, or national identity. It is not surprising that these unmoored affiliations are also often affective; like “exile,” diaspora subjectivity can assume the fantasy of a “return” to an idealized homeland. Another characteristic of the term is that while it is not synonymous with transnationalism, “diasporas are by definition transnational, resisting both the jurisdictional confines of the nationally bounded polity and the territorial rootedness to a single location” (Flores, *Diaspora* 18). A key difference between the term

transnationalism and the term diaspora is that the latter does not rely on the existence of specific nation-states.

Several authors reflect on the complexity of diaspora subjectivity that is both privileged and alienating. Though alternately treated with derision or pride by those in their homeland, the work of diaspora writers like Edwidge Danticat, Junot Díaz, and many others continually helps shape national discourses.¹⁰ For instance, Díaz's awkward, Dominican-American protagonist in *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007), Oscar de León, feels like an outsider from an early age. However, the estrangement he feels as a diaspora Dominican during a visit to Santo Domingo receives particular attention in the text. He tries to ignore “that whisper that all long-term immigrants carry inside themselves, the whisper that says You do not belong” (276). Although not born in the Dominican Republic, Oscar was raised in the kind of immigrant community that does not successfully conform to ideal assimilationist values. In this latter ideology, coming to the US means forgetting one's original language, accent, culture, and values, and absorbing US middle-class—usually white—values. This kind of assimilation is particularly difficult for non-white immigrants who cannot racially “blend” into white, mainstream society. Hence, his cultural closeness to his parents' homeland is what renders his alienation once he is physically on the island more painful.¹¹

Methodology

This dissertation is composed of four chapters and a conclusion. Together, they elaborate on several continuities and disruptions between three historical moments

marked by national consolidation and/or significant emigrations. These moments are Salomé Ureña's late nineteenth-century, the mid-twentieth-century of Rafael L. Trujillo's dictatorship, and the late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century period of the growth of the Dominican diaspora. All three have been eras in which the connection between nationalist discourses and geographical displacement is most evident. In part, this results from the fact that they were moments of political or economic volatility leading to significant migrations.

The late nineteenth century witnessed frequent and violent shifts of government, civil wars, and the constant exile of important political figures. Salomé Ureña was born into a country in which political parties were divided based on whether the nation should remain independent or be annexed to a foreign power. These years followed a long period of Haitian governance (1822-1844) and Spanish annexation (1861-1865). Though the nation's capital was Santo Domingo, power was divided throughout the mostly rural and inaccessible country. Agriculture and cattle ranching still formed the base of nation's economy and would remain so until the latter half of the twentieth century. The second period in which I focus was marked by the dictatorship of a single man, Rafaél L. Trujillo. Most scholars would agree that this was a historical era of singular significance due to Trujillo's brutal success in consolidating the nation's power not only in the capital, but also in his sole person. As in the earlier historical moment, this period was also characterized by a high number of political exiles. Finally, I chose the most recent historical moment of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century due to the unprecedented growth of Dominicans emigrating abroad. This time, however, the majority of migrants are motivated by the country's faltering economy, rather than by

political persecution. This is not to say there were not economically motivated migrants during the earlier historical moments. However, these earlier migrants did not challenge the nation's cohesion to same extent as today's migrants.

The texts analyzed, which include women's literature, novels written by men in the diaspora, film, and music, are either written during or reflect on these historical moments. Most of them also disrupt so-called "foundational fictions" through their emphases on different kinds of geographic displacements like migration, exile, and diaspora.¹² These texts also have a transnational (i.e., beyond borders) vision stemming either from direct experience with geographic displacement or from the authors' tenuous relationship with the homeland. Appreciating this literature's transnational context requires that I use an interdisciplinary, heterogeneous approach, which includes close-reading analysis of primary texts anchored by social science, history, and theoretical scholarship.¹³ I apply this interdisciplinary perspective to fiction and non-fiction literature alike. Research for this dissertation included personal interviews with Dominican writers and scholars such as Aurora Arias (interviewed 2006 and 2007), Lusitania Martínez (2009), Chiqui Vicioso (interviewed 2006 and 2009), Darío Tejada (2006), José Alcántara Almánzar (2006), and Junot Díaz (interviewed 2009). I also include many original translations.

As I mention above, the lack of a proper readership that can comprehend a woman or marginalized writer's message is central to what drives my textual analyses in this dissertation. This idea emerges in the 1879 poem "*Quejas*"/Complaints, in which Ureña beseeches an absent lover to listen to her:

Te vas, y el alma dejas

sumida en amargura, solitaria,
 y mis ardientes quejas,
 y la tímida voz de mi plegaria,
 indiferente y frío
desoyes ¡ay! para tormento mío.
 (*Poesías completas* 159, emphasis mine).

You depart, and you leave my soul
 submerged in bitterness, solitary,
 and my burning complaints,
 and the timid voice of my submission,
 indifferent and cold,
 oh! to my torment *you do not hear*.

My emphasis on the word “*desoyes*” or “you do not hear” is one that I use as a methodological reminder throughout the entire dissertation. Though the narrator here begs an absent beloved, I extend the metaphor to also include an unreceptive audience manifested as a masculinist—though not necessarily male—readership unable to embrace Ureña’s and other Dominican women writers’ whole body of work. Because my emphasis is on understanding how these writers and their works construct, challenge, and interact with shifting notions of national identity, my approach to the fiction and non-fiction writings is to respect the world created in each individual work without overlooking authorial biography and perspective.

Though my dissertation focuses primarily on Dominican and diaspora Dominican literature, it is in conversation with Caribbean, African Diaspora, Migration/Transnational Studies, and Gender Studies. Most crucially, I am motivated by the need to recognize that gender has been an important ingredient in the construction of national and regional identity, and, in so doing, to centralize it in scholarship. This dissertation builds on a vibrant tradition by authors such as Maryse Condé, Myriam

Chancy, Jamaica Kincaid, Chiqui Vicioso, Daisy Cocco de Filippis, Julia Alvarez, Meredith Gadsby, Catharina Vallejo, Teresita Martínez-Vergne, among several others. Also important are the edited anthologies of Caribbean women writers' work, as well as the collections of essays that exemplify the reliance of regional and national identity on gender.¹⁴ This rich intellectual tradition has grown alongside canonical masculinist works whose attempts to be generalist have often resulted in the exclusion of women's works and contributions to the region's history.

For instance, the curiously repetitive titles of some well-known Caribbean scholarship evokes the extent to which Caribbean history has been primarily understood as the passing of the torch from one male leader to the next. Three important Caribbean intellectuals, Eric Williams, Juan Bosch, and C.L.R. James, have titled their Caribbean studies *From Columbus to Castro* (1970), *De Cristóbal Colón a Fidel Castro* (1970), and "From Touissant L'Ouverture to Fidel Castro" (1963), respectively. One could also include Carlos Márquez Sterling's *Historia de Cuba, desde Cristóbal Colón a Fidel Castro* (1969), Louise L. Cripps' *The Spanish Caribbean, from Columbus to Castro* (1979), Jaime Suchlicki's *Cuba: From Columbus to Castro* (1974), and Alan Twigg's *Cuba: A Concise History for Travelers: From Christopher Columbus, 1492, to Fidel Castro, 2000* (2000). Not surprisingly, other major histories of the Caribbean—including intellectual histories such as Gordon K. Lewis' *Main Currents in Caribbean Thought: The Historical Evolution of Caribbean Society in Its Ideological Aspects, 1492-1900* (1983) and Silvio Torres-Saillant's *An Intellectual History of the Caribbean* (2006)—barely glance at the work of Caribbean women intellectuals and historical figures, and not because they do not exist.

With some key exceptions, when standard Caribbean intellectual production considers gender at all, it is through a tokenistic attempt at representation. The two-volume series *Intellectuals in the Twentieth-century Caribbean* (1992), which encompassed the Hispanophone, Francophone and Anglophone Caribbean within its purview, did not include a single woman intellectual. In regards to this absence, the Preface states: “What may seem a major and more serious omission is any consideration of the increasingly important contribution of women both in public life and as creative artists and writers reflected in the fact that over 50 per cent of student enrollments at UWI [University of the West Indies] now consist of women; however, the omission was not intentional” (xiv). Though there have been more recent considerations of Caribbean literature and culture that include women, they are not generalist and are usually dedicated only to women.

When considering how women’s intellectual, cultural, and political contributions have been misunderstood or entirely omitted from Dominican scholarship and literary anthologies, one need only think of Salomé Ureña. As I mention in chapter one, several men of letters, including Ureña’s illustrious son Pedro Henríquez Ureña, trivialized her intimate poetry, describing it as frivolous. Despite this misreading, the enduring power of her work stems partly from the fact that she became one of the most prominent voices during a time when Dominican national identity was under constant scrutiny. However, the kind of misunderstanding that Ureña’s work endures is not equivalent to the erasure that more commonly affects Dominican women’s work. It is alarming that a fairly comprehensive text like Franklin Franco Pichardo’s *El pensamiento dominicano 1780-1940* (2001) also does not include a single woman. Actually, Franco Pichardo does

include a brief allusion to one woman: “. . . let us first examine the ideas of Francisco Henríquez y Carvajal: lawyer and doctor who studied in Paris, France, and who was also the husband of our poetess, Salomé Ureña” (248-9).¹⁵ This comprises the book’s sole mention of a woman. Franco Pichardo dedicates a section of his study to the Puerto Rican intellectual Eugenio María de Hostos, whose influence fueled secular education in the Dominican Republic (*El pensamiento dominicano* 164). Nevertheless, he does not seize the opportunity to mention that Hostos and Ureña worked closely together to further their goals.¹⁶ Franco Pichardo also had opportunities to mention some of the women who had leading roles in the several wars and movements in the years that he covers.¹⁷ This neat avoidance of gender contrasts with the author’s sophisticated construction of a historiography that is sensitive to the ways in which race and class have been used to oppress in the Dominican context. This is just one example out of the many scholarly Dominican studies that could be similarly described.

Following several generations of Caribbean(ist) women writers and scholars, I build a feminist re-reading of traditional and non-traditional Dominican national discourses in the vein of Jean Franco’s influential *Plotting Women: Gender & Representation in Mexico* (1989). However, my dissertation shifts Franco’s focus on the frustrated and failed attempts of women to plot themselves by affirming that women like Ureña have helped define even the most canonical versions of Dominican national identity. The problem is that their work has been misunderstood. Guadeloupean novelist and scholar Maryse Condé has also been instructive to my work in relation to gender. In *La parole des femmes* (1979), she suggests that Caribbean women’s literature can offer a more holistic understanding of Caribbean society: “[T]his female literature has social

content that goes beyond the anecdotal nature of the author. It is situated at the heart of more general social concerns” (39).¹⁸ Also inspiring to my theoretical framework is Michelle M. Wright’s consideration of the patriarchal underpinnings of black nationalism and how black women intellectuals have helped transform the conversation (*Becoming Black*). Finally, I extend Doris Sommer’s and Benedict Anderson’s projects about how the nation “imagined” and forged nationhood through literature and the media, among other cultural texts and practices, by also highlighting migration and exile in national discourses. Unlike Sommer, who focuses on various kinds of unions and usurpations in Dominican novels, I interpret the country’s and its diaspora’s literature through two absences: the absence of many Dominicans from the homeland and a missing proper readership. The reason for this difference might stem partly from the fact that land in the Dominican Republic was not privatized to the extent that it was in other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean and, as such, the allegory of a masculine citizenry seeking and protecting ownership of the feminized land did not have the same kinds of repercussions.

Historical Context

Since my literary analyses are underpinned by their socio-historical contexts, a grasp of the three relevant moments in Dominican history is critical to understanding the texts under consideration. I begin with the late nineteenth century, which was a defining moment for the young Dominican nation. It had gained its independence from Jean Pierre Boyer’s Haitian government in 1844, and from Spain in 1865 after four years of the country’s annexation to its original “motherland.”¹⁹ After the founding of the new

nation called the Dominican Republic in 1844, the rest of the nineteenth century was a constant political struggle with frequent civil wars between several factions. This was an era of *caudillo* government, in which regional leaders fought for power. Broadly sketched, while one group wanted to annex the new country to a foreign power like Spain or the US, the other group wanted to maintain the nation's independence. During the nation's early years, the first group was spearheaded by General Pedro Santana, who succeeded in violently repressing the second group represented by the likes of the pro-independence hero and Founding Father Juan Pablo Duarte.²⁰ Santana's efforts further prevailed when the country was annexed to Spain between 1861 and 1865.

The late nineteenth century also saw the rise of nationalist letters, culture, and politics that sought to define Dominican national identity. Unlike in the rest of Latin America, where national romances flourished directly after independence followed by a period of "dour positivism" (Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* 23), these literary genres overlapped in the Dominican context. While a romantic approach to literature and culture centralized the individual, a positivist and/or Liberal one emphasized society and its progress through education, scientific rigor and politics. Positivism in the Dominican Republic flowered precisely at the moment that Manuel de Jesús Galván published the complete version of the nation's foremost national romance or foundational fiction, *Enriquillo* (1882)²¹ and, as scholar Catharina Vallejo points out, Salomé Ureña's poetry is a window into how positivism and romance overlapped and intersected in the 1870s and 1880s Dominican Republic. Writers like Galván and Ureña also produced texts that solidified the country's already elaborated *indigenista* literature.²² Ureña, for instance, provided a heroic history to the new nation and implicitly argued for its independence in

her epic indigenista poem entitled “Anacanoa” after the indigenous rebel queen. This literature connected the new national identity to the brave *taínos* who had perished in the late fifteenth- and sixteenth century. In unearthing this glorious and tragic past, these writers’ vision of the nation elided most Dominicans’ African ancestry entirely.

Moreover, since political instability prompted the exile of many individuals, Ureña’s complex body of work also reveals the extent to which she was inspired by these men. As I intimated earlier, the prevalence of exile as a mode of escaping political persecution in both Dominican and Caribbean contexts render the region unique at least in the Americas, if not the world. This singularity could be ascribed to several factors: the region’s geographic placement as an important trade and cultural crossroads; its many colonizing and imperial powers; and the characteristic of relatively small islands with their dearth of safe hiding places compared with its continental counterparts. This is not an exhaustive list of potential reasons behind Caribbean subjects’ historical propensity for migration and exile, but the fact that geographical displacement is a defining characteristic of Caribbean subjectivity is undeniable.

Often central actors of historical change, Dominican men like Juan Pablo Duarte and Gregorio Luperón, to name just two, are considered patriots whose exiles were motivated by the political machinations of which they were part.²³ Poems such as Salomé Ureña’s “*Recuerdos a un proscrito*”/Best Wishes to An Exile (1872) record empathy for the exiles as well as an implicated desire for them, the nation’s most illustrious men, to return:

. . . Así, aunque de otras playas jamás me vi en la arena
ni de otros horizontes las líneas contemplé,
concibo del proscrito la abrumadora pena . . .

. . . In that way, though I never saw myself on the sands of other beaches
 nor did I contemplate the line of other horizons,
 I imagine the exiled person's overwhelming sadness . . .
 (*Poesías Completas* 75).

This excerpt encapsulates the sense that exile pervaded much of Ureña's poetry and life, despite the fact that she never left her Dominican homeland. The poem also reflects a rarely discussed element of Dominican national identity: the nation's co-existence with, perhaps even dependence on, its exiles and emigrants.

The connection between literature and politics throughout Latin America and the Caribbean still persists but in the Dominican Republic of the mid-to-late nineteenth-century moment it cannot be overstated.²⁴ Puerto Rican exile Eugenio María de Hostos spearheaded the positivist movement in the country with the help of Ureña and her husband Francisco Henríquez y Carvajal. They were responsible for the institutionalization of secular education in Santo Domingo; their efforts led to the increase in the number of accredited teachers, both men and women, who then opened schools all over the country. This attention to "progress" and all that it meant became a central part of national governance.²⁵ There are more examples of how intimately involved Ureña and her husband were with politicians. For instance, while studying medicine at the University of Paris, Ulises Heureaux Jr., the son of President Ulises Heureaux, was under the tutelage of Ureña's husband starting in 1887 (*Epistolario* 65). This proves that the Henríquez Ureña household and Ulises Heureaux, the man who ended up betraying Ureña's and others' positivist ideals to become a ruthless dictator, were at one point working together at nation-building. At the other ideological end,

Galván was a “functionary in the service of the annexationists” (Franco Pichardo, *El pensamiento dominicano* 215).²⁶ Considering his now canonical, indigenista novel *Enriquillo*’s overall elision of the nation’s African ancestry, this preference of Spanish annexation over independence—and what seemed to Galván a vulnerability to Haitian “imperialism”—makes sense.

The late nineteenth-century political instability and decentralization of the government persisted into the early twentieth century. US investment in the region had begun to grow in earnest in the late nineteenth century, which led to the birth of the true sugar plantation economy in the country.²⁷ The country’s debt to the US also rose astronomically during this period and in the early twentieth century. The US seized the instability to occupy the nation from 1916 to 1924. Besides increasing Dominican foreign debt and improving the infrastructure of the nation, the occupying power ensured its legacy through the installation of an US Marine-trained army. This is the same army that would provide the perfect vehicle for an ambitious young man from the small town of San Cristóbal to rise to power: Rafael Leónidas Trujillo.

Trujillo’s dictatorship (1930-1961) took on the role that the US had of being the nation’s iron-fisted patriarch. He rose to power through astuteness, mischief, blackmail, murder, and deceit.²⁸ The latter was particularly evident when he toppled the physically ill President Horacio Vázquez, who had believed Trujillo’s promises of alliance when, in fact, the soon-to-be dictator was busy turning important figures in the government against Vázquez. This was only the beginning of Trujillo’s crusade to centralize power in his seat in Santo Domingo and to nationalize the entire country’s cultural identity. The task was especially challenging in the geographically remote (from the capital), fairly

independent regions bordering Haiti where many Dominicans and Haitians had been leading trans-border lives for centuries.

Post-independence, dictatorships proliferated in the Caribbean and Latin American region with the support of a Communist-phobic US. This often resulted in national and regional traumas that have inspired a large body of fiction and non-fiction literature. Twentieth-century Haitian literature is particularly interesting to juxtapose with Dominican literature in its exploration of the patriarchal underpinnings of its dictatorships. Here, I allude to works like Marie Chauvet's *Amour, colère et folie* (1968; *Love, Anger, Madness*, 2009), Dany Laferrière's *Le goût des jeunes filles* (1992; *Dining with the Dictator*, 1994), Edwidge Danticat's *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994), and Émile Ollivier's *Mère-solitude* (1983; *Mother Solitude*, 1989).²⁹ The Trujillo regime has also been a rich source of material for scholars, writers and artists. The main reason for this is that Trujillo's long-term power was so unprecedented, and his legacy so enduring, that it continues to baffle and astound people fifty years after his assassination. The haunting of the collective Dominican psyche is evident from the sheer proliferation of "tell-alls" about the glamorous Trujillo children and the jet-setting playboy Porfirio Rubirosa,³⁰ novels written both within and outside the island by both Dominicans and non-Dominicans, scholarship dedicated to the study of the era, and the recent heated responses to the publication of two memoirs by Rafael Trujillo's descendants Angelita and Aída Trujillo. This trauma and persistent hatred stems from the repercussions and echoes of the dictator's and his minion's torture, murder, surveillance, and extreme repression of countless of Dominicans.

During Trujillo's dictatorship, a sizable number of Dominicans managed to escape the country and often formed dissident communities in places like the US, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Venezuela. Like before, some of these exiles were key political actors.³¹ Poets like Pedro Mir, who was named National Poet by the National Congress in 1982, wrote poems from exile that would later become canonical. For instance, "*Hay un país en el mundo*"/There is a Country in the World implicitly decries the unpatriotic appropriation of land by Trujillo through the image of the sugar mill and the rhythm of the merengue. Women's political and cultural contributions during this era have been understudied; however, a recent text by Puerto Rican scholar Myrna Herrera Mora studies the lives and works of three women exiled in Puerto Rico during the Trujillo dictatorship.³²

Indeed, Trujillo's social, geographic, and historical reach were and are, in one word, inescapable.³³ Part of the reason for this enduring fascination with Trujillo is the sense that it is an epoch that has yet to be dealt with. His thirty-year regime permeated all levels of the social hierarchy, affecting people's quotidian and family practices. In May of 2011, soon before the fiftieth anniversary of Trujillo's assassination, a Dominican historian publicly proclaimed that Trujillo "had to be killed again" in the Dominican imaginary ("*Estima que a Trujillo*"). His regime is a historical trauma that perpetually re-emerges in the present in various guises. As in the literature of other Latin American nations dealing with the aftermath and often the perpetuation of dictatorships, genocides, and civil wars, Dominican writers have taken up the challenge of retelling the history of the era.

The first lasting—too lasting to be democratic—presidency following the *trujillato* was that of Trujillo's long-term aide, Joaquín Balaguer. Excluding his time as Trujillo's puppet president from 1960 to 1962, the years of his mandate were 1966-1978 and 1986-1996. Many have maintained that the Balaguer regime was simply a form of neo-*trujillismo*.³⁴ For instance, his brutal repression of any media dissent, which included the murders and “disappearances” of prominent journalists, is well known.

The country's political instability and economic volatility, as well as the US Immigration Act of 1965, which eased immigration quotas, fueled mass emigrations. In the 1970s, partly during Balaguer's first long presidency, the agriculture sector collapsed. This was a huge problem in a country whose economy had, from the late nineteenth-century, relied on “exports of sugar, cacao, and...coffee” (Aparicio 56, 59). Those who were most affected by the collapse of the export agriculture economy were generally less educated or uneducated and from rural areas. This led, in great part, to the vast rural-to-urban and transnational migrations of the late twentieth century.

Especially during in the 1980s and 1990s, an unprecedented number of Dominicans of all classes, educational backgrounds, and political motivations began to leave the Dominican Republic and settle in places like New York, Florida, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, Madrid, and Amsterdam, to name a few spots in the Dominican diaspora.³⁵ Several scholars have proven that continued communication between island Dominicans and their loved ones abroad remains strong.³⁶ They assert that it is more accurate to describe Dominicans living in the US or elsewhere as “transmigrants” or “transnational subjects,” in which even Dominicans who return to the homeland “must shuttle between the Dominican Republic and low-wage jobs in New York to maintain their middle-class

lifestyle at home” (Grasmuck and Pessar 17).³⁷ According to recent figures, there are well over a million Dominicans and people with Dominican ancestry living outside of the Dominican Republic (Nyberg Sorensen), including 1.4 million people “of Dominican origin” in the US alone according to the 2010 census (Ennis, Ríos-Vargas, and Albert 3). This fact renders it impossible to clearly delineate where Dominicanness begins and ends geographically and ideologically. As is evident in Dominican cultural production that describes the process of migration, cultural shock, adaptation, assimilation, rejection, oppression, and homesickness (especially in popular music),³⁸ Dominican national identity is in the midst of re-inventing itself. In other words, the current moment is one that prompts many intellectuals, writers and artists to actively consider what it means to be Dominican or to describe a “Dominican” experience.

The most recent emigration of Dominicans includes a high number of working-class women responsible for their families’ income, which upsets the social order touted in traditional discourses. For instance, a study of Dominican women residing in New York City in the early 1990s showed that “becoming part of a transnational cheap labor force implies some sacrifices on the part of women, such as being separated from their families . . . and assuming individual responsibility for the well-being of entire families that are spread between two separate nations” (Weyland, “Dominican Women” 155). Unlike the earlier masculinized and venerated political exiles,³⁸ recent migrations have inspired classist and sexist literature by the mainstream media and some intellectual ideologues.³⁹ As scholars like Silvio Torres-Saillant have signaled, this scorn stems from the accusatory element of a migration that results from the economic and social inadequacy of the nation.⁴⁰ According to Sommer, national fictions sought to unite

warring factions to create an elite that would solidify in the late nineteenth century and which left little room for the masses. In a sense, the vast emigrations of the late twentieth century to places like North America and Europe betray the discrepancies between inclusive populist fiction (i.e. national romances) and the inability or unwillingness of the nation-state to provide for its *pueblo*. Considering the economic dependence of many island Dominicans on their relatives abroad, the issue reflects the conflicting and contradictory interests of maintaining an insular idea of Dominicaness that is patriarchal at its root vis-à-vis a very real economic reliance on a migratory population that has been shown to be greatly composed of women workers.

It is not only the number of women who migrate, but how the migration of entire families affects the dynamics of the household. Sherri Grasmuck and Patricia R. Pessar's study of fifty-five migrant households in New York revealed that "[a]s women have come to demonstrate their capacity to share material responsibility with men on more or less equal terms, they have begun to expect to be co-partners in heading the household" (*Between Two Islands* 151). Migrant women's new expectations may cause friction within the family and in larger communal and societal contexts. Anthropologist Steven Gregory's study of Boca Chica and Andrés, two contiguous, predominantly working-class towns that have become tourist spots, includes an incident at a community meeting that highlights the tension caused by clashing expectations. At this meeting, a local man is angered by a returning migrant woman's opinion that Mother's Day gifts at the town festivities should be handed out to all the women—even non-mothers—who were active in community affairs, thereby challenging the assumption that adult women without children have no communal value. Gregory records the man's response as: "When

women go over there [i.e. abroad], they change... They become feminists. And when they return here, they want everything to change. Everything” (78). Thus, this anecdote demonstrates that the fear of “foreign” influence corrupting what are presumed to be “traditional” Dominican social and family values is not only enacted within and promoted by elite circles, but also reflects a cross-class ideological agreement based on the marginalization of racialized working-class women whose labor helps support the Dominican and even global economies. Gregory’s anecdote reflects how a disdain and suspicion of Dominican women who have lived or continue to live outside the Dominican Republic is inextricably connected to the country’s patriarchal conceptions of sexuality and gender.

However, the migrant reality of many working-class women has also inspired a surge of artistic and literary work by Dominicans and non-Dominicans reflecting on these Dominican migrant women’s experiences. Here I include Aurora Arias’ short story “Travesía” (2007); Chiqui Vicioso’s essay “Dominicanyorkness: A Metropolitan Discovery of the Triangle” (1998);⁴¹ Maritza Loida Pérez’s novel *Geographies of Home* (1999); Angie Cruz’s novel *Soledad* (2001); Junot Díaz’s novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007);⁴² Josefina Báez’s performance theatre text *Levente no. Yolayorkdominicanyork* (2007); the Spanish films *Princesas* (2004) and *Flores de otro mundo* (2005); the documentaries *My American Girls* (2001) and *De Welfare no Vive Nadie: Dominican Women in New York* (1994); Nicole Sánchez’s transnational photographic exhibit “Mujer” (2008);⁴³ and Karin Weyland’s photographic essay “Dominicanness at the Crossroads: Surviving the Translocal-global Village” (1999). This list, which is not exhaustive, provides a sense of the extent to which women’s

migrant experiences have entered a transnational, Dominican and non-Dominican cultural imaginary.

Chapter Breakdown

Each chapter elaborates on a different intersection between gender, geographic displacement, race, class, and national ideologies. The first chapter sets up the larger themes in the rest of the dissertation by focusing on the figure of Salomé Ureña and the way that this influential nineteenth-century Dominican's life and work informs understandings of exile from the homeland's perspective. Chapter one also considers women writers' roles in constructing the national fictions of the Dominican Republic. I explore how several kinds of absences—including the absence of a readership that can value Dominican women's work—inspire late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century writers Julia Alvarez and Sherezada (Chiqui) Vicioso to write fictional biographies of Salomé Ureña. I argue that Ureña's, Vicioso's and Alvarez's texts together form a matrilineal thread based on the tales that women tell each other and that defies the traditional "national romance." While these traditional national romances domesticate the political through the allegory of the nation as a marriage between the woman/Land and the man/People, this matrilineal genealogy indicates that women writers' relationship to the political sphere is rendered problematic by patriarchal discourses. Hence, their writings are not just aesthetic versions of how the two spheres intersect, but real material examinations of the fraught nature of this connection.

Chapter two extends this theme of the entanglement between the two spheres with drastically different results. Here, I propose that three narratives authored by three

female Trujillo descendants domesticate the dictator, rendering him a kindly *pater familias* at the cost of diminishing his exorbitant power as “father of the nation.” Because of the inaccuracy of this version of history, these memoirs rely on illogical erasures and outright falsehoods that echo an older tradition of elision in Dominican letters with *Enriquillo* at its peak. Moreover, I argue that the three memoirs desexualized Trujillo as the paternal figure and, as such, deflate the machismo that drove his regime, while emphasizing his righteous and all-knowing virility.⁴⁴ The second chapter also elaborates on chapter one’s focus on how geographically displaced women shape national discourses. Rather than joining their voices in the matrilineal conversation charted in chapter one, the vision evoked by these three exiled Trujillo descendants idealizes a patriarchal model of national narratives. Despite these faults, the chapter attempts to see the value in these narratives by recalling Maryse Condé’s challenge to find lessons in Caribbean women’s non-subversive literature.

At the other end of the ideological spectrum are the novels analyzed in chapter three, which demonstrate that Trujillo’s power was so great that tales surrounding his persona reached supernatural proportions. Written in the US by Dominican-born authors, Junot Díaz’s *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* and Viriato Sención’s *They Forged the Signature of God* narrate the tales of Dominican men who have been excluded from recent official histories. As I have already enumerated, these official histories are, almost without exception, male-centric, but the masculinity that they prize is far from inclusive. I unravel a hyper-masculine ethos represented by Trujillo that oppresses women and other non-ideal Dominican subjects, including men who are not considered masculine enough. This hyper-masculinity manifests itself in the language of magic and the occult

that the Dominican masses use(d) to comprehend high concentrations of political power in the body of a single leader like Trujillo. Chapter three also adds to the previous chapters' explorations of how diaspora and exiled Dominicans challenge, transform, or perpetuate the nation's racist, sexist, and classist ideologies through an emphasis on the novels' transnational perspectives.

The thread between homeland and diaspora is the central focus of chapter four through its analysis of the diverse ways in which the broad term "transnationalism" operates in literature by the aforementioned Vicioso, Aurora Arias, and Rita Indiana Hernández. I argue that this twenty-first-century fiction presents a society that, though "globalized," maintains the patriarchal conventions that were codified and canonized as official Dominican identity in the late nineteenth century. Rather than contradicting the argument that the idea of the Dominican nation has discursively relied on its exiles, it confirms that this transnational vision coexisted and was woven into patriarchal ideology. However, there are different kinds of transnationalism; while some transnational experiences and practices strengthen traditional and patriarchal discourses, others threaten them. Indeed, these threatening kinds of transnationalism are considered as such because they seek to forge unofficial affiliations that go against sexist and racist national ideologies. These transnational practices have the power to subvert the unequal empire-colony relationship as well as the official nation-states formed after independence in the Caribbean. Further, these affiliations and their related identities and practices are desirable to diaspora Dominicans who embrace the larger African Diaspora. In the case of Rita Indiana Hernández's novel *Papi*, also analyzed in chapter four, these transnational practices can additionally be seen as transforming the nation into a richly diverse cultural

space that is artistically inspiring and that counters static versions of Dominican national identity.

Finally, the conclusion meditates on how the current global market creates or forecloses different spaces for the publication and dissemination of Dominican women's literature. It is an appropriate way to end a dissertation that begins with the first chapter's study of the place and value of Salomé Ureña's work within Dominican and trans-American frameworks.

¹ In this dissertation, all translations are my own unless otherwise specified in the notes or bibliography.

² Ana J. Puello, reading the speech on behalf of the group, clearly delineates how women's education fits within the larger goals of national progress: "Women's influence in society is both direct and indirect. It is direct because it is the woman who must direct children's first steps of intelligence and heart; it is indirect in that, despite her lack of official access to public matters or the right to vote, her voice can always be heard and is part of that powerful strength called public opinion. Well, no matter how she influences society, the point is that the better her education, the better her influence" (Rodríguez Demorizi 159). The original text states: "La influencia de la mujer en la sociedad es directa e indirecta. Directa, porque ella es la que debe dirigir los primeros pasos de la inteligencia y el corazón infantiles; indirecta, porque por mucho que en los asuntos públicos no tenga acceso oficial o legal el voto de la mujer, su voz siempre se deja oír y forma parte de esa fuerza poderosa que se llama opinión pública. Pues bien, de uno u otro modo que influya, el caso es que influirá tanto mejor, cuanto mejor sea su educación."

³ The original text states: "Por eso al formarse madres ilustradas debe dárseles también religión y moral ilustradas, pues de lo contrario o desaparecen ambas cosas del hogar o la mujer seguirá, en esos ramos de la educación los vicios que las mil preocupaciones de la ignorancia tienen arraigados profundamente en ciertas esferas sociales."

⁴ The original text states: "ejercicios sobre historia sagrada."

⁵ This is not to say that their educational efforts were entirely secular, for the culture of the capital's elite at the time required a rigorous connection to the Catholic Church in daily life if not in actual faith.

⁶ She was named the Poeta Nacional by a "basically masculine association, the Society of Friends of the Country" (Ricardo 124). The original text states: "asociación básicamente masculina, la Sociedad de Amigos del País."

⁷ For more on how gender roles were legally enforced in Santo Domingo towards the end of Salomé Ureña's life and the early twentieth century, see Martínez-Vergne's *Nation & Citizen*.

⁸ It is important to note that the history of Mexican migration to the US is much longer than Dominican migration and its characteristics have undergone various transformations. For instance, during the first half of the twentieth century, Mexican migrants and Mexicans whose families had always resided in what became US territory embraced the term Mexican-American with its concomitant acceptance of a US melting-pot narrative and the desire for integration into the larger, mainstream society. Efforts during the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s transformed the previously pejorative term "Chicano" into a mark of pride. See Armando Rendón's *Chicano Manifesto* (1971).

⁹ Refer to Ana Aparicio's *Dominican-Americans and the Politics of Empowerment* (2006) and Lisa D. McGill's *Constructing Black Selves: Caribbean American Narratives and the Second Generation* (2005).

¹⁰ For more on how diaspora Dominicans have transformed the Dominican national cultural and social landscape, see Sylvio Torres-Saillant's essay "El retorno de las yolas" in *El retorno de las yolas*.

¹¹ Another example of the complexity of diaspora subjectivity is Edwidge Danticat's reflections on being called a dyaspora, which in Haiti refers to any diaspora Haitian (*Create Dangerously* 49). She writes about the instances in which she has been the object of the term's interpellation:

I meant to recall some lighter experiences of being startled in the Haitian capital or in the provinces when a stranger who wanted to catch my attention would call out, 'Dyaspora!' as though it were a title like Miss, Ms., Mademoiselle, or Madame. I meant to recall conversations or debates in restaurants, at parties, or at public gatherings where members of the dyaspora would be classified—justifiably or not—as arrogant, insensitive, overbearing, and pretentious people who were eager to reap the benefits of good jobs and political positions in times of stability in a country that they'd fled and stayed way from during good times (50).

Danticat admits to feelings of guilt though she had fled at age 12 during a dictatorship “that had forced thousands to choose between exile or death (50). This mixture of guilt, inadequacy, privilege, and alienation emerges most tragically when Danticat visits a devastated Haiti after the earthquake of January 12, 2010. One of her cousins—nicknamed Naomi Campbell for her beauty—asks Danticat to help her get out of Haiti and Danticat thinks: “NC [Naomi Campbell], like many of my family members in Haiti, has always overestimated my ability to do things like this, to get people out of bad situations. I hope at that moment that she is right. I hope I can help. I have sometimes succeeded in helping, but mostly I have failed. Case in point: my elderly uncle died trying to enter the United States. I could not save him” (169). Despite her American citizenship, Danticat cannot help her loved ones as much as she and they would like her to. I am not juxtaposing diaspora Haitians' likely desire to be close to their loved ones during and after the earthquake with the suffering of the Haitians who were on the ground during this time. With this in mind, a brief point to reiterate is the element of alienation in diaspora subjectivity. This notion is evident in Danticat's words quoted above, as well as when she discusses the ways in which her compatriots accuse her of deserting her country at age twelve.

¹² In this dissertation, I do not discuss leisure travel, which is common to the Dominican middle and upper classes. This kind of geographic movement is not displacement.

¹³ Here, I allude to Dominicanist, Caribbeanist, and more general works alike. For Dominicanist scholarship, see Stephen Gregory's *The Devil Behind the Mirror: Globalization and Politics in the Dominican Republic* (2007), Lauren Derby's *The Dictator's Seduction: Politics and the Popular Imagination in the Era of Trujillo* (2009), Ginetta E. B. Candelario's *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Racial Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops* (2007), Frank Moya Pons' *Dominican Republic: A National History* (1995), and Teresita Martínez-Vergne's *Nation and Citizen in the Dominican Republic, 1880-1916* (2005). For Caribbeanist or non-Dominican Caribbean scholarship, see Amalia Cabezas' *Economies of Desire: Sex and Tourism in Cuba and the Dominican Republic* (2009), Michel-Rolph Trouillot's *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Edouard Glissant's *Caribbean Discourse* (1981), and Silvio Torres Saillant's *An Intellectual History of the Caribbean* (2005). For more general scholarship related to this dissertation, see Arjun Appadurai's *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (1996), Michelle M. Wright's *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora* (2004), and Jean Franco's *Plotting Women: Gender and Representation in Mexico* (1989). This is only a limited selection.

¹⁴ Some examples include: Meredith Gadsby's *Sucking Salt: Caribbean Women Writers, Migration, and Survival* (2006); Emilia Ippolito's *Caribbean Women Writers: Identity and Gender* (2000); Helen Scott's *Caribbean Women Writers and Globalization: Fictions of Independence* (2006); Yolanda Ricardo's *La Resistencia En Las Antillas Tiene Rostro De Mujer/ Resistance in the Caribbean Has a Women's Visage* (2004); *Blue Latitudes: Caribbean Women Writers at Home and Abroad* (2006), a compilation of short stories; and Myriam J.A. Chancy's *Framing Silence: Revolutionary Novels by Haitian Women* (1997) and *Searching for Safe Spaces: Afro-Caribbean Women Writers in Exile* (1997). The sheer number of analytical texts and anthologies with the phrase “Caribbean women writers” in the title shows that, indeed, Caribbean women writers and intellectuals actually exist and they have a lot to say about women's place in the region's letters.

¹⁵ The original text states: “. . . examinaremos, en primer lugar, las ideas de Francisco Henríquez y Carvajal: abogado y médico, graduado en París, Francia; quien fuera, además esposo de nuestra poetisa Salomé Ureña.”

¹⁶ For proof of Ureña's key role securing the upkeep of her school, see some of her correspondence with local officials in the first volume of the Henríquez family *Epistolario* (1996).

¹⁷ For some examples, see Daisy Cocco-DeFilippis' *Documents of Dissidence: Selected Writings of Dominican Women* (2000) and Yolanda Ricardo's *La Resistencia En Las Antillas Tiene Rostro De Mujer* (2004).

¹⁸ The original text states: "[C]ette littérature féminine a un contenu social que dépasse le propos apparemment anecdotique de tel ou tel écrivain. Elle se situe au coeur des préoccupations de l'ensemble de la société."

¹⁹ Dominicans celebrate Independence Day on February 27, marking the end of Haitian rule in 1844, as well as "Día de la Restauración" or "Day of Restoration" on August 16, commemorating the end of Spanish annexation in 1865.

²⁰ Juan Pablo Duarte (1813-1876) was the leader of La Trinitaria, the secret society that would conspire against Haitian rule beginning in 1838.

²¹ An incomplete version of the novel was published in 1879. Mythologizing at the service of nationalism was central to Manuel de Jesús Galván's "national romance" *Enriquillo* (1882), which features Anacaona as a martyr who would perish at the hands of the evil Spanish governor Nicolás de Ovando. Galván's romance, which was published two years after Ureña's indigenista poem "Anacaona," is the literary culmination of an era when literature's importance stemmed from its ability to invent a history that would strengthen national unity against both the constant and violent changes of government and the threat of island unification under the Haitians. In this indigenista text, Spain usurps Haiti—and its concomitant symbolic blackness—as the central enemy of the Dominican nation. As Sybille Fischer argues, "Indigenismo thus allows for a distinctively Dominican interpellation while also strengthening the role of Spain in the Dominican cultural imaginary. In this sense, indigenismo is a form of Hispanism—most certainly not a rejection of Spain, as some literary critics have argued" (*Modernity Disavowed* 163). In this manner, *Enriquillo* marks the Dominican Republic as just another Latin American country that survived the struggle against Spanish colonialism, and not as a nation with a much more complicated colonial history with various independences from several imperial "oppressors."

²² According to Sybille Fischer, "At the time that Galván was writing, the literary *indigenista* movement was already fully formed, had developed its set of favored characters, along with canonical themes and plots, and constituted itself as 'the first truly Dominican national literature'" (*Modernity Disavowed* 155-6).

²³ Gregorio Luperón (1839-1897) was an important military and liberal leader during the War of Restoration and was the president of the country in 1879-1880. For other examples of key historical protagonists who were exiled at some point, refer to Franklin Franco's *El pensamiento dominicano* (2001).

²⁴ Two examples include Peruvian writer and Nobel Laureate Mario Vargas Llosa's unsuccessful bid for his country's presidency in 1990 and Martinican poet and scholar Aimé Césaire's decades-long political career in the late twentieth century.

²⁵ According to Teresita Martínez-Vergne:

Already they [political thinkers] had mapped out the blueprint for the island's progress and had professed their allegiance to modern agricultural techniques, secular education, and political participation as the cornerstones of the new nation. Espousing Liberal principles like their precursors in the last twenty years, these advocates of reform endeavored to develop the notion of hardworking, peaceful, voting citizens as the key to the future. Progress, as they envisioned it, was the concerted effort of a political and intellectual elite, with regulated input from common people (1).

²⁶ The original text states: "funcionario al servicio de los anexionistas."

²⁷ Unlike other Caribbean colonies, especially the French Saint-Domingue to the West of the island (which had become French in the late seventeenth century), Santo Domingo's economy was not based on the plantation model until the late nineteenth century. Up to then, it was an impoverished colony with a scant population and its socio-racial hierarchies differed from those of neighboring plantation-based societies.

²⁸ For more information on Trujillo's takeover, consult Juan Daniel Balcácer's *Trujillo: El tiranicidio de 1961* (2006) and Euclides Félix Gutiérrez's *Trujillo: Monarca sin corona* (2008).

²⁹ This list does not include the scholarship that treats the Duvalier regimes. For instance, see Jana Evans Braziel's *Duvalier's Ghosts: Race, Diaspora, and U.S. Imperialism in Haitian Literatures* (2010), Michel-

Rolph Trouillot's *Haiti, State Against Nation: The Origins and Legacy of Duvalierism* (1990), and Myriam J. A. Chancy's *Framing Silence: Revolutionary Novels Haitian Women* (1997).

³⁰ Porfirio Rubirosa was a handsome polo player who became part of Trujillo's inner circle after he married the latter's first daughter, Flor de Oro. After his divorce, Rubirosa became arguably the world's most famous playboy, jet-setting with, bedding, and marrying the likes of Barbara Hutton, Zsa Zsa Gabor, and Doris Duke. Rubirosa's charisma and charm must have been powerful, for he remained one of Trujillo's most trusted confidantes despite the his failure as a son-in-law.

³¹ One of these exiles was Juan Bosch, who would become the Dominican President for six months in 1963 before the US intervened, deeming his land reform platform too socialist.

³² See *Mujeres dominicanas 1930-1961: Antitrujillistas y exiliadas en Puerto Rico* (2008).

³³ In the geographic sense, Trujillo's reach was most evident when he ordered the assassination of several anti-trujillistas who lived abroad. For some examples, see Robert Crassweller's *Trujillo: The Life and Times of a Caribbean Dictator* (1966; 311-312). Most prominent of these was the case of Basque nationalist and Columbia doctoral student and lecturer Jesús de Galíndez in 1956. Galíndez's crime had been to portray Trujillo and his regime in an unflattering manner in his doctoral thesis. This was especially insulting to Trujillo since the anti-Franco exile had sought asylum in the Dominican Republic from 1939 to 1946. Galíndez's body was never found and the mystery surrounding the plot remains. A less successful instance of Trujillo's geographic power were the attempted assassinations of Venezuelan President Rómulo Betancourt in 1951 and 1960 (Crassweller 312 and 412-3).

³⁴ One important difference is that he was more effective in maintaining a cordial US relationship by encouraging foreign investment.

³⁵ It is important to note that late twentieth-century migrants come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and are not necessarily working-class or dark-skinned. As scholars like Sherri Grasmuck and Patricia R. Pessar note, these migrants are often "members of the petty bourgeoisie and other middle sectors in their own countries, whose first experience of proletarianization has occurred in the United States" (*Between Two Islands* 16). However, the migrations are homogenized as such in popular media discourses.

³⁶ See Sherri Grasmuck's and Patricia R. Pessar's *Between Two Islands: Dominican International Migration* (1991), Juan Flores' *The Diaspora Strikes Back: Caribeño Tales of Learning and Turning* (2008), Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof's *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York After 1950* (2008), Jorge Duany's *Quisqueya on the Hudson: The Transnational Identity of Dominicans in Washington Heights* (1994), Silvio Torres-Saillant's *El retorno de las yolas: Ensayos sobre diáspora, democracia y dominicanidad* (1999), and Karin Weyland's "Dominican Women 'Con un Pie Aquí y Otro Allá': Transnational Practices at the Crossroads of Local/Global Agendas" in Ernesto Sagás' and Sintia E. Molina's *Dominican Migration: Transnational* (2004).

³⁷ In this instance, I borrow Linda Basch's, Nina Glick Schiller's, Cristina Szanton Blanc's definition of transnationalism: "We define 'transnationalism' as the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders. Immigrants who develop and maintain multiple relationships—familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political—that span borders we call 'transmigrants'" (*Nations Unbound* 7).

³⁸ Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel highlights one such song by popular Dominican merengue group los Hermanos Rosario. The song, entitled "Un día en New York" (A Day in New York), has lyrics in "Spanglish," connoting a diaspora, but nonetheless Dominican, identity: "There is a knock on the door, I ask, who is it? / a hurried response: 'the super José.' / He reminds me that the 'heater' [English The original text states] will be turned off at three / that I should be careful with the 'fire escape' [also in English The original text states]" (*Caribe Two Ways* 296). (The original text states: "Tocan la puerta, pregunto ¿quién es? / responde, apurado: 'el super José.' / Me acuerda que el 'heater' lo apagan a las tres / que tenga cuidado con el 'fire escape.'") The song ends with a conversation between two friends, one who is a diaspora Dominican and one who lives on the island. The latter asks "Tell me if you still want to live in New York . . ." ("Dime si todavía tú quieres vivir en Nueva York...") and the former replies "I love the heat of my homeland" ("Me encanta el calor de mi tierra") (296-7). Because the diaspora Dominican sees

the island as “mi tierra,” it is evident that distance has not changed his primary affiliation as a Dominican, despite obvious changes in his surroundings and language.

³⁹ Like most national heroes, the men who endured political exile in the nineteenth century have been Europeanized in the Dominican cultural imaginary through, for instance, statues that often “whiten” the heroes’ features. While these men have been Europeanized in the Dominican imaginary, which is evidence of the nation’s pride, the current migrants are marginalized from a Hispanic ideal of the nation through an emphasis on their working class, black roots, which is, broadly speaking, evidence of the nation’s shame.

⁴⁰ Silvio Torres-Saillant writes of the criminalization of the so-called “dominicanyorks,” who, in fact, “have prevented the disastrous collapse of the national economy” presumably through remittances (*El retorno de las yolas* 47). The original text states: “ha evitado el colapso funesto de la economía nacional.”

⁴¹ I analyze Arias’ short story and Vicioso’s essay in chapter four.

⁴² I analyze *Oscar Wao* in chapter three.

⁴³ Sánchez’s exhibit featured Dominican women who lived in the island and in the diaspora. The exhibit included “125 poster-size photographs, biographical profiles, audio interviews and videos” (“‘Mujer,’ Groundbreaking Photo Exhibit on Dominican Women”). It was displayed at The City College of New York campus in Manhattan and at a park in the Colonial Zone in Santo Domingo.

⁴⁴ Sommer makes a useful distinction in the national romances between good and bad men which roughly correspond to models of masculinity (virility) and machismo, respectively (*Foundational Fictions* 23).

Chapter One

Letters to an Absence: A Dominican Women's Literary Genealogy

Apart from one or two names, the female writers of the West Indies are little known. Their works are forgotten, out of print, misunderstood.¹

Varonil/manly was the word used to praise the verses that would bring fame to Salomé Ureña, a nineteenth-century Dominican poet and pioneer of women's secular education. Her intimate or personal poetry, full of "trivialities" according to at least one critic, would have been relegated to the National Poetess' secondary works were it not for the efforts of two recent writers, Sherezada (Chiqui) Vicioso's play *Salomé U: Cartas a una ausencia*/Salomé U: Letters to an Absence (2001) and Julia Alvarez's novel *In the Name of Salomé* (2000). This chapter constructs an alternative literary genealogy of Dominican letters based on these biographies and Ureña's life and work. The vision of the nation that emerges from the juxtaposition of these women's texts differs markedly from canonical "foundational fictions," to borrow Doris Sommer's influential phrase, whereby the union between the woman-cum-Land and man-cum-Conqueror leads to the founding of the Dominican nation.² The characters' desires in these twenty-first-century works rupture the image of the national family. These texts do not offer a reversal so much as a re-imagining of the national structure in which "[t]he arbiter of this nationalist/naturalist ethic is the bearer of a peculiar, visible invisibility (some call it the phallus)—the familial patriarch" (Bhabha 59). As a traditional literary ideal the nation stands on the shoulders of patriarchs; as a reality, these women writers are able to elaborate on consistent voids in the Dominican nation.

Instead of re-writing the national romance as unification, the works analyzed in this chapter point to a matrilineal thread based on the stories women tell each other and which transcend the traditional binary between domestic and political concerns. Like those canonical foundational fictions, these stories also speak of Dominican national identity; however, theirs is forged through different kinds of absences. It is this motif of absence that inspires late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century writers Alvarez and Vicioso to write fictional biographies of Ureña. The voids addressed in these biographies, as well as in Ureña's poems and personal letters, are those of a missing readership and of a large percentage of Dominicans from a homeland that is politically or economically unable to support its citizens.

In this configuration, the life trajectory of Ureña's daughter, Camila Henríquez Ureña, serves as an appropriate frame for this chapter since the personal, academic, and political unite in her person. Ureña dies when Camila Henríquez is only three years old. In 1904, she migrated with her father, Francisco Henríquez y Carvajal, her father's new wife, and her three older siblings to Santiago de Cuba. After receiving her doctorate in philosophy, letters, and pedagogy from the University of Havana in 1917, she would go on to study and teach in Minnesota and Paris. In 1942, after nearly a decade of living in Cuba, she returned to the United States as Professor of Hispanic Studies at Vassar College, where she remained until 1960. At that point, she returned to Cuba to participate in the Cuban Revolution. She died in the land of her birth, the Dominican Republic. Her trans-American intellectual and political endeavors render her not only a biological daughter to Salomé Ureña, but also, like Vicioso, Alvarez, and other Dominican women writers and scholars, an ideological daughter. In particular, her essay

“The Letter as an Expression of Feminine Literary Form” displays her place within this Dominican feminine genealogy, as I demonstrate later in this chapter.

I chose Salomé Ureña and her writings as the center of my analysis because she is considered one of the Dominican Republic’s greatest poets within a nationalist canon, and is also viewed as a trailblazer within subversive Dominican women’s literature. She was born in 1850 in Santo Domingo and died of tuberculosis in 1897, having never left the country. Though a mixed-race woman, she was part of the capital’s cultural elite as her correspondence with important actors of Dominican history as well as her marriage into a well-placed white Dominican family demonstrates. Moreover, her father, Nicolás Ureña de Mendoza, was an important lawyer and poet.

It would be useful to pause on her status as a woman of color for it reveals the uniqueness of the Dominican context. In the mid-to-late nineteenth century, most literate women were European, or of direct European, descent. However, even in this era in which slavery persisted throughout much of the Americas, some women of color emerge as important contributors to Caribbean literature. One example is Ureña, a woman whose mixed-race background seems to have never been mentioned in the many speeches and essays written about her during and after her time. This has a lot to do with the fact that, unlike in other countries of the Americas in the nineteenth century, phenotypical black traits did not necessarily preclude one from belonging to a Dominican cultural and political elite that was not necessarily based on landowning. Indeed, several of the nation’s leaders during this era had obvious black descent, including the man who became a dictator during Ureña’s era, Ulises “Lilís” Heureaux. According to scholar and editor Miguel D. Mena: “It is curious to think that in that era we had a sort of ‘racial

democracy,' in which there was certainly racism, but not a State-sanctioned racism as Trujillo would later impose. We have as examples the leaders of that moment: [Gregorio] Luperón and Heureaux, the first mulatto and the second black. Both were presidents of the Republic" ("Re: Pregunta acerca de Salomé").³ The maintenance of this "racial democracy" was inextricable from a pervasive discourse that deemed blackness a strictly Haitian, and therefore foreign, characteristic. In other words, an explicit acknowledgement of someone's blackness entailed the otherization of the subject as "Haitian," which was shorthand not only for blackness but also for economic destitution. Though this complex ethno-racial system would not be strengthened until the Trujillo era, its existence in the late nineteenth century meant that Ureña's mixed-race background remained unspoken and unacknowledged, and, later, erased.

Thus, Ureña's contemporaries' overlooking of her racial background says more about Dominican perceptions of race at the time than about Ureña herself. Indeed, Silvio Torres-Saillant's observations about "black aesthetics" as connected to "a condition of oppression" rather "than with a biology of pigmentation" applies to Ureña; before citing mixed-race writers Alexander Pushkin and Alexandre Dumas père as examples, Torres-Saillant notes: "Nor does having an African descent automatically lead a writer to the adoption of black aesthetics" (*Caribbean Poetics* 56). However, her racial background is an important detail when taking into account that most of the Dominican elite prided itself in their supposedly "pure" Spanish or white European descent. Despite the country's unique racial politics, historical representations have "whitened" Ureña to the point that her mixed-race ancestry is indiscernible. Below is an unretouched photograph of the poetess:



Figure 1.1: Rare photograph of Salomé Ureña. Courtesy of Miguel D. Mena and Julia Alvarez.⁴

Though blurry, Figure 1.1 clearly portrays a woman of black descent, which can be contrasted with the more popular—and retouched—depiction of Ureña below:



Figure 1.2: Common retouched image of Salomé Ureña. Courtesy of Hostos Community College's Photo Gallery. www.hostos.cuny.edu.

Finally, this is a bust of Ureña at a small park in Santo Domingo’s Colonial Zone:



Figure 1.3: Bust of Salomé Ureña. Image is my own.

Even more Europeanized versions of Ureña are to be found. For instance, refer to artist Miguel Núñez’s portrait as it appeared on the cover of the twelfth edition of Rafael García Romero’s novel *Ruinas*. Her “whitening” betrays the nation’s Hispanophilia and echoes the Europeanizing of several other national heroes.⁵

Returning to her influence, one hundred years later, Vicioso and Alvarez—both writers with experiences as immigrants in the US—find resonance in her work not only as fellow Dominican women writers but also through the several kinds of vacancies that her work and life portray and address. At first glance, these absences could be deemed as representative of nineteenth-century romantic poetry which “articulates the feelings of the lover-subject” to a beloved (Vallejo 123).⁶ For instance, poems like “*Quejas*”/

Complaints (1879), quoted in the introduction to this dissertation, decry a beloved's absence. Future poems and personal letters would reveal her yearning for her husband, Francisco Henríquez y Carvajal, who studied medicine in Paris from 1887 to 1891.

More subtly, absence appears in poems like "*Recuerdos a un proscrito*" / Best Wishes to An Exile (1872), which implores exiled Dominicans to return to the homeland: ". . . you must return to the place you love, / to the blessed earth that never forgot you" (*Poesías completas* 76).⁷ "Recuerdos" describes a homeland that has not forgotten the person in exile and thus evokes the inextricability between the *idea* of a Dominican nation—what it means to be Dominican and what the nation should stand for—and the exile of different waves of its population. Finally, the absence of the beloved metaphorically stands in for a missing readership resulting partly from the masculinization of the Dominican literary canon that erases women's work or texts deemed too feminine.

Indeed, Vicioso and Alvarez respond to the disheartening consequences of being a woman writer in a literary canon constructed by patriarchal concepts of the nation and society. In this canon only works that fit the project of solidifying Dominican identity into a coherent nationalist ideology were valued. As Sommer demonstrates for Latin American national romances, this literature domesticated the political realm by allegorizing the nation as a marriage between the feminine land and the masculine *pueblo*. When analyzing Dominican women writers' lives and literature, this overlap between the domestic and political realms is far from allegorical. In other words, while male writers could write fictions in which lovers allegorically represented the nation, women writers *lived* the social pressure to be domestic and the challenge of being

politically and socially active. The tension between Ureña's intellectual work and her life demonstrates that the relationship between the two spheres is a real preoccupation rather than an aesthetic aperture. I propose that the misreadings and exclusions that have plagued Dominican women's literature starting in the nineteenth century and enduring to the present stem partly from this tension between women's ideological place in the nation and the domesticating demands made on their time and their bodies. For instance, masculinist literary standards considered Ureña's complex so-called intimate or personal poetry—her “domestic” texts—frivolous until women writers like Vicioso and Alvarez interceded.⁸ These two recent writers' own experiences leaving the homeland and settling in the United States, as well as the challenges they faced as women writers, provide them with the lens necessary to counteract the traditional perspective that had obscured the value of Ureña's whole body of work. Through their fictional portrayals of Ureña, Vicioso and Alvarez excavate the poet's less celebrated work, as well as the difficulties of her experience as a woman writer in the tumultuous late nineteenth century. In turn, a readership or audience is re-introduced to Ureña through another, more complete, prism.

My methodology in this chapter reflects the importance of *bricolage* in Alvarez's and Vicioso's attempts to re-imagine a late nineteenth-century moment in Dominican history. Linear historical narratives, which begin at a point in time chronologically progressing until reaching a resolution sometime in the future, erase the margins in which women reside within official Dominican history.⁹ In the case of marginal subjects who also happen to be of great historical import, like Ureña, it is especially important to remain wary of attempts to circumscribe her work and life within a neat, linear plot that

benefits nationalist projects. This is an important warning to heed despite the fact that she did have strong pro-independence nationalist ideals. There is no shortage of critical or panegyric texts on Ureña produced both during her lifetime and posthumously. However, most of them privilege her more conventionally patriotic poetry over what has been frequently termed her intimate or domestic poetry, a distinction that is clearly fraught with a gendered literary standard.¹⁰ The importance and legacy of Ureña's patriotic verses and the nationalist, pro-independence fervor that inspired them, are uncontested. For this reason, I focus mostly on how her intimate poetry and letters to her husband provide new angles on women's participation in the body politic.

Despite most critics' preference for her patriotic poetry, it is only after reading Ureña's less venerated personal poetry that Vicioso becomes fascinated by this woman "*de carne y hueso*" / of flesh and bone (Vicioso, Personal Interview).¹¹ While her patriotic poetry transgresses the traditional woman's role outside of the masculine political sphere, poems like "*Amor y anhelo*" / Love and Longing (1879) reveal another kind of relationship with the gender norms of her era:

Quiero decirte que a tu mirada
me siento débil estremecer,
que me enajena tu voz amada
que en tu sonrisa vivo extasiada,
que tú dominas todo mi ser
(*Poemas y biografía de Salomé Ureña* 49).

I want to tell you that before your gaze
I feel a weak shiver,
that your beloved voice maddens me
that in your smile I live in ecstasy,
that you dominate my whole being.

And later:

Ven y tu mano del pecho amante
 calme amorosa las penas mil,
 ¡oh de mis ansias único objeto!
 Ven, que a ti sólo quiero en secreto
 contar mis sueños de amor febril (50).

Come and with your hand lovingly soothe
 the thousand troubles from my chest,
 Oh, sole object of my longing!
 Come, that I want to secretly tell you
 my dreams of feverish love.

In this and other intimate poems “the positions of lover and wife become equivalent and present a loving subject that includes both categories of lover and wife” (Vallejo 174).¹²

“Amor y anhelo,” a poem that may at first seem like an exercise in conventional romanticism, is almost shocking when one takes into account the fact that it was scandalous for women at the time to reveal their desire in a public manner.

Vicioso celebrates what she sees as Ureña’s bravery for writing and making public “the desperation and yearning of the heart during a time when, due to the predominance of romantic ideology, this was the model of love in vogue, but whose open expression was reserved for the male gender” (*Algo que decir* 38).¹³ She pinpoints that what renders Ureña a daring poet is that she is a woman occupying the male territory of expressing desire in literature. This break from convention reflects the reality that a traditional (that is, male) standard of value does not allow for the appreciation of this sort of verse. As Daisy Cocco de Filippis argues when describing the literary criticism of Ureña’s intimate poetry:

An analysis of the critical work of Salomé Ureña points to two constants: the endless preponderance of her patriotic cantos, considered to be ‘luminous and manly poetry,’ and the caution to her “weak” moments in which she allows herself to write poems to the home. These last ones were considered of lesser importance for being intimate, feminine and

because, as José Alcántara Almánzar indicates, “a reading of the intimate papers reveal a perpetual complaint” (20-21).¹⁴

Important Dominican male writers who have anthologized her work—namely her own son Pedro Henríquez Ureña, as well as Joaquín Balaguer and the above-mentioned José Alcántara Almánzar¹⁵—either exclude the intimate or domestic works from the Ureña canon or provide excuses for them. In his canonical and often-cited *Historia de la Literatura Dominicana*, Balaguer writes: “The purely sentimental part of Salomé Ureña’s poetry, although *without a doubt* inferior to the patriotic, constitutes proof that the distinguished poetess did not lose the trembling sentiment of great poetry, not even when she wrote about less elevated things” (123, emphasis mine).¹⁶ Though admitting that Ureña’s talent is evident in her entire body of work, Balaguer is certain that her patriotic poetry has greater literary value. Thankfully, Balaguer’s shutting the door on further discussion of the topic does not keep Vicioso and others from revisiting it.

The privileging of Ureña’s patriotic poetry also emerges in the work of the many intellectuals who write about her during her own time. In 1888 Federico García Godoy writes about Ureña:

Her muse did not descend to certain *trivialities*, nor does she allow herself to be led by the currents that always drag mediocre talents. Her poetry is *virile* and full of greatness, as if composed to the heat of the great ideas of regeneration and progress that the modern spirit continuously spreads to every corner of the globe (Rodríguez Demorizi 99, emphasis mine).¹⁷

Godoy praises Ureña for maintaining a thematic emphasis on the grandiose ideas of modernity and progress, rather than on so-called trivialities, a word that has often functioned as shorthand for what are seen as typically feminine concerns. Thus, her

intimate or domestic poems have been considered nice, if unnecessary, additions to an already illustrious literary career.

These intimate poems, combined with her more lauded patriotic poetry, reflect Ureña's blurring of the often one-dimensional notions of femininity and womanhood prevalent during this nineteenth-century romantic era: either a woman was asexual and mother-like, or she was hypersexual and "whore-like." Ureña claims the subjectivity of a romantic poet in which the honorable patriot co-exists with the passionate lover in the body of a woman. However, because men set Dominican literary standards in Ureña's time and since, one must ask: who is the audience that can appreciate this kind of literary subversion? The answer seems to lead us to a second kind of absence: the reader. This is evident in the above-cited "Amor y anhelo," in which the object of her desire needs to be told about these secret longings, as in the phrase "I want to secretly tell you." Whether or not he listens is another matter.

Though Ureña's influence through her intimate poetry speaks to writers like Alvarez and Vicioso, the poet also molded generations of women through her role as an educator. Under her tutelage, women attained teaching degrees and opened their own secular schools throughout the mostly illiterate country. Around the time of Ureña's birth in 1850 the few women fortunate enough to receive any education were unable to advance beyond basic literacy.¹⁸ Dominican historian Roberto Cassá notes that in 1850, "the vast majority of the population lived in the countryside, where there were no educational institutions of any sort. But even in the scarce small cities, the general population remained illiterate" (13).¹⁹ In 1881, with Eugenio María de Hostos's guidance, Ureña opened the Instituto de Señoritas, the first of its kind in the country. Its

founding marks the beginning of the country's positivist education, which emphasized society's secular progress above individual desire. The school was also a first in Dominican women's higher education, for "she trained six teachers who, in turn, educated a number of young women who opened schools for girls in the early twentieth century" (Martínez-Vergne 106). Ureña's role as an educator of women during this era contributed to the generations of women intellectuals that followed. Her school taught women who became figures in anti-imperial, feminist, and anti-dictatorship efforts, including Ercilia Pepín and Abigaíl Mejía.²⁰ Thus, the extent of Ureña's influence as an educator cannot be underestimated.

As I mentioned in the introduction, positivist values, which had come to influence politics, education and literature by the late nineteenth century, had been preceded by a romanticism evident in some of the most lauded literary works of the nineteenth century. Because of the diversity of influences during her years of published writing (early 1870s to early 1880s), Ureña's poetry straddles the fence between romanticism and positivism. Catharina Vallejo describes romanticism as a genre in which "a human being (that is, a man) is considered autonomous, unified and individual, the fount of knowledge and significance; he constitutes himself as an individual precisely through his writing" (170).²¹ On the other hand, positivism "subordinated the individual to collective progress and order, [and] promoted social order and material progress as a transcendence in which the individual subject disappeared to give way to the concept of 'society'" (170).²² In the first, a woman's role is as the desired object. In the latter, "a woman had no other role beyond a domestic one" (Vallejo 170).²³ However, the father of positivism in the Dominican Republic, Hostos, is clear on the potential influence of educated women in

society: women's education was crucial due to their instructive roles *as mothers*. He celebrates the influence that the 1887 graduation of six women teachers from the Instituto de Señoritas will have on Dominican society as a whole: “[N]o longer are you thirsty brains and hearts, you are women who form an integral part of a society” (*Instituto de Señoritas* 174).²⁴ However, he warns them of the difficulties they will now face: “You must know before you begin your journey: society will refract the light of truth and justice that you come to offer, because it a disorganized society” (174).²⁵ Like any good positivist, Hostos blames social ills on a lack of order. Here, any efforts to overcome these problems would involve women as much as men.

Ideas of progress and patriotism, so important at the time, applied to both Ureña's roles as an educator and as a poet. However, I propose that her success during her era stems from her ability to embody not only her role as a patriotic poet and educator of women, but also that of mother. As mentioned at the opening of the chapter, Ureña's verses are often praised as *varonil*/manly though she is never considered to be challenging gender norms herself. The various speeches made at the women's graduation reveal a tension between a traditional role of women as mothers of future (male) citizens and a progressive role of women alongside men in the public sphere. Since her more intimate poetry transcends the pedagogical imperatives of positivism and Ureña's traditional motherly role, generations of (male) scholars have failed to succinctly categorize it. In turn, this has led to its relative obscurity.

Vicioso and Alvarez, however, are able to salvage this lost element through their creative work. Their own experiences as “absent Dominicans” living outside of the homeland, as well as the shared experience of being Dominican women writers, renders

Vicioso and Alvarez literary daughters to Ureña. In the politically unstable mid-to-late nineteenth-century it was not uncommon for men of the political and cultural elite classes to live in exile. As a child, Ureña barely knew her father—the lawyer, poet, and politician Nicolás Ureña—who was repeatedly exiled. This is the antecedent to the absence that Ureña later experiences through her husband, the white Dominican Francisco Henríquez y Carvajal (F. Henríquez), whom she would marry when she was twenty-eight and he was nineteen years old. A few years later, the couple lived separately while F. Henríquez completed his medical study in Paris as his contribution to the faltering young nation. During these five years, he had an affair with a French woman, conceiving an illegitimate daughter, while Ureña took care of the three first children and suffered through debilitating melancholy.²⁶ Beyond her father's and her husband's exiles she was also linked to exile through her close friend and intellectual collaborator Hostos, who lived in various places in the Americas, including the Dominican Republic and Chile. In a sense, the frequent long absences of Ureña's father and husband can metaphorically stand in for the era's political subversives who fled the political instability and violence of the young nation.²⁷ These political exiles often belonged to the cultural and political, if not traditional landholding, elite.

Though the circumstances and impulses behind it have shifted to include a greater variety of “absent Dominicans,” the persistence of exile and migration as motifs within Dominican literature renders them intrinsic to the idea of a Dominican nation itself.²⁸ Even before the nation's founding, migration was a constant in the eastern, Spanish part of the island. Hence, it is no surprise that exile in Ureña's life and work is a point of interest for Vicioso and Alvarez—two women writers whose works continually treat the

issue of the marginalization of exiles, migrants, and women from national discourse. Vicioso's and Alvarez's own lives reflect the themes of exile and migration; Vicioso returned to the island in 1985 after over a dozen years of living in the New York City and Alvarez has lived in the US since leaving the island with her family during the Trujillo dictatorship. As I discuss in chapter four, Vicioso's experience studying and living in the United States provided her with a broader lens through which to view Dominican culture and literature. For her part, Alvarez was encouraged by Vicioso herself to write *In the Name of Salomé*. The novel's "Acknowledgements" section states: "...Chiqui Vicioso, who five years ago...sat me down in her apartamento in Santo Domingo and loaned me her copy of the just-published *Epistolario* of the Henríquez Ureña family, and a copy of the poems of S. Ureña, and like some bossy musa said, 'Your next book, Julia!'" (356).²⁹ This is a tale of poets-cum-muses inspiring other poets-cum-muses.

Ureña's poetry—whether it speaks of exiled Dominicans, the pain caused by her husband's absence, or the joys of motherhood—exemplifies the mutual relationship between exile, Dominican nationhood, and, to a lesser extent, the trans-Americanism of her colleague Hostos. Indeed, scholars like Hostos, José Martí, and Édouard Glissant constructed regional Caribbean or Latin Americanist visions inspired by exile and/or budding nationalisms. Martí's "Nuestra América" (1891) and Hostos' *La peregrinación de Bayoán* (1863) exemplify this regional scope. In Ureña's case, these ideas emerge most clearly in one of her earliest published poems "*A la patria*" / "To the Fatherland" (1874) which entreats the new nation to free itself from its hardships. It opens with these lines:

Desgarra, Patria mía, el manto que vilmente,

sobre tus hombros puso la bárbara crueldad;
levanta ya del polvo la ensangrentada frente,
y entona en himno santo de unión y libertad
(*Poemas y biografía* 14).

Tear off, my homeland, the cloak that
barbaric cruelty placed over your shoulders;
lift your bloodied forehead from the dust,
and sing the saintly hymn of union and liberty.

The poem's regionalist scope is evident when it ends with a call for the homeland to fulfill its pre-ordained mission to lead "Columbus' world," which likely refers to the Americas:

¡Oh Patria idolatrada! Ceñida de alta gloria
prepárate a ser reina del mundo de Colón:
tu rango soberano te guarda ya la historia,
la fama te presenta tu lauro y tu blasón
(*Poemas y biografía* 16).

Oh idolized homeland! High glory clinging to you
prepare yourself to be the queen of Columbus' world:
history already guards your sovereign rank,
fame presents you with your laurel and coat of arms.

The kind of regionalism that she envisions, however, is one in which the Dominican Republic is the jewel on the American crown. This is a concept that subtly re-emerges in the late twentieth century with the ideology surrounding conservative ideologue and President Joaquín Balaguer's construction of the *Faro a Colón*/Columbus Lighthouse, which I will discuss at length in chapter three.

In its original context of great political unrest and censorship, "A la patria" was considered subversive and revolutionary. When published, the poem included a note in which Ureña clarified: "This composition does not allude to the actions of such and such

a determined government, because the barbarian system of government that we condemn began with our political independence” (*Poemas y biografía* 14).³⁰ Her warning shows that the poem does not refer to a specific government; instead, it offers a general entreaty to end the violence and focus on ideals of progress. Removed from its revolutionary context, the verses can and have been used to espouse twentieth-century rhetoric that is far from revolutionary; they evoke what most of the political and intellectual elite—regardless of political affiliation or historical moment—have claimed to desire: a united, non-violent nation with a stable government and civic freedoms. This has often rendered them convenient slogans for competing kinds of political ideologies, including Balaguer’s twentieth-century conservatism.

The interconnectedness between exile and nation in the Dominican context is clear not only in a poem like “A la patria” or the aforementioned “Recuerdos a un proscrito,” but also in the poem dedicated to her *esposo ausente*/absent husband, “*Tristezas*”/Sorrows (1888). Written soon after F. Henríquez’s departure for Paris, the end of this poem quotes their first-born son: “Don’t you remember, Mama? / The sun, how beautiful it was / when Papa was here!” (*Poemas y biografía* 60).³¹ Through a domestic anecdote Ureña’s poem describes the homeland that has not forgotten the person in exile, as well as a homeland that simply looks different for those who remain.

As is clear from both “Tristezas” and “Recuerdos a un proscrito,” Ureña sees the nation as a continuum between those who remain in the homeland and those who are exiled. Her poem “A los dominicanos” (1874) also reinforces this perspective. Even the poem’s title, a dedication to exiled Dominicans whom she interpellates simply as “Dominicans,” evokes the sense that the exiles’ Dominicaness is undoubted. Indeed,

their exile functions as a sign of their faithfulness to the homeland. In this specific case, she responds to those who fled the country due to the revolutionary attempts of 1873.

She writes:

Los que anheláis del templo de la gloria
la Patria levantar a lo eminente;
que supisteis luchar heroicamente
por darle en los anales de la historia
el renombre de un pueblo independiente,

venid y saludad la nueva aurora
que baña en luz la dilatada esfera;
saludad la celeste mensajera
que en nombre de la unión, que el libre adora,
abre del bien la suspirada era
(*Poemas y biografía* 11).

Those who yearned to lift the Fatherland
into the eminent temple of glory;
who knew to fight heroically
to give renown to an independent people
in the annals of history,

come and greet the new dawn
that bathes in light the dilated sphere;
greet the celestial messenger
that, in the name of the union the liberated adore,
opens for good the desired era.

The rest of the poem is an invocation to return to the homeland: “Fly to receive the tender embrace / of the mother who gave you life.”³² The poem also suggests that the maintenance of a peaceful homeland depends on these exiled patriots, for after each imperative to return, a reason is given: “with a tender voice swear. . . to give her once more her lost majesty” and “repress the passion from the war, / and relive, to the sun of hope, / the sweet illusions of the patriot” (12).³³ The poem reflects the sense that exile is central to the intellectual and political projects of building the nation.

Another key element of this connection is the non-exiled Dominican's figurative presence in the loved one's place of exile. Places that were otherwise unknown to Ureña became part of her everyday existence if only by association. In a personal letter to her husband, an anguished Ureña writes: "I live in Paris without having ever been there. Despite everything, I don't really want to go; I want you to come back, but I don't want to go there. Only in the case of an extreme necessity would I go there to meet you" (*Epistolario* 189).³⁴ She came to know and exist in Paris in spirit through her husband's letters, leading to an emotional exile that did not require her physical absence from the homeland. While the feeling of living somewhere "without ever having been there" was likely more individual than collective due to the country's relative isolation in the late nineteenth century, by the late twentieth century, US culture had become familiar to many Dominicans who had never set foot outside the island. However, the recent vast international migrations from the island and rural-to-urban migrations within the island also signaled other kinds of historical changes: urbanization projects beginning during the early twentieth century, the Trujillo dictatorship (1930-1961) that forced dissidents into exile, and the post-Trujillo instability of the government with its faltering national economy.

A poet and critic whose move to the US reflected some of these later historical shifts, Chiqui Vicioso was so attracted to the Ureña of the intimate poems and letters to her husband that she wrote a play entitled *Salomé U: Cartas a una ausencia*. It was based on a play by Dominican dramatist Germana Quintano, in turn based on the correspondence between Ureña and F. Henríquez, and some of Ureña's love poems.³⁵ The play is a monologue featuring two characters, Salomé Ureña and an anonymous late

twentieth-century Dominican woman writer. The actress playing both women adopts one character per scene. It is clear from Vicioso's stage directions that Ureña is suffering from the advanced stages of the consumption that ultimately killed her in 1897: "[Ureña h]as a coughing fit, runs towards one of the sinks, rubs alcohol on her face" (*Salomé U. 25*).³⁶ The monologue in Ureña's scenes is a blend of inner thoughts related to the government, her husband, and her children; fragments from the correspondence between husband and wife; and excerpts of her poetic work. The monologue of the late twentieth-century Dominican woman writer focuses on the frustration of having to write a seminar paper on the great Dominican patriotic poet Salomé Ureña as well as the absence of her husband, Ernesto, who does not return her calls and who is late returning home. The anonymous writer, initially bored to tears by Ureña's somewhat generic if perfectly written patriotic verses, is blown away by the *atrevimiento*/daring of the intimate poems. She finds herself connecting to the Ureña of the intimate poems and the anguished letters to her also-absent husband. As Vicioso describes in the introduction to the published version of the play: "The most important thing is to underline that this monologue's connecting thread is the absence of a loved one, seen and felt through the lens of two women writers separated by a century" (8).³⁷ Moreover, the decision to have one actress play two characters emphasizes the unity of the two women, despite the wide historical gap. It also highlights the sense that Ureña's writings have found a reader; the fact that this reader is, metaphorically speaking, also Salomé Ureña, reiterates the absence of the addressee, for the love poems in particular are addressed to an indifferent beloved.

Thus, the absence of the beloved also functions as an allegory for the absence of a readership that can value the literary voice of a Dominican woman in its entirety and not

only when it conforms to conventional standards. As stated previously, standard literary values in the Dominican Republic during and after Ureña's era overlook or diminish the artistic value of the poet's more personal poetry, while elevating the nationalist verses. Though there is no reason to doubt that Ureña's patriotic work was as heartfelt as her domestic preoccupations, it is through her personal poetry that a sense of what it is to be a woman and a woman writer in the Dominican Republic of her era emerges.

The greater complexity found in Ureña's personal poetry is highlighted when one considers the patriotic ramifications of the absent beloved who must return in order for national unification to take place. In other words, her intimate poetry makes evident the interrelatedness between domestic and political desires. Vicioso remarked that when reading Ureña's patriotic verses, she understood the latter's incredible talent as a poet. However, she was surprised to find that "other" Ureña, who is not in fact another Ureña, but who is condemned to be split in two by traditional literary standards.³⁸ She describes this intimate poetry as more "complete" and certainly more ahead of its time:

...I must recognize that my identification with the Puerto Rican poet [Julia de Burgos] was more immediate. Perhaps because the 'patriotic' poems did not stand in the way, that veil that must be put aside in order to get to Salomé Ureña the woman, the mother, the lover; the Salomé of her hours of sad anguish and her complaints, the Salomé of the erotic poems, the same ones that her son Pedro tried to relegate to oblivion; the solitary Salomé among the racket of her students (*Algo que decir* 33).³⁹

Here she implies that the patriotic verses are merely a curtain or veil obscuring the real Ureña.

Extending this idea, the inattentive beloved in the home stands in for the lack of readership in the public sphere. In the excerpt from the play cited earlier Vicioso also

alludes to the aforementioned poem “*Quejas*”/Complaints, in which Ureña implores an absent lover. This poem reveals that motif of absence correlates with the image of a lover deaf to the narrator’s demands and desires leading to a series of interrelated set of questions. Where is the beloved? Where is the reader or listener who will appreciate and understand this poem? Because these questions emerge from what is, on the surface, an intimate poem, they convey the porosity and fluidity of the border between the domestic and political sphere that Ureña inhabited.

In the play *Salomé U.*, Ureña contemplates sending a letter to her husband that says, “You know that to believe in the faithfulness of women is a myth” (21).⁴⁰ Afterwards, she reflects, “As if women are made of glass. / As if ours and men’s feelings and needs were not the same” (21).⁴¹ Although these last few lines do not explicitly reference Ureña’s correspondence with her husband, a careful reading of the family epistolary reveals that Vicioso here indirectly alludes to a letter that he had written her from Paris on 13 May 1888:

And nonetheless, you could be proud . . . of having a husband as faithful as myself, who, up to now, has remained in Paris completely isolated from the contact of women.

Nevertheless, it is against nature, and instead of pleasing you, it should displease you. *To believe in the fidelity of men is a myth: they cannot be faithful because nature does not allow it.* Since I don’t know how to lie, I speak like this (*Epistolario* 79-80, emphasis mine).⁴²

Despite these assurances, F. Henríquez did, in fact, know how to lie. Though perhaps it did not happen in fact, in the play Ureña refuses the dichotomy that gives men the freedom to act according to their desires while negating women’s own sexual and emotional desires. Indeed, in Ureña’s, era a woman belonging to the intellectual and

cultural elite, married and with children, was not considered a sexual being; to be thus imagined would have been her doom.

F. Henríquez's absence is also figurative in his prioritization of intellectual and political concerns over his wife's domestic ones. The pain that this caused Ureña fueled both her letters and her intimate poetry, revealing her suffering after realizing that she may have been more of an intellectual muse than a lover to her husband. In a letter from Paris, F. Henríquez comforts Ureña by writing that she can look forward not to his physical presence, but to the influence of his return on her poetry:

Little time remains before we can be reunited. Then you will no longer suffer. I will give you themes and you will dress them with your poetic form. You will educate your children and will see them walk down the path of goodness and science with the steps of the triumphant (*Epistolario* 84).⁴³

Her own letters, on the other hand, rarely mention her poetry, focusing, instead, on household matters, the children, her illness, and her melancholy.

The play seems to insist that what happens behind closed doors in a domestic setting is just as instructive in terms of what is happening in the nation as are the machinations of the government amongst mostly men.⁴⁴ Vicioso contends that this dichotomy between the "public" and the "private" spheres obscures their real connections. In the play, the anonymous writer muses: "And they like to say that love has nothing to do with politics. Yeah right! When a woman's in love she can even live in Haiti and believe that everything will turn out well, that the country has hope" (33).⁴⁵ Besides disclosing an anti-Haitian bias, the contemporary writer makes a direct connection between Ureña's yearning for her husband with a desire and a hope for a peaceful *patria*. Perhaps more accurately, there is a mutual blindness that is willing to

forgive the husbands' wrongs and their absence in the same way that they are willing to wait patiently for the day the nation ceases to be violent and oppressive.

As many feminist scholars have argued, the connection between the feminized domestic and personal sphere and the masculinized political sphere is real. Work that focuses on the nineteenth-century US, for instance, "demonstrat[es] that the private feminized space of the home both infused and bolstered the public male arena of the market and the sentimental values attached to maternal influence were used to sanction women's entry into the wider civic realm from which those same values theoretically excluded them" (Kaplan 111). As I have shown, Dominican women entered political discourse through their instructive roles as mothers. Ureña's renown as a writer of political verses and not as a sentimentalist writer, however, shows the extent to which these borders between the two spheres were permeable in the Dominican context. Both Vicioso's play and Alvarez's novel evoke this permeability. In the play, the peaceful nation is not only the object of desire for Ureña but also for the men in her life, since turmoil is what keeps her father and, later, her husband, exiled and away from her. In the play, the Ureña's character recalls:

When I was a little girl, I thought that *patria* must be a very beautiful woman for my father to risk himself so much and abandon us for her. When I was older, I noticed that it was not just my father. In the East, the *patria* had driven Santana crazy. In the South, in the blink of an eye, she had Báez. In the Cibao region, persistent and firm, she got Luperón. All of them fighting each other in the name of the *patria* (29-30).⁴⁶

The *patria* takes on the role of the seductive woman for whom important men in Dominican history will risk their lives and who, ironically, will provoke husbands' and

fathers' lengthy absences from the domestic space of the hearth and of the homeland. Alvarez alludes to this idea in her novel every time that F. Henríquez reminds Ureña that domestic contentment must be sacrificed in their efforts to improve the *patria*. The word *patria* signifies two conflicting ideas; restoring the *patria* is what Ureña herself desires in her patriotic poetry, but it also symbolizes her husband's stronger love for something other than her. In the latter sense it is a sort of displacement. Thus, the *patria*, which uses the Latin root for "father," is feminized. It is appropriate to recall Anne McClintock's notion of femininity as standing in for the traditional and the atavistic—that is, the homeland itself—and the masculine as representing forward-thrusting progress. F. Henríquez's metaphorical displacement of Ureña with the homeland "Herself" suggests that the union that he idealizes is a traditional one between the man-as-the-People and the woman-as-the-Land. In this manner, Vicioso's and Alvarez's implicit critique of this desire signifies more than a displeasure with F. Henríquez's inattentive and philandering ways; their texts rupture standard foundational fictions like Manuel de Jesús Galván's *Enriquillo* (1882).

Indeed, unlike these foundational fictions in which "marriage . . . is the core metaphor for political coalitions" (*One Master for Another* 61), Vicioso's and Alvarez's biographies of Ureña point to the failure of marriage as a conciliatory institution. In canonical Latin American fiction, it is marriage that is triumphant in the efforts to end political strife and unite the nation. In contradistinction is the loneliness and emotional devastation that marriage brings to Ureña's life. The emotional consequences of her husband's absence, infidelity, and indifference are the elements that prompt Vicioso and Alvarez to produce literature that builds on this motif of the failure of marriage, and,

concomitantly, the failure of a patriarchal familial and national structure to protect its citizenry. In contrast to this failed patriarchy, the works discussed in this essay highlight the matriarchal, trans-generational, women-centered chains of thought and support networks.

Julia Alvarez's *In the Name of Salomé* explores this idea when Ureña's poetry, which is so anti-dictatorship, anti-violence and anti-oppression, comes to represent the regime of several dictators. For instance, in chapter two of the novel, Ureña's daughter, Camila Henríquez Ureña (1894-1973), is invited to Santo Domingo (Ciudad Trujillo at the time) during the Trujillo dictatorship in 1950 to speak on the centenary of her mother's birthday (*In the Name of Salomé* 71). Trujillo, whose egomania clashed with Ureña's message of national community, had smoothly adopted the patriotic ideology in Ureña's poetry.

I have already highlighted some important connections between Vicioso's *Salomé U.* and Alvarez's *In the Name of Salomé*, but there are several other observations that clarify the role of Ureña in a Dominican women's literary tradition. For instance, the theme of absence continues as a motif in the novel, but in the novel it is Ureña herself, as a mother, who is absent. As I mention earlier, her daughter, Camila Henríquez, was born in the Dominican Republic to a severely ill Ureña. In the novel, Ureña continues to exist to a daughter who values her mother's direct voice wherever it emerges. Camila reads and memorizes Ureña's letters and poems in order to sort through this library of information when a challenge arises and she needs her mother's wisdom.⁴⁷ In the prologue, which describes her 1960 move from Poughkeepsie (Vassar College), Camila's reliance on her mother's letters up to that point is apparent:

She is taking only her suitcase and the trunk of her mother's papers and poems carried down just now by the school grounds crew to the waiting car. To think that only a few months ago, she was consulting those poems for signs! She smiles at the easy gimmick she thought would resolve the big question in her life. Now, playfully, she imagines the many lives she has lived as captioned by the title of one or another of her mother's poems (*In the Name of Salomé 2*).

Though she realizes that she can live on her own without her mother's guidance, it is only because she has absorbed Ureña's many lessons; her decision to leave her position at Vassar to participate in the Cuban Revolution as an educator reflects Ureña's own efforts to educate the Dominican nation. Hence, Ureña is both biological mother and intellectual antecedent. Though it is important that Camila has lost a mother who was a national literary icon, the intellectual and spiritual motherhood of Ureña is one that Camila seems to share with many other women writers, including Vicioso and Alvarez themselves.

The novel's chapters go backwards in time with Camila and forward with Ureña. This form showcases their temporal meeting at the end of the novel with a dying mother and an infant daughter. The chapters' titles are borrowed from the titles of some of Ureña's most famous poems, appropriately fitting the life experiences described in each chapter. For instance, chapter one is entitled "El ave y el nido" for a young Salomé and "Light" for an adult Camila returning to Cuba to work for the Revolution, while the last chapter is entitled "Luz," referring to Salomé's giving birth to Camila and "Bird and Nest," referring to Camila's earliest memories as a little girl trying to process her mother's death. When referring to Camila the title "Light" alludes to her intellectual "enlightenment," whereas when referring to Salomé "Luz" refers to *dar a luz* (literally, "to give to light") which means "to give birth." That the titles translated into English are dedicated to Camila points to the latter's long-term life abroad in the United States.

As is the case with Vicioso's play, the novel implicitly explores the marked contrast between women as symbols of the vulnerable land in nationalist narrative prose and women as creators of culture. Alvarez's project is one that differs from traditional Latin American national romances in other ways. Most importantly, the characters in these works are not one-dimensional stand-ins for concepts like *tradition* and *progress*. Men frequently do represent a void or an absence, while women represent a trans-generational conversation in both the novel and the play. In the play *Salomé U.*, the women remain in the home(land), while the men are nowhere to be found or remain distant and unreachable. Despite ostensibly being about Salomé Ureña, both the novel and the play also feature a twentieth-century woman who reads Ureña's works. The conversation or *chain* denotes the presence of these women of the future who are able to figuratively listen to Ureña's voice, salvage it, and allow it to speak directly to them. Women in this configuration are the active agents of change as well as the active listeners.

Camila Henríquez is also one of the readers whose understanding of Ureña's legacy encompasses her whole body of work rather than just her patriotic poetry. This is especially evident in an essay by C. Henríquez about the centrality of the epistolary form in women's literature. The following excerpt exemplifies the indirect influence of Ureña's personal life on C. Henríquez:

We are interested above all in the personality of the writer, and when we read we feel his/her intimate presence. We get to know him/her more than as a writer, as simply a human being, as he/she was known to relatives, friends, lovers; perhaps as only one person got to know him/her; perhaps how he/she for a moment knew him/herself, by baring his/her soul in the paper of his/her letters. But since the letter aspires to be a dialogue, the writer can and usually does let us get to know another

person: that person to whom he/she writes (“The Letter as an Expression of Feminine Literary Form” 229).⁴⁸

The passion of a writer to an indifferent reader has a political element, since the epistolary form has often been one of the few literary avenues available to women. As such, C. Henríquez argues, it should be considered worthy of critical analysis. The above excerpt captures the importance of the often-personal epistolary form within a tradition of women’s literature. It also cannot be mere coincidence that C. Henríquez wrote an essay on this topic when there is a rich correspondence between her parents, revealing both Ureña’s despair at F. Henríquez’s absence and his indifference. Since C. Henríquez writes in this essay, “A private letter is a state of mind” (*Hija de Camila* 228), there is no doubt that she took her mother’s correspondence as an accurate window into the latter’s feelings.⁴⁹ C. Henríquez also describes letter writing as “the natural form of expression for those who are alone and do not want to feel alone” (*Hija de Camila* 233).⁵⁰ Though surprising, C. Henríquez does not analyze her mother’s letters in this essay. Instead, she divides her essay into four parts, each focusing on one kind of letter writing: letters of divine love or love of God, letters of romantic and mundane love, polemic letters, and letters as chronicles. The most important difference between these four categories is the recipient. As the epigraph above demonstrates, the letter is a window into the letter writer as well as the addressee: “But since the letter aspires to be a dialogue, the writer can and usually does let us get to know another person: that person to whom he/she writes.”⁵¹ C. Henríquez is particularly interested in the significance of the addressee. Her section on romantic love letters shows with some certainty that C. Henríquez’s

interpretation of a lovesick nun's letters was either consciously or subconsciously influenced by the correspondence between her parents.⁵²

The notion of passionate romantic love as an illness that could lead to death as well as the beloved's halfhearted excuses defending his or her absence and his or her eventual silence are both elements that become central in the correspondence between Ureña and her husband. This is also the case with some poetry dedicated to or inspired by F. Henríquez's absence, as well as some of Ureña's "intimate" poetry. In her essay, C. Henríquez states: "The [R]omantic [female] lover dies, in fact, of love or the consequences of love" (*Hija de Camila* 258).⁵³ However, as she points out, the mid-to-late seventeenth-century period on which she focuses precedes the romantic era during which painful longing and threats of suicide become commonplace in literature, rendering the aforementioned nun's feelings "genuine" rather than "in fashion" (*Feminismo* 100). As I discussed in this chapter, romanticist influence is evident in Ureña's poetry. However, her letters also show that her verses tapped into a real, physical pain. One of her husband's letters to Ureña admonishes her to stop worrying herself sick over his absence:

No, my friend; if you continue along this path you will soon be the victim of nerves, you will have a nervous breakdown, and you could make yourself incurably ill. Tell me honestly if you cannot be content; if so I will leave [Paris]; but do consider that in that case everything will be lost and that it will condemn me to a dark life (*Epistolario* 71).⁵⁴

In spite of, or perhaps because of his scientific mind, it is clear to F. Henríquez that Ureña's passion is directly related to her constant physical weakness, bouts of asthma, and an unrelenting melancholy. These letters must have formed an impression on a daughter who has no memories of her mother.⁵⁵

Ureña's literary daughters were similarly influenced: both Vicioso's and Alvarez's understanding of her life and work was greatly inspired by the 1994 publication of the Hernández family epistolary by the Secretaría de Estado de Educación. Despite the fact that her work and life distinctly show the ways in which the domestic and the political converge, Ureña's letters to her husband convey a sense of discomfort at the very idea, precisely because it is not conventional ideology at the time. While in Paris, F. Henríquez frequently reminds her that they must both sacrifice personal happiness in the pursuit of the ultimate goal of the nation's progress. Though dedicated to women's education and inspired to write verses that would move Dominicans to action, Ureña's wish to have a unified family seems to have been *her* ultimate, if unmet, wish:

I don't want titles, I don't want anything that isn't you. No matter how grand are my good fortune and the pomps that are given me, I would give them all for not having suffered, for never having separated myself from the husband of my soul, of the very beloved father of my poor children. Do you remember when you told me that my aspirations were too scant? I desired a small home, a home without luxuries where I could live with you and my children without a care in the world, with your love and with plenty of virtue. I compare that life with the present one, and I see that I was right and you were mistaken (*Epistolario* 195).⁵⁶

The National Poet would have rather been with her husband and children in a humble home than suffer through the absence of an ambitious husband, even if this sacrifice would have led to further intellectual glory or national progress. Another interpretation is that for Ureña the nation's unification was not possible in a situation that led so many Dominicans to leave their homeland.

In F. Henríquez's more faithful adherence to positivist ideology, domestic happiness must be sacrificed to national progress. Though Ureña chastises herself for

yearning for him instead of accepting their sacrifice to the nation, she also fills her letters with the regret of having allowed him to go. In the letter cited above she writes:

I would like to tell you how much I suffer; I would like to tell you that I cannot wait for you with tranquility, because my spirit is no longer strong enough to prolong its torment. I dreamt with the hope of seeing you within three or four months, and you kill me by telling me that the day we see each other is so distant that it is impossible to set a date. But, my God! I cannot live like this any longer; I am terrified, I am afraid of life, I am afraid of this loneliness in my heart! (*Epistolario* 194).⁵⁷

These are the moving words of a woman for whom national progress is not possible without personal and domestic contentment. What remains of this account is not the staunchly patriotic, almost mythical heroine of Dominican national history, but the complex woman “of flesh and bone” whose ambivalence resonated with Alvarez and Vicioso. Their fictional biographies of the poet show how Ureña’s real life was far from the late nineteenth-century foundational fictions of writers like Galván by focusing on Ureña’s very real failed marriage. Ureña’s plight as an educator, writer, wife and caregiver are fused to such an extent that recreating the standard binary between a public, rational political sphere and a private, emotional domestic sphere becomes a challenge.

I posit that the traditional failure to acknowledge the “complete” Salomé Ureña—in her home, in the classroom, and at the lectern—stems in part from many Caribbeanist intellectuals’ reluctance to adopt a non-patriarchal prism in studies about the rich tradition of Caribbean letters. Though some Caribbean women receive accolades and a place in the historical, political, and literary canons, there is not a proper system of value through which to read and appreciate women’s complex subjectivities in Caribbean Studies. Despite the ample evidence of fiction and poetry by both men and women that exposes these subjectivities—Aída Cartagena Portalatín, Rosario Ferré, Maryse Condé,

Émile Ollivier, Marie Vieux-Chauvet, to name a few—there remains a hyperbolic concern with masculinity and paternalism in theoretical and critical analyses of the region. Ironically, these texts may subvert racist and classist ideologies, for instance, while ignoring the patriarchal and male-centric structures that ease and strengthen these unjust systems of oppression.

¹ Condé, “Order,” 160.

² A frustrated and failed union also emerges quite clearly in Eugenio María de Hostos’ *La peregrinación de Bayoán* (1863), though the ideal union is regional, not national.

³ The original text states: “Es curioso pensar que para esa época teníamos una especie de “democracia racial”, en la que ciertamente había racismo, pero el mismo no era parte de una lógica de Estado, como Trujillo luego la impulsaría. El ejemplo lo tenemos en los líderes le momento: Luperón y Heureaux, el primero mulato y el segundo negro. Ambos fueron presidentes de la República.

⁴ I thank Chiqui Vicioso for forwarding my question about Ureña’s race to Miguel D. Mena, the editor of the Dominican online literary and cultural journal *cielonaranja.com*. I also thank Julia Alvarez for sending me this image in response to my question.

⁵ Another common “victim” of whitening is founding national hero Francisco del Rosario Sánchez.

⁶ The original text states: “articula los sentimientos del amante-sujeto.”

⁷ The original text states: “. . . volver seguro debes a tus amantes lares, / al suelo bendecido que nunca te olvidó.”

⁸ For some examples of a traditional outlook on Ureña’s literature, see Joaquín Balaguer’s essay on Salomé Ureña in *Historia De La Literatura Dominicana* (117-30). Also, refer to Balaguer’s prologue in *Poesías completas* (11-70) and the panegyric on her work in the Rodríguez Demorizi edited collection *Salomé Ureña y el Instituto de Señoritas: para la historia de la espiritualidad dominicana*.

⁹ Women like Rosa Duarte (the sister and archivist of Founding Father Juan Pablo Duarte) and María Trinidad Sánchez (an important figure in the mid-nineteenth-century independence efforts) are tangential within Dominican national history. If they are unequivocally central to the historical narratives—like rebel taíno queen Anacaona and the three anti-*trujillista* Mirabal sisters—they tend to be mythologized.

¹⁰ An exception to this categorization is Diógenes Céspedes, who is at pains to show that many of Ureña’s poems cannot be easily categorized since they are all positivist in their emphasis on higher Moral values and on progress. Further, some poems contain elements of the three different categories: domestic, intimate, and patriotic (Rodríguez Demorizi 111).

¹¹ Vicioso and other contemporary scholars have collapsed her “subjective” poems about her surroundings and those about family-life into the single category of intimate poetry. The canonical collection of Ureña’s poetry, *Poesías Completas*, published on the 100th anniversary of her birth and with a prologue by Joaquín Balaguer, organizes her poetry under the following section headings: “A la patria” (To the Fatherland), “Páginas íntimas” (Intimate Pages), “Varia” (Various), and “Anacaona.”

¹² The original text states: “se equivalen las posiciones de amada y esposa [y] presenta un sujeto amante que incluye las dos categorías de amada y de esposa.”

¹³ The original text states: “las desesperaciones y anhelos del corazón en tiempos donde, por el predominio de la ideología romántica, este era el modelo amoroso en boga; pero cuya abierta expresión estaba reservada al sexo masculino.”

¹⁴ The original text states: “Un estudio de la crítica de la obra de Salomé Ureña señala dos constantes: La ponderación interminable de sus cantos patrióticos, considerados de ‘luminoso estero poético varonil’, y la amonestación a sus momentos de ‘debilidad’ en los que se permite escribir poemas al hogar. Estos últimos

considerados de menor importancia por ser intimistas, femeninos y porque, como indica José Alcántara Almánzar, ‘la lectura de las páginas íntimas revelan una queja perpetua.’”

Here, Cocco de Filippis quotes José Alcántara Almánzar’s *Estudios de poesía dominicana*. Santo Domingo: Editora Cultural Dominicana, 1972. 61-62

¹⁵ Alcántara Almánzar is one of the country’s foremost short story writers, anthologers, and currently the Director of Banco Central’s Cultural Division. I interviewed him in August 24, 2006.

¹⁶ The original text states: “La parte puramente sentimental de la obra poética de Salomé Ureña, aunque inferior sin duda a la patriótica, constituye una prueba de que la insigne poetisa no perdió su sentimiento palpitante de la gran poesía, ni siquiera cuando escribió sobre las cosas menos elevadas.”

¹⁷ The original text states: “Su musa no desciende a ciertas trivialidades, ni se deja llevar por las corrientes que arrastran siempre a los talentos mediocres. Viril y llena de grandeza es su poesía, como elaborada al calor de las grandes ideas de regeneración y de progreso que el espíritu moderno propaga continuamente por todos los ámbitos del globo.”

¹⁸ In 1860 the magazine *Quincenal Dominicana* conducted a census on primary schools in Santo Domingo, which totaled 35 schools with 335 girls and 329 boys. The total estimated population at the time was 12,000 residents (Castro Ventura 22).

¹⁹ The original text states: “La inmensa mayoría de la población residía en el campo, donde no había instituciones educativas de ningún tipo. Pero incluso en las escasas y pequeñas ciudades, la generalidad de la población permanecía en el analfabetismo.”

²⁰ For more on these women, see Ricardo’s *La resistencia*.

²¹ The original text states: “el ser humano (es decir, el hombre) es considerado autónomo, unificado e individual, la fuente de conocimiento y de significado; se constituye como individuo precisamente a través de su escritura.”

²² The original text states: “subordinaba el individuo al progreso y el orden colectivos, promovía el orden social y el progreso material como trascendencia en la que desaparecía el sujeto individual para dar lugar al concepto de ‘sociedad.’”

²³ The original text states: “la mujer no tenía otro papel sino el de doméstica.”

²⁴ The original text states: “[Y]a no sois cerebros y corazones sedientos, sois mujeres que formais parte integrante de una sociedad.”

²⁵ The original text states: “Pues sabedlo al empezar vuestra jornada: la sociedad es refractaria a la luz de la verdad y de justicia que venis a ofrecerle, porque es una sociedad desorganizada.”

²⁶ Though it is unclear whether or not Ureña knew of her husband’s infidelity, her poetry and letters nevertheless betray the suffering caused by his prolonged absences in other parts of the country or abroad. In Alvarez’s novel, Ureña learns of her husband’s infidelity. However, my own readings of the family epistolary do not reveal any signs of her awareness.

²⁷ Some of the absences took place within the nation itself. However, traveling within the island was difficult and time-consuming since some of the main highways connecting parts of the country would not be built until the US Occupation in the early twentieth century (Moya Pons, *La otra historia* 399).

²⁸ For more information on Dominican history and the recent migrations, refer to Moya Pons’ *The Dominican Republic* (1995) and *La otra historia dominicana* (2008) and Torres-Saillant’s *El retorno de las yolas* (1999). For general information on the feminization of labor in the global market, see Sassen’s *Globalization and its Discontents* (1998) and Ehrenreich’s and Russell Hochschild’s *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy* (2003).

²⁹ Besides interviewing Chiqui Vicioso for this dissertation, I also corresponded with Julia Alvarez via email asking her about Salomé Ureña’s race. Her response revealed that Vicioso’s discussion of Ureña likely influenced how she wrote about Ureña’s mixed-race background. She also had “many conversations” with Aristides Incháustegui, one of the editors of the Henríquez Ureña family epistolary.

³⁰ The original text states: “Esta composición no alude a hechos de tal o cual gobierno determinado, pues, desde nuestra independencia política principió a ensayarse el bárbaro sistema que reprobamos.”

³¹ The original text states: “Tú no te acuerdas, mamá? / El sol ¡qué bonito era / cuando estaba aquí papá!”

³² The original text states: “Volad a recibir el tierno abrazo / de la madre amorosa que os dió vida.”

³³ The original text states: “juradle con voz enternecida. . . darle otra vez la majestad perdida” and “reprimid de la guerra las pasiones / y revivan, al sol de la esperanza, / del patriota las dulces ilusiones.”

³⁴ The original text states: “Vivo en París sin haberlo visitado nunca. A pesar de todo, no tengo muchos deseos de ir; deseo que tú vengas, pero no ir yo. Solo en caso de suma necesidad iría yo á tu encuentro.” All the letters cited in this essay come from the first volume of the two-volume compilation of the Ureña de Henríquez family letters *Epistolario*.

³⁵ I have been unable to locate the manuscript form of Germana Quintana’s play *Y no todo era amor* (And Not Everything Was Love).

³⁶ The original text states: “Tiene un ataque de tos, corre hacia uno de los lavamanos, se pone alcohol en la cara.”

³⁷ The original text states: “Lo más importante es subrayar que el hilo conductor de este monólogo es la ausencia de un ser querido, mirada y sentida a través de la óptica de dos mujeres escritoras, separadas por un siglo.”

³⁸ “Re: Entrevista.” Message to the author. 4 Oct. 2006. Email.

³⁹ The original text states: “. . . debo reconocer que mi identificación con la poeta puertorriqueña [Julia de Burgos] fue más inmediata. Quizás porque no estaban de por medio los poemas ‘patrióticos’, esa cortina que hay que descorrer para llegar a Salomé Ureña la mujer, la madre, la amante; la Salomé de sus horas de angustia triste y de sus quejas, la Salomé de los poemas eróticos, esos mismos que tratara de relegar al olvido su hijo Pedro; la solitaria Salomé en medio del bullicio de sus pupilas.”

⁴⁰ The original text states: “Tú sabes que creer en la fidelidad de las mujeres es una falsa creencia.”

⁴¹ The original text states: “Como si las mujeres estuviesen hechas de vidrio. / Como si los sentimientos y las necesidades no fueran los mismos.”

⁴² The original text states: “Y sin embargo, podrías enorgullecerte . . . de tener un esposo tan fiel como yo, que hasta ahora permanece en París aislado por completo del contacto de las mugeres. / Esto no obstante, es contra la naturaleza, y en vez de agradarte, debe desagradarte. Creer en la fidelidad de los hombres es una falsa creencia: no pueden ser fieles, porque la naturaleza no se lo permite. Como yo no sé mentir, hablo así.”

⁴³ The original text states: “Poco tiempo falta para volvernos á juntar. Entonces no sufrirás mas. Te daré temas y tú los vestirás con tu forma poética. Educarás á tus hijos y los verás ascender por el camino del bien y de la ciencia con paso de triunfadores.”

⁴⁴ A current manifestation of this is the preponderance of migrant Dominican women workers virtually supporting the Dominican economy through their remittances earned through what are often domestic, caretaking jobs in wealthier countries. For more on this issue, see Ehrenreich’s and Russell Hochschild’s *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy* (2003)

⁴⁵ The original text states: “Y después dicen que el amor nada tiene que ver con la política. ¡P’al carajo! Cuando una está enamorada puede vivir hasta en Haití y creer que todo va a salir bien, que el país tiene esperanzas.”

⁴⁶ The original text states: “Cuando era chiquita pensaba que la patria debía ser una mujer muy hermosa para que papá—por ella—se arriesgara tanto y nos abandonara. / Ya más grandecita percibí que no era sólo papá. / En el Este, la patria tenía loco a Santana. / En el Sur, en un ir y venir, a Báez. / En el Cibao, persistente y firme, a Luperón. / Todos peleándose unos con otros en nombre de la patria.”

⁴⁷ When I refer to the character of Camila Henríquez in the novel, I use only the first name. When I refer to the person, I use C. Henríquez.

⁴⁸ This translation is taken from Daisy Cocco de Filippis’s *Hija de Camila/Camila’s Line* (2007). The passage in the original Spanish: “Nos interesa sobre todo la personalidad del que escribe, y al leer sentimos su íntima presencia. Le conocemos entonces, más que como escritor, como simple ser humano, como fue conocido por sus familiares, por sus amigos, por sus amantes; acaso como le conoció solamente una persona; acaso como sólo él mismo se conoció con sorpresa, al desnudar su alma en el papel de cartas. Pero como la carta aspira a ser diálogo, el que escribe puede y suele darnos a conocer a otra persona: aquella a quien escribe” (*Feminismo* 87).

⁴⁹ The original text states: “Una carta privada es un estado de ánimo” (*Feminismo* 86).

⁵⁰ The original text states: “la forma de expresión natural a aquellos que están solos y no desean sentirse solos” (*Feminismo* 233).

⁵¹ The original text states: “Pero como la carta aspira a ser diálogo, el que escribe puede y suele darnos a conocer a otra persona: aquella a quien escribe” (*Feminismo* 87).

⁵² The letters that C. Henríquez chooses are written by a seventeenth-century Portuguese nun who falls in love with a very indifferent and mocking French Count (later the Marquise) of Chamilly.

⁵³ The original text states: “La amante romántica muere, efectivamente, de amor o de sus resultados” (*Feminismo* 111).

⁵⁴ The original text states: “No, amiga mía; por el camino que vas pronto serás víctima del nerviosismo, te enfermarás de tu sistema nervioso, y podrás enfermarte de manera difícilmente curable. Si no puedes vivir contenta, dímelo con franqueza: entonces yo me iré; pero piensa que en caso tal todo se habrá perdido y que desde luego me condenaré a una vida oscura.”

⁵⁵ In answer to the question of what memories she has of her mother, C. Henríquez responds: “My mother died in 1897; for this reason I do not remember her” (*Estudios y conferencias* 629). The original text states: “Mi madre murió en el año 1897; hecho por el cual yo no la recuerdo.”

⁵⁶ The original text states: “Yo no quiero títulos, yo no quiero nada que no seas tú. Por grandes que fueran las dichas y las pompas que me aguardan yo las diera todas por no haber sufrido, por no haberme separado nunca del esposo de mi alma, del padre amorosísimo de mis pobres hijos. ¿Recuerdas cuando me decías que mis aspiraciones eran muy mezquinas? Yo deseaba un hogar pequeño, un hogar sin lujo donde vivir contigo y mis hijos sin cuidarme del mundo, con tu cariño y la virtud por toda riqueza. Comparo esa vida con la presente, y veo que yo tenía razón y que el errado eras tú.”

⁵⁷ The original text states: “Yo quisiera decirte cuánto sufro; yo quisiera decirte que no puedo esperarte con ánimo tranquilo, porque ya mi espíritu no tiene fuerzas para prolongar su martirio. Soñaba con la esperanza de verte dentro de tres ó cuatro meses, y me matas diciéndome que el día de vernos está tan lejano que es imposible fijarlo. Pero, Dios mío! Si yo no puedo vivir así por más tiempo; si vivo aterrada, si tengo miedo de la vida, si tengo miedo de esta soledad del espíritu!”

Chapter Two

Eliding History in Three Trujillo Memoirs

At a panel hosted by the General Archive of the Nation in Santo Domingo on May 20, 2010, respected historian and Archive General Director Roberto Cassá spoke passionately against a book authored by Rafael Trujillo's daughter, María de los Angeles "Angelita" Trujillo (1939 –) entitled *Trujillo, mi padre, en mis memorias*/Trujillo, My Father, In My Memories (2009).¹ Though he claims that "what follows is not an analysis of 'Angelita Trujillo's book' so much as the anachronistic claims it contains," he nonetheless proceeds to unpack the book's many faults ("La perversidad").² He casts doubt on its authorship, arguing that the text was written by multiple authors seeking to "validate the Trujillo regime with documents and proceedings identical to those used in their moment by the regimen's cheerleaders."³ He adds that it is "a very poorly written book, plagued by orthographical errors, nonsensical, lacking any intellectual element and expository consistency."⁴ Further, the book is a "latrine" and "emanates shit, it is the worst waste that could emanate from a human being, in this case the excrement of a concert of individuals who, from their ancestors, legitimizers of lies and crime, lost their honor and, as such, the attribute of humanity as it is understood."⁵ He describes Angelita Trujillo herself as "a vampire, Queen of the Darkness of the Long Night," and an "obese grandmother."⁶

I both agree and disagree with Cassá's take on Angelita Trujillo's book. I concur that it is a badly written text and I doubt that Angelita Trujillo is its sole author. It likely contains many false claims and it insults survivors and the memory of those who perished

during the regime. The idealization of the economic and social order that Rafael Trujillo (R. Trujillo in the rest of this chapter) imposed on Dominican citizens during those thirty-one years and the potential rise of a pro-Trujillo movement are also concerns. I concur with Cassá that the book “offers nothing new,”⁷ for it simply reiterates the position of pro-Trujillo activists during and after the regime. However, I disagree with Cassá when he states: “Nothing makes it [the book] deserving of a specialized historiographical debate or professional consideration as a source.”⁸ Although it is true that multiple *trujillista*—that is, pro-Trujillo—authors likely compiled most of the book, the sections that focus on Angelita Trujillo’s personal memories and are peppered with Catholic devotional phrases clearly have her personal touch. The very juxtaposition of these personal sections, family photographs, letters, official documents, and the pro-Trujillo sections that Cassá justly condemns as taking up most of the book renders it a document worthy of study.

Without disregarding Cassá’s important criticisms, this chapter analyzes three Trujillo descendants’ texts. In addition to Angelita Trujillo’s book, I also study Aída Trujillo’s *A la sombra de mi abuelo/ In the Shadow of my Grandfather* (2008), and Flor de Oro Trujillo’s “My Tormented Life as Trujillo’s Daughter” (1965), written in English and translated as *Trujillo en la intimidación según su hija Flor* (2009). In doing so, I assert that these texts’ willful attempts to dislocate R. Trujillo as the nation’s patriarch by re-locating him as a patriarch of the home leads to problematic historical erasures. Their versions of the regime’s history domesticate the dictator and render him relatively powerless in the political arena. Though less the case with Flor de Oro Trujillo’s memoir due to her tenuous relationship with her father, R. Trujillo is portrayed as a doting

(grand)father who is omnipotent when it comes to his good works and unaware when it comes to the bad deeds attributed to his regime.

In their efforts to create an illusion of the dictator's power away from political activity, these three Trujillo memoirs paradoxically betray the emphatic interconnectivity between the domestic and political spheres during the dictatorship. Though they are not national romances, these memoirs' domestication of the political—and vice versa—provides a “metonymic association between romantic love that needs the state's blessing and political legitimacy that needs to be founded on love” (Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* 41). In other words, their visions of the era's history and R. Trujillo's legacy rely on what Sommer argues became a naturalized “metonymic” relationship between the domestic/romantic and the political. This “romantic love” implicitly leads to the idealized family unit with the reproduction of well-behaved citizens with the all-knowing patriarch, R. Trujillo, at the helm. Concomitantly, Aída and Angelita Trujillo's refusal to acknowledge the extent of R. Trujillo's power as such relies on a set of elisions and distortions analyzed in this chapter. It might be useful to recall *Enriquillo*, by Manuel de Jesús Galván, a national romance whose resolution was driven by “a series of opportune erasures that lightened the (t)racés of intervening history” (Sommer, *Foundational Fictions* 233). Thus, the act of historical erasure is necessary to fulfill romantic visions of the nation, especially when it comes to defending a dictatorship whose image of itself was enmeshed in family ideology.

In order to demonstrate how the three Trujillo authors re-construct history through erasure, I hone in on their treatment of three events during the Trujillo regime that helped shape both Dominican history and how the nation and the world viewed the dictatorship:

the assassination of *caudillo* Desiderio Arias, the Haitian Massacre of 1937, and the assassination of the three Mirabal sisters in 1955. Current official history decrees that all three were carried out under Trujillo's direct orders. However, as with most occurrences related to R. Trujillo, an aura of legend and mystery surrounds them. The texts authored by Angelita and Aída Trujillo take advantage of this historical murkiness to either deny that the Trujillo patriarch was to blame or to defend his actions.

As should be evident, the erasures that I trace in this chapter are within the texts themselves, rather than in their valuation as is the case with Ureña's intimate poetry. However, the question of value is difficult to ignore when it comes to the stories of oppressors and their descendants. What is the value of testimonies based on erasures and revisionism? In general, this kind of Trujillo narrative is read by Dominican(ist) scholars, the media and an interested general public for information that could clarify the many mysteries that the regime generated.⁹ Hence, the value of *Trujillo, mi padre* and other Trujillo memoirs to most of the intended audience rests on the insiders' information they provide about R. Trujillo and other regime protagonists. While Cassá believes that Angelita Trujillo's book does not deserve historical analysis, he—with sarcasm—states, “how great that this poor excuse of a book could circulate because it helps us confirm the unveiling of the ominous headquarters of pro-Trujillo ideology.”¹⁰ In other words, even Cassá sees *some* value in the text. However, Cassá's gendered, personal insults against Angelita Trujillo—“obese grandmother,” for instance—are problematic and particularly surprising since he is one of the few male historians who actually writes about Dominican women's contributions to the country's history.¹¹ This is not to say that Angelita

Trujillo's status as a woman precludes her from personal insult, but that Cassá's derision is at least partially gendered.

It is important to determine the value of books like the three under discussion when Caribbean(ist) scholars discard the work of Dominican and other Caribbean women writers with ease.¹² I take up Condé's challenge to see the alternate value in three narratives that could be interpreted as simply pro-Trujillo propaganda. Though it would be unjust to compare many of the works by Caribbean women writers to these Trujillo memoirs—two of which are billed as non-fiction—it would be useful for the remainder of this chapter to consider Maryse Condé's critique of male-centric Caribbean scholarship. Frantz Fanon's otherwise beautiful and influential *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) includes a scathing reading of fellow Martinican Mayotte Capécia's *Je suis martiniquaise* (1948).¹³ Unlike Fanon, Maryse Condé is able to "listen" to Capécia's voice in its entirety. She writes: "Contrary to what Frantz Fanon thinks and says, *Je suis martiniquaise* is a precious written testimony, the only one that we possess, of the mentality of a West Indian girl in those days, of the impossibility for her to build up an aesthetics which would enable her to come to terms with the color of her skin" (Condé, "Order" 161). In this manner, Condé provides an alternate standard of value through which to understand Capécia's novella and others like it. This point can provide a general framework for grappling with the value of the three texts studied in this chapter.

After I discuss Angelita Trujillo's book, I analyze *A la sombra de mi abuelo* by R. Trujillo's granddaughter and Ramfis Trujillo's daughter Aída Trujillo (1952 –). Though it is marketed as a novel, it is generally considered a testimonial account. This is a dangerous assumption, but it is difficult to ignore the lack of critical distance between the

author and the events portrayed. Like *Trujillo, mi padre*, the novel gained notoriety from the start. It won the prestigious Manuel de Jesus Galván National Prize for the Novel in 2008, which split the Dominican scholarly community and stunned the general public (Paravisini-Gebert). The third text that I chose for analysis is Flor de Oro Trujillo's (1915 – 1978) memoir "My Tormented Life as Trujillo's Daughter," which was first serially published in English in the June 15 and June 29, 1965 issues of U.S.-based magazine *Look*.¹⁴ The text was translated into Spanish as *Trujillo en la intimidad según su hija Flor* and published by the Fundación Cultural Dominicana in 2009. This edition includes an introduction by respected scholar Bernardo Vega, as well as photographs that may or may not have been part of the English magazine story. While *Trujillo, mi padre* has a clearly pro-Trujillo message, the other two texts are more complex since they are written by two women—Flor de Oro and Aída Trujillo—who are deeply conflicted with R. Trujillo's actions and legacy. However, all three narratives focus on Trujillo-as-patriarch, not of the nation, but of the home. Though only Flor de Oro Trujillo's text is strictly a memoir, this chapter juxtaposes the three texts similarly without ignoring their important differences.

Cassá's strong reaction to Angelita Trujillo's book is not surprising considering the Dominican scholarly community's struggle to grapple with the legacy of Rafael Trujillo. At the heart of the ambivalence of the reactions to Angelita and Aída Trujillo's books is a collective desire to know *more* combined with outrage that these Trujillo family members' voices have a forum. As I discuss in chapter three, R. Trujillo's regime has since become an unavoidable focal point for artists, writers, scholars and journalists. The writer Roberto Marcallé, noted that "in the majority of the works studied [in the

running for the 2008 Manuel de Jesus Galván National Prize for the Novel], perhaps 12 out of the total of 14, the personality of The Boss [R. Trujillo] is like a specter that plans—and he continues to do so—the daily life of Dominicans” (“Defienden Premio a la Novela de Trujillo”).¹⁵ Despite the sheer proliferation of pro- and anti-Trujillo texts that already fill Dominican bookstores and kiosks, the fascination with scholarly interpretations and rumors about the era continue to flood the media.¹⁶ Scandals, ghosts, witchcraft, torture, rape, pedophilia, and other head-turning terms maintain the publication machine that cranks out Trujillo literature. With each new book, there is hope that new secrets will come to light and *paginas en blanco* will finally be filled.¹⁷ The fascination with what happened behind closed doors at the Presidential Palace and at the various Trujillo estates is understandable, especially considering the layers of elegiac and hyperbolic discourses encasing Trujillo and his inner circles during the regime. Moreover, the many disappearances and murders during the regime left survivors hungry for answers. These readers’ interest in the tomes proclaiming to reveal secrets of the *trujillato* often stem from a deeply personal desire to make sense of this traumatic past and to cope with the loss of a loved one.

However, the public did not equally welcome all texts about R. Trujillo. As mentioned above, Angelita Trujillo’s *Trujillo, mi padre*’s appearance was surrounded by scandal; it provoked the Museum of Resistance in the Dominican Republic, “formed by five anti-Trujillo foundations,” to file a libel suit against her and her publisher, the Florida-based Universidad del Caribe (UNICARIBE). Those filing the suit argue that the book violates “the Law against pro Trujillo activities” (“Dominican Dictator’s Daughter”). Angelita Trujillo also refuses to acknowledge any wrongdoing on her or her

father's part, which fanned the public's outrage. *Trujillo, mi padre, en mis memorias* is difficult to categorize, except that it is marketed as non-fiction and that she considers it an "essay" (v). As the title denotes, it is a kind of memoir, but it is not organized conventionally. For instance, beyond a 27-page section entitled "Angelita Trujillo (La autora)," it is not mostly centered on Angelita Trujillo's person, nor does it follow a personal or chronological trajectory. The 450-page book is organized haphazardly into seven chapters entitled: *Contenido/Contents*, *Antecedentes/Antecedents*, *Vida y Trayectoria/Life and Trajectory*, *Era de Trujillo/The Trujillo Era*, *Década del 40/The 1940s*, *Hitos Familiares/Family Milestones*, *Década del 50/The 1950s*, and *Lustro Final/The Last Five Years*. These sections contain personal recollections, her own and others' anecdotes, the correspondence between important figures of the regime, conversations, photographs, denunciations of those she deems more culpable than her father, etc. Peculiar to the book are the author's frequent allusions to God that pepper her stories: "if God allowed it" (xi) and "I pray to God" (281), for instance.¹⁸

Despite the book's disjointed nature, a recurring theme is R. Trujillo's family-loving nature. Angelita Trujillo's inclusion of family snapshots (both literal and figurative) undermines the extent to which her father's iron fist controlled the fate of many Dominican citizens. Spending her second birthday in New York without her father in 1941, Angelita Trujillo recalls, "They made me a birthday cake and I received many gifts, but I could not have the best gift that day, although he [my father] did call me and I heard his always tender voice and, despite my being just two years old, I suddenly got sad and I think I missed him" (209).¹⁹ Her yearning for her father's presence on her

birthday—“the best gift”—rhetorically elevates R. Trujillo’s power as family patriarch, for no other gift or family member can compare.

Contrasting with this glorification of the family patriarch is his superficial demotion as the nation’s leader in an example involving one of the puppet presidents’ wives. On the occasion of Ramfis’ fifth birthday on June 5, 1941, R. Trujillo addresses all Dominican women to tell them that they now have the right to vote. Angelita Trujillo continues that the “First Lady” responded with the following message: “What I know is that only a soul as great as yours and with a heart as free from prejudice could ensure women this conquest of political rights with which you have made yourself a champion of freedom” (209).²⁰ When recounting this anecdote, Angelita Trujillo is careful to call the wife of the then-puppet president Manuel de Jesús Troncoso de la Concha the “First Lady of the Republic Alicia de Troncoso.” This example pays lip service to the falsehood that anyone besides R. Trujillo was in power between 1930 and 1961. Besides simply mentioning Alicia de Troncoso’s decorative title, however, Angelita Trujillo does little to hide her father’s power during Troncoso’s presidency. After all, Alicia de Troncoso merely *reacts* to one of R. Trujillo’s decrees. Hence, the text’s inclusion of First Lady Troncoso’s hyperbolic praise only emphasizes her and then-President Troncoso’s actual powerlessness contrasting with their titles.

Those who are nostalgic for the Trujillo era and defend the dictator’s decisions like to refer to Trujillo’s decision to give women the right to vote. In fact, he absorbed the feminist movement, spearheaded in great part by the *Acción Feminista Dominicana*/The Dominican Feminist Effort (AFD). Founded by Abigail Mejía in 1931, the purpose of this organization was to “transform the sociocultural and legal situation of

women” (Ricardo 141).²¹ In their Manifesto, the AFD “maintained that they were not in a hurry to have the right to vote, that they would wait, but that, ‘when the situation presents itself, we will ally ourselves with it’ . . . [Hence] with their promise, the dictator facilitated the goal . . . and, through it, succeeded in coopting the feminist organization during the 30s” (Mora 56).²² In the 1940s, Trujillo created the women’s section of the Partido Dominicano (Dominican Party), officializing feminist efforts. Some feminists were aware that Trujillo sought to placate the movement for appearance’s sake.

According to Yolanda Ricardo: “It was an ambivalent discourse, since the Trujillo regime utilized women’s civil rights in a demagogical form, while legally and socially fixing their role within the home under the principles of subordination to the omnipresent masculinity” (141).²³ Important feminist figures like Carmen Natalia Martínez Bonilla saw through Trujillo’s efforts to appease them; Martínez Bonilla escaped to Puerto Rico, remaining a fervent anti-trujillista.²⁴

These complexities are nowhere to be found in *Trujillo, mi padre*, which elevates R. Trujillo’s unmatched power when it came to his good works, like the rebuilding of Santo Domingo after the 1930 San Zenón hurricane, while de-emphasizing his influence when referring to the many atrocities for which he has been held responsible. R. Trujillo has indeed been credited with fomenting several positive changes to the Dominican Republic. One of Trujillo’s legacies is the introduction of the Dominican peso, which replaced the Haitian and US currencies. Trujillo nationalized most of the country’s economy, paying off the foreign debt in full. By paying off the substantial debt crippling the Dominican economy, and by daring to buy out the formerly foreign-owned businesses and plantations, Trujillo had greatly succeeded in decreasing US involvement in and

control of Dominican affairs. Therefore, he challenged the unequivocal mandate that all governments south of the US border were to comply with US orders. Though these, as well as other, positive shifts were real, these achievements were made possible at the cost of Dominicans' personal freedom and the violent repression of the general population. In addition, historian Bernardo Vega argues that, when seen from another angle, some of these same achievements are minimal at best and blunders at worst.²⁵

The complicated reality does not stop Angelita Trujillo from exaggerating what she sees as her father's administrative prowess. In a sense, this is historical revisionism at its most obvious. For instance, when discussing R. Trujillo's influence on the economy, Angelita Trujillo writes: "My father, was a great governor, and he could have been, thanks to having had a good head above his shoulders, as well as having been a colossal and successful administrator of the immense fortune that he was chosen to manage" (365).²⁶ Here she attributes the improvement of the nation's prosperity to her father, using words like "colossal" to exaggerate his talents. In the meantime, she ignores the fact that many Dominicans lost control of their social and economic autonomy. Her passive diction in this quote is also curious; in writing "le tocó," which I translate as "he was chosen," she wrongly implies that Trujillo was a passive recipient of this wealth, rather than a savvy and corrupt businessman. Indeed, he consolidated the country's economy in his power to such an extent that "at the end of his life in 1961 he controlled nearly 80 percent of the country's industrial production and his firms employed 45% of the country's active labor force" (Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic* 365). The national economy virtually became his personal bank account, rendering him one of the six wealthiest individuals in the *world*.²⁷ To counter many of the accusations against

him, Angelita Trujillo claims that R. Trujillo was either ignorant of the abuses committed against citizens or had no other option. She argues that many of Trujillo's underlings, like Johnny Abbes García, the Chief of the SIM (Military Intelligence Service), allowed their own bloodlust to fulfill what they wrongly assumed to be Trujillo's desires. In this manner, *Trujillo, mi padre* portrays R. Trujillo as paradoxically both powerful and unaware, revealing the impossibility of reconciling the benevolent father of Angelita Trujillo's memories with the tyrant portrayed in Dominican history since his death.

However, his role as family patriarch, which all three texts emphasize, cannot be separated from his role as the nation's "Benefactor" and "Jefe" or Boss. Some scholars have argued that Trujillo was a "super patriarch" (López-Calvo 100), emphasizing his status as such with his political role as the *nation's* father. The regime enforced and benefited from Trujillo's paternalism from the very beginning. An important *trujillista* text was the *Cartilla cívica* (1932) whose title can be translated as the "Civic Pamphlet." It was drafted by Ramón Emilio Jiménez and was officially adopted by the *Consejo Nacional de Educación*/National Council of Education. It advised Dominicans on their moral and educational duties as citizens, including their roles as members of their individual families (Gutiérrez Félix 115). As cited in Gutiérrez Félix:

Love your parents, to whom you owe your life. Respect and obey them. That way, you will learn to govern your children, to mold obedient and respectful men. And be present, since your happiness and honor is in your home; and you must feed it with your love and honor it with your [good] conduct, respecting yourself and having others respect you. Fulfill your obligations and do not harm anyone. In this manner, you will enjoy the esteem that good men deserve and you will be loved and appreciated all over (120).²⁸

Some of the words used in this excerpt (e.g., “govern your children”) reveal the fascinating overlaps between maintaining a good home and governing a nation. According to Pedro San Miguel, “It was no coincidence that the *Cartilla cívica* paid so much attention to family responsibilities, which became an extension of citizens’ obligations. The discourse of the *Cartilla* was centered on the father whose obligation it was to watch over and protect his family. The citizenry masculinized, men became the axis of State paternalism” (*La guerra silenciosa* 106).²⁹ This document reveals the extent to which Trujillo’s politics profited from and deepened a pre-existing entanglement between the domestic and the political in national discourses.

Indeed, R. Trujillo’s role as the nation’s Benefactor did not emerge from a vacuum. According to Lauren Derby, the US occupation and “the crisis of liberalism” during this era also “precipitated a crisis of masculinity for Dominican manhood, one that helped usher Trujillo into office as reformers called for a new style of presidentialism to more effectively keep the rabble down and thus the United States out” (*The Dictator’s Seduction* 27). Included in this “rabble” were the *caudillos*—local military and political leaders spread around the country. In general, the nation’s political power had been partly in their hands at least since the nation’s founding in 1844 and despite official State presidencies. According to Pedro San Miguel, “since the founding of the Republic in 1844 . . . militarism had become one of the main aspects of Dominican social life” (*La guerra silenciosa* 34).³⁰ When he ascended to power, Trujillo’s maneuvering managed to kill, render submissive, or force into exile most remaining dissident factions. This included the remains of the scattered constituencies controlled by local *caudillos* with

their own armies. Although he propelled its demise, one could argue that the *caudillista* style of governance paved the way for his own brand of thuggish rule.³¹

Hence, an appropriate way to approach *Trujillo, mi padre*'s take on R. Trujillo's patriarchal role is to analyze its discussion of *caudillo* Desiderio Arias, who was a powerful military and political leader in the northwestern region of the country. (Arias is also a central figure in Aída Trujillo's novel, as I discuss in detail later in the chapter.) Arias frequently convinced officials into giving him and his own constituents positions in the government. The powerful *caudillo* remained insubordinate until his death in 1931, except during a period during the US occupation (1916-1924) when "he had been forced to live in Santiago almost as a recluse making cigars for a living" (Moya Pons 335). Though initially one of Trujillo's allies against the previous regime, he led a coup against Trujillo after realizing that the latter had duped him. The coup failed and Trujillo's loyal henchmen assassinated him. Arias' assassination in 1931 was a key moment in R. Trujillo's consolidation of power in the capital of Santo Domingo and in his person.

Though Angelita Trujillo's comments on Desiderio Arias and *caudillismo* are not extensive, his place and then replacement in history is significant. Despite the US intervention's best efforts to eradicate *caudillismo* between 1916 and 1924, factions remained strong by the time of Trujillo's 1930 political and military consolidation of power. Desiderio Arias was one of these figureheads. In Angelita Trujillo's view, these unruly men left her father with little choice but to violently remove them from undeserved seats of power.³² In this sense, Doris Sommer's description of R. Trujillo as a "bloated monster . . . who had absorbed all the patriarchal charisma and cruelty when he absorbed the patriarchs as a class" is apt (*One Master* 115).³³

For Angelita Trujillo and her father, *caudillismo* was simply a social ill that had to be eradicated. Trujillo's deeds had been necessary in a society of "rural men with a guerilla mentality . . . caudillos [who] did not respect any government" (*Trujillo, mi padre* 112).³⁴ She describes Arias somewhat disdainfully as a "so-called general" (113), implying that, in contrast, her father's title of General in the US Marines-created Dominican army was valid. The figure of the *caudillo* also allows Angelita Trujillo to demonstrate R. Trujillo's boundless kindness. For instance: "I would not be in my right mind if I could describe, in its entirety the generosity of my father, he was like a fount from which emanated milk and honey for all. His humanitarian arm reached his home, all of his kin, friends and even enemies. As was the case with the widow of Desiderio Arias, whom he visited to give her a house" (365).³⁵ Indeed, much of Angelita Trujillo's evidence of the events she describes rests on the numerous panegyrics and the hyperbolic discourse surrounding his gift-giving and persona. According to Lauren Derby, "[e]ffusive praise oratory to Trujillo was a stock component of official protocol" ("The Politics" 329). Angelita Trujillo conveniently overlooks the important fact that Trujillo ruled through an unwavering climate of fear, so that a perceived slip in someone's devotion to Trujillo could result in social or actual death. Those who failed to comply with this protocol of exaggerated loyalty, could be "denounced and—it was said—actually died of social disgrace, even when the accusations were clearly false" (Derby, "The Politics" 304).

Beyond the actual or reported sequence of events, it is curious to note that Angelita Trujillo does not acknowledge that the general Dominican public mistrusts R. Trujillo's words. She either naively or knowingly upholds her father's words as the only

truthful historical version. Why else would she counter the variety of versions of the Arias affair with her father's version of events if not for blind faith, willful ignorance, or outright fabrication? Angelita Trujillo provides another example of R. Trujillo's giving nature in relation to Arias:

In the first months of the year 1931, my father offered, in the prestigious Fausto hotel a great feast to which were invited all of the so-called "generals" of the era, which meant that Desiderio Arias [and others] were present . . . He extended an olive branch, inviting them to collaborate with the government's new politics and to participate from congressional positions. He then clearly told them . . . that the de-centralization of the government was a thing of the past (113).³⁶

She states that some of the generals accepted positions in Trujillo's administration, while others, she notes grimly, "followed the steps of the insurrection and the fate of General Cipriano Bencosme and general [sic] Desiderio Arias" (113).³⁷ After this cryptic comment, she details what she deems Arias' stubborn attitude that left Trujillo no other recourse but to act decisively. She writes:

In Desiderio Arias' case, all arguments and ways to get him to desist in his perturbing attitude were exhausted. This man could have well been considered one of the most representative of these personages of impulsive and guerrilla-like personality . . .

General Desiderio Arias was a person whom governments could not give themselves the luxury to ignore, always present with his list of non-negotiable privileges and on whose concessions depended the difference between subversion and tranquility (114).³⁸

She reiterates that the need to put an end to the previous governments' flexibility with these local "caciques" or "tribal leaders," as caudillos were commonly called, stemmed from her father's supposed loyalty to the Constitution. Here, she ignores the several instances in which Trujillo changed parts of the Law that did not personally suit him.³⁹ Nevertheless, she notes that Arias' financial losses after his fall from political power

“irritated and incited his warlike soul” (116).⁴⁰ She observes that what happened next—Arias’ assassination—“has given rise to an infinite number of legends tinged with all kinds of tonalities and colors” (116).⁴¹ Her historical antidote to this issue is to “allow that it is my father’s own words, that refer us to the facts, just as he related them on February 27, 1932 to the National Assembly on the occasion of his report of accounts corresponding to the year 1931” (116).⁴² To Angelita Trujillo, her father’s words should put any debate to rest.

According to this book, the transition into her father’s government in 1930 was one from wild anarchy to a modern panacea. In this configuration, paternalism was central, for this transformation only worked if those who did not agree with the paternal figure, Rafael Trujillo, were silenced. What Angelita Trujillo saw as the caudillo’s, or child’s, passion and irrationality had to give way to the rightful leader’s, or father’s, calm and rational deliberation. Fittingly, the book portrays Desiderio Arias and other caudillos as emotional, unruly men of the past unfit to rule a modernizing nation. In other words, their presence was an obstacle to the country’s progress. Angelita Trujillo peppers her descriptions of Arias with words that convey the image of a renegade: “perturbing attitude,” “impulsive and guerrilla-like personality,” “subversion” (114), and “warlike soul” (116). By contrast, her father’s imperial nobility and rationality in connection with the Arias affair is evident in the excerpts above.

This kind of whitewashing also emerges in Aída Trujillo’s novel. Though *A la sombra de mi abuelo* and *Trujillo, mi padre, en mis memorias* were published only about a year apart and were authored by two of the closest surviving Trujillo family members who live in exile, they are markedly different. For instance, Aída and Angelita Trujillo

have divergent views regarding apologizing for the cruelties of their ancestor's regime; while Aída Trujillo actively apologizes for many of the atrocities (“Aída Trujillo Responde”) and admits that she “has received critiques and reprimands from her family and trujillistas for having written the novel”⁴³ (“Entrevista: Aída Trujillo”), Angelita Trujillo offers no apologies. As my analysis of Aída Trujillo's novel reveals, however, outright denunciation of the regime during interviews does not deny the novel's similarity with the historical revisionism of Angelita Trujillo's narrative. An important difference between the texts' stances on culpability stems from the fact that while Angelita Trujillo was a young adult for some of the regime, Aída Trujillo was merely a child when she was exiled with her immediate family after the dictator's assassination in 1961. Perhaps due to the childhood trauma of her grandfather's assassination and the enforced exile, Aída Trujillo's novel follows many of the generic conventions of fictionalized memoirs in the vein of self-help books. The protagonist in *A la sombra de mi abuelo* shares the author's name and family history, and the narration focuses on her search to overcome the shock of her exile and her beloved grandfather's infamy. As some have argued, *A la sombra* can be described as a loosely fictionalized autobiography, a detail that Aída Trujillo acknowledges with some ambivalence; though she does not hide the novel's obvious autobiographical elements, she also reminds the public that her story is a work of fiction, especially when she is being criticized.

A la sombra de mi abuelo begins with Octavia “Tantana” Ricart's marriage to “golden boy” first son Ramfis Trujillo, continues with their daughter Aída's charmed childhood in the Trujillo household in the Dominican Republic, and proceeds with her life in Europe, including her education, romances, and flamenco dancing.⁴⁴ The novel

rests on Aída's struggle to confront the trauma of being expelled from her homeland and contending with the fact that the world sees her beloved grandfather as a violent, pedophilic tyrant. One of the ways in which Aída struggles to come to terms with the legacy of her grandfather is through a ghost that visits her at night, just as it had visited her mother, Tantana. It is only after speaking with a family friend while visiting Santo Domingo as an adult that Aída learns that the ghost is Desiderio Arias. The discovery that it is Arias leads to the resolution of most of Aída's internal conflicts with her own and her family's history. Besides Arias's ghost, the novel is full of allusions to the supernatural. For instance, Aída has a sixth sense which manifests itself through an awareness of the world around her before birth, which allowed her to choose Tantana and Ramfis as her parents at the end of her previous lifetime. Furthermore, the novel is populated by characters like *Pesar/Sorrow*, described as "a well-formed young man, with a strong torso and legs . . . [and who] always chose to lament," and *Tristeza/ Sadness*, who "has appearance of a pale woman with a long and transparent body" (124).⁴⁵ These characters represent Aída's and others' feelings, desires, and fears.

Unlike in Angelita Trujillo's book, Desiderio Arias and his ghost significantly frames Aída's search for self-acceptance in relation to her grandfather's legacy. A family friend whose grandfather had first-hand knowledge of the events of 1931 tells Aída that R. Trujillo had not ordered the assassination. According to this account, an ambitious though drunken soldier named Ludovino Hernández had not followed orders and had decapitated Arias with the hopes that it would please R. Trujillo. When R. Trujillo was shown the head, "With great apprehension, Trujillo recognized the one who yesteryear had been his great collaborator. A mixture of pity, fury, indignation, nausea, and, unusual

for him, fear invaded the head of state. His superstitious roots emerged profusely” (294).⁴⁶ His fear was a prelude to the curse placed on him and on his descendants by Arias’ family. There is a scene in which R. Trujillo expresses his condolences to the Arias family, but, because they assume that Trujillo had ordered the assassination, the latter cast a “maldición” or curse (298) on the dictator and his progeny for several generations. Once Aída learns this history and returns to Madrid, she confronts the ghost:

Suddenly, he began to feel a coldness that reminded her of the one that had invaded her more than two years before. She remained still and alert but did not turn on the light. Soon she saw [him] . . . However, the woman was not at all afraid. But she could sense the ghost’s great discontent communicated to her without saying a single word. He was angry because she cried over her grandfather when they assassinated him in [Mario Vargas Llosa’s novel] *The Feast of the Goat*. / As if it were natural, Aída confronted him and shouted that, despite not agreeing with his way of governing, she still loved her grandfather. She then asked him why he had come to visit her. His response was silent and she could not hear it, she only felt it. He was happy that she had publicly recognized that she did not agree with her grandfather’s dictatorship. / She, convinced that this was the soul of Desiderio Arias, reproached him for not yet having recovered his head after so much time. Whom had he not forgiven, Trujillo or [Ludovino] Hernández? / Neither of them, was his mute reply. Not his assassin for having robbed him of his life and not Trujillo for, despite not agreeing, had promoted [Hernández]. / Aída . . . exclaimed: —Desiderio, I’m going to give you some advice. For-give! Free yourself from your cross and rest in peace! / She had just pronounced these words when the specter left his place and walked over to the bathroom (299-300).⁴⁷

I quote this scene at length to show that only Aída’s scolding can free Arias from his torturous wanderings in the human realm. In this manner, the novel centralizes Aída in a sequence of events that actually have little to do with her. According to the narrative, the most important result of this exchange is that it brings peace to Aída.

This is also an interesting account because Aída finds out that there is a curse turned against Trujillo and his family. Far from being the agent of a curse, as I discuss in

chapter three and as is generally the case in popular Dominican discourses, this portrayal shows R. Trujillo and his family as victims of Dominicans' wrath and vengeance. Though it emerges more subtly in *A la sombra*, both Angelita and Aída Trujillo turn traditional Trujillo discourse on its head by rendering Trujillo's kin the victims of the Dominican people's vengeance. This wrath is made more fearsome with Dominicans' access to what the two Trujillo descendants deem to be magical practices. Aída, who describes herself as having a sixth sense, sees the curse as negative energy or a "spell" that must be broken. As I mentioned above, Angelita Trujillo infuses her text with Christian sayings and likely finds Aída Trujillo's dabbling in other kinds of magical and religious practices to be blasphemous. Though her narrative does not allude to a family curse, she more directly victimizes the Trujillo family in the face of Dominicans' wrath. Even more alarming, Angelita Trujillo partly uses the incursion of "Vodou" or what she would deem "black magical practices" into the Dominican national territory to excuse the Haitian massacre, as I discuss in detail below. In general, though, both texts betray a remarkable insensitivity towards those who suffered during the regime.

As with *A la sombra de mi abuelo*, a ghost also inhabits Flor de Oro Trujillo's memoir. In this case, it is the ghost of R. Trujillo himself: "Four years have passed since his death and I still suffer, trying to release him from within, like my poor fellow Dominicans followed by his ghost" (22).⁴⁸ Rather than the figure of an actual phantasm, however, the ghost is a metaphor of the trauma that Dominicans had only begun to endure in 1965.⁴⁹ Flor de Oro Trujillo was born in 1915 to a young Rafael Trujillo and his first wife, Aminta Ledesma, in his hometown of San Cristóbal. He left Ledesma to marry the "poor blueblood" Bienvenida Ricardo, who came "from a *familia de primera*

(society family)” (Derby, *Dictator’s Seduction* 113, 193).⁵⁰ In this sense, Flor de Oro Trujillo’s experience as R. Trujillo’s daughter differed markedly from that of Angelita Trujillo’s. While Trujillo lore—and perhaps R. Trujillo himself—considered Angelita Trujillo the favorite daughter, Flor de Oro Trujillo has always been portrayed as the bohemian “wild child,” unable to please her father.⁵¹

The memoir differs from the other two texts in several ways. First, it was published only four years after the dictator’s assassination, in English, and for a US audience since it was dictated to Laura Bergquist, Executive Editor of *Look* magazine. Further, the original English title of the memoir—“My Tormented Life as Trujillo’s Daughter”—speaks to the second set of differences; while the other two seek to demystify R. Trujillo by showcasing him in a flattering paternal light, Flor de Oro Trujillo narrates her struggle with this larger-than-life figure whom she could not help but want to please, despite his manipulations. It seems that she can relate to other Dominicans in that the dictator was also otherworldly to her. Though she may also victimize herself, she does so as her father’s victim rather than as the object of the Dominican people’s vengeance.

Flor de Oro Trujillo’s awareness of her father’s catastrophic legacy on the Dominican nation could be due to several factors. For instance, the fact that R. Trujillo had left her mother when Flor de Oro was still a young girl must have affected her. Though he continued to raise her, Flor de Oro Trujillo could hardly look on her father in an idealized paternal role in the same manner as Angelita Trujillo, the product of his last marriage. Another reason likely stems from Flor de Oro Trujillo’s exposure to an uncensored international media during her years living abroad in places like France and

the US. Third, one cannot ignore the memoir's intended, mainstream US audience with its general knowledge that R. Trujillo was a despot. The readership would be initially attracted to the story by Flor de Oro Trujillo's connection to her glamorous first husband Porfirio Rubirosa and at least a passing awareness of her father's cruelties; they, like a Dominican readership, would be more receptive to a narrative that showed R. Trujillo as an egomaniacal dictator. However, women's magazines have also been known to sympathetically publish the stories of the daughters and wives of men who are known to be corrupt leaders.⁵² In this sense, it would not be surprising if her story had been published irrespective of her tone.

Flor de Oro Trujillo's memoir describes her father's frequent manipulations. She compares him to her sixth father-in-law, a bourgeois Frenchman she describes as "almost a 'dictator'"⁵³ and as having a "despotic" personality (60-1). Her father's strategies are most evident when she discusses her many marriages. In her lifetime, she married at least eight times and, according to her memoir, it is mostly because R. Trujillo strongly pressured her to marry any man with whom she had been seen. She psychoanalyzes her feelings towards her father, stating that her marriages "were an anesthetic for a neurotic fixation on Trujillo, my escape from loneliness, my father and myself" (57).⁵⁴ The first time this happens formed a template. In 1933, Flor de Oro Trujillo met Porfirio Rubirosa, a handsome polo player, at a social event in Santiago. According to Flor de Oro Trujillo, they spoke in French about Paris (32), and they connected as "two uncommon Dominicans who had seen the world beyond their borders with their very eyes and who had briefly sampled sophistication" (32).⁵⁵ They attended a concert that night with her friend Lina Lovatón—who later became R. Trujillo's most famous mistress—and

chaperones. In the next few days, she received several innocent letters from Rubirosa whose only telltale sign of courtship is that he addressed her as his “Flor chère” (33). When R. Trujillo noticed the messenger carrying Rubirosa’s letter, he beat him. Flor de Oro states that this was the first time she had witnessed her father’s physical violence (33). She was sequestered in her room for days, and even her stepmother advised her to stay away from Rubirosa, a “playboy . . . a boy without a future” (33).⁵⁶ Just as suddenly, however, her “exile” ended with the breathless news that “I was engaged to Rubi and that I had to depart immediately for Santo Domingo!” (34).⁵⁷ She admits that, by this point, she was “anxious to emerge from my prison, to escape from my father, an instinct that would drive me for the rest of my life” (34), implying that marrying Rubirosa was her escape.⁵⁸

About four years later, R. Trujillo consoles his daughter after she has complained about Rubirosa’s infidelities. He suggests that she should pick out a car from a catalog as a treat while she wonders, “Why did he almost force me to marry him [Rubirosa]?” (45).⁵⁹ After she picks out a Buick to be sent to her in Paris, he suddenly declares, “I will never allow you to return to that man” (45).⁶⁰ The next day, R. Trujillo’s lawyer arrives at Flor de Oro Trujillo’s home to start the divorce process, which she accepts with “docility” (45). This is a pattern that would repeat itself with several of Flor de Oro Trujillo’s husbands. Though it seems that she “docilely” accedes to her father’s demands, Flor de Oro Trujillo’s memoir portrays what are actually her complex feelings towards him.

Indeed, I contend that, despite or perhaps due to the magazine’s editorial layer, Flor de Oro Trujillo displays little interest in upholding an idolatrous image of her father.

Unlike Aída Trujillo who cannot seem to reconcile the image of her kindly grandfather and the cruelties about which she reads, Flor de Oro Trujillo's struggles with her father take his despotism for granted. It is clear that she is not interested in flattering her father in several sections of her memoir. For instance, right before she alludes to the Haitian massacre, she mocks her father's attempts to connect his lineage to that of "Napoleonic courtesan Joseph Chevallier" (26).⁶¹ In another section, she says of a US pilot named Charles Stehlin that he "wore as many medals as dad, except he [Stehlin] had obtained them honestly" (58).⁶² Hence, it is clear that Flor de Oro Trujillo has no qualms with speaking negatively about her father.⁶³

Unlike the other two women, Flor de Oro Trujillo does not delve into politics, which likely has to do with the fact that her memoir was published in a women's magazine. One must also take into account that Flor de Oro Trujillo narrated her story in 1965, well before dozens of survivors' testimonial accounts about the Trujillo regime had come to light. Nonetheless, she was well-aware that, by 1960, R. Trujillo had many enemies: "Even the Dominican middle class, which he himself had created and which had supported him without vacillation when life had been good, was now anti-Trujillo. The Catholic Church had denounced him. Old friends were [now] plotting his death" (22).⁶⁴ The memoir's intended US readership is evident in the paragraph dedicated to explaining the family's genealogy, which included Haitian parentage through R. Trujillo's grandmother. It is important to note, however, that his Haitian ancestors were elite landowners—who have a historical aversion to the working classes—and the massacre affected poor Haitians. She then states that, like Trujillo, "70%" of Dominicans have "black blood" (26). Surprisingly, she addresses the Haitian massacre directly and offers

no excuses for her father: “[H]e horrified the world in 1937 when his army killed about 15,000 Haitians in an inexplicable border dispute” (26).⁶⁵ Though she does not seek to explain R. Trujillo’s actions, she states that he “had a certain animal wildness” (26).⁶⁶ The bareness of her words here contrast with the discursive pirouettes that Aída and Angelita Trujillo perform in their narratives when explaining the Haitian massacre, as I show below. This may be explained in part by the fact that Flor de Oro Trujillo is narrating her life story to the editor of a non-Dominican magazine, to whom the Haitian massacre must be explained.

For her part, Aída Trujillo’s retelling of the massacre zooms in and out of scenes depending on how she wants to portray R. Trujillo. The narrator invents a scenario that is remarkably apologist. The horrific event, which lasted several days in early October of 1937, is commonly called “El Corte” or “The Cut” in reference to the machetes used to maim victims. Machetes were the preferred weapon because they made it seem like the murders were the result of mob-like violence rather than an organized government genocide.

In *A la sombra*’s recounting, Rafael Trujillo emerges as a benevolent *pater familias* who has the power to end a massacre that he, in fact, started. The narrative explains: “A few years after starting his rule, Trujillo, moved by hostility and sectarianism against the neighboring country, and also backed by his stalwarts, due to unknown punctual motives, gave an order of execution to many of his neighbors” (76-7).⁶⁷ Unlike Angelita Trujillo, whose description of the massacre I discuss below, Aída Trujillo acknowledges the oddity of the effusive praise heaped on R. Trujillo:

Such was the exaltation and hypocrisy that surrounded the dictator that, in multiple occasions, it was mentioned that he was directly sent by God. One of these [men] was his personal secretary, Joaquín Balaguer . . . Trujillo's followers, inspired by the barbarities committed by what was "The Holy Inquisition," as sadly known by all, encouraged him to follow the steps that marked his long rule. God Himself, his co-authors used to say, was the inspiration behind this ordeal that, though difficult, was wise and beneficial (79).⁶⁸

However, with these last words, the narrator displaces much of the blame for the Haitian massacre onto those who worked for him, as well as Dominicans' own anti-Haitianism. This is not to say that this blame is not also well deserved. Further, she implies that in ordering the massacre of Haitians along the border, Trujillo "forgot some of his roots and the good advice of his mother, and allowed himself to be influenced by the racism that characterized many Dominicans with respect to their Haitian neighbors" (82).⁶⁹ Finally, the narrator connects the massacre to Trujillo's own Haitian background and deduces that "his Haitian background had caused him much suffering. It had made him feel despised and inferior, and, because of this, he decided to erase them from his memory" (82).⁷⁰ In this manner, the narration psychoanalyzes R. Trujillo's motives for the massacre as an extension of his self-hatred.

Despite *A la sombra's* general message that R. Trujillo was a good man in difficult circumstances, Aída Trujillo cannot entirely deny that he was responsible for the Haitian massacre in her fictionalized rendition of the event. Most suggestive of the novel's stance on the Haitian massacre is the fictive anecdote of a Haitian family who is spared from death by a paternal R. Trujillo. The family has an eight-year-old ethnically Haitian, Dominican-born boy named Eugène, who wants to be a soldier in the Dominican army. Amidst the massacre, Trujillo's military shows up at the family's home and asks

his parents for documentation proving their legal residency. Eugène expresses his interest in the Dominican military and curiosity about Trujillo. When Trujillo hears about this, he takes the boy under his wing, inviting him to the National Palace and bestowing many gifts upon him. When Eugène returns home, his father exclaims happily, “Lé asesiné dé haitian, ‘la matanza de lo haitiano’, com il dís isí, sé finí” (97). Throughout this anecdote, the narrator extensively describes Eugène’s wondrous encounter with the dictator and the latter’s paternal kindness. There is, however, no discussion of the actual massacre. It only emerges in phrases describing Eugène’s parents’ terror. For instance, after Eugène innocently tells the soldiers that he had heard that Trujillo had sent an order to kill all Haitians, the narrator describes his mother’s reaction: “Panic had made Elmiré its prisoner” (88).⁷¹

Though a writer should have the freedom to invent, Aída Trujillo clumsily re-scripts a traumatic history. Once again, she conveniently overemphasizes or fabricates R. Trujillo’s positive actions while dismissing or “zooming out” of the negative ones. She focuses on a fictitious relationship between R. Trujillo and a young Haitian boy, after whose meeting the massacre mysteriously ceases. It is clear that the violence is over through the boy’s father’s exclamation of happiness and relief and not through the narrator’s explanation that Trujillo had decided to call an end to it, just as he had decided to start it. The subject who controls these events is rendered invisible. Though not entirely denying Trujillo’s culpability, the narrative portrays R. Trujillo as a benevolent family patriarch who has little control of his racist society.

Angelita Trujillo begins her version of the events by returning to the era of colonization in order to contextualize Haitian-Dominican relations. In doing so, she overlooks some important elements of African slavery on the island. She writes:

Father Las Casas did an excellent job cultivating very good relations with the Indians and was much moved to see them overburdened with the work imposed on them by the colonizers . . . To ameliorate that situation, Father Las Casas suggested to Ovando [the island's governor] to bring labor from the African continent, since those black natives were corpulent, muscular and better suited for that kind of work. That is how the future inhabitants of the ethnicity that would be Haitian came to the island (163).⁷²

Besides overlooking Dominican blackness, most evident in this excerpt is her uncritical acceptance of Las Casas' racist ideas on the physical strength of Africans, which he would later regret. She then summarizes the events leading up to the Haitian government of the island from 1822 to 1844 and Dominican independence. She quickly reaches the early years of her father's regime, writing:

It was his [Trujillo's] goal to uproot from the country any vices and past blights that had caused so much damage, and to direct it towards a dimension of progress and national greatness. / But his initiative was gravely hindered by the free and permanent intrusion of Haitian naturals settling in our territory, creating a tacit decline of our geography and the consequent disappearance of our border. This injustice, an illicit and unacceptable activity, signified, more than an obstacle, a negation of our rights. Without borders, there is no country. Aristotle says: "That which belongs to everyone, belongs to no one" (166).⁷³

She continues by delving into some of the negotiations commenced during Trujillo's regime with the Haitian government, as well as his unification efforts euphemistically called the *La Dominicanización de la Frontera*/The Dominization of the Border (167). Despite these efforts, she argues, "Haitians refused to respect the new reality" (168).⁷⁴ According to Angelita Trujillo, this meant that Haitians continued to steal cattle from

Dominican ranchers living in the border region as well as to spread Haitian culture through the Haitian currency and “patuá” (168).⁷⁵ Worst of all, according to her, was “Vodou, and other syncretic religious practices” (168).⁷⁶ As I show in chapter three, Dominican religiosity’s relation to Haitian religious practices is incredibly complex, which is clearly an idea unfamiliar to Angelita Trujillo. Many elements of Dominican syncretism can be attributed to long-term intra-island travel, which included Santo Domingo colonials trading cattle in neighboring Saint Domingue and runaway slaves who escaped to the neighboring Spanish colony. However, at least some of this syncretism stems from African and European practices native to what is now the Dominican Republic, irrespective of any Haitian presence.

This is just one of the many ways in which Angelita Trujillo’s book distorts the complexities of Dominican-Haitian relations and the histories of both nations. Throughout this section, Angelita Trujillo tellingly cites noted anti-Haitian ideologue Manuel Arturo Peña Batlle, who had been an important part of R. Trujillo’s intellectual machinery. She claims that her father “exhausted all diplomatic avenues in search of a dialogued solution to get the Haitian nationals to return to their country” (168).⁷⁷ Her usage of the word “return” here overlooks the fact that many of these “Haitians” had actually been born in the Dominican side of the porous border and that residents in the region frequently crossed back and forth and led trans-border lives. However, she points out that “repatriation was not a convenient solution for the Haitian government, for them, the exodus was a beneficial escape valve that provided some relief for the demographic problem that asphyxiated them” (169).⁷⁸ The Haitian government at the time, and since, has not been successful in ameliorating the socio-economic situation of its masses.

Finally, she reaches the events of 1937, writing:

Trujillo, as supreme authority, had no other choice but to order that all Haitians residing illegally in Dominican territory be repatriated using force if necessary . . . Unfortunately, as was feared, bloody violent events took place that one wishes had not occurred . . . The latent resentment of the civilian population, victim to the incessant onslaught to which Dominican inhabitants were object, exacerbated the violence (169-170).⁷⁹

It is clear that she has chosen the official version of events in which the massacre was the result of “latent resentment of the civilian population” and not, in fact, an organized, military order from above. She also chooses the lower number of Haitians killed during the events of October of 1937 rather than the higher numbers cited by several scholars. The number of those killed that she cites are those of Dominican historian Euclides Gutiérrez Félix when he writes that “the victims of The Cut did not go over 3,000” (cited in 171).⁸⁰ Frank Moya Pons cites 18,000 (*A National History* 368), Ignacio López-Calvo cites 15,000 to 20,000, and Lauren Derby cites 15,000 (“The Politics” 303). Trujillo biographer Robert Crassweller writes that “[t]he number of those who perished in these October hours will never be known with accuracy . . . Estimates range from a low of 5,000 to a high of 25,000. The Haitian Government at one time put forth a figure of 12,000 fatalities, and Trujillo in later days spoke of 18,000. A figure between 15,000 and 20,000 would be a reasonable estimate, but this is guesswork” (156). In other words, the number that Angelita Trujillo chooses is on the far lower end of all numbers cited.

According to *Trujillo, mi padre*, the international uproar over the massacre was fueled, if not created, by the “antipatriotic” efforts of Trujillo’s enemies abroad. The book ends the discussion of what she deems the “inevitable” (173) catastrophe with an entire letter from the aforementioned conservative intellectual Peña Batlle to Dr. Jorge Mañach,

the Cuban International Relations Minister dated years later. The inclusion of the letter at this point in the book raises some questions on the book's authorship. In fact, it is likely that this section is entirely written by a ghostwriter.

Another important historical event that allow Aída and Angelita Trujillo to highlight R. Trujillo's paternal strengths was the assassination of the three Mirabal sisters. On November 25, 1960, three sisters who had been involved in a failed *coup d'état* in June of 1959 were beaten to death. For many, the murder of three women from a respected family from the town of Salcedo signaled that R. Trujillo and his henchmen, especially the head of the Military Intelligence Service Johnny Abbes, had finally gone too far. This is because women had previously been protected or excluded from the violence of the regime. It has become common knowledge that Trujillo had the three sisters assassinated, but Aída and Angelita Trujillo seek to "set the record straight" on the matter. (Flor de Oro Trujillo's memoir does not comment on the issue.)

As with the fictionalization of Haitian massacre, *A la sombra* addresses the matter by domesticating the retelling. In this case, Aída Trujillo does so through a conversation between Tantana Ricart, Aída's mother, and R. Trujillo. The familiar closeness between the two allows for the following conversation between a despondent and aging R. Trujillo and his beloved daughter-in-law. Tantana asks her father in law: "How could you have those women, the so-called Butterflies, assassinated? [. . .] Those young women, the Mirabal sisters, were innocent people, sir! [. . .] It is true that they, like their husbands, were against your government!"⁸¹ The narrator continues:

That terrible matter that, according to some historians "had slipped through his fingers," totally disconcerted Trujillo. The dictator felt that he owed an explanation to Tantana, the whole world, God and . . . himself [.

. . .] “You know very well that I did not order them to be killed, Tantana . . . That was an accident . . .” / Trujillo was conscious that the actions of the men who had killed the Mirabal sisters, and other innocent beings, were habitually provoked by his own orders. The members of the Military Intelligence Service, the terrifying SIM, were very cruel and, in more than a few occasions, did things that even he had not ordered, assuming that they would fulfill “his wishes” (65-6).⁸²

As before, the novel uses these narrative opportunities to cast R. Trujillo in a fatherly light. In this case, his cruelty and probable guilt are rendered vague, but Tantana’s and his mutual father-daughter-like love is amply described throughout the novel. For instance: “Tantana who loved him as much as one could love a father” (64) and “The Boss loved and treated her like a daughter” (29).⁸³ This repeated emphasis on R. Trujillo’s fatherliness serves as an attempted distraction from the facts that Aída Trujillo cannot deny about him.

Trujillo, my father begins discussion of the Mirabal “crime” (421) with an anecdote by Ramfis Trujillo’s close friend the retired General Juan Pou, which describes several meetings between the famously beautiful Minerva Mirabal and Ramfis Trujillo. The general message of Angelita Trujillo’s retelling is that “the Boss, does not kill women” (421).⁸⁴ Misunderstanding the standard definition of misogynist behavior, Angelita Trujillo writes: “My father was not ‘machista,’ he was the most expressive and gentlemanly person with ladies, and from these feelings flowed his protection and exaltation of the Dominican woman” (423).⁸⁵ Once she considers her father’s intentions to be clear, she attempts to tarnish the reputation of the Mirabal family by accusing them of one of the worst crimes during her father’s regime: Communism. She writes: “[T]he affiliation with and devotion to the Communist cause of these young women, in some way could have constituted a serious threat to the stability of the government” (424).⁸⁶

Despite this affiliation, Angelita Trujillo cannot fathom her father's involvement in the sisters' assassination on November 25. Angelita Trujillo provides the specific names of those she argues are directly responsible for the murders: "According to the declarations of general Román Fernández, the, [sic] executioners were members of the Military Intelligence Service [which] is directly under the Ministry of the Armed Forces, with the exception of a man named Segundo Imbert Barreras, who was responsible of supervising and verifying the execution of the crime" (424).⁸⁷ More specifically, General José René [Pupo] Román Fernández, who would later help orchestrate and carry out R. Trujillo's assassination, "ordered the crime against the Mirabal sisters following the instructions of Luis Amiama Tió, who was the direct contact between the Counsel Dearborn, chief of the CIA in the country and the conspirators" (426).⁸⁸ In other words, according to *Trujillo, mi padre*, the CIA was ultimately to blame for the sisters' assassination.⁸⁹ It is not surprising that the other key figure in version of Angelita Trujillo's story is Amiama Tió, another one of her father's assassins.⁹⁰

According to Angelita Trujillo's faulty logic, her father could not have been responsible for the crime, since "that is what the court transcripts demonstrate, that, despite how much the accusing parties tried, they did not succeed in obtaining any declaration from the accused that directly or indirectly implicated my father in the aforementioned crime. And that is because that order, never escaped the lips of my father!" (424).⁹¹ Once again, Angelita Trujillo overlooks the fact that the climate of fear under R. Trujillo was such that truth and justice were impossible to achieve. As with other sections in the book, Angelita Trujillo closes this one on a religious note: "With all my heart, it makes me happy that [Román Fernández] had the opportunity to reconcile

himself with the Almighty through a sacramental confession and that in the grace of God, he ate and drank the Body and the Blood of Christ. The mercy of God is that great!” (427).⁹² Perhaps she seeks to demonstrate her willingness to forgive General Román Fernández for this crime and the crime of helping to assassinate her father.

Like Aída Trujillo’s Ludovino Hernández, General José René “Pupo” Román Fernández is portrayed as the disobedient subordinate. However, both men’s narrative presence rescues R. Trujillo from blame. Román Fernández “occupied the post of Military Secretary of State since August 1960” (Balcácer 279), which was *officially* the second in line to the Presidency since there was no Vice President (280).⁹³ In reality, as Balcácer points out, if anything happened to Trujillo, his first-born son Ramfis would be in charge (280). Both Román Fernández and Hernández represent the figure of the clumsy underling or recalcitrant child who does not obey the boss’ or father’s clear orders. According to Aída Trujillo’s and Angelita Trujillo’s versions of the events, these men’s disobedience—whether due to pure clumsiness or inappropriate ambition—led to many of the crimes attributed unfairly to R. Trujillo. Although Angelita Trujillo maintains that her father had never ordered the Mirabal sisters’ assassination, she makes some curious comments regarding General Román Fernández: “Why did [Trujillo] not act against Pupo [Román Fernández]?”⁹⁴ The answer lies in General Fernández’s loyalty to el Jefe:

My father believed that Román had acted with patriotic zeal, in the belief that he was acting for the benefit of the government. That deduction, made sense for that who knew the limited rationality of General Román, a reality aggravated by other duties that he neglected. Logically, he had gone overboard in his committing of a political crime, due to an obtuse excess of loyalty, but, in the end, loyalty (426).⁹⁵

She admits that R. Trujillo excuses his bloodthirsty behavior because it was done in his father's name. It is worthwhile to point out that, even in Angelita Trujillo's forgiving version, her father's was a government in which this kind of behavior was even possible and, when executed, potentially rewarded. In *A la sombra*, it was Ludovino Hernández, the drunken soldier, who receives credit after foolishly decapitating Desiderio Arias. Aída never answers Arias' frustrated ghost when he rightly exclaims that he had not forgiven neither R. Trujillo nor Ludovino Hernández because "despite not agreeing [to Hernández's actions of decapitating Arias], [R. Trujillo] had promoted him" (299).⁹⁶ Neither Angelita nor Aída Trujillo can account for R. Trujillo's promotion of those who committed atrocious acts in his name.

This chapter elucidated some of the ways in which three narratives by Trujillo descendants, especially those written by Aída and Angelita Trujillo, actively erase and displace historical facts. These fanciful versions of the regime, however, have the value of further revealing the extent of R. Trujillo's success in promoting a family rhetoric during his regime. Though the texts seek to disentangle the domestic sphere from politics, their willful ignorance demonstrates the very opposite claim. Rather than presenting a convincing argument that Trujillo was nothing but a humble family man with the burden of wisdom, business acumen, and a responsibility to lead the Dominican nation, he is further revealed as a calculating despot. These texts also demonstrate the extent to which conservative rhetoric (in this case, pro-Trujillo) can coincide with the exile space. After all, Angelita and Aída Trujillo are both exiled because they were deported from the nation for belonging to the family who did the most to solidify Dominican conservative patriarchal values. At the same time, these women seek to

redefine the nation from exile through their implied message that theirs is the official history of *trujillismo*. Their efforts were ultimately unsuccessful. However, the publication of Aída Trujillo's and Angelita Trujillo's books, as well as the public's passionate reaction, marks the regime as an unhealed wound in the Dominican psyche.

¹ The paper is available on the website historiadominicana.com.do. He clarifies that his views do not represent those of the General Archive.

² The original text states: "lo que procede analizarse no es tanto el 'libro de Angelita', sino el reclamo anacrónico que contiene."

³ The original text states: "validar el trujillato con idénticos argumentos y procedimientos que los utilizados en su momento por los alabarderos del régimen."

⁴ The original text states: "un libro muy mal escrito, plagado de faltas ortográficas, disparatado, carente de todo ingrediente intelectual y de cualquier consistencia expositiva."

⁵ The original text states: "deslita mierda, es el peor desecho que puede emanar del ser humano, en este caso un excremento de un concierto de individuos que, desde sus antepasados legitimadores de la mentira y el crimen, perdieron la honra y, por ende, el atributo de la humanidad bien entendida."

⁶ The original text states: "una vampiresa, Reina de las Tinieblas de la Larga Noche" and "abuela obesa."

⁷ The original text states: "no trae nada nuevo."

⁸ The original text states: "Nada lo hace merecedor de un debate historiográfico especializado o de una ponderación profesional como fuente."

⁹ They are particularly interested in regime mysteries such as whether or not the Trujillo family thought that General Román Fernández was involved in R. Trujillo's assassination, as well as conclusive evidence that Trujillo had ordered the murders of the Mirabal sisters, Jesús de Galíndez, and others. For instance, see Angela Peña's "Flor de Oro cuenta las verdades del Jefe." *Hoy.com. Hoy*, 29 Aug. 2009. Web. 26 June 2011.

¹⁰ The original text states: "qué bueno que este hideous libraco circular, porque nos ayuda a ratificar el develamiento de las matrices ominosas del trujillismo."

¹¹ He is the author of *Heroínas nacionales: María Trinidad Sánchez, Salomé Ureña, Minerva Mirabal* (2007), *Minerva Mirabal: la revolucionaria* (2000), *Salomé Urena: mujer total* (2000), and *María Trinidad Sánchez: la heroína de febrero* (2001).

¹² Many of the codes and values on which these exclusions are based were not even native to the Caribbean; they had been set for centuries in the European metropolises.

¹³ His chapter titled "The Woman of Color and the White Man" infamously includes a particularly vindictive footnote: "May she add no more to the mass of her imbecilities. / Depart in peace, mudslinging storyteller . . . [sic] But remember that, beyond your 500 anemic pages, it will always be possible to regain the honorable road that leads to the heart. / In spite of you" (53). His disdain for white man/woman of color relations contrasting with his acceptance of man of color/white woman relations is explained thus, "Since he [the white male] is the master and more simply the male, the white man can allow himself the luxury of sleeping with many women. This is true in every country and especially in colonies. But when a white woman accepts a black man there is automatically a romantic aspect. It is a giving, not a seizing" (46). I thank Sara Johnson for pointing out that Fanon's critique of Capécia stemmed from the fact that he hated the Vichy regime and its Nazi sympathies, and Capécia's protagonists becomes involved with a representative of this hated occupying regime. I would also add that the extremity of Fanon's indictment of Capécia is based on more than her protagonist's personal relations with a member of the hated occupier.

¹⁴ I have been unable to locate the original English version of this text. My translations of this text are from Spanish translation of the English original.

¹⁵ The original text states: “En la mayoría de las obras estudiadas, quizás 12 del total de 14, la personalidad de El Jefe es como un espectro que planea—y lo sigue haciendo—sobre la vida de los dominicanos.”

¹⁶ Scholar and pianist Manuel Rueda argues that literary narratives on the *trujillato* are actually limited compared to non-fiction works about the dictator: “Faced with national literary production we confirm that Dominican dictatorship literature is abundant in historiography, essay, popular anecdotes and some theatre pieces that appeared after the Trujillo Era.

It is not the same in the field of narrative which, divided among novels and short stories, has remained timid and even neutral before the figure of the dictator” (“Presencia del dictador”). (The original text states: “Enfrentados a la producción literaria nacional comprobamos que la literatura dominicana referente al dictador es abundante en la investigación histórica, en el ensayo, en el anecdotario popular y en algunas piezas teatrales aparecidas con posterioridad a la Era de Trujillo. / No sucede lo mismo en el campo de la narrativa que, dividido entre la novela y el cuento, se ha mantenido tímido y hasta neutral ante la figura del dictador.”)

¹⁷ Here, I refer to the infamous *página en blanco* (blank page) in Joaquín Balaguer’s *Memorias de un cortesano de la era de Trujillo* (1988), which he left blank as a symbol of the secrets that would be revealed after his death. Many had the hope and fantasy that the “page” would have revealed the truth about journalist Orlando Martínez disappearance in 1975 during Balaguer’s first twelve years of repressive governance. After Balaguer’s death in 2002, however, excited speculation gave way to disappointment as the page remained blank.

¹⁸ The original text states: “si Dios lo permitía” and “Yo ruego a Dios.”

¹⁹ I have retained many of the book’s grammatical and syntactical errors without necessarily noting them in my translations. The original text states: “Me hicieron un bizcocho de cumpleaños y recibí muchos regalos, pero el regalo mayor no lo pude tener ese día, aunque sí que me llamó por teléfono y al oír su voz siempre cariñosa, de momento, me entristecí a pesar de mis dos añitos, y creo lo echaba de menos.”

²⁰ The original text states: “Lo que yo sé es que solo una alma muy grande como la suya y con un corazón libre de prejuicios podría asegurarle a la mujer esta conquista de los derechos políticos con la cual usted se ha hecho el campeón de la libertad.”

²¹ The original text states: “transformar la situación sociocultural y jurídica de la mujer.”

²² The original text states: “las mujeres sostuvieron que no tenían prisa por ejercer el voto; que esperarían, pero ‘cuando la situación pase, nos juntaremos a ella . . .’ Con su promesa, el dictador, les facilitó la meta . . . y a través de ésta, logró cooptar la organización feminista durante los años treinta.”

²³ The original text states: “Se trataba de un discurso ambivalente, ya que el régimen trujillista utilizaba de forma demagógica los derechos civiles para la mujer, a la vez que fijaba legal y socialmente su papel en el hogar bajo los principios de subordinación a la omnipresente masculinidad.”

²⁴ For more on her life, see Ricardo’s *La resistencia en las Antillas* and Mora’s *Mujeres dominicanas*.

²⁵ See Bernardo Vega’s “Las falsas hazañas de Trujillo.”

²⁶ The original text states: “Mi papá, fué un gran gobernante, y pudo serlo, gracias a que tuvo una cabeza muy bien puesta, así como haber sido un colosal y exitoso administrador de la inmensa fortuna que le tocó administrar” (365).

²⁷ According to popular news magazine show *El informe* with Alicia Ortega, Trujillo’s fortune was as high as US \$800,000,000 at the time.

²⁸ The consulted text states: “Ama a tus padres, a quienes debes la vida. Respétalos y obedécelos. Así aprenderás a gobernar a tus hijos, a formar hombres obedecientes y respetuosos. Y ten presente que en tu casa está tu felicidad y tu honor; y debes alimentarla con tu cariño y honrarla con tu conducta, respetándote y haciéndote respetar. Cumple tus compromisos y no hagas daño a nadie. De esta manera gozarás la estimación que merecen los hombres de bien y serás en todas partes querido y apreciado.”

²⁹ The original text states: “No por casualidad la Cartilla cívica prestaba tanta atención a las responsabilidades familiares, las que se convirtieron en una extensión de las obligaciones ciudadanas. Centrado el discurso de la Cartilla en torno a la figura paterna, correspondía al padre la obligación de velar y proteger a su familia. Masculinizada la ciudadanía, los hombres se convirtieron en los ejes del paternalismo estatal.”

³⁰ The original text states: “Desde la fundación de la República, en 1844 . . . El militarismo se convirtió en una de las principales expresiones de la vida social dominicana.”

³¹ For more on this idea, see Derby's *Dictator's Seduction*.

³² According to San Miguel, Trujillo had even managed to "domesticate" the peasantry which the ruling elite had yearned to accomplish from the end of the nineteenth century (*La guerra silenciosa* 19).

³³ Here, Sommer writes about Juan Bosch's novel *La mañosa* (1936).

³⁴ The original text states: "hombres rurales de mentalidad montonera . . . caudillos [que] no daban tregua a ningún gobierno." Here, I loosely translate "montonera" as "guerilla." The translation is not exact.

³⁵ The original text states: "No estaría en mis cabales si pretendiera describir, en toda su extensión la generosidad de mi padre, él era como una fuente que manaba leche y miel para todos. En su hogar, sus familiares todos, amigos y hasta enemigos les alcanzaba su brazo humanitario. Como fue el caso de la viuda de Desiderio Arias, a quien visitó para regalarle una vivienda."

³⁶ The original text states: "En los primeros meses del año 1931, mi papá ofreció, en el prestigioso hotel Fausto una gran comida a la cual fueron invitados todos los llamados 'generales' de la época, de manera que estuvieron presentes, Desiderio Arias [and others] . . . Les ofreció un ramo de olivo invitándoles a contribuir con esa nueva política del gobierno y a participar desde posiciones congresales. Luego les dijo bien claro . . . que la descentralización del gobierno, era cosa del pasado."

³⁷ The original text states: "siguieron los pasos de la insurrección, y la suerte del General Cipriano Bencosme y del general Desiderio Arias."

³⁸ The original text states: "En el caso del Gral. Desiderio Arias, se agotaron todos los argumentos y medios para que desistiera de su actitud perturbadora. Este señor bien podía considerarse como uno de los más representativos entre estos personajes de personalidad irreflexiva y montonera . . . / El General Desiderio Arias era una persona que los gobiernos no podían darse el lujo de ignorar, siempre presente con su lista de prebendas no negociables y de cuyas concesiones pendía la diferencia entre la subversión y la tranquilidad."

³⁹ For instance, Flor de Oro Trujillo admits that she was the inspiration behind a law of disinheritance. After a US society column publishes a rumor about Flor de Oro Trujillo and alludes to the 1937 Haitian massacre, her father is infuriated by the negative publicity. She writes: "Now Trujillo was completely convinced that I had committed the unforgivable crime of speaking publicly against him. I was a 'scandal and an embarrassment' . . . [and] Congress, obeying Papa, had passed a law allowing any father to deny any son or daughter who had shamed him. My name was not mentioned, and I was not sent any official announcement, but that was my 'disinheritance'" (*Trujillo en la intimidación* 58). (The consulted text states: "Ahora Trujillo estaba completamente convencido de que yo había cometido el crimen imperdonable de hablar públicamente en su contra. Yo era un 'escándalo y una vergüenza' . . . [y] el Congreso, obediente a papá, había pasado una ley que permitía a cualquier padre negar a un hijo o hija que la haya avergonzado. Mi nombre no fue mencionado, no me enviaron ningún anuncio oficial, pero eso era mi 'desheredamiento.'")

⁴⁰ The original text states: "irritaron y sublevaron su alma guerrillera."

⁴¹ The original text states: "han dado origen a una infinidad de leyendas matizadas con toda clase de tonalidades y colores."

⁴² The original text states: "permitir que sean las propias palabras de mi padre, que nos refieran los hechos, tal y como lo relatara el 27 de febrero de 1932 a La Asamblea Nacional en ocasión de su rendición de cuentas correspondiente al año 1931."

⁴³ The original text states: "he recibido unas cuantas críticas y amonestaciones de parte de mi familia y de trujillistas, por haber escrito la novela."

⁴⁴ For the rest of the chapter, I use Aída's first name to refer to the protagonist of the novel and the full name, Aída Trujillo, to refer to the author.

⁴⁵ The original text states: "un joven bien formado, de torso y piernas fuertes . . . [y que] siempre elegía el lamento," and "tiene el aspecto de una mujer pálida y cuerpo alargado y transparente"

⁴⁶ The original text states: "Trujillo reconoció, con gran aprensión, al que antaño fue su gran colaborador. Al mandatario le invadió una mezcla de pena, furia, indignación, náuseas y, algo insólito en él, miedo. Sus raíces supersticiosas emergieron profusamente."

⁴⁷ The original text states: "De pronto, empezó a sentir un frío que le recordaba el que la había invadido hacía ya más de dos años. Permaneció quieta y alerta pero no encendió la luz. Al rato lo vio . . . Sin embargo, la mujer no sintió miedo alguno. Pero pudo percibir un gran descontento en lo que el fantasma le

manifestó, sin pronunciar ni media palabra. Estaba enfadado porque ella había llorado a su abuelo cuando, en una parte de ‘La fiesta del Chivo’, le asesinan. / Como si de algo natural se hubiese tratado, Aída se enfrentó con él y le gritó que, a pesar de no estar de acuerdo con el modo en que él había gobernado, ella seguía queriendo a su abuelo. Después también le preguntó que por qué había venido a visitarla. Su respuesta fue silenciosa y no puedo escucharla, solo la sintió. Se alegraba de que ella reconociera públicamente que no estaba de acuerdo con la dictadura de su abuelo. / Ella, convencida ya de que aquella era el alma de Desiderio Arias, le reprochó el hecho de que, después de tanto tiempo, aún no hubiese recuperado su cabeza. ¿A quién no había perdonado, a Trujillo o a [Ludovino] Hernández? / A ninguno de los dos, fue su muda respuesta. A su asesino por haberle arrancado la vida y a Trujillo porque, a pesar de no haber estado de acuerdo, lo había ascendido. / Aída . . . exclamó: —Desiderio, voy a darte un consejo. ¡Per-do-na! ¡Libérate de tu cruz y descansa en paz! / Nada más pronunciar aquellas palabras, el espectro abandonó la estancia y se dirigió al cuarto de baño.”

⁴⁸ Since I have been unable to locate the English original, I have re-translated the Spanish into English: “Cuatro años han pasado desde su muerte y aun agonizo, tratando de sacármelo de adentro, como mis pobres y atormentados dominicanos, perseguidos por su fantasma.”

⁴⁹ 1965 was an important year in the Dominican Republic. The US occupied the nation in April, which led to what is now called the War of April. This was also the year in which Dominicans began migrating to the US in larger numbers than ever before, motivated in part by the instability in the country and by the easing of immigration quotas through the US Immigration Act of 1965.

⁵⁰ R. Trujillo, a mulato, non-blue-blood “policeman” then dared to humiliate Ricardo by divorcing her and marrying his mistress María Martínez. The political and social control that had until recently belonged to a few “white” elites and their kin was now in the hands of Trujillo. Some have argued that Trujillo’s resentment in being rejected from being part of this tight-knit landholding elite provided impetus for many of his official governmental decisions. This included everything from changing divorce law so that he could divorce and re-marry at will to simply taking over any piece of land or company he desired by forcing owners to resign—or worse—if they did not pay him a substantial percentage of profits.

⁵¹ Flor de Oro Trujillo and several of her husbands received many gifts and favors from R. Trujillo, including a cultural ambassadorship in New York (Derby, *Dictator’s Seduction* 113). However, it was the favored one Angelita Trujillo who was crowned Queen of Peace and Confraternity of the Free World (Reina de la Paz y Confraternidad del Mundo Libre) on the occasion of the 1955 Fair of Peace and Confraternity of the Free World (Feria de la Paz y Confraternidad del Mundo Libre). To mark the occasion, Angelita Trujillo had an entourage of 150 princesses and was dressed with an \$80,000 white silk gown and a \$75,000 scepter (Derby, “The Dictator’s Seduction” 109).

⁵² Imelda Marcos and her thousands of shoes is just one example. Most recently, there was some controversy surrounding the March 2011 *Vogue* article “A Rose in the Desert” about Asma al-Assad, the Syrian first lady. Detractors were infuriated that the article glorified a woman married to a corrupt leader. Soon after the article was published the Syrian protests that became part of the so-called Arab Spring began.

⁵³ The consulted text states: “casi un ‘dictador’”

⁵⁴ The consulted text states: “eran mi anestesia para una fijación neurótica con Trujillo, mi escape de la soledad, de mi padre y de mí misma.”

⁵⁵ The consulted text states: “dos dominicanos poco comunes quienes habían vistos con sus propios ojos el gran mundo más allá de las fronteras y quienes superficialmente habían degustado la sofisticación.”

⁵⁶ The consulted text states: “u playboy . . . un muchacho sin futuro.”

⁵⁷ The consulted text states: “[i] estaba comprometida con Rubi y que tendría que salir inmediatamente hacia Santo Domingo!”

⁵⁸ The consulted text states: “ansiosa en resurgir de mi prisión, de huir de mi padre, un instinto que me impulsaría a través de mi vida.”

⁵⁹ The consulted text states: “¿por qué me había casi forzado a casarme con él?”

⁶⁰ The consulted text states: “Jamás permitiré que regreses con ese hombre.”

⁶¹ The consulted text states: “cortesano napoleónico Joseph Chevallier.”

⁶² The consulted text states: “portaba tantas medallas como papá, excepto que él las había optenido honestamente.”

⁶³ Lauren Derby suggested that this could also be due to a difference in personality between Flor de Oro Trujillo and the other two Trujillo women.

⁶⁴ The consulted text states: “Hasta la clase media dominicana que él mismo había creado y que lo había apoyado sin vacilaciones cuando la vida era buena, ahora era anti-trujillista. La Iglesia Católica lo había denunciado. Viejos amigos planeaban su muerte.”

⁶⁵ The consulted text states: “[L]legó a horrorizar al mundo en 1937 cuando su ejército mató unos 15,000 haitianos en una inexplicable disputa fronteriza.”

⁶⁶ The consulted text states: “tenía un cierto salvajismo animal.”

⁶⁷ The original text states: “Unos años después de comenzar su mandato, Trujillo, movido por una animadversión y un sectarismo hacia el país vecino, y también respaldado por sus incondicionales, por motivos puntuales desconocidos, dio orden de ejecución de muchos de sus convecinos.”

⁶⁸ The original text states: “Tal era la exaltación e hipocresía de la que el dictador estaba circundado que, en múltiples ocasiones, se llegó a afirmar que él era un eviado directo del propio Dios. Uno de los que se encargaron de ello fue su secretario personal, Joaquín Balaguer . . . Los seguidores de Trujillo, inspirándose en las barbaridades cometidos por lo que fue ‘La Santa Inquisición’, tristemente conocida por todos, le alentaban a seguir los pasos que marcaron su largo mandato. El propio Dios, solían decirle sus coautores, era el inspirador de su epopeya que, aunque de gran dureza, era sabia y bienhechora.”

⁶⁹ The original text states: ““olvidó parte de sus raíces y los buenos consejos de su madre, y se dejó influir por el racismo que caracterizaba a muchos dominicanos con respecto a sus vecinos haitianos.”

⁷⁰ The original text states: “sus hacendencias haitianas lo habían hecho sufrir mucho. Le habían hecho sentirse despreciado e inferior, y, por ello, decidió borrarles de su memoria.”

⁷¹ The original text states: “El pánico había hecho presa de Elmiré.”

⁷² The original text states: “El padre las Casas hizo un excelente trabajo cultivando muy buenas relaciones con los indios y se conmovía mucho al verlos sobrecargados con los trabajos que les imponían los colonizadores . . . Para remediar esa situación, el Padre las Casas sugirió a Ovando [el gobernador de la isla] traer a la isla mano de obra del continente africano, puesto que estos nativos de raza negra eran corpulentos, musculosos y mejor desarrollados para ese tipo de labor. Es así como llegaron a la isla los futuros pobladores cuyo gentilicio sería haitianos.”

⁷³ The original text states: “Era su meta [de Trujillo] desarraigar del país todos los vicios y lacras del pasado que tanto daño le habían acarreado, y encauzarlo hacia una dimensión de progreso y grandeza nacional. / Pero su iniciativa se veía gravemente entorpecida por la libre y permanente intrusión de naturales haitianos radicándose en nuestro territorio creando con ello una tácita merma de nuestra geografía y la consiguiente desaparición de nuestra frontera. Esta injusticia, ilícita e inaceptable actividad, significaba, más que un obstáculo, una negación a nuestros derechos. Sin fronteras no hay país. Aristóteles dice: ‘Lo que es de todos, no es de nadie.’

⁷⁴ The original text states: “los haitianos se resistían a respetar la nueva realidad.”

⁷⁵ The text itself places the word in quotation marks.

⁷⁶ The original text states: “vodou, y otras prácticas de religiones sincretistas.”

⁷⁷ The original text states: “agotaba todas las vías diplomáticas en busca de una solución dialogada para que los nacionales haitianos retornaran a su país.”

⁷⁸ The original text states: “la repatriación no era una solución conveniente para el gobierno haitiano, el éxodo era para ellos una beneficiosa válvula de escape que les aliviaba el problema demográfico que los asfixiaba.”

⁷⁹ The original text states: “[Trujillo] no tuvo más alternativa que, como autoridad suprema, ordenar que todos los haitianos residiendo ilegalmente en territorio dominicano, fueran repatriados, mediante el uso de la fuerza si fuera necesario . . . Desafortunadamente, como se temía, ocurrieron hechos violentos de sangre que ojalá no hubiesen sucedido . . . Exacerbó la violencia el resentimiento latente entre la población civil víctima de las incesantes embestidas de que eran objeto los pobladores dominicanos.”

⁸⁰ The original text states: “las víctimas [sic] de El Corte no pasaron de 3,000.”

⁸¹ The ellipses in brackets are my own. The original text states: “¿Cómo ha podido mandar a asesinar a esas mujeres, las llamadas ‘Mariposas’? [. . .] ¡Esas jóvenes, las hermanas Mirabal, eran personas inocentes, señor! [. . .] ¡Es verdad que, tanto ellas como sus esposos, estaban en contra de su política!”

⁸² The original text states: “Aquel terrible asunto que, según dicen algunos historiadores ‘se le había escapado de las manos’, desconsertaba totalmente a Trujillo. El dictador sentía que debía una explicación a Tantana, al mundo entero, a Dios y . . . a sí mismo [. . .] ‘Tú sabes muy bien que yo no las mandé matar, Tantana . . . Eso fué un accidente . . .’ / Trujillo era consciente de que las acciones de los hombres que habían matado a las hermanas Mirabal, y a otros seres inocentes, eran habitualmente provocadas por órdenes suyas. Los miembros del Servicio de Inteligencia Militar, el espeluznante SIM, eran muy crueles y, en no pocas ocasiones, hacían cosas que ni él les había encargado, adelantándose ‘a sus deseos.’”

⁸³ The original text states: “Tantana que lo quería tanto como se puede querer a un padre” and “El Jefe la quería y la trataba como a una hija.”

⁸⁴ The original text states: “el Jefe, no mata mujeres.”

⁸⁵ The original text states: “Mi papá no era ‘machista’, era la persona más expresiva y galante con las damas, y como fruto de esos sentimientos brotaba su protección y exaltación de la mujer dominicana.”

⁸⁶ The original text states: “[L]a filiación y devoción a la causa comunista de estas jóvenes, en modo alguno podía constituir una amenaza seria a la estabilidad del gobierno.”

⁸⁷ General Román Fernández had been in the armed forces since 1935 and was married to one of R. Trujillo’s nieces. He was sentenced to 30 years in prison for helping to orchestrate Trujillo’s assassination, but was murdered by Ramfis Trujillo in October of 1961 (Balcácer 489). The original text states: “De acuerdo con las declaraciones del general Román Fernández, los ejecutores [sic] fueron miembros del Servicio de Inteligencia Militar dependencia directa de la Secretaria de las Fuerzas Armadas, a excepción de un señor llamado Segundo Imbert Barreras, responsabilizado de supervisar y constatar la ejecución del crimen.”

⁸⁸ The original text states: “ordenó el crimen de las hermanas Mirabal por instrucciones de Luis Amiama Tió, que era el contacto directo entre el Consul Dearborn jefe del puesto de la CIA en el país y los conjurados.”

⁸⁹ The website for Fundación Rafael Leónidas Trujillo, an organization that is almost entirely dedicated to Angelita Trujillo’s book, contains a page entitled “*La última que vió a las Mirabal*”/The Last Woman Who Saw the Mirabal Sisters, which states that Miriam Morales, an anti-*trujillista* who spent time in the infamous jail “La 40,” saw that a blue car following the Mirabals on the night of their murders was driven by “a person who is still alive and is a retired high official.” (The original text states: “una persona que aún está viva y que es un alto oficial retirado.”) She argues that Trujillo had ultimately not given the order to assassinate the women (Santana). The website’s official mission, like that of the book, is to “fulfill the dignified process of complementing the last century’s annals of our patriotic history with the just restoration of the mutilated period of the 30 years known as the ‘Trujillo Era.’” (The original text states: “llevar a cabo el decoroso proceso de complementar los anales del siglo pasado con la justa restauración de los 30 años mutilados a nuestra historia patria correspondiente al periodo conocido como la ‘Era de Trujillo.’”) In other words, the goal is to re-write the history of the *trujillato*.

⁹⁰ Amiama Tió was an entrepreneur and politician from a landowning family. He survived Ramfis Trujillo’s vengeful retaliation after the dictator’s death by hiding in a closet at the home of some friends. He died in 1980 (Balcácer 487).

⁹¹ The original text states: “así lo manifiestan las transcripciones del juicio, que, por más que trataron los fiscales acusadores, no lograron obtener declaración alguna de los acusados que directa o indirectamente implicara a mi papá en el aludido crimen. ¡Y es que esa orden, jamás salió de los labios de mi padre!”

⁹² The original text states: “De todo corazón me alegra saber que [Román Fernández] tuvo la oportunidad de reconciliarse con el Todopoderoso mediante la confesión sacramental y que en la gracia del Señor, comiera y bebiera el Cuerpo y la Sangre de Cristo. ¡Así de grande es la misericordia de Dios!”

⁹³ The original text states: “desde agosot de 1960 ocupaba el cargo de Secretario de Estado de las Fuerzas Armadas.”

⁹⁴ The original text states: “¿Por qué no actuó [Trujillo] contra Pupo?”

⁹⁵ The original text states: “Creyó mi papá que Román había actuado en un arrebató de celos, en la creencia de que actuaba en beneficio del gobierno. Esa deducción, tenía sentido para el que conociera las limitaciones racionales del General Román, realidad agravada por otros hábitos que desatendió. Lógicamente se había excedido en la comisión de un crimen político, por exceso de lealtad, obtusa, pero al fin y al cabo lealtad.”

⁹⁶ The original text states: “a pesar de no haber estado de acuerdo, [Trujillo] lo había ascendido.”

Chapter Three

Magic and Patriarchal Legacy in Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar*

Wao* and Viriato Sención's *They Forged the Signature of God

*In Santo Domingo a story is not a story
unless it casts a supernatural shadow.¹*

The Dominican dictator Rafael L. Trujillo (1891-1961) led one of the most brutal regimes in the Caribbean and Latin America between 1930 and 1961. One of his right-hand men, Joaquín Balaguer (1906-2002), became his political heir, with presidencies from 1960 to 1962, 1966 to 1978 and 1986 to 1996. In the past few decades, survivors, scholars and writers—Dominican and non-Dominican—have documented some of the disastrous effects of the leadership of these men on the collective Dominican psyche.² In this chapter, I argue that Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007) and Viriato Sención's *They Forged the Signature of God* (1995; *Los que falsificaron la firma de Dios* [1992])—two novels written in the US by Dominican-born authors, inscribe history's so-called losers into the written form. In doing so, they expose a Dominican hyper-masculine ethos that, when it relates to Trujillo and Balaguer, revolves around a discourse of the supernatural. Further, since the language of magic in the Dominican Republic is frequently conflated with Haiti, I propose that the fear and awe present in discourses about Trujillo's and Balaguer's power stems directly from popular anti-Haitian anxieties. I read Díaz's and Sención's novels as both recording these anxieties and as engaging with Trujillo and Balaguer discourses from a diaspora perspective

which, as I have been arguing in this dissertation, often provides both a critical and nostalgic view of the homeland's ideologies and collective identity.³

Though I interpret *Oscar Wao* as a fascinating take on the Trujillo novel, it also intersects several genres, including the immigrant novel, ghetto fiction, sci-fi tale, and *bildungsroman*. It focuses on the tragicomic life of Oscar de León Cabral, a Dominican-American nerd who is unable to get girls' attention and be a stereotypical *tíguere dominicano* (Dominican playboy hustler). The novel is also the history of the rest of the Cabral family.⁴ Narrated by Yunior, Oscar's bully and sometime friend, one learns of Oscar's mother Belicia Cabral de León's tragic past back in her homeland of the Dominican Republic.⁵ Belicia's abusive behavior towards her two children—Oscar and Lola, the protagonist's older sister—reveals itself to be the result of the unspeakable trauma and physical beatings she had to endure before her move to the US in 1961. Belicia's tragedies begin before she is even born; Trujillo's murderous retaliation against her prominent family leaves her an orphan. A poor but proud family member named Myotis Altagracia "La Inca" Toribio Cabral decides to take her in. Later in life, Belicia becomes the mistress of a man who was married to Trujillo's sister. For this reason, she is beaten and left for dead. After this incident, La Inca urges her to move to the US. The tragedy of a life so shaped by Trujillo leads not only to the obvious repercussions that generations of the Cabral family have to endure, but also to the sense that Trujillo's trans-generational reach of power could have only resulted from his access to the supernatural. The sheer oddity of the supernatural in *Oscar Wao*—contrasting with the quotidian element of popular magical and religious practices that seek to manipulate this otherworldly realm—emerges when Yunior describes what happens after Belicia's

near-fatal beating. She encounters a mongoose-like creature that speaks to her as if from another realm. After Belicia recovers from this near-death experience, she migrates to the US.

Translated as *They Forged the Signature of God*, Sención's *Los que falsificaron la firma de Dios* centers on three adolescent seminarians' attempts to overturn Tirano, an obvious stand-in for Trujillo, an insignificant puppet compared to mastermind Dr. Mario Ramos, a stand-in for Dr. Joaquín Balaguer. Antonio Bell, Arturo Gonzalo, and Frank Bolaño, the seminarians at the beginning of the novel, grow up to be, respectively, a political insurgent, an apolitical bourgeois everyman, and an ambitious spy for the highest bidder. The novel, which begins soon after Tirano's regime with the seminarians' adolescence and ends with their middle age, revolves around these three characters' failed attempts to help end the regime that began with Tirano and that endures through Dr. Ramos. In their adulthood, the former seminarians resign themselves to Dr. Ramos' leadership, however unjust. An early event gives rise to the novel's supernatural motif: Antonio's father, Cástulo Bell, disappears after the losing opponent of a cockfight, Cocolo Cantera, informs the authorities that Cástulo is an anti-Tirano subversive. The latter is "disappeared," never to be heard from again. However, the rooster Juanito, a descendent of Cástulo's winning rooster, avenges Cástulo's murder by killing Cantera after another cockfight and, years later, mysteriously appears in Santo Domingo and kills Dr. Ramos himself. The rooster's assassination of wrongful patriarch Dr. Ramos closes the entire novel, highlighting the importance of the supernatural rooster and its acts.

Oscar Wao, and, to a lesser extent, *They Forged* make evident the ways in which the Dominican homeland's culture, ideologies, and collective trauma endure in the

diaspora. For instance, *Oscar Wao* reveals the both humorous and alienating extent to which Dominican masculinity becomes synonymous with Dominicanness itself. The protagonist's inability to conform to a Dominican ideal of hyper-masculinity makes others doubt the authenticity of his Dominicanness. Early in the novel, Oscar's decidedly awkward approach to women is described: "Anywhere else his triple-zero batting average with the ladies might have passed without comment, but this is a Dominican kid we're talking about, in a Dominican family: dude was supposed to have Atomic Level G, was supposed to be pulling in the bitches with both hands" (24). Oscar's lack of masculine prowess is precisely what challenges his feelings of belonging; not only is Oscar a diaspora Dominican—an identity that already implies a tenuous relationship to the homeland—but he is also a diaspora Dominican who does not fit the strict, gendered parameters of Dominicanness.

Another extension of the homeland that persists in the diaspora is the popular Dominican interpretation of power through supernatural figures. These interpretations of power are intertwined with Dominican anxieties about and misunderstandings of Haiti's religious practices. Institutionalized Dominican anti-Haitianism operates in great part through a simultaneous demonization of Haitian Vodun and an elision of the real affiliations between popular Dominican religious practices and Vodun. A close reading reveals that, not only does the awe-inspiring power of the two leaders evoke an anti-Haitian anxiety, but also that the supernatural as explored in these two novels manifests itself in a patriarchal manner. That is, they portray worlds in which the taken-for-granted patriarchal structure forms the base of corrupt leadership and unchecked power. Moreover, national and regional histories revolving around important male figures both

convey and promote this patriarchal structure, lending credence to Hegel's idea of great men of history.⁶ The novels also enumerate the devastating consequences of this unruly power, which includes physical and emotional trauma for generations of Dominicans.

Power that is not readily understood by a disenfranchised citizenry can manifest itself as a predatory supernatural entity or force.⁷ Some of the most well known works in post-Trujillo literature, both fiction and non-fiction, have made direct connections to the regime's demonic and occult elements. *They Forged* and *Oscar Wao* allude to figures in popular Dominican magical and religious practices, rendering them textual participants within these belief systems. Though Díaz's text was written in the English of a New Jersey-raised Dominican narrator while Sención's was written in Spanish, both novels were authored by diaspora Dominicans and became bestsellers.⁸ Junot Díaz's novel won the Pulitzer Prize in 2008. Its Spanish translation has also been successful in the Dominican Republic, at least among intellectual circles. Sención's novel had "over 32,000 copies . . . in circulation within 15 months of its initial appearance," which, added to its translation into English, signals its success (Wolff 218-9). That two works would make such a commercial and literary impact on Dominicans both on the island and in the diaspora, as well as a larger US public in the case of *Oscar Wao*, signals the compelling nature of tales at least partly touching on issues of power and the occult.

Haiti, Power and Magic

The fear and veneration of Trujillo's and Balaguer's power as evident in popular discourses echo a phantasmagorical Dominican anxiety over Haitian imperial desires to take over the entire island.⁹ This unease also recalls the common correlation between

Haiti and magic in which magical practices are often assumed to be Haitian. Hence, interpretations of these two men's power as occult stems from the fascination with Haitian "magic" that straddles both anxiety and respect. Lauren Derby's historical study of the Dominican-Haitian border region at the turn of the twentieth century reveals "an unstable set of symbolic associations linking Haitian *Vodun* (or *vodou*), fertility and value itself" ("Haitians, Money, Magic," 290). Here, she describes a border mentality and not the nationalist, anti-Haitian ideology that had as its apex Trujillo's 1937 Haitian massacre along the border region. Though these ideologies do not necessarily coexist within the same person, they form part of a general Dominican psyche.

Ambivalence is a pervasive theme in *Oscar Wao*, constantly suggesting a larger Caribbean mentality of linguistic and cultural creativity coexisting with political and economic chaos. However, it remains unclear if this ambiguity offers opportunities for demystifying "the totalizing pretensions of History . . . [in which it] ultimately emerges as a fantasy peculiar to the Western imagination in its pursuit of a discourse that legitimizes its power and condemns other cultures to the periphery" (Dash, *Caribbean Discourse* xxix).¹⁰ In other words, is the ambivalence a potential aesthetic aperture or simply the result of "a history characterized by ruptures" (Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* 61)?¹¹ Édouard Glissant uses the previous words to describe the history of the French Caribbean, but they are just as applicable to the rest of the Antilles. Ambivalence emerges during one of the most important moments in *Oscar Wao*. When Belicia encounters the mongoose-like creature in the sugar-cane fields, a question emerges: is this creature a sign of good or evil? On the one hand, the creature ultimately saves her; it implores Belicia to gain strength despite the death of the fetus in her womb, for she has

yet to give birth to her future two children. On the other hand, it connotes evil through a reference to the Faceless One that appears in her nightmares soon after the tragedy (Díaz 161).

The Faceless One reappears again in the novel in reference to the fate of a family she never knew. Sixteen years before Belicia is almost killed, her mother, Socorro dreams that a faceless man is standing over Abelard Cabral just weeks before he is thrown into jail and accused of a fictitious crime. The faceless one seems to be the figure of Death, but the fact that it appears in Belicia's dream of the night in the sugarcane field (which she survives), instead of the mongoose, is telling. After Belicia's encounter with the mongoose, Yuniór wonders whether the night's events resulted from the curse ("fukú") or a *zafa*, a blessing. La Inca, Belicia's adoptive mother, interprets the mongoose's visit as a sign that Belicia is blessed. This double interpretation is repeated again, but backwards in time, when Socorro finds out that she is pregnant with Abelard's third and final daughter while he is in prison. The narrator asks but does not answer the question "Zafa or Fukú?" The ambivalence of signs as either good or bad omens emerges also in the body of Belicia herself: "the family claims the first sign [of the oncoming tragedy] was that Abelard's third and final daughter [Belicia] was born black" even for Dominican standards (Díaz 248).¹² Though her extended family interpreted Belicia's dark skin as a "bad omen," one can also interpret the fact that she is the sole surviving member of her immediate family that survives as evidence of her good fortune. This double-sidedness echoes Deive's description of the Haitian baká's constitution, which "comprises of a superior force or aerial soul, and a superior or terrestrial one . . . Although the latter fulfills his role as guardian angel, it could also turn against its owner

due to its own dual composition” (257). Though the significance of omens and signs is unstable, the mystery of the Cabral family tragedy that begins with Abelard’s imprisonment becomes a traumatic silence that cannot be broken, despite Oscar’s attempts (Díaz 243).

With similar ambivalence, *Oscar Wao* and *They Forged* suggest that the power of men like Trujillo and Balaguer can be read as either messianic or demonic. In popular discourses, exorbitant power is interpreted as resulting from direct access to a mysterious realm. Though everyone has potential access to the supernatural through purchased rites of magic, accessing this power for selfish desires only results in larger social devastation, chaos and loss. The notion of a vampiric entity that feeds on living things is common to colonized or economically dependent societies. This is the spillage that results from the inadequacy of official explanations of extreme socio-economic inequality. Stories of malevolent, otherworldly, and vampiric creatures like the *chupacabra* throughout the Americas, the *galipote* in the Dominican Republic, and the *pishtaco* in the Andes can be seen as analogous to the powerful national or individual bodies that feed on the poor and disenfranchised.¹³ Haitian-American writer Edwidge Danticat shares her own experience hearing rumors of organ harvesting:

As a child growing up in Haiti at the time, I heard . . . stories of children being kidnapped so their organs could be harvested and used to save rich sick children in America, an idea that frightened me so much that I sometimes could not sleep (*Create Dangerously* 70).

For Danticat and other poor Haitian children, fear took the horrific form of dismemberment and physical loss of self for the benefit of the imperial power to the north. Similarly, Dominicans have often interpreted the historical and political centrality

of figures like Christopher Columbus and Trujillo as stemming from their privileged access to an occult realm. The supernatural power attached to Trujillo becomes an active agent in a larger social sense through the concept of *fucú*,¹⁴ or curse, which I discuss further below.

Returning to the issue of religiosity, many Dominicans would describe themselves as Catholic, in fact practicing a mixture of popular medieval European Catholicism, multiethnic African religious practices, and Haitian Vodun. One of the reasons for this was the sheer dearth of ordained priests in the island; by 1809, only about a dozen priests remained (Moya Pons, *A National History*, 116). Moreover, before the Haitian Occupations of the nineteenth century and Haitian day labor and immigration in the twentieth century, there was persistent intra-island movement. Among these were runaway slaves, commercial traders selling cattle in Port-au-Prince, and Haitian day laborers in the Dominican Republic. One can therefore attribute the presence of Haitian Vodun in what is now the Dominican Republic to the continuous permeability of the border; this border was simply not a fixed entity for most of the island's history.¹⁵ Recognizing the lack of uniformity in the ways in which popular Catholicism and Dominican vodú are practiced throughout the country, I will outline some of the motifs within them that are relevant to the literary analysis that follows. Like most forms of ethnic or racist prejudice, Dominican anti-Haitianist antagonism is vague in its focus and it directs its generalized scorn against cultural practices that *seem* to have African or Haitian roots. Despite this animosity, many Dominicans practice what is termed *vodú*, which differs from Haitian Vodun. It is not equivalent to "black magic" or "Satanism." Because it is evident in what many Dominicans see as *curandería* or the manipulation of

herbs, objects, and prayers for the curing of ailments and illnesses whose cause may be the evil eye or the presence of a malevolent spirit called a *baká* or *bacá*,¹⁶ it is often practiced alongside mainstream Catholicism. For this reason it is not surprising that many Dominican Catholics may also practice what ethnographers would term vodú while wholeheartedly denying it.

Carlos Esteban Deive, whose study on religion and magic is specific to the Dominican Republic, argues that there are two main differences between magical and religious practices. The first is that “[i]n religion, myth is inseparably connected to ritual . . . One could argue that magic . . . also implies the presence of myths, but these are not what really matter. What is essential to the sorcerer is ritual, the manipulation through specific techniques of the numinous power” (Deive 43-4). He elaborates: “Myth—which could be defined generally as the story of a sacred event that occurred in *illo tempore*, in primordial times—justifies itself through ritual, which, in turn, repeats it, updating the sacred act of creation” (181). In other words, while religion requires stories of creation and *may* include ritualistic practices, magic relies solely on ritual. The second difference between magic and religion is that “magic appears connected to unbridled desire and fear, and, above all, is seen as an experimental science in which the *brujo*¹⁷ offers all that he knows and makes use of as many techniques and procedures that he can find here and there to be successful in his enterprise” (246).

Deive’s suggestion that, unlike religion, magic is driven by irrationality is a reminder of the centuries-old feminization of magic. The standard anecdote in texts about Dominican magic is that of the scorned woman seeking to bring an indifferent lover into her arms.¹⁸ This feminization of black magic should be familiar to anyone who

has read about witchcraft in European, US, Mexican, and other Pan-American contexts. It was also a frequent complaint of white colonists “under the spell” of *mulatas* whose power of seduction lay in their proximity to “African” rituals and potions. Other scholars have written of the gendering of magical and religious practices in those contexts.¹⁹ However, because the impoverished Spanish colony of Santo Domingo had few priests compared with the heavy presence of the Catholic Spanish Crown in places like Mexico and Peru, there was little control of how people used magical and spiritual practices to understand their world. As such, the usage of magic was more generalized and could not have become exclusively associated solely with women in the Dominican context. That magic is not considered exclusively feminine in the Dominican Republic allows for a discursive precedent in popular interpretations of Trujillo’s power resulting from magical negotiations. Indeed, in literature about Trujillo, the tyrant’s grotesque desires and paranoia render him demonic, gendering magic as a masculine longing for money and power.

The masculinization of magic or witchcraft emerges clearly in *They Forged*. The men in the story—Antonio’s mourning grandfather, Antonio himself, and Ramos—believe in the power of magic, especially within the context of the traditionally masculine practice of cockfighting. Dr. Ramos’/Dr. Balaguer’s illicit sexual encounters are narrated as feeding the devil to which he sold his soul for power. For instance, a footnote within the novel explains:

Doña Muñinga, a famous clairvoyant of Santiago de los Caballeros, asserts that Dr. Mario Ramos [Dr. Joaquín Balaguer] has a pact with the devil, whose presence is abundantly clear on close examination of any photograph of him or in any appearance on a television screen. The Señora also says that Dr. Ramos’s constant revitalization is the result of

the transfer of energy he obtains in his magical-erotic rites with adolescent girls that are supplied to him regularly by Satan himself (243).

While the mothers have faith in the power of the Church, Dr. Ramos resorts to the power of black magic. Despite Ramos' satanic rituals, the magical-supernatural has the final word, for the supernatural rooster Juanito overtakes Dr. Ramos at the end of the novel.

While Senci3n captures the sense that Ramos was believed to have communed with witch doctors to fuel his power, he also conveys the popular idea that, in the end, he was a mere vessel to a higher entity. Ramos' tragic fate echoes that of the men in bak3 anecdotes who resort to acquiring a bak3 for selfish motives. Two of the mothers in the novel have a blind faith in the Catholic Church, despite—or because of—the latter's maintenance of patriarchal order. The desire of Antonio Bell's mother to send her son to a seminary is the result of the disappearance and likely murder of her husband C3stulo Bell by Dr. Ramos' order during Tirano's dictatorship. Arturo Gonzalo's mother's suffering at the hands of an abusive, alcoholic husband led her to believe that only a vow to the church could save her son from becoming this kind of man. For both mothers, then, the answer to placating the curse of patriarchal excess is to exterminate the family name through their sons' celibacy. However, the Church ultimately fails to protect the boys from the curse of patriarchal power embodied by Tirano and Dr. Ramos. Despite Antonio Bell's and Arturo Gonzalo's mothers' faith in an organized religion, the Church remains a masculine space with priests who are more concerned with saving face than with saving their constituents from tyranny. The exception to this is the figure of Fabricio Paula y C3spedes, an exiled Cuban priest working at the boys' seminary. Paralleling his aversion to the Batista regime in his homeland, he inspires the boys' *anti-trujillismo*.²⁰

In popular Dominican culture, extraordinary wealth and power are commonly attributed to that person's purchase of a *baká*. A *baká* or *bacá* exists "within [Dominican] *vodú* magic" and is, as mentioned above, "a malevolent spirit that surrounds and protects the property of its owner under the appearance of an animal" (Deive 257). It was rumored that Trujillo had the help of a *muchachito* or little boy, referring to a *baká* (Derby, *Dictator's Seduction*, 216). Anecdotes reveal that, in general, buying a *baká* is seen as a futile and even evil endeavor. Furthermore, "the one who buys a *baká* is not always aware of the nature of the deal, and the brujo who is in charge of its preparation can fool his patient" (Deive 257). For instance, illnesses and ailments can be attributed to the mishandling of a *baká*: "If it is determined that the problem's cause is spiritual, the specific source must be determined. It could be a matter of the spirits of the dead attached to the patient, or the repercussion of the anger of a deity or another spiritual entity such as a 'bacá' which is charging the person for his or her lack of attention" (Davis 238). In the end, only the greater power, to which both the *baká* and the brujo are subservient, prevails.

What is more, *baká* narratives contain the moral that neither power nor wealth is ever worth the loss of life, dignity, family and friends that the purchase of a *baká* often requires. Many of these tales show that tragedy stems from the greed of those seeking power and their lack of humility vis-à-vis a greater entity. For instance, Deive recounts the story of a man in the province of Eliás Piña whose 16-year-old son suddenly died because the father had promised him to a *baká* (Deive 258). However, *bakás* can also hold contradictory meanings. As mentioned above, Belicia's encounter with the mongoose can be described as either fortuitous in that she survives a near-death

experience, or catastrophic, in that her life following the event is filled with hardship. The creature itself is described as a mongoose except for its “golden lion eyes” and “absolute black” pelt. Most descriptions of the baká identify it as a “[l]arge animal, usually black, of the dog family” and with “eyes [that] glow like fiery coals at night” (De Pree 8-9). They are also described as “imaginary hybrid beasts that steal farm animals, harvests, and cash through shape-shifting. Created by sorcerers, bacás are spirit creatures that enable people to become dogs, cats, pigs, and goats and to amass wealth” (Derby, “Male Heroism” 3).

A key example of the supernatural trope and history-making on a larger scale is the construction of the *Faro a Colón*/Columbus Lighthouse Memorial. Also evident in this example is the way in which political power manifests itself in the bodies of men resulting in a masculine genealogy of history beginning with Columbus. Though the Lighthouse had been conceived over a century earlier, the project only came to fruition under Balaguer’s administration, just in time for the quincentennial celebrations of Columbus’ “discovery” of the New World in 1992. Construction of the Lighthouse began in 1986, but Dominican historian Antonio Del Monte y Tejada had either conceived of or solidified (depending on the source) the idea in 1852. There were even international architectural design competitions held in 1929 (Candelario 280). The current Lighthouse follows the winning 1931 design at half a mile long and with walls 120-feet high (“New Lighthouse”). A *New Yorker* article describes the Lighthouse in its final stages of construction: “The Columbus Lighthouse . . . is a horizontal structure, like a recumbent beast, designed to throw its light vertically, upward . . . Since it was clearly intended as one of the new wonders of the world, its scale is immense . . . It has the look

of a concrete pyramid with one long extended arm: a humped, dinosaur look; an anonymous, inert grayness” (Reid 72). Despite the structure’s hyperbolic nature, it is a fitting culmination of the country’s and the Caribbean region’s masculinization of power and history. As such, the general public’s uneasiness with the Lighthouse partly stems from a discomfort with this aggrandizement of men like Columbus. It is also likely that the usage of public funds to commemorate a single man reminded many Dominicans of Trujillo’s countless monuments celebrating himself and his family during the regime.

The Lighthouse celebrates the Genovese’s “discovery” of the Americas, the evangelization of the region, and, as such, the arrival of “Fukú americanus” according to Yunior’s narration in *Oscar Wao* (Díaz 1). Here, it is appropriate to explain *fucú*. It means, quite simply, curse. Citing Dominican folklorist R. Emilio Jiménez, Derby describes it as an “evil charge passed through bodily extensions such as clothing, house, touch, or even the uttering of one’s name” (*Dictator’s Seduction* 217). Jiménez further explains that people often take precautions against *fucú*’s potential destruction, such as avoiding contact with the object, animal, or person who is said to have a *fucú* (*Savia dominicana* 66).

Yunior’s narration frequently alludes to Trujillo’s supernatural power, connecting it to a greater curse set off by Columbus’ arrival to the New World. He explains, “[I]n those elder days, *fukú* had it good; it even had a hypeman of sorts, a high priest you could say. Our then dictator-for-life Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina. Nobody knows whether Trujillo was the Curse’s servant or its master, its agent or its principal, but it was clear he and it had an understanding, that them two was tight” (Díaz 2-3). Once again, Trujillo is an agent, not the creator, of this occult force. In more material terms, no one can escape

Trujillo's legacy (the result of *fucú*), because the way he enacted his power would not allow it; Trujillo's ruling style required the participation of the entire citizenry in the drama of the State. For instance, invitations to regime events were thinly disguised orders and these events required guests to conform to a strict protocol. This "drama" is most clearly evident in the aforementioned panegyrics, whose hyperbolic praise, in which no one could offer dissent, became the standard conversational register in all Trujillo-related events. According to Robert Crassweller: "Their own worth denied, Dominicans were reduced to the pagan phrases which purported to dignify and even deify Trujillo: 'Thanks to God and Trujillo'; 'If God and Trujillo permit.' Bronze tablets proclaim: 'In this house Trujillo is the Chief'" (289).²¹

In *Oscar Wao*, supernatural events erupt into the text—that is, they are not seamless—as reminders that survival in Díaz's doomed and enchanted Caribbean requires the manipulation of the social, cultural, and political environment through magic. In other words, when anything supernatural occurs in *Oscar Wao*, the narrator comments on its strangeness. *Oscar Wao* cannot be considered a "magical realist" novel precisely because it does not fulfill the genre's convention of weaving the magical with the quotidian seamlessly and unselfconsciously.²² In both novels, managing these extraordinary supernatural forces requires the usage of amulets that can protect individuals from harm or *fucú*. For instance, *Oscar Wao*'s Yuniór describes his fear that Lola's young daughter Isis will one day have to confront the family's curse. In the meantime, Isis has been given several layers of spiritual protection: ". . . [O]n a string around her neck: three azabaches: the one that Oscar wore as a baby, the one that Lola wore as a baby, and the one that Beli was given by La Inca upon reaching Sanctuary.

Powerful elder magic. Three barrier shields against the Eye. Backed by a six-mile plinth of prayer . . . Powerful wards indeed. One day, though, the Circle will fail” (329-30).

Though amulets have the ability to temporarily placate evil forces, their power expires.

The curse of the Cabral family, like slavery was in most of the Americas, is inherited: “It was believed, even in educated circles, that anyone who plotted against Trujillo would incur a fukú most powerful, down to the seventh generation and beyond” (Díaz 3). The curse dictated that any member of the Cabral family—and any seemingly subversive family—would be born into chaos and suffering. On a realistic level, this emphasizes the inescapability of the dictatorship and its legacy for its survivors and descendants, even in the diaspora.

Another element of fucú in *Oscar Wao* is that it opens this Dominican-American tale to Caribbean and African Diaspora discursive space and literary and cultural tradition. Yunior’s repeated reminder that the curse is not just unique to the Dominican Republic but to the entire Caribbean is evident even in the opening passage:

They say it came from Africa, carried in the screams of the enslaved; that it was the death bane of the Tainos, uttered just as one world perished and another began; that it was a demon cracked open in the Antilles. *Fukú americanus*, or more colloquially the Curse and the Doom of the New World. Also called the fukú of the Admiral because the Admiral was both its midwife and one of its great European victims; despite “discovering” the New World the Admiral died miserable and syphilitic, hearing (dique) divine voices. In Santo Domingo, the Land He Loved Best, . . . the Admirals’ very name has become synonymous with both kinds of fukú, little and large; to say his name aloud or even to hear it is to invite calamity on the heads of you and yours (Díaz 1).

Díaz’s choice to open the novel with these words places the narrative within a larger Caribbean and African Diaspora context. Though the narrator alludes to the entire New World, the centrality of the Caribbean as the fount of this fucú becomes evident.

Repeated references are made to canonical Caribbeanist and Pan-Africanist writers like Fanon, Césaire, and Glissant.²³ For example, words like *chabine*, used to describe the golden eyes of the mongoose, Belicia, and Ybón—Oscar’s last love interest—that emerge from a Francophone Caribbean vocabulary, infuse the text.²⁴ Like other writers in the Dominican diaspora, Díaz’s imagination allows him to explore the Caribbean and African Diaspora elements of the Dominican national identity.²⁵ His contextualization of the Trujillo dictatorship as part of a complicated, fascinating, violent, and myth-like history of the Caribbean is in part what renders Díaz’s exploration of the legacy of the Trujillo regime so unique. The narrator is incredulous, especially in the novel’s copious footnotes, that the regime has not been fully analyzed and contextualized within a larger history of exploitation and a larger framework of the Caribbean and the African Diaspora. This element distinguishes Díaz’s novel from other Dominican(-American) novels, which generally look towards the national canon or mainland Latin America.²⁶

In popular discussions of the Lighthouse, Balaguer’s greed for power becomes self-destructive, reminding them that he, like Trujillo, is the mere vessel of a higher power. Reports “prophesied that Balaguer would die on the day of the Columbus quincentennial” (Ferbel 142), that “the repeated obstacles and delays to initiating and later completing the project” (Calendario 281) and that Balaguer’s sister Emma’s death just days before the inaugural event were all evidence of the curse of Columbus (Derby, *Dictator’s Seduction* 221). Even the *New York Times* mentions fucú in an article about the Balaguer administration’s failure to attract many international dignitaries on the quincentennial celebrations. The same article also mentions the country’s poverty as another reason behind many Dominicans’ disapproval of the construction of the reported

\$70 million structure (French): “To many supporters and opponents of the lighthouse alike, that Mr. Balaguer’s long-cherished project should be so bitterly opposed is not surprising given a longstanding and widely held belief, known as *fucú*, or curse, that anything bearing the name Columbus will bring enduring trouble” (French). In general, Dominicans were incredulous that despite the “hunger in the countryside” and the “misery in the slums on the edges of the capital,” “Balaguer continued in Olympian indifference, unperturbed, deaf to dissent” (Reid 72).

Balaguer was also accused of committing the crime of building a huge structure whose existence interpellated the name of the Admiral. Hence, the Lighthouse is emblematic of Balaguer’s codification of that which should not have been codified—Columbus—as well as his failure to lead a successful quinquennial events. It is also a hyperbolic kind of history-making, visible and legible from miles away and for generations to come. Like Rafael Trujillo’s much-hyped and expensive 1955 FERIA de la Paz y Confraternidad del Mundo Libre, which “generated neither international attendance and the revenue nor the public-relations payoffs Trujillo had hoped for” (Candelario 89), this event came and went without meeting organizers’ high expectations. This is not specific to the commemorative events taking place in the Dominican Republic. According to Michel-Rolph Trouillot, “as 1992 neared, commercial, intellectual, and political brokers prepared to turn the quinquennial into a *global* extravaganza” (*Silencing the Past* 137, emphasis mine). He argues that the failure of the event was equally wide-ranging, since the “quinquennial was a flop compared to the celebrations of the 1890s” due in great part to “the retorts produced by dissenting minorities” (137). However, “[t]he one monument celebrating 500 years of evangelism was the cruciform

lighthouse in Santo Domingo . . . under the orders of the octogenarian president . . . at tremendous cost to his country's impoverished economy. Of all the 'world leaders' invited, only the Pope saw fit to attend the opening of this monumental embarrassment, which the rest of Latin America studiously ignored" (Hulme 230). Many Dominicans' unhappiness stemmed greatly from the electoral fraud that allowed Balaguer into the presidential seat in 1990 as well as the fact that "the country was ill-equipped economically to afford such a gaudy and expensive (multi-million dollar) display of commemoration" (Ferbel 142). The final Lighthouse design was in the shape of a cross, which should not be surprising considering Balaguer's Christian, priestly brand of paternalism most evident in his emulation of monk-like Founder of the Nation, Juan Pablo Duarte. Although the design had been decided decades earlier, Balaguer likely had the last word in the definitive design as he was the president who finally brought the dormant and ambitious project to fruition. The Lighthouse, combined with the widely believed idea that Columbus' remains were at the Catedral Primada in the Colonial Zone, rendered Santo Domingo a unique point on the map of the 1992 quinquennial events, and, hence, especially conspicuous in its failures.²⁷

These 1992 celebrations organized by Balaguer echo the 1955 Fair in at least one important way: the failure of the patriarch to keep his constituents content. By 1955, many Dominicans who before were able to overlook the regimes' excesses were beginning to get restless. Trujillo scholars see the mid-to-late 1950s as the beginning of the end for the Trujillo regime and the Fair serves as an appropriate marker due in great part to its inability to meet expectations. Though the 1992 events differed markedly from 1955 in that the first celebrated what many thought was a globally important event while

the 1955 Fair was a national event with international aspirations. For Balaguer to have planned the construction of the Lighthouse starting in 1986 in time for the quincentennial in 1992 shows a foresight that betrays the seriousness with which he embraced the undertaking. Indeed, it seemed that he was alone in this matter leading many people to call the project “Faro a Balaguer” (Ferbel 142). Apparently, “[t]he only others who supported the Faro’s construction were those who had a stake in celebrating Columbus: Spaniards, Italians, and upper-class Dominicans who identified with the European roots of their culture” (Ferbel 143-4). Cementing the sense that only the interests of a few were being met in the construction of the Lighthouse was the fact that its construction required the removal of poor residential housing and, like many tourist spots around the world, the surrounding low-income area was placed out-of-view from tourists:

“Surrounding the Faro is a tall stone wall that blocks poor barrio residents from crossing the Faro’s grounds . . . This wall, built to hide the realities of Dominican poverty from the visiting dignitary or tourist, is known by everyone as the *Muro de la Verguenza*, or the Wall of Shame” (Ferbel 144). It was why even former Balaguer supporters wanted the blind octogenarian out of office (Reid 71).

Balaguer’s behavior regarding the Lighthouse broke many of the ties that he had carefully established with the *pueblo*. According to Krohn-Hansen’s study in the border town of La Descubierta, people’s confidence in Balaguer as a patriarch stemmed from his adherence to the crucial duties of *compadrazgo*/patronage such as gift-giving and the practice of “letting himself be seen” (“dejarse ver”). As is evident in both René Fortunato’s condemning *La violencia del poder* (2004) and Saul Pimentel’s flattering *Balaguer: 96 años de historia* (2006), Balaguer’s spectacle of gift-giving, like Trujillo’s,

was a central part of his political campaign. Hence, his behavior regarding the Lighthouse, which can be described as “taking” resources from the people rather than “giving” to the *pueblo*, was likely surprising to some people, though not to many others who were accustomed to being treated poorly by government officials. It also makes sense that many people alluded to the curse of Columbus in reference to the Lighthouse and the calamity that would come upon Balaguer or those near and dear to him, for many felt that he was behaving in a manner that was anti-social, self-aggrandizing, egotistical. That kind of selfish behavior—akin to the purchase of a baká for selfish motives—results in the death of self or a loved one.

Patriarchal Anxiety and Men of the Occult

Oscar Wao also showcases the curious revival of taboos around important men of history like Columbus, Trujillo, Balaguer, or their symbolic representation. In short, the taboo exists on the men whose uttered names or images could potentially unleash the curse or fucú on Dominicans or Caribbean people. This is particularly interesting considering that taboos traditionally form around the bodies of women, whose reproductive capacity renders their bodies impure. In this case, however, they center on the powerful men who guard access to the greater power. The notion of taboo becomes significant in *Oscar Wao* when Oscar’s grandfather, Abelard Cabral, is punished by Trujillo and his clan in the most brutal way: by destroying his family. Trujillo sends Abelard, a prominent doctor, to prison for refusing to give Trujillo sexual access to one of his two young daughters, Jacquelyn. His wife, Socorro, commits suicide soon after the third daughter Belicia’s birth, and Jacquelyn and the other daughter, Astrid, are dead

within three years. A torture called “La Corona” or The Crown renders Abelard a “vegetable,” neither dead nor alive. Belicia, an infant too dark-skinned for the family’s relatives to adopt her, ends up being sold into servitude in the desert of Azua until a distant family member rescues her. Later, as a young woman, Belicia would encounter the tragedy in the sugar cane fields that would lead to her emigration to the US soon after Trujillo’s assassination. The fate of the Cabral family is cruel not only in fact, but also in a symbolic sense as the almost total destruction of a family line, whose blood only feeds “bloated” patriarch Trujillo. However, to Trujillo, Abelard is guilty of two of the worst taboos during this era: daring to use reason and intellect for purposes other than in the service of the dictator, and rejecting Trujillo’s grotesque desire to rape Abelard’s adolescent daughter. If one defines taboo in the sense of “[t]he putting of a person or thing under prohibition or interdict, perpetual or temporary,” in a time of a repressive regime the many rules of what may or may not be said become redefined as taboo based on the preferences of the leader (*OED*). The original usage of the word *taboo*, which was directly connected to religion and superstition insofar as “certain things [were] considered the property of the gods or superhuman powers, and therefore forbidden to men” was “extended to political and social affairs, being usually controlled by the king or great chiefs in conjunction with the priests” (*OED*).

Indeed, considering that Trujillo had become almost omnipotent by the end of his regime, the many repressive laws during the *trujillato* could be understood through the lens of what Trujillo enforced as taboo. For instance, the State terrorized the Dominican citizenry into adulating Trujillo even in their homes with a metal sign “*En esta casa Trujillo es el Jefe*”/In this Household Trujillo is the Boss, for failing to do so resulted in

imprisonment or worse. Due to this constant adulation, Trujillo had acquired an almost omnipotent aura by the end of his regime. The attempted *coup d'état* in 1961 failed in great part because of the insistence of key conspirators that they see Trujillo's corpse before carrying out any subsequent steps. The atmosphere of mistrust among government officials and common citizens bred by Trujillo's regime is evident in the plotters' extreme caution. At the crucial moment the men, some of whom had had high posts in the government, simply could not trust their fellow plotters' word that Trujillo was really dead. Thus, the macabre proof in the shape of Trujillo's bullet-riddled body, was evidence of a power that would be impossible to eradicate through a single night's events, even if these had led to the dictator's physical death.

Both *Oscar Wao* and *They Forged* evoke the near impossibility of escaping the patriarchal construction of the post-Trujillo nation. *Oscar Wao*'s characters in particular struggle with their world's gendered social structures. The manner in which the novel develops this theme is through repeated allusions to the process of history-making and, specifically, the power of the written story. For a novel that concerns itself with the winners in history—e.g., the West and hyper-masculine men—and the losers—e.g., the “rest” and feminized subjects—this interest in who gets to narrate history makes sense. The contrast between history's winners and losers emerges violently several times in the text, but it is climactic during a scene that presages Oscar's death. Because Oscar fails miserably at the masculinity test and thereby at securing his Dominicanness within the diaspora, he seeks to find community and belonging by spending time in Santo Domingo and searching for and writing about his family's history. This goal is interrupted first by his violent assault and finally by his murder at the hands of a sadistic, pro-Balaguer cop,

whose girlfriend, Ybón, Oscar had been courting. Unlike overweight, clumsy, and sweet-tempered Oscar, the cop is described as “a skinny forty-something jabao [light-skinned man] standing near his spotless red Jeep, dressed nice . . . One of those tall, arrogant, acerbically handsome niggers that most of the planet feels inferior to” (294). Called “el capitán,” this jealous boyfriend is the masculine antithesis of Oscar. The capitán’s exorbitant masculinity manifests itself in his violence against Oscar, a decidedly “failed” man.

Christian Krohn-Hansen argues that “notions of masculinity among Dominicans have played, and continue to play, a central part in the everyday production of political legitimacy—inside and outside the political parties, and the state. Ideas about masculinity constitute a dominant discourse” (108). E. Antonio de Moya further contends that “masculinity as a totalitarian and contradictory political discourse . . . is produced, reproduced and modified by ordinary people in everyday life in the Dominican Republic . . . Verbal categories mainly based on sexual orientation, and labels used by Dominican men for classifying and evaluating each other as men . . . structure masculinity as a dominant discourse” (107). *Oscar Wao* reveals some of the intricacies of these categories used among men, and the violence enacted to protect them. According to Yuniors, what saves Oscar this first time is the fact that he does not look like “my pana [chummy], Pedro, the Dominican Superman, or like my boy Benny, who was a model,” but, instead, “was a homely slob” (296). For el capitán, Oscar’s place on the masculinity hierarchy is too low to even merit his death, at least initially.

This tragic event is also proof that the oppressive forces that caused the disintegration of the Cabral family decades earlier persist. Having worked under

“Demon Balaguer,” the Capitán is also a remnant of that recent traumatic history that has haunted Oscar’s and countless other Dominican families (294). Unlike for Oscar’s family, “[t]he Twelve Years [of Balaguer’s rule of 1966 to 1978] were good times for men like [el capitán]. In 1974 he held a woman’s head underwater until she died (she’d tried to organize some peasants for land rights in San Juan); in 1977 he played mazel-tov on a fifteen-year old boy’s throat with the heel of his Florsheim (another Communist troublemaker, good fucking riddance)” (295). In other words, history’s winners continue to win.

Even a diaspora subject like Oscar must continually contend with a Dominican legacy of patriarchal violence whose apex was represented by Trujillo and Balaguer and which is far from over. Further, as mentioned earlier, masculinity emerges as tenuous and over-important in the diaspora, where it is conflated with national belonging. Anti-hero Oscar is bullied by questions about his sexuality both in the homeland and in the diaspora, but it is only in the US that his feminized sensitivity distances him from his Dominicanness. Sadly, Oscar’s attempts to defend himself during the first encounter with the angry boyfriend by proclaiming, “I’m an American citizen,” do not keep the captain and his thuggish sidekicks from beating him almost to death (295). In fact, the capitán replies, “I’m an American citizen too. I was naturalized in the city of Buffalo, in the state of New York” (295). This simple exchange indicates that Oscar’s US citizenship offers little protection if he cannot defend himself physically “like a man.” After the capitán and his friends teach Oscar a lesson, they leave him in the cane fields, directly echoing Belicia’s violent experience decades earlier. This is a point that does not escape the narration itself, which states “How’s that for eternal return?” (296) and, later,

“If they [the Cabral family] noticed the similarities between Past and Present they did not speak of it” (301). The captain later murders Oscar for defying his orders to never see Ybón again.

Oscar dies before he can fulfill his goal of writing his family’s history, though Yuniór acts as a record keeper and does, in fact, narrate the Cabral family history. Abelard Cabral—the grandfather Oscar would never meet and the father Belicia would never know—attempts to write about the Trujillo regime, but the dictator destroys his life before he gets a chance to do so. In a sense, Abelard’s and Oscar’s fates as failed storytellers emerges as a constant. Another constant is that women in the novel do not partake in writing history. Broadly speaking, the main women in the novel—Belicia, Lola de León (Oscar’s sister), Abelard’s wife Socorro, his mistress Lydia Abenader, Belicia’s adoptive mother La Inca, Oscar’s first and only sexual conquest Ybón—are either victims of history or protectors of the hearth. However, they are also undeniably complex characters whose decisions and desires are pivotal to the narrative. Furthermore, they have the limited power of taming or warding off the curse. For instance, after Belicia is kidnapped by the SIM (Military Intelligence Service), beaten in the sugarcane fields, and left for dead, La Inca

knew in her ironclad heart that . . . the Doom of the Cabrals had managed to infiltrate her circle at last. . . Shrugging off her weariness, she did what many women of her background would have done. Posted herself beside her portrait of La Virgen de Altagracia and prayed. We postmodern plátanos tend to dismiss the Catholic devotion of our viejas as atavistic . . . but it’s exactly at these moments, when all hope has vanished when the end draws near, that prayer has dominion (Díaz 144-5).

La Inca’s gendered and classed prayers—“women of her background”—succeed in protecting Belicia Cabral from death. However, Yuniór’s narration of the trauma that

haunts Belicia in the diaspora and results in the abuse of her two children suggests that dying in the sugarcane fields may have been better, pinpointing the limits of La Inca's prayers in the face of larger, masculine historical forces.

The female characters in Sención's novel fit into three conventional categories that are characteristic of a masculine gaze. In the first category are the nubile schoolgirls and seductive young women. One may include in this category Doña Amelia Bolaño, Frank Bolaño's twenty-two year old aunt, who "married at eighteen and a widow now at twenty-two, her body in fullest splendor, was lithe as a schoolgirl in her bearing" (Sención 117). At the other extreme are the prostitutes and the aging brothel madam, Herminia, who is described as a "short and dumpy drill-sergeant, her flesh now in its irremediable fifties, her face thickly powdered, a false Marilyn Monroe birthmark on her cheek, both forearms dripping bracelets" (125). She also has "red talons," "sausage fingers," "and a great big mouth" that "open[s] to roar like a lioness" (126). Recalling a real-life incident in which Trujillo sent prostitutes to various churches to humiliate the anti-Trujillo priests, the narrator describes the prostitutes who storm the seminary as "drunken and coarse, dancing *habaneras*, stark naked, breasts swaying to the accompaniment of their own hoarse, raucous voices in chorus in a wild, lewd carousal in a moonlit yard" (107). In the third category and far from this extreme corporeality are the pious mothers, whose traumatic experiences with their husbands have led them to push their sons towards eternal celibacy and the priesthood.

Despite the flatness of its female characters, Sención's novel taps into a traditional Dominican literary canon helmed by a portrait of the masculine, earnest *campesino* or peasant on whose modest livelihood the family relies. The pivotal figure of

this ethos is Dr. Ramos—alias—Dr. Balaguer, an important writer of history and canonizer of literature. Arguably the most important Dominican political ideologue of the twentieth century, Balaguer was particularly concerned with the patriarchal family structure as the nucleus of the nation. Because he was also anti-Haitianist, he was obsessed with the idea of the Dominican Republic as a land of pure, Spanish descendants. This concern is especially evident in his influential *La isla al revés* (1983), which includes photographic “evidence” of families that, to other eyes, could also serve as evidence of the very opposite thesis: that the Dominican Republic is a country of racially mixed families with African ancestry. The very idea of a “pure” Spanish ancestry is unstable and breaks down with even halfhearted scrutiny.²⁸ Nevertheless, the ideology of pure, or almost pure, Spanish ancestry that Balaguer espouses is one that is tethered to the culture of the Cibao region. This is the valley region in the center of the country, “protected” from Haitian immigrations by mountains. The Cibao is featured in works like Ramón Emilio Jiménez’s *Al amor del bohío* (1927) and other canonical celebrations of patriarchal traditions in which the idealization of the manly peasant is prominent. In a sense, when Juanito the rooster assassinates Dr. Ramos at the end of *They Forged*, he avenges the death of all peasants like Cástulo Bell. This is ironic because Dr. Ramos—again, a thinly veiled version of Balaguer—idealized peasants like Bell in theory. To Balaguer, these *campesinos* represented the ideal Dominican nation.

They Forged suggests that Dr. Ramos could not accept that peasants like Cástulo Bell were agents of their own destiny and not simply symbols in his imagined national community. In other words, as a writer of official history, Balaguer could not abide by his characters’ realization of their own power. In this sense, *They Forged* offers an

alternate history whereby Balaguer/Ramos dies a supernatural death by the claws of a rooster, perhaps a baká. Indeed, one can read the rooster Juanito's mysterious and surreal appearance in the capital of Santo Domingo as cosmic punishment against malevolent patriarch, Dr. Ramos/Dr. Balaguer for his wrongful leadership. Juanito's supernatural task also avenges the wrongful death of patriarchs like Cástulo Bell. Considering Ramos/Balaguer's role as Usurper of the People—to borrow Doris Sommer's terminology from *One Master for Another*—Juanito simply seeks to take power away from the wrongful patriarch in his cowardly attempts to steal it from real patriarchs like Cástulo Bell.

While Trujillo showcased his power through a performance of overt masculinity, Balaguer's touting of traditional Christian rhetoric reveals an investment in his own patriarchal power. This is the case despite the fact that Balaguer's poetic and asexual nature contradicts clichés of Dominican masculinity. When he became President in 1930, Trujillo's thuggish masculinity-as-power had filled what some deemed a vacuum in Dominican leadership. Trujillo's brand of confident, heteronormative masculinity not only differentiated him from Balaguer, but was also his tool to humiliate a traditional social elite that could not accept him. Balaguer, in turn, symbolically modeled his persona on that of ascetic political hero Juan Pablo Duarte. Considered to be the nation's Padre de la Patria (Father of the Fatherland), Duarte (1813 – 1876) founded a secret society called La Trinitaria with the goal of overturning Haitian rule over the entire island. Dedicated to the construction of the nation, Duarte never married and, according to Balaguer, led a monk-like existence during his exile in Venezuela. Though Duarte

does not characterize masculinity in an overt sense, the notion of a “savior” and “protector” of the nation is patriarchal at its core.²⁹

Despite Díaz’s and Sención’s allusions to Balaguer’s sexual excesses, he seems to have fetishized celibacy. This becomes most evident in Balaguer’s admiration for Duarte. The line between the asexuality of the ascetic monk and latent homosexual desires becomes very blurry indeed when one notes the homoerotic undertones in Balaguer’s descriptions of Duarte. Here, he describes Duarte’s departure for Paris to study:

. . . an adolescent with blue eyes and fine curled hair. His gaze remains suspended . . . His carriage . . . has a surprising definition in that young man whose masculine visage contains feminine traces that together communicate an air of a sickly and delicate person. A few golden strands descend, in effect, to the high and terse forehead, and his cheeks have the paleness of mother-of-pearl that intensifies with the sweetness emanating from his candid gaze. Even those who knew him in life. . . speak with admiration of his cheeks soft as rose petals and his eyes caressing with kindness (*Cristo de la libertad* 13-14).³⁰

Allowing some acknowledgement of Balaguer’s preference for heavily ornamented prose, this excerpt nonetheless betrays not only Balaguer’s queer desire but also his Eurocentrism through the obvious reverence to Duarte’s Nordic looks. These tender, loving descriptions are deeply evocative of romantic poets’ declarations of love. Further, like the most fervent neo-classicists, Balaguer conflates physical beauty with perfection of the soul, both qualities irrevocably connected to a global racial hierarchy led by those closest to God: whites/Europeans.

Balaguer’s homoerotic desire is masked in part by the comparison between Duarte and Christ in the title—*The Christ of Liberty*—and within the text itself:

Duarte was, like Jesus, eternally a child, and he preserved the purity of his soul by covering it with a sacred virginity. He had a girlfriend in his youth, whom he loved with tenderness, but who died dreaming of her wedding night sighing for her garland of orange blossoms. Wealthy and with a figure of masculine beauty, he could have been loved by women and lived happy and flattered among men; but like Jesus, Son of God, who never wore purple cloaks or cut his mane, who neither sat the powerful at his table nor ever knew a woman, Duarte fled from places where life is full of joy and feasts in order to offer the Fatherland his fortune and to die as the last of the mortals among nakedness and poverty (*Cristo de la libertad* 195).³¹

The opening pages' open incredulity at Duarte's inner and outer beauty and whiteness are tempered by a long discussion on Duarte's childlike innocence and purity. These two portrayals are not necessarily at odds with each other, for perhaps Balaguer's homoerotic desire for the national hero fed itself with a fantasy of Duarte's own unspoken desires.

As mentioned above, unlike Trujillo, Balaguer's patriarchal rule was not based on public displays of sexual prowess. If anything, his sexuality was in constant question. Senci3n dramatizes these rumors in an anecdote from Dr. Ramos' adolescence. A declaiming Ramos attracts a young woman who, "attracted by the force of his inspiration," leaves her boyfriend momentarily "to bestow upon the boy the caress of an older sister." After being teased, the boyfriend retorts: "No problem, man, faggots don't make it to Glory" (Senci3n 77). To provide another example, during an international press conference, a female journalist from a Greek publication asked Balaguer why he remained a single man. After an extended period of laughter, Balaguer responded: "Perhaps it's because I hadn't met a woman like you" (*La violencia del poder*). This rare sample of effusive male Dominican flirtation coming from Balaguer was tame relative to the hyperbolic performance of Trujillo and his world-famous ex-son-in-law Porfirio Rubirosa. If during the *trujillato*, perhaps "the world's first culocracy" (Diaz 217), the

“tigueraje achieved by Trujillo and Rubirosa [. . .] forced a reluctant respect on the part of Dominicans” (Derby, *Dictator’s Seduction* 175), then Balaguer’s era represented the other extreme in emblematic patriarchal power: celibacy and asceticism.³² However, both Díaz and Senci3n portray Balaguer as a pedophile who, unlike Trujillo, could hide his exploits well. In one of *Oscar Wao*’s many footnotes, the narrator observes: “Much is made of his [Balaguer’s]. . . asceticism (when *he* raped his little girls he kept it real quiet)” (Díaz 90).

Juanito the Rooster in the City: Masculinity in the Diaspora

Evident in the presence of Juanito the rooster in *They Forged*, *Oscar Wao* also references a rural Dominican culture that penetrated the urban space of Santo Domingo throughout the twentieth century. This idea is palpable in the descriptions of Oscar’s visits to the Dominican Republic and in the flashbacks to Belicia’s youth in the capital. Detailing peasants’ post-Trujillo migrations to the capital, Hoffnung-Garskof writes:

In 1960, even after Trujillo’s romance with sugar, small- and medium-sized farmers held 70 percent of occupied land in the Dominican Republic. By 1980, the percentage had shrunk to 36 percent. Even as the national population grew by more than 2.5 million, less and less land was available for campesinos to grow food. This brewing subsistence crisis emerged at the same time that the state relaxed legal restrictions on internal migration. The result was an explosive growth of poor neighborhoods at the edges of the new capital (38).

In other words, the differences between the capital during Trujillo’s regime and the Santo Domingo of the late twentieth century were stark. It makes sense that early twentieth-century literarization of a rural contingent of the nation and its practices in canonical Dominican texts like *Cañas y bueyes* and the aforementioned *Al amor al bohío*, or the

denigration of its “backwardness” in essays by scholars like Américo Lugo, gives way to a more complex portrait of Dominican culture in *Oscar Wao*. Unlike these previous texts, which were at times propagandist denigrations or celebrations of entire sections of society, Díaz’s novel exhibits contradictory feelings towards the Dominican homeland, including hatred, love, apathy, disgust, and, of course, fatalism. However, it could not be described as a fatalist narrative since its absurdist humor and frequent allusions to beauty convey the sense that the oft-cited curse has also given way to inspiring strategies of survival.

One can also read Juanito’s appearance in Santo Domingo as a symbol of a larger rural presence in the nation’s capital. This presence entails the many customs, tales, beliefs, and practices deemed “rural.” Their denomination as rural, however, does not mean that they *are* rural. Writing in 1975, Deive argues that practitioners of vodú and magic live in all parts of the country and come from all social classes. However, he is careful to note that “it is undeniable that most Dominicans given to magico-religious behavior belong to the peasantry” (365)³³ and that about 80% the practitioners whom he interviewed in the capital migrated from or are first generation direct descendants of peasants (365). In a sense, both *Oscar Wao* and *They Forged* reflect the intermixing of rural and urban cultures caused by the rural-to-urban migrations in the late twentieth century. Often, these migrants had the city as their final destination, but for many, the city was only a platform to migrate to *los países* (literally, “the countries”): the United States, Canada, Spain, Italy or the Netherlands, among other wealthy nations. Among these migrants or descendants of migrant peasants, *los países* became a viable option

once they realized that the economic structure of the capital would be unable to support all of its inhabitants.

The geographic distance of and travails within the diaspora space often requires diaspora subjects to reconsider what elements of their lives, values, and actions define them as Dominicans. Though this has led many diaspora subjects to see the meaning of their attachment to the homeland as fluid, many also strengthen their “performance” of Dominicanness to counteract the fragility of their belonging.³⁴ As Gayatri Gopinath argues in her study of what she terms “queer diasporas,” the diaspora space may become a hyperbolic extension of the nation, including its patriarchal ideology.³⁵ Hence, it is not surprising that two narratives revealing patriarchal trauma through the lens of magic would emerge in the diaspora, for this is the space in which the stakes of national belonging are raised. In many ways, the diaspora space forces its subjects to think and act as extensions of the homeland. Both *Oscar Wao* and *They Forged* are products of a diaspora community that must contend with the legacies not only of two ruthless leaders but also of a longer history of exploitation and violence.

¹ Díaz, *Oscar Wao* 246.

² Some examples include: René Fortunato’s documentaries *El Poder del Jefe* (1993) and *La violencia del poder* (2003), Nina Bruni’s *Letras De La Era: Imagen De Trujillo En La Narrativa Dominicana Contemporánea* (2007), Robert D. Crassweller’s *Trujillo: The Life and Times of a Caribbean Dictator* (1966), Jesús de Galíndez’s *La Era De Trujillo; Un Estudio Casuístico De Dictadura Hispanoamericana* (1956), Marcio Veloz Maggiolo’s *De abril en adelante (Protonovela)* (1975), Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1976), Pedro Vergés’s *Sólo cenizas hallarás* (1980), Euclides Gutiérrez Félix’s *Trujillo: Monarca Sin Corona* (2008), Ignacio López-Calvo’s *God and Trujillo: Literary and Cultural Representations of the Dominican Dictator* (2005), Eric Roorda’s *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945* (1998), Francisco Rodríguez de León’s *Balaguer y Trujillo* (1996), Manuel Vázquez Montalbán’s *Galíndez* (1992), Julia Alvarez’s *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994) and *Before We Were Free* (2002), Mario Vargas Llosa’s *The Feast of the Goat* (2000), and Marisela Rizik’s *Of Forgotten Times* (2004).

³ For more on the correlation between Haiti and magic in Dominican popular discourses, see Lauren Derby’s “Haitians, Magic, and Money: Raza and Society in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands, 1900 to 1937” in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36.3 (1994): 488-526.

⁴ The Cabral's are Oscar's mother's family.

⁵ Oscar's and Lola's father was another Dominican immigrant and is only briefly mentioned in the novel.

⁶ See my reference to Eric Williams' *From Columbus to Castro*, Juan Bosch's *De Cristóbal Colón a Fidel Castro*, and C.L.R. James' "From Touissant L'Ouverture to Fidel Castro" in the introduction. I noted that these repetitive titles reflect regional history's tendency to organize historical events through charismatic male leaders.

⁷ For more on how discourses of magic, witchcraft and other occult practices often demonstrate people's unease with political and economic power, see Peter Geschiere's *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa* (1997).

⁸ Silvio Torres-Saillant mentions that Senci6n began writing his novel around 1987 in New York (*El retorno* 169).

⁹ For more on Dominicans' displacement of anti-Haitian anxieties in the nineteenth century, see chapters five through eight in Sibylle Fischer's *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (2004): 131-97.

¹⁰ This quote is taken from the 1999 edition of the text.

¹¹ This quote is taken from the 1989 edition of the text.

¹² This figure of the dark-skinned woman as a curse on the family also emerges through Claire in Haitian writer Marie Chauvet's "Amour" in *Amour, colère et folie* (1968).

¹³ Refer to Lauren Derby's "Imperial Secrets: Vampires and Nationhood in Puerto Rico" (2008).

¹⁴ Also spelled *fukú*.

¹⁵ I thank Lauren Derby for reminding me of the historical intransigent movement.

¹⁶ The word "baká" or "bacá" (or even "baka") is spelled differently depending on the source. In my own translations, I have retained the author's specific spelling. However, when not citing, I prefer to use the spelling "baká."

¹⁷ It is difficult to translate the word *brujo* into one English word. The direct translation is male witch, which is already gendered, or witch doctor. As such, the masculinized word *brujo* is used in different contexts than the feminized *bruja*, which can be literally translated as with the implicitly gendered witch. *Brujo* has a broader connotation than the gendered word *bruja* does. For this reason, I will use the word *brujo* and retain the word within my own translations for the remainder of this article.

¹⁸ For instance, Deive writes: "The world of malevolent magic is the world of uncontrolled and ungovernable desire. The great sorceresses in classic literature are women dominated by an erotic passion. Their determination to win back a lover or to gain the affections of a man eloquently illustrates the tragedy and impotence of those beings trapped in the web of an ardent and unhealthy sexuality" (267).

¹⁹ For more on the Mexican case, see Jean Franco's *Plotting Women* (1989) as well as the Luisa Campuzano and Catharina Vallejo edited anthology *Yo con mi viveza: Textos de conquistadoras, monjas, brujas, poetas y otras mujeres de la colonia* (2003).

²⁰ As is evident in other Latin American and Caribbean contexts, the Church's attitude during a dictatorship is either one of support, dissent, or both depending on the congregation and specific moment in the dictatorship. In the Dominican case, the shift from dissent to support took place most dramatically when anti-Trujillo Archbishop Rafael Castellanos Martínez, native of Puerto Plata, was replaced by the ever-supportive, Italian-born Ricardo Pittini in 1935 (Gutiérrez Félix 96-7). However, in 1960, the country's six bishops rose up against the Trujillo ("Bishop's Warning").

²¹ Beyond Crassweller's biography of Trujillo, Derby's *Dictator's Seduction* also offers information on the performative demands that Trujillo made of Dominican citizens.

²² Monica Hanna would disagree when she argues that the novel incorporates "genres like magical realism" (500).

²³ For instance, a subsection on page 272 is titled "The Condensed Notebook of a Return to a Nativeland," an echo of Césaire's seminal *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* (1939).

²⁴ For instance, see Díaz, *Oscar Wao* 279.

²⁵ For another example of this, see Chiqui Vicioso's personal essay "Dominicanyorkness: A Metropolitan Discovery of the Triangle" (1998).

²⁶ Édouard Glissant writes: "The Spanish-speaking Caribbean . . . is completely turned towards Latin America . . ." (*Caribbean Discourses* 223).

²⁷ For a perspective published during an earlier planning stage of the Lighthouse, see Tulio M. Cestero's *Colón (Su Nacionalidad, El Predescubrimiento De América, Su Tumba y El Faro Conmemorativo)* (1933).

²⁸ The nineteenth-century Cuban novel *Cecilia Valdés* (1839/1882) by Cirilo Villaverde uses humor to address the fact that many Spaniards used the opportunity to start anew in the New World to hide Jewish or even mixed race ancestry.

²⁹ According to historian Franklin Franco Pichardo, Duarte “had full dominion of the most current and advanced philosophical and political thinking of the era, which he mixed with his deep religious convictions” (*El pensamiento dominicano* 105-6). The original text states: “tenía pleno dominio de las corrientes filosóficas y políticas más avanzadas de su época, lo que conjugó con sus profundas convicciones religiosas.”

³⁰ The original text states: “. . . un adolescente de ojos azules y de finos cabellos ensortijados. Su vista permanece suspensa . . . Su porte . . . es de una distinción que sorprende en aquel joven cuyo semblante varonil contiene rasgos femeninos que comunican al conjunto de su figura un aire de persona enfermiza y delicada. Hasta la frente alta y tersa descienden, en efecto, algunas hebras doradas, y las mejillas tienen una palidez de nácar que se torna más intensa merced a la dulzura que despide su mirada candorosa. Todavía quienes le conocieron en la plenitud de la vida . . . hablan con admiración de sus mejillas suaves como las rosas y de sus ojos acariciadoramente bondadosos” (*Cristo de la libertad* 13-14).

³¹ The original text states: “Duarte fue, como Jesús, eternamente niño, y conservó la pureza de su alma cubriéndola con una virginidad sagrada. Tuvo en su juventud una novia, a la que quiso con ternura, pero que murió soñando con su noche de bodas y suspirando por su guirnalda de azahares. Rico y de figura varonilmente hermosa, pudo haber sido amado de las mujeres y haber vivido feliz y adulado en medio de los hombres; pero como Jesús, Hijo de Dios, que nunca llevó mantos de púrpura ni se cortó la cabellera, que no sentó a los poderosos a su mesa ni conoció mujer alguna, Duarte huyó de los lugares donde la vida es alegría y festín para ofrecer a la Patria su fortuna y para morir como el último de los mortales en medio de la desnudez y la pobreza” (*Cristo de la libertad* 195).

³² The people who claimed to be Balaguer's progeny after his death somewhat sullied Balaguer's ascetic façade.

³³ The original text states: “es innegable que la mayor parte de los dominicanos dados al comportamiento mágico-religioso pertenecen al campesinado” (365).

³⁴ For more on how migration affects Dominican identity, see Silvio Torres-Saillant's and Ramona Hernández's *The Dominican-Americans* (1998), Silvio Torres-Saillant's *El retorno de las yolas: Ensayos sobre diáspora, democracia y dominicanidad* (1999), and Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel's *Caribe Two Ways: Cultura de la migración en el caribe insular hispánico* (2003).

³⁵ Gopinath, *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures* (2005).

Chapter Four

Transnationalism in Contemporary Dominican Literature

This chapter unravels some of the most recent literary attempts to capture the contemporary Dominican experience of transnationalism as one that transforms the lives not only of those who are (trans)migrants, but also of those who remain in the homeland. Many Dominicans living abroad continue to describe themselves as Dominican and maintain close ties to the island, rendering the nation's border permeable and fluid. Migration scholarship has shown that living and working in the US has not erased or weakened many of the rituals and beliefs concomitant with being Dominican. However, the "increasing permeability of boundaries between nation-states has threatened the traditional definition of an identifiable 'homeland'" (Concannon et al. 2). Under these circumstances, the various phenomena that are commonly described as transnationalism have not only become a reality but also an aesthetic aperture for writers who subvert the nationalist canon, especially the rhetoric of the novel as national romance. The transnational in these texts functions as a window into the injustices of the Dominican nation-state: its sexism, racism, and classism. Furthermore, though the term and idea of transnationalism can provide a broader context for understanding national identity, the transnational space can also reinforce the same oppressive tenets of the nation.

I analyze the diverse ways in which the broad term "transnationalism" operates in texts by three Dominican women writers. This chapter incorporates close readings of primary texts, writers' experiences living in exile or in the diaspora, and current ethnographic data to elaborate on the connections between nationalism and patriarchy. I

begin with an analysis of Chiqui Vicioso's essay "Dominicanyorkness: A Metropolitan Discovery of the Triangle" (1998), which takes on the theme of race consciousness and "finding oneself" in the African Diaspora community that exists beyond nation-states. She critiques the Dominican nation-state's hegemonic ideology that concomitantly rejects blackness and oppresses women under patriarchal social pressures. I continue to explore the potential overlaps between the Dominican diaspora and a larger African Diaspora as they emerge in Aurora Arias' short story "*Travesía*" / Crossing (2007) through the personal connection between an African American man and a diaspora Dominican woman. In another one of Arias' short stories, "*Novia del Atlántico*" / Girlfriend of the Atlantic (2007), an encounter between a foreign expat and a sex worker, as well as their dreams and desires, emblemize transnational neo-colonial hierarchies based on race and gender. Finally, Rita Indiana Hernández's short novel *Papi* (2005) suggests that, despite globalization and the transnationalism of Dominicans living in Santo Domingo, the power of the hyper-masculine patriarch remains. These women-authored texts destabilize the nationalist paradigm that dismisses women's experiences and socio-economic contributions beyond their roles as wives and mothers.

Before presenting close readings of these texts, I will clarify several elements of the seemingly straightforward term *transnationalism* as it applies to this chapter's analysis. The term itself contains a useful reminder of how these texts *transcend* the borders of a traditional, nationalist literary canon. This transgression of national borders encompasses different kinds of geographic movements and displacements of products and people, including migration, foreign occupation, exile, and diaspora. In general, the term embraces both the "translocal" practices and identities that exist under the radar of

nation-states and the affiliations between fully formed nations exemplified by many Dominicans' dual citizenship status. In this broad sense, the transnationalism of Dominicans and Dominican identity is not new. During the colonial era, there was a constant resistance to insularity and strict adherence to the Spanish Crown. As I mentioned in earlier chapters, there was also a constant stream of Santo Domingo traders selling in Port-au-Prince, runaway slaves escaping to Santo Domingo, and others who lived their lives on both sides of the border. The northwestern region of Santo Domingo was the seat of flourishing contraband trade. Later, the US occupation of 1916-1924 and the intervention of 1965, as well as the increasing presence of foreign products have rendered Dominican culture relatively transnational. However, what is different about the most recent five decades is that they follow an insular epoch under Trujillo and the vast migrations to the US after 1965. The large presence of Dominicans abroad weakened the solidification of a national identity that resulted from Trujillo's successful—and often repressive and brutal—attempt to consolidate the entire country under one state ideology. Though many diaspora scholars deem this change as positive, the Dominican press often “otherizes” and criminalizes diaspora Dominicans. Since the Dominican media is “fundamentally governmental,” meaning that it “[r]esponds to the influence of power” (Torres Saillant, *El retorno de las yolas* 56), it follows that this view of the Dominican community abroad to a great extent represents the views of the State.²³³ To clarify, the island perspective is highly complex, not least because so many island Dominicans have relatives abroad. It is also important to mention that this mainstream repudiation coexists with many Dominicans' frustration that diaspora Dominicans have

²³³ The original text states: “fundamentalmente gobiernista” and “[r]esponde a los influjos del poder.”

access to resources that island Dominicans may wish for themselves, reminding them of the country's inadequacies.

A characteristic of the recent diaspora is that “even as families, or whole villages, have relocated to (and often from) the United States, many of today’s migrants are no longer ‘at home’ in one nation-state; they are often becoming transnational migrants, who live in a state of physical and intercultural transit between two or more national communities” (Concannon et al. 2). Further, “[o]ne of the most obvious results of the immigrant experience for Dominicans [in the US] is that the space of their physical and existential mobility increases tremendously . . . They now can access a larger mental habitat within which to configure their human identity” (Torres-Saillant and Hernández 146). Transnationalism here applies to diaspora Dominicans who literally or metaphorically live in more than one nation-state. There is also the transnationalism of those who experience it through their surroundings despite their geographic immobility. In this vein:

Transnationalism is not only a phenomenon of mobile groups, but can also be present with individual immobility; a person can live in one place and never leave it, but can still be transnationalized if the place of residence and location becomes more and more a stage of transnational connectivity, for example by new neighbors, restaurants, and shops. Secondly, physical immobility does not exclude communicative connections with the world (Mau 37-8).

Those who work in the local tourism industry are exemplary of this element of the transnational experience.

As I mentioned in the introduction and in chapter 3, the tensions inherent to the term transnationalism emerge in the Dominican diaspora, whose continuing ties to the island have created an almost explosive discursive space where battles pertaining to the

culturally unstable categories of racial identities and gender roles are fought. As described by Gayatri Gobinath for the South Asian diasporas and Caitrin Lynch for Sri Lankan female garment workers, women and men whose lives and beliefs collide with the gender norms valued in the homeland are considered foreign. The “foreignness” of their practices or beliefs seems to belie their nationality. This is another example of how the mutually constituted nature of nationalism and appropriate gender roles and family structures is a common attribute of nations.

The protection of these gendered norms and values acquires a deeper significance during times of deep anxiety about foreign influence or dependence. National paradigms, in which women’s value is “specifically attached to (and implicitly conditional on) their reproductive capacity” (Pratt 51), become problematic in light of the fact that national and transnational economies *worldwide* became increasingly dependent on racialized women’s labor in the late twentieth to twenty-first centuries. The tension stemming from a *transnational* demand for women as participants in the labor market on the one hand, and a *national* framework that sees motherhood as a sacred, naturalized, and essentialized symbol of womanhood, as well as the only way to be female, are important components of this discussion. In this contradictory situation, third world women are both asked to be traditional mothers by their homeland’s cultural and political ideologies and to financially support their dependents from a distance through necessary remittances or in the homeland by, for instance, working in foreign-owned corporations or within ostracized industries like sex tourism.²³⁴

²³⁴ For more on the first world demand for third world women’s caretaking labor, see Barbara Ehrenreich’s and Arlie Russell Hochschild’s *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy* (2003).

My focus on women's work underlines the contradictions and tensions between the ways in which their labor engages with, contests and takes advantage of the idealized role of the *woman* within patriarchal constructions of the family—whether nuclear or otherwise. However, patriarchal ideals are as much about the idealized *pater* figure as they are about idealized female subjects. The patriarchal demands of masculinity render a whole section of Dominican society disempowered due to rampant unemployment caused in part by the undesirability of unskilled male labor compared to unskilled female labor within the late twentieth-century global economy. Amalia Cabezas contends that “[w]hile tourism has generated new possibilities for women’s economic independence, whether through wage labor, informal work, or international labor migration, these opportunities have appeared in conjunction with increases in *male unemployment*, female-headed households, trafficking in women, and egregious violations of human rights” (211, emphasis mine). This rise in male unemployment is coterminous with “conditions that have promoted the formation of a supply of migrant women in third world countries” (Sassen 130), conditions that partly stem from “the prevalence of women in export manufacturing and the high incidence of manufacturing jobs among women in countries where this type of production is prominent” (114). The types of production most frequently outsourced are in “electronics, garments, textiles, toys, and footwear . . . that is, industries that have traditionally employed women” (114). Therefore, the economic reliance on export manufacturing and the decline in agriculture led to a rise in male unemployment or their presence within the Dominican “informal” economy. This aspect of contemporary Dominican society is evident in another one of Arias’ short stories, “Emoticons,” which focuses on the meeting of internet lovers Pepe,

an unemployed Dominican man, and Julieta, a fun-loving, middle-aged Spanish woman who goes to Santo Domingo to meet Pepe. It is also explored in Dominican writer Jeannette Miller's novel *La vida es otra cosa* (2006), in which the only viable forms of employment available to the men in the story are connected to criminal activities within the so-called informal economy and/or migrating out of the country. Though beyond the scope of this dissertation, working-class male labor, which is crucial to the country's enactment of progress through the building of bridges, tunnels, expressways, and, most recently, the metro in the capital, is an important element of this discussion.

From Inter-Generational Struggle to African Diaspora Consciousness

I begin with an analysis of poet, playwright, and activist Chiqui Vicioso's "Dominicanyorkness: A Metropolitan Discovery of the Triangle."²³⁵ This personal essay envisions an African Diaspora alliance that challenges Dominican patriarchal nationalism and critically adopts elements of African Diaspora discourses through the story of a Dominican tomboy intellectual's coming-of-age. This short essay defies easy categorization, straddling several literary traditions at once: diaspora Dominican fiction as exemplified by writers like Junot Díaz, Afro-Dominican literature such as Blas Jiménez's and Aída Cartagena Portalatín's poetry, and the literature of the forefathers of African Diaspora Studies such as Frantz Fanon and Aimé Césaire, who narrated their own experiences with racism and a shifting idea of the homeland while abroad. In short,

²³⁵ This three-page personal essay was first published in the anthology *Caribbean Creolization* in 1998, and two years later in *Callaloo*'s issue on Dominican literature with some minor differences in the translation.

“Dominicanyorkness” opens Dominican(-American) literary and cultural texts to African Diaspora discourses.

The central narrative revolves around a girl (presumably Vicioso herself) “finding herself” in the transnational or supranational (i.e., not just transcending national borders, but existing in a realm beyond nations) group of people of African descent living outside of the continent of Africa. For a Dominican, the act of *choosing* to be part of this diaspora requires an acceptance of African ancestry, and, concomitantly, his or her “blackness.” Dominant Dominican culture has prioritized its European and indigenous, rather than African, ancestries while equating “blackness” or being black (“ser negro”) to an affiliation with Haiti. Hence, what to most US nationals may be an obvious correlation between Dominicans and blackness, is, in her essay, a personal “discovery” worthy of close examination. When the narrator speaks of her hair—unacceptably kinky or curly to her traditional mother—and her exclusion from the genetic “jackpot” of inheriting her relatives’ blond hair and blue eyes, Vicioso refers to a long history of a Dominican preference for physical attributes that reflect European and/or a mostly fictitious *taíno* ancestry.

Though a simple declaration, Vicioso’s insistence that Dominicans are subjects of the African Diaspora challenges the very foundation of the Dominican Republic as distinct from Haiti—a nation founded in part on the pride of its African ancestry. “Dominicanyorkness” goes beyond subverting the Eurocentric bias of Dominican nationalism by suggesting that this realization can also shape African Diaspora discourses. This is not to say that Dominican scholars have not made these kinds of gestures in the past, but that, in general, Dominican literary production has been firmly

entrenched within a Hispanophilic and/or “mestizo” Spanish American tradition that generally has not taken into account that it can be fruitful to *also* place it within a greater Caribbean and African Diaspora context. For instance, conservative intellectual Joaquín Balaguer used his power as one of the nation’s foremost scholars and politicians to officialize his denials of the African ancestry of most Dominicans and Dominican cultural practices.

Not surprisingly, official history in the Dominican Republic, as that of almost every other nation-state, has often served the interests of the ruling classes. The power of this discourse stems in part from the ways in which it seemingly echoes the needs and wishes of the masses, forming hegemonic ideas in the truest sense of the term; anti-Haitian discourses, for example, stem both from general Dominican populist and elite sentiments, though the former are also racialized and ostracized by similar discourses. To clarify, “Haitian” does not just constitute a national identity in mainstream Dominican discourses; it is also synonymous with being very dark-skinned, poor, and having to do the most backbreaking labor. Hence, anti-Haitian discourses fuel xenophobic state policies and policing practices that in general curtail the economic agency of a stratum of the population that is racialized, whether or not the people affected are actually ethnic Haitians.

Vicioso’s willing self-inclusion within the African Diaspora is a direct rejection of the kind of nationalism that greatly defines Dominican identity, especially after Trujillo’s dictatorship. Moreover, literature of the African Diaspora, the black Atlantic, Pan-Africanism, and Black Nationalism has rarely considered the Dominican case. On the one hand, this is not surprising, considering the nation’s disavowal of its African

ancestry. On the other hand, the Dominican case does have the unique potential to add complexity to analyses of how race—specifically blackness—and nation are interrelated. Further, the country also occupies an interesting role within the history of the black Atlantic. For instance, Dennis J. Harris’s 1860 travel account *A Summer on the Borders of the Caribbean Sea* details black Protestant separatists’ interests in creating an “Anglo-African” southern section of the hemisphere ruled by what he saw as more civilized US blacks.²³⁶ The Dominican Republic was one of the places that Harris visited and assessed for an African American readership. Though an “Anglo-African” south was never created, several thousand freedmen had already immigrated to the island during Boyer’s Haitian government of 1822 to 1844 (Hoetink 38).²³⁷ Even today a “knowledge of the English language is very generalized in Samaná,” a place that received a high number of these immigrants (Hoetink 39). In this and other ways, the Dominican Republic’s place in the history of the black Atlantic is irrefutable.

Though Vicioso has lived in the Dominican Republic since the mid-1980s, her experience in New York led to the “discovery” of her blackness through the sexist and racist oppression she faced in the US. This discovery prompted her to absorb a Pan-Africanist and Black Nationalist vocabulary and literary/theoretical tradition with which to conceptualize the oppression back in the Dominican Republic (Vicioso, Personal Interview). A great part of the focus of her work stems from her stay in the US from the

²³⁶ His account can be found in *Black Separatism in the Caribbean, 1860* (1970).

²³⁷ According to H. Hoetink, Boyer sought to systematically attract freed African Americans to the island, and “to that end, the agent Jonathan Granville was sent to New York with the authority to offer a free trip, fourth months’ financial support and 36 acres of land for each 12 workers” (38). The original text states: “para ese fin fue enviado a Nueva York el agente Jonathan Granville; tenía autorización para ofrecerles a quienes quisieran emigrar a la isla de Haití una travesía gratis, mantenimiento por cuatro meses y 36 acres de terreno por cada 12 trabajadores.” The estimated number of people who travelled to the island through Granville’s propositions was between 6,000 and 13,000 (Hoetink 38).

late 1950s, her trips around the world beginning in 1977, and her return to the island in 1987. She also reflects on the effect that these experiences have had on her concept of Dominican national belonging through the essay's poetic prose, weaving together various scenes that deal with the relationship between gender, race, and nationality.

The essay begins with the assertion, "I discovered the geographic limits of my world when I was very small" (62), connecting notions of personal space with local Dominican and global settings, a juxtaposition that reveals the difficulty of finding a personal space within which to reach "consciousness." In the context of this essay, Vicioso's race consciousness connotes her legibility to herself as a proud African Diaspora subject. This sense of belonging negates her exclusion from the traditional narrative of the nation as a woman who does not want to conform to the homeland's feminine ideals. These ideal attributes include European and/or an indigenous *mestiza* beauty (the result of Dominicans' common African and European mixed ancestry) and a delicate demeanor dedicated to domesticity. In Dominican dominant and popular culture, black femininity has signified dangerous, hypersexual, and even demonic attributes.

For Vicioso, the diaspora space offers her the possibility of attaining this consciousness due to her newfound access to trans-Caribbean and African Diaspora communities and their entirely different concepts of race. By enacting her racially conscious diaspora Dominican identity, Vicioso is at odds with traditional notions of what constitutes Dominicanness.²³⁸ For instance, her essay alludes to her acceptance of

²³⁸ By "identity" I borrow Ginetta B. Candelario's definition of identity based on "the relationship between institutions and individuals, and between official discourse and everyday life practices": "In particular, I am influenced by the nets of symbolic interactionism in which the self is produced through interactions with others, groups and institutions and that are enacted through multiple role identities. Thus, particular

the physical attributes, namely her hair and skin color, that seemed to exclude her from ideal European/*taína* Dominican feminine beauty. The image of her mother imploring her to straighten her hair before a party (64) is juxtaposed with that of figures like Frantz Fanon, Marcus Garvey, and C.L.R. James (65). Her mother's demands reflect a mainstream Dominican convention to reject blackness, while her education in Black Nationalism and Pan-Africanism in the US introduces her to the basics of embracing that previously rejected part of herself.

Although the diaspora space often serves as a hyperbolic extension of an idealized nation,²³⁹ it allows Vicioso not only to come to terms with her African ancestry, but also to accept a supranational, African Diaspora identity. About halfway through the essay,

identities of a given individual will be more or less salient in different circumstances and contexts" (*Black Behind the Ears* 6-7).

²³⁹ Indeed, the policing of gender norms can emerge with a virulent tension in the diaspora space. This idea is far from specific to the Dominican or Caribbean diaspora, as proven by a media rife with debates about what Muslim women should be allowed to wear in European public spaces. It is also evident in the film *Princesas*, a Spanish film that centers on the lives of two prostitutes working in Madrid. One of them is a Dominican immigrant named Zulema who sends money home for her young son. In order to save money, she shares an apartment with a Dominican family in shifts, with Zulema having access to it during the day. Though she tries to leave as soon as the family arrives, she takes a bit longer than usual to gather her things on one occasion. As she gathers her things, the following conversation takes place between the father of the family and Zulema:

Father: Mi wife wants me to let you know to please change the bed sheets after you sleep on them.

Zulema: Why doesn't she change them herself?

Father: Because she's not the one who fucks ten men each day. She also wants me to let you know to be out of the house before eight o'clock. It's because of our son, we don't want him to see you.²³⁹

The film shows the mother indignantly talking about Zulema with her husband in hushed tones right before the above exchange takes place. However, it is the father who makes their request to Zulema by repeatedly mentioning that he was "sent," 'le manda decir,' by his wife, conveying that he is only the messenger. Moreover, there is a clear demarcation between the improper, promiscuous prostitute and the chaste mother and wife. The latter's primary concerns are to maintain the familial purity of the domestic space and prohibit her young son from exposure to what she deems to be the prostitute's promiscuous and immoral lifestyle. Finally, the conversation shows that, to the parents, Zulema's presence itself is a form of contamination: both figuratively—through her visibility in front of their son—and directly through her body's "dirt" sullyng the legitimate couple's sheets; the space inhabited part-time by a woman who so threatens patriarchal values must be purged of its contamination in order for the nuclear family to feel at home. After this exchange, Zulema feels a shame that in part propels her to return to the island; she realizes that her son needs her physical presence more than her money from abroad.

Vicioso's focus shifts from her experience growing up on the island to her experience as a Dominican residing in the US. According to scholars like Torres-Saillant, diaspora Dominicans' experiences abroad are crucial to an emerging validation of Dominicans' African ancestry and a positive outlook on blackness. The Dominican population in New York City was just beginning to increase while Vicioso lived there from the late 1950s through the 1970s. In order to gain some strength in numbers to face the US state's neglect and outright hostility, it was especially important for Dominicans to join forces with other racialized minorities, namely the Puerto Rican and African American communities, an idea that I explore further in my analysis of Aurora Arias's "Travesía." In addition, due to their encounters with anti-black racism in the US and other countries, many diaspora Dominicans have had to contend with definitions of blackness that greatly differ from those of their homeland. Though Torres-Saillant does not argue that submitting to a hegemonic US concept of race should be preferred over other conceptualizations, he maintains that at least US blacks have access to positive affirmations of blackness and a greater African Diaspora community to which they can resort. Furthermore, because the majority of Dominicans are alienated from their African ancestry by an overemphasis on the European and indigenous elements of their ancestry, the next step is "to empower the population with the analytical tools with which, on their own, to dismantle State-funded racism" (Torres-Saillant, "The Tribulations of Blackness" 1107). Because most diaspora Dominicans face questions regarding their race, questions that are generally not in the Dominican vocabulary to ask, their diaspora identity may develop with a sense of race consciousness that barely exists in the Dominican Republic itself.

However, many diaspora Dominicans reject blackness as an identity category and continue to adhere to traditional Dominican concepts of race, sometimes in order to fight what they see as a mainstream US tendency to subsume peoples with diverse histories and cultures under totalizing, often essentialist, categories. Sociologist Ginetta B. Candelario asks: “How do Dominicans face the ‘black behind the ears’ when confronted with both Haiti and the United States’ expansionist agendas and racial ideologies that would define them as black so as to legitimate Dominicans’ subordination to their respective states and social orders?” (6). The answer to this question holds the key to understanding many diaspora Dominicans’ staunch self-conceptualization of identity that is based on nationality and/or *latinidad*. For these Dominicans, identity and communal affiliation is not based on race (except when it means *la raza hispana* or *la raza dominicana*), but on language, for instance. This latter kind of communal affiliation has its own caveats, namely a continuing rejection of blackness. Interestingly, mainstream notions of *latinidad* in the US have tended to exclude black Latina/os, an erasure that emerging Afro-Latina/o Studies seeks to address.²⁴⁰ However, this affiliation offers the opportunity of facing the rhetoric of a US-centric discourse of blackness in which the Dominican Republic becomes shorthand for the “wrong way” to view race and blackness. A prime example of this is an article published in the *Miami Herald* called “Black Denial” by Frances Robles as part of a series on Afro-Latin America. Unlike the articles about other countries, “Black Denial” portrays Dominicans—and especially Dominican

²⁴⁰ Though the field of Afro-Latina/o Studies itself is institutionally new, Afro-Latinos themselves have occupied prominent positions in the US. Cuban Celia Cruz is just one example. For more on the emerging field of Afro-Latina/o Studies, see Miriam Jiménez Román and Juan Flores *Afro-Latin@ Reader* (2010). For autobiographical explorations on Afro-Latinidad, see Piri Thomas’ *Down These Mean Streets* (1967) and Evelio Grillo’s *Black Cuban, Black American* (2000).

women—as disgusted with their blackness by focusing on the culture of Dominican hair salons. Despite the fact that one can find black women who prefer to straighten their hair all over the world, Dominicans’ undeniable preference for straight hair over non-straightened hair was presented as conclusive evidence for their self-hatred. The article subsequently became popular on the Internet and the subject of great debate among the general public and academics (Candelario 5).²⁴¹

For someone like Vicioso, however, the diaspora space offers the possibility of opening a Dominican identity to transnational possibilities based on *blackness* itself. Of the transition from her intergenerational gendered and racialized struggle in the homeland to her conflicted race consciousness in the US, she writes: “The journey from ‘buts’ to consciousness turned into stubborn determination against the racism of American universities. It was articulated with my brothers and sisters from the English- and French-speaking Caribbean in the face of a sexist society, where to be a woman, Latina, and intelligent was an insult” (65). Though here she calls herself “Latina,” her primary mode of identification is with fellow black Americans.²⁴² She then describes how the growth of her African Diaspora education, which included reading works by figures such as Frantz Fanon and C.L.R. James, provided “evidenc[e] of the underlying racism, transmitted *from generation to generation*, that exists in the Dominican Republic” (65, emphasis mine). In

²⁴¹ Henry Louis Gates Jr.’s PBS documentary *Haiti and the Dominican Republic: An Island Divided* (2011) provides a concerted effort to connect Dominican racial politics with the country’s history with mixed results. He interviews historian Frank Moya Pons who states that: “If you look at the official documents . . . most of them normally claim: ‘From the most Spanish and loyal city of Santo Domingo or colony of Santo Domingo.’ That created . . . an ideological superstructure of of hispanicity . . . no matter how dark your skin was.”

²⁴² “Dominicanyorkness” was written before the rise of “Afro-Latina/o” as an identity category, but Vicioso would likely embrace the idea. In fact, two of the foremost proponents and scholars of Afro-Latinidad, Juan Flores and Miriam Jiménez Román, are close friends with Vicioso.

other words, the diaspora furnished her with the tools necessary to unearth the roots of the inter-generational struggle that she experienced as a child in the homeland.

It is clear from the passage cited above on her “journey from ‘buts’ to consciousness” that the trans-Caribbeanist and African Diaspora intersubjectivity that Vicioso attains in the US contrasts with the aforementioned inter-generational struggle between the girl and her mother/grandmother; while the latter relationship is dialectical, the former is dialogical and offers the possibility of a self-conceptualization that goes beyond the constraints of a biological familial social structure. I borrow Michelle M. Wright’s usage of the term “intersubjectivity” as one reflecting “not a simple merging of two into one (the synthesis in an ideal dialectic) but the conflated coexistence of two subjects, defined by, through, and against one another” (*Becoming Black* 171). Wright cites Mae Gwendolyn Henderson’s concept of an “‘omnivocal’ subjectivity” that allows for difference (141) and is coterminous with a “move away from the binary of the nation, in which the line between subject and Others is quite clear” (142). Continuing to invoke Henderson, Wright describes this shift towards “omnivocality” or “intersubjectivity” as providing the framework for a diaspora subjectivity that combats nationalisms that render certain subjects, such as dissident females, illegible. She defines “diaspora” as “the new collective model for Black subjectivity” that “embrac[es] the concept of diverse Black subjects” (142). Vicioso’s personal and narrative embrace of an African Diaspora intersubjectivity is one that is commonly adopted by second-generation Dominican-Americans. Ana Aparicio remarks on the inter-generational conflict that emerges in the diaspora, noting that “[t]he second generation’s definitions of race and Blackness in the United States contend with their parents’ perception of race” (139).

The practice of being Dominican requires, in part, certain racial and gender performances, whereby women must strive to erase unacceptable traces of blackness and any desires deemed masculine. While Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* focuses mostly on how these precedents affect boys, the novel also explores the intergenerational conflict between Oscar's sister Lola and her mother Belicia that is ignited when the former decides to cut off her long hair. Though her newly acquired punk persona attracts negative attention in general, her "mother is the worst" (54). Lola, who narrates this section of the novel, describes their relationship: "She was my Old World Dominican mother and I was her only daughter, the one she had raised up herself with the help of nobody, which meant it was her duty to keep me crushed under her heel" (55). Furthermore, Belicia nicknames her daughter *Fea/Ugly*. Though there is less physical violence, "Dominicanyorkness" similarly describes a young girl who cannot quite conform to Dominican society's standards of "proper" behavior and idealized "white" physical attributes. With her grandmother, she negotiates traditional Dominican gender expectations: "'Grandma, let me go to Canaima!'/ 'That's not for girls! . . . Who did you take after, such a tomboy?'" (63). Here, Canaima—a small river in Vicioso's hometown of Santiago—represents the masculinized space of the outdoors. It is this kind of space that is forbidden to "proper" young Dominican women after a certain age, when their feminine virtue is in part measured by their faithfulness to home life.

This domestication of Dominican women is not unique to the mid-to-late twentieth century moment of Vicioso's youth or to the middle class. Samuel Guy Inman, a Protestant church leader from the United States who was sent to the Dominican Republic and Haiti during the US occupation of both countries in 1919, observed that

“the average [Dominican] girl has nothing with which to occupy her time. She is very closely chaperoned, is not allowed out alone, and can only sit in her parents’ home and rock to and fro as she sees her brothers go out at night in pursuit of social enjoyment” (38). Julia Alvarez’s novels also elaborate on the themes of young women who seek freedom of movement and are intellectually curious. The women in the upper-class, white Dominican family in *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* (1991) are simply not allowed to leave the family compound without a male relative or trusted family friend or to pursue their studies for too long. Hence, representations of Dominican gender norms transcend socio-economic class and encompass at least the entire twentieth century.

Femininity within Vicioso’s narrative represents not only the confinement of domesticity, but also the parameters within which Vicioso, as a female, must fit in order to be *legible within the narrative of the nation*. In this manner, the home that confines Vicioso to a restrictive definition of femaleness signifies the demands that the Dominican *patria* makes of its daughters. Canaima not only represents the world beyond her grandmother’s house, but also foreshadows the world beyond national borders. This is a world that, as it becomes clearer towards the end of the essay, provides Vicioso with a conceptual space in which to attain a racially based consciousness.

One may interpret Vicioso’s description of her childhood in the homeland as an inter-generational conflict whereby the female narrator tries to assert her subjectivity outside constraining racialized and gendered parameters. During an argument with her mother, she seeks an alternative space for girls who do not wish to confine themselves within racialized gender roles in the homeland:

“...Can you imagine yourself white and with Juan’s green eyes? And Antonia, with Luis’s blue eyes and blond curls? It would’ve been a knockout!”/ “But, mother!” / “No buts! If you want to go to that party, you must have your hair straightened...[...] To have taken after your father! It’s not that I didn’t love him just as he was, don’t get me wrong, but the boys should have taken after him, and you and Antonia, after me” (63-4).

Most striking about this passage is the clear delineation of ideal femininity as white; men’s blackness is more forgivable, for ideal concepts of beauty are relegated to the feminine realm.²⁴³ In this sense, Vicioso also condemns canonical Dominican literature that venerates the submissive, white and virginal woman while vilifying her foil, the tempting but evil *mulata* or *negra*. Male writers’ shifting desire between the virginal white woman and the sexual *mulata/negra* reflects real societal anxieties over the “contamination” of the Dominican population’s “whiteness” with “Haitian” blackness (Cocco de Filippis, “Indias and Trigueñas No Longer”). In this context, Haiti functions as a marker of a blackness that is both external and foreign to Dominicaness and an internal force that must be, but is never entirely, eradicated.

In Vicioso’s text, the female ancestral figures police the social norms that value white, domestic femininity, and, by extension, its connection to the meaning of Dominicaness and national belonging. Vicioso’s rejection of white domesticity and her acceptance of her position within the overlapping African and Dominican diasporas echo Gayatri Gopinath’s concept of diaspora female queerness. She defines this concept as one that subverts the “illegibility and unrepresentability of a non-heteronormative female subject within patriarchal and heterosexual configurations of both nation and diaspora”

²⁴³ Indeed, according to E. Antonio de Moya’s study on Dominican masculinity, men who are considered too handsome are “under suspicion” of not being real men (124).

(16). Vicioso's challenge of the traditional family structure defies the national body, for Dominican nationalism as it was formed in the late nineteenth century and magnified during Trujillo's dictatorship is based on the family unit, as I discuss in chapter two. Within this family unit, it is the mother's job to indoctrinate her daughter into the duties of a true daughter of the nation that leaves little to no space for divergences. Hence, the narrator's challenges to her mother and grandmother's demands are rejected because they are simply nonsensical; her mother cannot accept a daughter's refusal to straighten her hair and thereby to comply with social and racial norms.

Another Dominican writer, Aurora Arias, also tackles issues of the shifting or enduring identifications of diaspora Dominicans. Her short story "Travesía," which focuses on a Dominican immigrant woman named Rosa Campusano on a casino cruise ship floating off the coast of New York City with a friend, portrays a Dominican alliance with, though not necessarily within, the African Diaspora. Throughout her story, her identification primarily as a Dominican woman is evident: "Twenty five years working in a country that is not and will never be my own despite my papers . . . I am and always will be Rosa Campusano, a Dominican woman resident in New York" (81).²⁴⁴ The text alludes to the estrangement Rosa feels in the US when she compares the Atlantic ocean that she sees from the cruise ship to the Caribbean sea: "This sea does not look like mine" (83).²⁴⁵

Because she gets seasick, she sits next to an older African American man and proceeds to tell him her life story while he patiently listens. She tells him that, upon her

²⁴⁴ The original text states: "Veinticinco años fajada trabajando en un país enorme que no es el mío, que nunca lo será aunque tenga muy bien hechos mis papeles... Soy y seré siempre, Rosa Campusano, una dominicanana residente en Nueva York."

²⁴⁵ The original text states: "Este mar no se parece al mío."

arrival in Santo Domingo from the countryside, a man who had promised to help her migrate to Puerto Rico had deceived her. She gave him all her savings and he placed her on a small boat with other passengers. Instead of landing in the neighboring island, the boat ended up only a few miles away from where they had departed near Boca Chica beach.²⁴⁶ While she is telling the older man her story, she is repeatedly interrupted by a meeting of women also on the deck of the ship. They are apparently talking about President George W. Bush in a language that to Rosa sounds like “an Arabic language, or something like that” (86).²⁴⁷ Though the women continually tell Rosa to be quiet, the older man encourages her to continue. Finally, the speaker at the meeting shouts “¡Shut up!” while looking at Rosa (89). The latter responds by telling the women to “shut up” themselves and she reasons: “He is black, and he must know that Hispanics are often treated like that, just pure *shut up*. Always *shut up*. This means that, for me, from now on, no more *shut up*” (90).²⁴⁸ There is a telling demarcation between the man who is *negro/black* and Rosa who is *hispana/Hispanic*.

Indeed, Rosa’s gesture of alliance does not extend to her self-identification as a black woman. Though it is possible that Rosa’s character is that of a white Dominican woman, more likely Arias here evokes many Dominicans’ discomfort with being considered “African American.” This alliance based on minority status in the US does not necessarily equate with a rejection of blackness. Ana Aparicio’s study of Dominican-Americans provides the example of a second-generation Dominican woman who, though

²⁴⁶ People pay “middlemen” who arrange illegal trips on small, precarious boats to Puerto Rico, which Dominicans (and Haitians) see as a jumping-board to migrate to the United States. If they are lucky enough to survive the trip, many Dominicans decide to stay in Puerto Rico.

²⁴⁷ The original text states: “un idioma árabe, o algo así.”

²⁴⁸ The original text states: “Él es negro, y tiene que saber que a los hispanos muchas veces nos tratan así, a puro shut up. Siempre shut up. Así que, para mí, de ahora en adelante, nada de shut up.”

“acknowledge[ing] her African roots and her Blackness, she distinguishes those from what she feels African-Americans experience. Her position does not suggest a distancing from African-Americans; it is, rather, an affirmation of her place in the African diaspora that includes acknowledgement of roots in the Caribbean” (139). Unlike “Dominicanyorkness,” Arias’ short story captures the ways in which the diaspora space does not necessarily lead to a supranational vision. It may actually compound a yearning for the homeland and an entrenched sense of alienation within the diaspora space. It is also significant that Rosa makes a gesture of alliance towards the older black man while fighting the interjections of the presumably Middle Eastern women. There is also a curious similarity with Vicioso’s texts’ emphases on the main subjects’ silencing by other women. In Arias’ short story, a possible transnational women’s alliance between women that are racialized within the US mainstream is replaced by a cross-gender African Diaspora alliance based on what the narrator deems is a shared oppression.

Arias’ choice to emphasize Rosa’s identification as a Dominican woman, despite the fact that she has spent over two decades in the United States, is important, because of the mainstream Dominican cultural exclusion of diaspora Dominicans. Arias, a writer who has only had very short-term experiences studying abroad or as a tourist, nonetheless acknowledges that Dominican national identity could be defined through close emotional ties to the homeland, and a sense that, despite the multi-ethnic alliances that are forged, one is more “Dominican” than anything else. In both “Dominicanyorkness” and “Travesía,” there is a clear call to envision an African Diaspora alliance that challenges patriarchal strains in both Dominican nationalism and in African Diaspora or Black Nationalist discourses.

The Transnationalism of Dominican Sex Workers

As my discussions of “Dominicanyorkness” and “Travesía” elucidate, gender is an important axis of identification that is often questioned when traversing national and cultural borders. For instance, women who are returning migrants are often reminded of the homeland’s different standards of gender behavior. Carmen, cited in Juan Flores’ study of Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Dominicans returning to their or their ancestors’ homeland, narrates her daughter’s arrest by the Monte Cristi—a Dominican border town—police for “necking” with her boyfriend in the town plaza. Carmen is embarrassed by her US-raised daughter’s “indecent behavior.” She also notes:

I just want to take the good with the bad, adapt again to this way of doing things without losing or forgetting the principles and values I learned in my other home, the Bronx. I think it’s that with the much broader view I got living there I can now value and understand the close-up things more fully than ever (*Diaspora Strikes Back* 91).

However, it is not just returning migrants, especially women, who face recrimination as well as exclusion from the national body and its civic and social advantages; sex workers, especially those who cater to foreign tourists, are frequently marginalized within a society that economically relies on tourism. Especially disquieting for many Dominicans are the ways in which women who participate in this tourist economy in “informal” ways upturn the recognizable signs of traditional gender roles:

In Puerto Plata and Sosúa, it was perturbing to many folks that the old gender demarcations could not sustain the new social order. Without a specific geographical site of stigma, like a brothel or street corner, the *mujeres de la calle* (women of the street as prostitutes are called) and *mujeres de su hogar* (so-called decent women of their home) were now difficult to distinguish. Many of the informants kept saying, “*Ya no se*

sabe quien es cuero aqui” (We no longer know who is a prostitute here) (Cabezas 56-7).

I have been using the term “sex worker” as shorthand, but, in places like the Dominican Republic and Cuba, the relations between foreign tourists and locals that may include sex are, in fact, much more complex. Amalia Cabezas argues that “the exchange of goods and money for sexual services is not an unambiguous commercial endeavor but a discursive construction that is contested and in motion, changing across time and space” (4). These relationships or “transactions” often last days and, if the local plays her or his cards right, may result in documents that will allow her to migrate and/or a steady income from a foreigner. Indeed, some of these transactions are so akin to accepted forms of dating that the term “sex work” glosses over some of these complexities.

Though reflecting on the ambiguities of the term is crucial, its usage is unequivocal in the context of Aurora Arias’s short story “Novia del Atlántico.” This story unravels the kind of transnationalism that is an effect of globalization through an encounter between Jennifer, a young Dominican prostitute, and James Gatto, a white, foreign expat. This effect, evident in the lives of many third world sex workers, is one that rests between nationalist ideologies and economic inadequacies on one side, and a global demand for the labor practices that emerge from these inadequacies on the other. I elaborate on Zygmunt Bauman’s contention that, “What appears as globalization for some means localization for others; signaling a new freedom for some, upon many others it descends as an uninvited and cruel fate” (2). “Novia” reveals one of the gaps between

those who are able to experience the mobile possibilities of globalization and those who cannot.²⁴⁹

Within the larger context of Latin American literary traditions, “Novia” emerges from a varied repertoire of narratives that take place in a brothel. In these narratives, the national romance of Latin American literature is “replaced (in reality, devoured) by stories of the brothel, where love and marriage are forbidden and where social projects disintegrate into detritus, degenerating the proposed social contract, displaying its grotesque exclusions” (Cánovas 15).²⁵⁰ Hence, the brothel is a narrative space that allows the writer to portray the failures of modernity. For the most part, however, this canon of “brothel literature” is centered on a masculine narrator or protagonist whose quests and disappointments are resolved, challenged, upheld, and/or validated *at* or *through* the brothel. In Dominican literature, novels like Marcio Veloz Maggiolo’s *De abril en adelante* (1975) and Andres L. Mateo’s *La balada de Alfonsina Bairán* (1998), despite their political subversions and textual innovations, center on the lives of a male protagonist/narrator whose performance of masculinity at the brothel weaves itself into the narrative precisely through its invisibility and normalcy. In other words, in these novels, the brothel emerges both as a metaphorically rich space as well as a normalized, quotidian space for Dominican men. Of course, women are a central part of the

²⁴⁹ In *Globalization and its Discontents*, Sassen argues that globalization has been understood primarily through its wonders: the speed of information and increased access to it, the democratization of cultural creation, and other changes in the global economy and imagination seemingly removed from actual places and spaces. The goal is then to localize globalization, by highlighting the labor that leads to site-less (that is, physically inexistent) informational and financial changes at the global level, for it is in emphasizing this “hidden” element that one can evidence the complexity of globalization. In Sassen’s words, “even the most advanced formation industries have a work process—that is, a complex of workers, machines, and buildings that are more place-bound than the imagery of the information economy suggests” (xxii).

²⁵⁰ The original text states: “. . . dislocadas (en realidad, devoradas) por los relatos de prostíbulo, donde están prohibidos el amor y el matrimonio y donde los proyectos sociales se descomponen hasta el detritus, degenerando los contratos sociales propuestos, mostrando sus groseras exclusiones” (15).

functioning of the brothel, especially in Mateo's novel, but they are symbols within or props to the development of the main male character. More significantly, unlike the men who write about and frequent brothels both in real life and in literature, prostitutes are marginalized and rendered invisible in these novels. Though the protagonist of Arias' text is a foreign man, the narrator's distinct voice is one that criticizes his actions and questions the normalization of the brothel; it estranges the reader from the space of the brothel rather than assume the reader's familiarity with this space and complicity with the protagonist/ "John."

"Novia" follows Gatto as he looks for work as a night manager at a Canadian-owned "adult resort" catering mainly to American or European men. (Strictly speaking, Gatto is not a tourist and my usage of the term "sex tourist" to describe him is loosely based on the common characteristics of Gatto's desires and actions in the text.) Gatto travels to various Caribbean countries in order to escape the drabness of his life in his country of origin, presumably a wealthy one. Most of the story describes the atmosphere at the resort's bar and the exchanges between the clients and the sex workers both from Gatto's perspective and through the lens of a sarcastic and critical narrator. By the narrative's end, Gatto cannot help but give way to his sexual desire for Jennifer, a young, drugged Dominican prostitute. The narrative reveals the tensions between the Dominican economy's entrenchment within transnational economic networks and the upholding of mainstream, Catholic "family values" ideals.

Due to this contradiction, the sites of labor deemed unacceptable within traditional nationalist Dominican discourses are acceptable within the unequal global exchange on which the Dominican economy depends. This is particularly the case with

Dominican sex workers, many of whom cater almost exclusively to foreign tourists and are therefore an “off-the-record” important labor force fueling the economy.

Economically independent sex workers subvert several of the parameters that circumscribe nationalist ideals. Hence, sex work remains officially marginalized and legally unprotected. Indeed, one side of the equation feeds the other as Alicia Schmidt Camacho suggests in relation to *maquiladora* workers in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico: “The concept of *female virtue simultaneously evacuates women’s citizenship and legitimates increased demands on poor women’s labor*. As solutions to the debt crisis dictated the state’s retreat from its social welfare commitments, poor women were forced to assume primary responsibility for their households’ survival” (264, emphasis mine). Thus, the contradiction betrays a commonality between a defense of a Dominican patriarchy and a transnational economic demand for cheap labor: the marginalization of racialized, feminized, and infantilized subjects in need of a first-world father figure. The global economy’s reliance on the underpaid labor of marginalized women in third world countries is both fed by so-called free trade policies and fuels the profitable interventions of first world “aid” concerned with third world women.

James Gatto’s actions reveal the persistence of a neocolonial order in which the foreign, white male’s “possession” of the local, non-white female is contiguous with narratives of “saving” the Other. These narratives also shape unequal transnational economic, social, and political networks. His yield to temptation is described from a mixed perspective between the sarcastic narrator and Gatto: “Jennifer, girlfriend of the Atlantic, victim of underdevelopment, I want to be your hero, I, James Gatto, First World

citizen, will save you” (126).²⁵¹ Most particular about this exchange is that Gatto’s reasoning leads him to conclude that, in sexually exploiting Jennifer, he is doing her a favor. He had been compelled to reject her in the first place because, in his view, Jennifer “is only a prostitute. A whore” (124).²⁵² She responded to his initial rejection by telling him: “Please, handsome, come here, I’m cold and I have no money . . . do you know if more *gringos* will arrive tomorrow? (124).²⁵³ He ends up having sex with her out of a sense of moral duty, in which he, as a foreign white male must protect her.

In a study conducted by scholars at the University of Leicester’s Department of Sociology for the World Congress Against the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children, it was revealed that “sex tourists . . . rationalise their own behavior through reference to a set of beliefs about the economic and social situation in the ‘third world’ countries they visit” (14). Some of these beliefs include “[r]acist stereotypes of Dominicans as hypersexual . . . used to construct a fiction in which the sexual tourists’ sexual contacts do not carry the same meanings as they would carry in the west” (14). From the tourists’ perspective, “the fact that women and children desperately need money, often to support dependents, [is] evidence that Dominicans both consent to and benefit from sexual contact with tourists” (14). It is precisely this kind of simplistic rationale that fuels sex tourism and which perpetuates notions of a “classic ‘rescue fantasy’ of Western masculinity—one fixated on saving third world women from the excesses of their own cultures” (Fregoso 15).

²⁵¹ The original text states: “Jennifer, novia del Atlántico, víctima del subdesarrollo, quiero ser tu héroe, yo, James Gatto, ciudadano del Primer Mundo, te salvaré” (*Emoticons* 126).

²⁵² The original text states: “[e]s solo una prostituta. Un cuero” (124).

²⁵³ The original text states: “Por favor, lindo, ven, tengo frío, y no tengo dinero . . . ¿tú sabes si mañana llegan más gringos?” (124).

The notion that free trade increases everyone's options, not just those from powerful countries is contested not only by nation-based immigration policies that curtail the supposed increased opportunities of those who most need them, but also by the conceptual confinement of these opportunities within an older colonial order.²⁵⁴ When the narrator describes the scene on the dance-floor earlier that night as “money, decadence, sexual frustration, and impunity on one side; youth, misery, hunger on the other” (119),²⁵⁵ one may see that little has changed in the differences of power between colonizer or first world subject and colonized or third world subject. While globalization both empowers migrant Dominican women “by taking them out of traditional settings, increasing the value of their labor, and enabling them to ‘break out’ of traditional roles and statuses” (Weyland 155), it disenfranchises them by perpetuating and creating inequalities that force them to migrate in the first place. In much the same way, Arias’ story describes Dominican sex workers as demystifying the idealized domestic roles in the nationalist imaginary by being the sole or primary income-earners for the families. In “Novia,” sex workers get to choose their clients, and the choosing is described as a kind of role-play in which the predator sizes up her prey: “‘Damn, *papi*, you look so good, you hound’ . . . Just one full-voiced yell without fear, conscious of her power” (114).²⁵⁶ Yet, the story also seems to ask, how much agency do these women have if the main reason that they are led to sex work is the lack of options for poor and uneducated Dominicans?

²⁵⁴ Of course, this category excludes the many who live in poverty within wealthy countries.

²⁵⁵ The original text states: “dinero, decadencia, frustración sexual e impunidad de un lado; juventud, miseria, hambre del otro” (119).

²⁵⁶ The original text states: “‘Diablo, *papi*, tú si tá bueno, buen perro!’[...] Un solo grito a plena voz y sin miedo, consciente de su poder” (114).

This is a crucial, and not entirely rhetorical, question. I concur with efforts by transnational feminist scholars to shift scholarly and human rights focus from prostitution as a *moral* issue to prostitution as an *economic* one. Prostitution is commonly deemed a dangerous job because lack of sex worker rights often fueled by misogynist sentiment. However, one cannot overlook the fact that these economic exchanges between sex tourist and sex worker often highlight the perpetuation of neocolonial paradigms. This is the case both when the sex tourist has racist and sexist fantasies and when the latter appropriates these fantasies to her or his own advantage. However, motives for choosing sex work over other kinds of employment in the Dominican Republic are also impossible to ignore. These reasons include economic independence, freedom to choose a work schedule (especially important for women with dependents), possibility of migration through marriage with a foreigner, among others.

Globalization in “Novia” emerges mostly as a gap between global access to the mass media that portray imagined transnational possibilities and *real* global access to these possibilities. Arjun Appadurai remarks that, in great part because of the mass media, “[m]ost persons in more parts of the world consider a wider set of possible lives than they ever did before” (*Modernity at Large* 53), which he sees as an opportunity for the world’s poor to become aware of “the ironic compromise between what they could imagine and what social life will permit” (54). Though “Novia” does not optimistically show how the mass media leads Dominican sex workers to political action, it does reveal the differences in access to transnational possibilities between the clients and the sex workers. At the bar, while the popular love song “*El hombre que yo amo*”/The Man That I Love is playing, one of the sex workers “sitting at the bar smokes, drinks, and sings,

watching, teary-eyed, a soap opera on the TV placed behind the bartenders” (119).²⁵⁷ Since the international soap operas broadcast in the Dominican Republic often focus on a Cinderella-like figure whose beauty and benevolence allow her to win the heart of a wealthy man and thus to escape poverty, one can deduce that the tearful *telenovela* viewer is able to contrast her situation with the one on the screen while also mentally escaping her immediate surroundings.²⁵⁸ In her case, transnational “mediascapes,” to borrow Appadurai’s term, allow her to imagine a world different from her own, while also providing her with the imaginative possibility of escaping or improving her socio-economic conditions. After all, sometimes the clients “fall in love and take some of these poor wretches to live with them in their countries” (“Novia” 117).²⁵⁹ However, for the majority of these women, this is not the case, nor is it without its risks.²⁶⁰

The narrative voice in “Novia” also estranges the reader from a taken-for-granted ideology of globalization. One may contrast the sex workers’ imagined goals and their clients’ interactions with new media. The story alludes to an internet-based “message board del *World Sex Archives*,” on which former clients post information about the best places in the world to find cheap sex labor. They also post pictures in which one may see a

little Dominican girl with illiteracy and malnutrition written on her face
with my penis in her mouth and her eyes vacant from taking so much

²⁵⁷ The original text states: “sentada en el bar, fuma, bebe, y canta, mirando llorosa una telenovela en la TV colocada detrás de las bartenders” (119).

²⁵⁸ Soap operas that were successful in the Dominican Republic include the Venezuelan *Cristal* and *Esmeralda*; the Mexican *Muchacha italiana viene a casarse*, *Simplemente María*, *Marimar* and *María la del barrio*; and the Brazilian *Xica da Silva*. I thank my family for this list.

²⁵⁹ The original text states: se enamoran y se llevan a algunas de estas infelices a vivir con ellos para sus países” (117).

²⁶⁰ To see some of the complexities that emerge after two women migrate from the Dominican Republic and Cuba with their respective beloved or client—the boundaries are murky—to Spain, see the Spanish film *Flores de otro mundo* (2005).

cocaine, how pretty she is and how much she enjoys what she does. Look for her, she's easy to find on the web, look at her face, hers; not mine, which I erased to prevent being recognized, in case the girl is a minor ("Novia" 117-8).²⁶¹

This detailed description encapsulates the difference of power between the Dominican sex worker, who may or may not be underage, and a man whose own face he is able to blur and who can choose his level of participation with ease. He has the power to protect himself from social and legal repercussions, while she is probably unaware that her face and body are available for the world to see on the internet. The sheer violence of posting this picture online, not to mention his part in the exchange, significantly undermines cheerful declarations of a transnational world community connected through faster modes of communication and mass media. In the case of the potential and former clients who visit the online World Sex Archives, the possibilities of going to a "*paraíso de carne*"/meat paradise (117) are very real.

In other words, transnational information networks, or mediascapes, function very differently for the sex worker watching the *telenovela* than for those posting and researching on the website; for the latter, mediascapes are a tool enabling the realization of fantasies, while for the former, they serve as a reminder of the gap between the haves and the have-nots or, at best, as fueling a dream of escape or political action. On the one hand, one could interpret this as just one instance in which "the imposition of a neoliberal conception of globalization, according to which rights are necessarily unequal, the novelties of modernity now appear to the majority only as objects of consumption, and

²⁶¹ The original text states: "dominicanita con cara de analfabeta desnutrida con mi pene en la boca y los ojos vacíos de tanto meter perico, qué bonita es y cómo disfruta de lo que hace. Búsquenla, es fácil de encontrar en la red, miren su cara, la suya; no la mía, que borré para no ser reconocido, por si la chica es menor ("Novia" 117-8).

for many as little more than a show to be watched” (García Canclini, *Consumers and Citizens* 26). On the other hand, anthropologist Steven Gregory’s study of tourist town residents challenges simplistic notions of sex work by pointing out that poor Dominican women are quite skeptical about the possibility of finding a “prince charming” to whisk them away to a strife-less life abroad. “Novia” does not quite address this element. Despite these women’s constant enactment of agency within the constraints created by the “stigma and legal fetters that bind the trade” (McClintock, “Sex Workers and Sex Work” 4), it is clear that they truly have few employment options that provide a comparable kind of socio-economic mobility.

However, as Cabezas demonstrates, sex workers often make ample use of the transnational networks resulting from globalization, including affordable internet access and phone communication that allows them to stay in touch with foreign clients. Some of these clients continue to send money and even migration documents, broadening traditional definitions of “sex work.” For this and other reasons related to financial improvement in a stagnant economy, “[a] too-narrow focus on exploitation can result in a dismissal of the importance for these women workers of their new access to consumer culture. To understand these women’s experiences it is crucial to comprehend what makes them happy, what they desire, what they hope for and dream of” (Lynch 35). Though Lynch here writes about Sri Lankan garment workers, the idea applies equally to Dominican sex workers who, besides hoping to access this “consumer culture,” also seek to finance their basic needs including food, housing, and schooling.

Neocolonial patterns that render racialized women as “natural” sexual objects are also perpetuated in first world spaces. The danger of ignoring the existence of these

exploitative and violent networks in first world countries is that it mirrors the concept of a democratic, civilized first world and a chaotic, politically primitive third world.

Further, because even well-intentioned transnational human rights efforts often function under notions of liberty and freedom that have supported and continue to support violent colonialist and imperialist projects, efforts to destroy the exploitation of women's labor in both the first and third world must be "[n]either a formal exercise of moral modernity nor a neocolonial attempt to transfer universal rational forms everywhere" (Lowe 17). The notion that the third world is politically backwards leads to the inevitable conclusion that the first world must "save" it.

The Enduring Power of the Patriarch

The last kind of transnationalism that I explore in this chapter emerges in Rita Indiana Hernández's short absurdist novel *Papi*. A sign that nations are not enclosed spaces is that first world and third world cities are no longer so distinct from each other, at least in some respects. Many migrants entering the world's metropolises do not arrive from an entirely foreign space.²⁶² In part, this familiarity is due to many Dominicans' familial relationship with diaspora Dominicans as well as the Dominican country's historical—and often hierarchical—affiliations with foreign nations. These affiliations, ranging from trade to aesthetic borrowing, increase Dominicans' access to foreign

²⁶² As Schmidt Camacho argues,

Third world migrants who arrive in New York, Amsterdam, or Berlin and lay claim to the legal institutions, civic organizations, and social movements that constitute the "postnational civil society" must first pass through the globalized periphery of Juárez, Jakarta, Fuzhou, or Tehran. The processes of denationalization occurring in migrants' countries of origin help determine the political disposition of migrants in the transnational circuit (258).

In this context, what she terms "denationalization" is a kind of transnationalism.

products and change the urban landscape to include, for instance, a metro system in Santo Domingo that resembles those of places like New York City and Paris.²⁶³

This kind of general sense that Santo Domingo is a transnational space emerges powerfully in Rita Indiana Hernández's short novel *Papi*. After publishing *Papi* and earlier novel *La estrategia de chochueca* (2003), Hernández's most recent and successful reincarnation is as an alternative *merengue* performer in her band Rita Indiana y Los Misterios. The band's music blends a traditional *perico ripia'o* style of merengue with electronic instrumentation and mixing and the songs often evoke a diaspora Dominican consciousness despite the fact that Hernández is not a diaspora Dominican herself. In this section, I analyze Hernández's short novel *Papi*, which narrates a Santo Domingo that expresses its cosmopolitanism or "worldliness" through constant allusions to a capitalist world beyond the island. *Papi* not only conveys the kind of transnationalism that is spurred by daily encounters with transnational cultural and media networks, but also the transnationalism that results from many Dominicans' interaction with family members or friends who live abroad or have dual citizenship status. These two forms of transnational interaction, lived and imagined, add complexity to the already contentious concepts of patriarchy, nation, Dominicaness, family, and modernity in a moment when Dominicans are, in many senses, "'natives' to the transnational world" (Nyberg Sorensen 241). Overall, the novel questions the ability of an interconnected world of consumption to weaken the power of patriarchal social structures that celebrate a hyperbolic masculinity and continue to define the Dominican nation.

²⁶³ The metro, completed in 2007, was spearheaded by a former diaspora Dominican, President Leonél Fernández.

Papi tells the story of a little girl's obsession with her absent father narrated from her own point of view. The nameless narrator often addresses the reader to comically mock the ways in which the reader's father is not as wealthy, as handsome, or as seductive as the narrator's. Papi is a white, upper-middle-class Dominican subject whose business and personal networks stretch mostly between Miami and Santo Domingo. His place as an ideal Dominican male—like Trujillo—is unquestioned. Though the narrator's parents are no longer a couple, she continues to be the favored child among her father's numerous children since she is the result of a legitimate union. Towards the end of the story, her father dies and there is a fantastical description of his funeral echoing his triumphant return from abroad earlier in the novel. *Papi* ends with a description of the narrator's mother suffering from what seems to be a malignant tumor. The entire story revolves around the little girl's obsession with her mostly absent father, an obsession that is driven by an insatiable desire for the products that he has purchased abroad. However, Hernández's choice to close the novel with a scene centralizing the bond between mother and daughter functions as a feminist critique of the relentless celebration of the patriarchal status quo.

Papi's young narrator makes references to culture and media that often come from outside the Dominican Republic, and if one considers the ways in which they infiltrate her mind and therefore her lived experience, one could consider her a kind of transnational subject in her own right. When her father returns to Santo Domingo from Miami, there is an impromptu parade in his honor, to which the Dominican public is witness either in person or through live television coverage (or both). The narrator describes watching the event on live television as the parade is nearing her home:

And before I can touch him, we see him on TV, high-fiving from the airport to the *feria* [a neighborhood in the capital] . . . [T]he man from the six o'clock news with a picture of papi over his shoulder is saying: the beloved son of Quisqueya returns, and they replay the images that have been captured minutes before . . . Then on the screen the cars and the gold chains and a pregnant woman who faints from the excitement.

I leaned over the balcony to see if he is arriving and what does arrive are the *vanettes* from the television channels waiting for him and signaling towards where I am with their hands. I wave my hand from Cili's balcony and when I go back inside, to see if the news is saying where papi is, I see myself on the screen on Cili's balcony waving goodbye with my hand (12-13).²⁶⁴

This passage highlights the sheer ubiquity of the mass media, and the way that it seamlessly infuses subjects' lives. Most important to this discussion, however, is how this passage critiques and pokes fun at the events that are considered worthy of being shown on the news and are therefore of import to the Dominican national community. As Lisa Parks notes, "[L]ive satellite television not only captures but also defines events of global significance by virtue of where its remote cameras land" ("Our World" 81). Though presumably Papi's return is news fodder only at the local level, the discourse of satellite television and news media infuses a local event with national significance by calling Papi the "cherished son of Quisqueya." This celebration of Papi's return betrays the sharp contrast between the expected roles of a male and female citizenry, for it is the celebration of the ultimate *tíguere*.²⁶⁵ This is a national celebration that is difficult to

²⁶⁴ The original text states: "Y antes de que yo pueda tocarlo lo vemos en la tele, chocando manos desde el aeropuerto hasta la feria...[E]l señor del noticiero de las seis de la tarde con una foto de papi sobre su hombre derecho dice: el niño mimado de Quisqueya, vuelve, y hacen un replay de las imágenes que han capturado hace unos minutos...Luego en la pantalla los autos y las cadenas y una mujer encinta que cae desmayada por la impresión. / Me asomo al balcón para ver si ya llega y lo que llegan son las vanettes de los canales de television a esperarlo, en mano señalando hacia aquí. Yo saludo con la mano desde el balcón de Cili y cuando entro, para ver si en las noticias dicen por dónde anda papi, me veo en la pantalla en el balcón de Cili diciendo adiós con una mano" (12-13).

²⁶⁵ *Tíguere* is a term used to describe Dominican "men whose behavior and disposition place them beyond the pale of respectability...and the law," "hustlers," "criminals," people who engaged in behaviors that victimized others," "womanizers and seducers or who otherwise exploited women emotionally, sexually, or

imagine in the case of a returning Dominican woman as exemplified by an anecdote that I mentioned in the introduction in which a female returnee was seen as “too feminist” to fit in with Dominican society. Adopting Anne McClintock’s study of nationalism, these women’s act of migrating subverts the role that nationalist ideology demands of them as symbols of static tradition; in this configuration, men’s migration fulfills their prescribed role as the nation’s agents of discontinuity, progress, and revolution. As I have elucidated throughout this dissertation, geographically displaced people have the capacity to transform their homeland’s national identity ideologically if not materialistically. Due to migrants’ and exiles’ potential to upturn the homeland’s status quo, both as a community and as individuals, it is not surprising that women’s inclusion and even prevalence within the present-day diaspora is particularly threatening.

As is evident from my discussion of Arias’ short story and Vicioso’s essay, diaspora Dominican women and sex workers defy the boundaries of the nationalist narrative, for women are expected to be the guardians of tradition irrespective of their economic needs. However, a wealthy, white, and hyper-masculine Dominican man who travels back and forth between the diaspora and the homeland does not challenge the status quo at all; in fact, like the many men building the nation from exile in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, *Papi* is a hero.

Papi also challenges the paternalist structures that uphold nationalism by mocking the Dominican Catholic church. As noted in chapter three, alliances with Catholicism and Christianity were central to the strength and longevity of both Trujillo’s and

financially” (Gregory 41). It often refers to the most macho of Dominican men and it is part of popular Dominican lingo with positive or negative connotations depending on the context.

Balaguer's regimes. Hernández satirizes "family values" ideology and the concomitant values of the Catholic Church most clearly in a scene in which the narrator is watching a popular nighttime talk show hosted by a famous Dominican TV personality:

Huchi Lora, the country's most famous *decimero*, appeared on TV, saying that he had proof that there was a narco-Satanist cult operating in the Dominican Republic, trafficking virgin blood, eating fetuses . . . sacrificing people, and that, in order to identify those involved, one only had to look at their T-shirts. And the camera at Color Vision's Studio B showed a close-up of an Ozzy record cover and Ozzy's mouth was full of blood as usual.

Huchi had more proof, covers of Judas Priest's and Megadeth's records and a Bob Marley T-shirt with a leaf of marihuana. The camera quickly scanned over the corpus delicti and Freddy Beras Goico, the host, was receiving live calls from specialists (the chief of Civil Defense, Doña Chucha, the Araña clown) who recommended a lot of prayer and the immediate intervention of the authorities (112).²⁶⁶

A famous Dominican personality, whose fame comes from the traditional Dominican practice of reciting *décimas* about important political issues (Derby, "Shadow of the State," 307), reports on the supposed existence of a local satanic cult while the images being broadcast are those of globally famous anti-establishment personalities and heavy metal icons. It is important to note that a few pages prior to this scene in the narrative, the narrator describes her adventures as a skateboarder and overall pre-adolescent rascal who wears t-shirts of famous heavy metal bands. The juxtaposition of these scenes remarks on the hyperbolic attempts of the Dominican news media and famous talk shows to scandalize the public; in particular, it broadcasts its mission to support dominant

²⁶⁶The original text states: "[E]n la tele salió Huchi Lora, el decimero más famoso del país, diciendo que tenía pruebas de que en la República Dominicana había un culto narco-satánico operando, traficando con sangre de vírgenes, comiendo fetos...sacrificando gente, y que para identificar a los involucrados sólo había que mirarle los t-shirts. Y la cámara del estudio B de Color Visión le hacía un close up a la carátula de un disco de Ozzy y Ozzy como siempre tenía la boca llena de sangre. / Huchi tenía otras pruebas, carátulas de discos de Judas Priest, Megadeth y un t-shirt de Bob Marley con una hoja de marihuana. De inmediato la cámara recorría el cuerpo del delito y Freddy Beras Goico, el host, recibía llamadas en vivo de especialistas (el jefe de la Defensa Civil, Doña Chucha, el payaso Araña) que recomendaban mucha oración y la intervención inmediata de las autoridades" (112).

conservative ideology, the Catholic Church, and the broad discourse of family values. As mentioned previously, this kind of family values discourse was central to both Trujillo's and Balaguer's patriarchal governments. The "specialists" invited to speak on the issue are the Chief of Civil Defense and Doña Chucha, a real-life personality who founded a home for the daughters of working parents. The last reference is to a famous professional clown whose name translates into Spider, adding to the absurdity. In this scene, Dominican patriarchal family values are pitted against US and European cultural influences, especially those representative of alternative youth culture, which are seen as so antithetical to Dominican "traditional" values that they are deemed satanic. In other words, in denying the reality of a transnational Dominican identity, the rhetoric necessarily turns to patriarchal values.

To conclude this chapter, I reiterate that the literary works of Hernández, Arias, and Vicioso reveal the various ways in which Dominicans live transnationalism in the late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century moment. I started with a rejection of the nation's gendered borders that leads to an embracing of an African Diaspora identity, continued to an exploration of the discrepancy between a transnational economy that validates sex work and a nationalist patriarchal agenda that marginalizes it, and ended with a portrait of a thoroughly transnational urban space whose lived transnationalism coexists with staunch patriarchal values perpetually celebrating the Dominican *tíguere*. Studying Dominican subjects' transnational practices and the country's own transnationalism inevitably points to the fact that practices and identities that transcend the confines of the nation-state are far from being a recent phenomenon. From colonial intra-island trade to the colonial relationship to African American freedmen immigrating

in the mid to late nineteenth century, transnationalism in the Dominican Republic has taken many shapes. Indeed, the historical anomaly is an insular Dominican nationalism itself. Fighting against Dominicans' transnationalism has been an uphill battle requiring constant vigilance. When Trujillo came to power in 1930, he had to struggle to unify the nation under his rule. After his presidency, communities that existed beyond the laws and beliefs of the nation-state, like the messianic Palma Sola movement, revealed the many cracks in nationalist ideology.²⁶⁷ National unification efforts have also often led to violent, military reprisal as occurred in the case of the 1937 Haitian Massacre and in the 1961 Palma Sola massacre.

The country's historical transnationalism also renders the Dominican Republic thoroughly Caribbean. Because of the region's advantageous geographic placement, European imperial powers—including Spain, Portugal, England, France, and Belgium—have vied for a piece of these fertile islands. Violent takeovers resulted partly in an unequal global hierarchy whereby the Caribbean became a place that exported raw goods and provided free or cheap labor. This colonial global hierarchy persists in similar guises to this day; sex tourism, for instance, re-enacts some elements of a racist and sexist configuration. However, it is not only the unequal hierarchical relationship to the empire, whether “empire” means Europe or the US, that has made the Caribbean a transnational

²⁶⁷ According to Lusitania Martínez, the Palma Sola messianic movement “was a social protest movement (conducted religiously) stemming from an immediate and present structural cause: the peasant group's oppression related fundamentally to the penetration of capitalism in the countryside” (*Palma Sola* 16). The original text states: “Fue un movimiento de protesta social (conducida religiosamente) debido a una causa estructural mediata y presente: la opresión del grupo campesino relacionada fundamentalmente con la penetración del capitalismo en el campo.” For more on the Palma Sola massacre, as well as the cult of Olivorio Mateo on which it was based, consult Jan Lundius' *The Great Power of God in San Juan Valley: Syncretism and Messianism in the Dominican Republic* (1995), Lusitania Martínez's *Palma Sola: Opresión y esperanza (Su geografía mítica y social)* (2003), and Martha Ellen Davis' *La ruta hacia Liborio: Mesianismo en el sur profundo dominicano* (2004).

space; the migrations of people of color and other marginalized subjects from the early colonial era to the twentieth century have helped define the region's cultural cohesion. Sara Johnson studies the ways in which, despite "the failures of pan-Caribbean social movements," there is "a successful integration of disparate practices [in the extended Caribbean region] into cultural traditions that have left enduring legacies" (*Migrant Recitals* 84). These kinds of affiliations transcend, and greatly precede, the borders of a modern-nation state with its closed and exclusionary definition of national belonging. Hence, though the texts studied in this chapter are clearly evocative of a historical moment *after* the nation-state's boundaries have been codified, their attempts to demonstrate the flexible transnationalism of Dominican identity have historical precedents.

Conclusion

Dominican Women Writers in the Global Marketplace

*Tengo nueve año llenando maleta
con media-panti, desodorante en de'cuento.
Voy a regalal'lo cuando llegue a 'onde mi abuela
y todo el mundo se pondrá contento.
Te llegó la hora, papi. Como Monkey Magic
súbete a e'ta nube y depositate en tu calle
y coge un avión, coño, coge una yola al revé.
¿Tu no lo vé? Llegó la hora de volvé . . .*

*I spent nine years fillin' suitcases
wit' pantyhose, deodorant on sale.
I'm gonna give 'em away when I arrive at my grandma's
and everyone will get happy.
Your hour has arrived, papi. Like Monkey Magic
climb on this cloud and deposit yourself in your street
and get on a plane, damn it, get on a backwards boat.
Don't you see? It's the hour of return . . .*

The epigraph above, an excerpt of Rita Indiana Hernández's popular alternative merengue “*La hora de volvé*”/The Hour of Return, is an apt way to end this dissertation. Even a cursory reading of the song's title and lyrics reveal that it is a twenty-first century version of Salomé Ureña's 1872 poem “Best Wishes to an Exile.” Both texts implore absent Dominicans to return to the homeland and both Ureña and Hernández themselves evoke some of the central symbols and concepts of their respective eras. Ureña's work and life embodied the question of what women's role in the nation's progress should be. For her part, Hernández evokes both the continuities and disruptions from Ureña's nineteenth century to the present through both her personas as literary phenomenon, whose second novel *Papi* I discussed in chapter four, and alternative, queer performative *merenguera*.¹ Like Ureña, Hernández is not a diaspora or exiled Dominican subject, but her experiences with a loved one living abroad—her father—has rendered her a

transnational subject in her own right. Her literature and music's concern with a diaspora community also echoes Ureña's own musings on Dominican exiles.

Another continuity between Ureña's late nineteenth-century and Hernández's early twenty-first century is the question of what is the place of women's and marginalized subjects' cultural production in larger Dominican, Caribbean, and global contexts. This issue encompasses both women's and marginalized writers' agency and their valuation within the market. In an era when there is a demand for Caribbean women's working-class labor, it is worthwhile to ask what is the demand for Caribbean women's intellectual (or artistic) labor. Indeed, over a century after the Instituto de Señoritas' first graduation ceremony, women's place in Dominican and Caribbean histories and markets continues to be an important quandary. If anything, it has become an even more relevant and heated debate.

In order to demonstrate the challenges that current Dominican women writers face and to uncover some of the transnational and intellectual networks that surround literary publication, it might be useful to contrast the ways in which two books by two non-diaspora writers were published, advertised, and disseminated in the mid-2000s. Rita Indiana Hernández's *La estrategia de chochueca* and Jeanette Miller's *La vida es otra cosa*—two works written by a newcomer and an established writer, respectively—followed remarkably different routes to publication. Knowing that the place of Dominican women's writing within the national canon is marginal, at best, allows one to consider whether or not their works find a niche within other frameworks. Miller's novel was basically institutionalized from its inception, beginning with an official nod from the privately sponsored but nationally recognized Casa de Teatro and symbolic acceptance

within the international Spanish-language literary market through the prestigious transnational publishing house Alfaguara. In contrast, the story of how Rita Indiana Hernández entered the global market is one that reveals what appears to be a reciprocal relationship in the world of Dominican letters between the North American or European academy and the Dominican writer.

In the summer of 2006, the Dominican literati gathered at the Pontificia Universidad Católica Madre y Maestra in Santo Domingo for the release of celebrated Dominican writer Jeanette Miller's first novel *La vida es otra cosa* (2006).² Instead of "progress," the keywords in this new century are "globalization," "speed," "internet," and other similar catch phrases meant to capture the ease with which information—including cultural texts like Miller's novel—are being produced, consumed, and profited from. These words also seem to convey that national borders are disintegrating while in other senses they are, in fact, hardening. The novel itself treats the rarely discussed issues of the economic stagnation that leads to migration from rural regions to the city or abroad, sex work as a viable option for poor women, and the problem of anti-Haitianism. However, Miller seemed to heed aforementioned Minister of Public Instruction J.T. Mejía's words that religious virtue must remain front and center in women's lives and education since her novel has a pedantic pro-family, pro-Catholic Church message. This is a reminder that women's literature is not necessarily anti-patriarchal, an issue that I discussed within the context of the Trujillo descendants' narratives in chapter two.

In hindsight, it is evident that Miller's book release was an event clearly evocative of its sociocultural context. Before the publication of *La vida* by Alfaguara, Miller was already an established poet, art critic, and cultural figure. Introducing Miller and her

book were some of the country's most important writers and intellectuals, including José Alcántara Almánzar, Marcio Veloz Maggiolo and María Ugarte. In the audience were other well-known writers, like Ángela Hernández, who were present to celebrate the novel's First Mention (primera mención) in the Premio Internacional de Novela de Casa de Teatro (a prestigious Dominican cultural organization)³ and its publication by Alfaguara. Indeed, the fact that Alfaguara had published the novel merited a thorough discussion in Alcántara Almánzar's opening speech, in which he also praised the publishing company's advertising methods:

attractive posters [. . .] have placed the photograph of our distinguished author in visible places along the avenues of major circulation in Santo Domingo, in that way, to the satisfaction of her friends and acquaintances, rivaling in popularity politicians, councilors, and congressmen, whose faces have invaded the public spaces of our city. (“La vida es otra cosa”)⁴

He suggests that the advertisements' visibility in the city should be enough to secure the novel's success.

Rather than through official advertising, current *merenguera* Rita Indiana Hernández's first short novel *La estrategia de chochueca* reached cult success through the power of word-of-mouth. I have found very little information about Hernández's two short story collections, the second of which was translated into English in 2003 by Kunstneres Hus, an art gallery in Norway, according to the *La estrategia de chochueca* book cover flap. *La estrategia*, which is currently in its third edition (2006), was sent by poet Alexis Gómez Rosa to Dominican-born and Puerto Rican-raised Nelson Rodríguez while the latter, a current University of Toronto professor, was still a doctoral student at Emory University. The manuscript made quite an impression on him and he sent copies

of it to the owner of a bookstore in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The bookstore owner, in turn, sent it to Professor Juan Duchesne at the Universidad de Puerto Rico, who assigned it to his students and publicized it in the Puerto Rican press. As Rodríguez writes, “Two years later, the novel was re-edited in Puerto Rico and today it is studied in US, Canada and Belgian universities” (“La invisibilidad” 12).⁵ I surmise that *Papi* (2005), Hernández’s second novel, was published due to *La estrategia*’s relative success within scholarly circles and alternative youth culture circles.

Of key relevance to this discussion is the reciprocal, though sometimes unequal, relationship between foreign cultural institutions, usually universities, and Dominican cultural production. Especially interesting is the broadening of what is considered worthy of study in the Dominican Republic. With some exceptions, Dominican scholarship has historically not concerned itself with the culture of the masses, “la cultural popular.” Hence, it may be either a diaspora Dominican or a foreign scholar who precipitates national interest in a cultural product previously ignored by the Dominican intelligentsia.⁶ Part of the reason that so many foreigners become interested in elements of Dominican culture that have generally been ignored or denigrated is that they are in contact with those members of the popular classes that migrate in the first place.⁷ Certainly, that only the opinion of a foreigner can give legitimacy to the tastes and cultural practices of the popular classes highlights the socio-economic hierarchies in the country.⁸ It is also a problem when the foreigner comes with an exoticizing lens at one extreme or an idealizing lens at the other, even with the best intentions.⁹ Frequently, diaspora Dominicans like Rodríguez, Junot Díaz, Julia Alvarez, Daisy Cocco de Filippis,

Silvio Torres Saillant, and many others use their connections in places like the United States to kindle an interest in the homeland's popular culture.¹⁰

These issues demonstrate the influence of the Dominican diaspora on the homeland's national identity, and the connection between the North American and European academies and Dominican cultural production. Returning to the discussion of Dominican literature specifically, have North American/European academics—including diaspora Dominicans—replaced the wealthy arts patrons of yore in their role as “discoverers” of unacknowledged talent and/or as its tireless promoters? If so, how does this relationship differ from that between the significantly wealthier patron that is the global corporation and a more marketable literary work, like Jeanette Miller's *La vida es otra cosa* and Pedro Antonio Valdez's novel *Carnaval de Sodoma* (2003), also published by Alfaguara?¹¹ Is the world market always necessarily exploitative in its tireless search for new commodities? Taking as a starting point that everything that becomes a commodity does not necessarily espouse oppressive dominant ideologies, there seems to be a checks-and-balances component that is internal to this system. That is, because of the scarcity of publishing houses in the Dominican Republic that are interested in new Dominican fiction (as opposed to history, political science, sociology, or journalism), Dominican writers have to resort to other means of publishing their work, including making connections with foreign academics who might also translate their books. Part of the reason that interest in this literature comes from abroad is that the study of literature is much more institutionalized in these other regions than in the Latin American context, which privileges social science methodologies in cultural studies (García Canclini, *Consumers and Citizens* 78).

Dominican writer Aurora Arias captures the problems that writers face when interacting with interested but self-centered academics in her story “¿Pero cómo se atreve?”/ But How Do They Dare?, which is one of the stories in her short story collection *Emoticons* (2007). It describes a Dominican woman writer’s experience attending a transnational literary conference that takes place at a Dominican high-end resort as the guest of an academic friend, a Dominican-born professor working in North America. The conference organizers exclude her from participation and the scholars condescendingly ignore her opinions. (It must be noted that the villain of the story, if there is one, is a Cuban academic, whose fame within these circles has clearly gone to her head.) It is unfortunate, though not surprising, that this story is based on a real-life experience (Arias, Personal Interview. 18 Dec. 2007), and it offers a Dominican writer’s perspective on a transnational literary network in which writers are often marginalized but on whose recognition, as I have shown, the publication of their works may depend.

One may note, however, that these relationships with foreign academics provide Dominican authors the space to disseminate works that do not necessarily cater to a global market’s demands. This does not mean that authors like Arias and Hernández would not want to be published by Alfaguara, or that Miller wrote her novel in order to conform to the market’s demands, but that the global market itself filters out certain works while privileging others and that, in doing so, creates alternative systems of “patronage” that allow for greater diversity. In general, these questions form part of a larger discussion about cultural production in the Caribbean and Latin America and its relegation to cultural fare from other parts of the world, notably the US. This inequality in cultural output and reception is due in part to neoliberal policies that prevent Latin

American nation-states from adequately funding cultural institutions. Further, as García Canclini argues, this unequal relationship in cultural output and its uneven reception throughout Latin America (e.g., the wealthier, more educated classes have access to certain kinds of cultural products, while the masses have access to other kinds), prompts one to imagine a “reform[ation] of the state, not only for it to accept the autonomous development of diverse ‘communities,’ but also for it to guarantee equal access to the resources brought by globalization” (*Consumers and Citizens* 21).

La estrategia de chochueca's path to publication also unravels the transnational, hemispheric consciousness of a network of Dominican writers like Rita Indiana Hernández, diaspora Dominican scholars like Néstor Rodríguez, and other Caribbean subjects like the Puerto Rican poet who introduced Rodríguez to Hernández's work. Indeed, this dissertation explored how literature that challenges traditional concepts of national belonging extends itself towards other cultural contexts. These connections often consciously or accidentally demonstrate a trans-American and/or, especially in the case of diaspora Dominican literature, an African Diaspora perspective. For instance, Julia Alvarez's *In the Name of Salomé*, studied in chapter one, presents a trans-American vision, in which “the teaching of literature by traveling and often exiled writers and critics [e.g., Camila Henríquez Ureña] continually migrating across the boundaries of nation, language, and institution foregrounds what had been the crucial role of pedagogical work in the formation of various public spheres in the nineteenth century Americas” (Brickhouse 255). Here, Anna Brickhouse remarks on the dissemination of texts after they have been written and published. Teaching becomes the basis for the transnational and transhistorical life of texts that would otherwise never be read beyond

very specific and limited contexts. This kind of trans-American pedagogical effort is precisely what led to Rita Indiana Hernández's success as a writer.

Like the graduation ceremony in 1887 and Jeanette Miller's book release in 2006, another cultural event in Santo Domingo provided an aperture for understanding the current twenty-first-century cultural moment. In early August of 2009, I attended a talk by well-known writer and lawyer Carmen Imbert Brugal entitled "*Mujer, literatura y Caribe*"/Woman, Literature and the Caribbean. Part of her argument was that Caribbean women writers must contend with a reading public and an industry that often prioritizes marketability over quality. The talk provoked much indignation, including from those who felt that there was no problem to be discussed. They contended that women's work was published less than men's only because it tended to be worse. The audience also included those who felt that Imbert Brugal's talk was not radical enough. I left the event with the sense that the lecturer's main point was generally misunderstood. The idea of "quality" or "value" is subjective. However, Imbert Brugal claims that the measuring stick of quality differs for male and female writers. As an example, she mentioned the national award that *A la sombra de mi abuelo* by Aída Trujillo had won the year before. Imbert Brugal wondered whether the heated vitriol that she was hearing from the media and literary circles stemmed solely from the book's questionable literary merit or if the fact that Aída Trujillo happened to be a woman added to the public's scorn.¹² If an answer to the question were even possible, it would not have been in a room full of such emotions.

In response to a market and reading public that too often cannot adequately comprehend women's and other marginalized subjects' cultural texts, this dissertation

presented intersecting alternative genealogies. In chapter one, I constructed a literary genealogy that starts with Ureña and ends with her daughter Camila Henríquez Ureña, Chiqui Vicioso, and Julia Alvarez. In chapter three, I introduced a genealogy that begins with canonical Dominican discourse by Balaguer and other conservatives and ends with its deconstruction in Junot Díaz's and Viriato Sención's novels. I argued that the reason that these genealogical constructions are important is that literature that provides alternative discourses of national belonging have been under-analyzed and misread. In the Dominican case, women writers have often been the ones to produce this literature as their perceptions of national belonging differ markedly from canonical nationalisms in several ways. First, these works often capture the interrelatedness between the domestic and the public sphere, as well as the actual distance between women's and men's differing roles. Second, these texts are suspicious of the stability of a patriarchal structure in protecting citizens from different forms of abjection. In short, they untangle the ways in which patriarchal ideologies alienate Dominicans. This includes dominant discourses of hyper-masculinity—as I explored in chapter three—and appropriate femininity—as I discussed in chapters one and four. Moreover, in chapters three and four, I argued that the transnational diaspora space allows for the possibility for self-transformation through race consciousness and differing gender standards. However, I also proposed that this potentially liberating space could perpetuate the same oppressive ideologies as the nation. It is important to avoid an easy binary between a necessarily progressive diaspora and an oppressive homeland, and my analyses have shown that the inverse of this binary is also possible.

This dissertation also explored the place of Dominican citizens within Eurocentric national, regional (i.e., Caribbean), and global histories. Chapters one and two analyzed these issues in relation to gender. In chapter one, I used the example of nineteenth-century National Poet(ess) Salomé Ureña because, despite her primordial role in canonical Dominican letters, her “intimate” and more personal poetry has been largely obscured by her patriotic poetry. The dismissal of her ignored or misread poetry stems greatly from the fact that the ideas expressed in them have been relegated to the less valued feminine and domestic spheres. I argued that paying closer attention to her whole body of work reveals the fascinating idea that Dominican national identity as it has been understood until now has always relied on the absence of Dominicans living abroad. This understanding of Dominican letters in relation to the construction of national identity is relevant considering that the vitriol that is currently aimed at migrant Dominicans—that is, absent Dominicans—emanates from a vision of Dominican nationhood that cuts ties with those living outside of the geographic borders. Chapter two’s analysis of three memoirs by three female Trujillo descendants demonstrated that the act of erasure is not only the purview of male writers and scholars. Much like Ureña’s erasure or misreading by male scholars is gendered, I argued that these memoirs’ historical erasures for the benefit of the dictator’s legacy rely on an idealization of a patriarchal family structure. As such, they portray Trujillo as a righteous *pater familias* who coyly took on national responsibilities at people’s request. Moreover, at least two of the Trujillo descendants, Aída and Angelita Trujillo, attempt to challenge the now official version of the Trujillo regime’s history that paints him as an egomaniacal, perverted, and psychopathic man.

The dissertation's exploration of Dominican historical narrative(s) continues with chapter three and chapter four's investigation of how diaspora Dominicans who do not or cannot reinforce the homeland's gender and racial standards are written out of these narratives. Both Sención's *Los que falsificaron la firma de Dios* and Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* engage with the idea that national and global histories reinforce colonial hierarchies and its inverse, that neo-colonial paradigms influence history-writing. The question of who has the power not only to write history but also to take advantage of so-called globalization and its increased flow of people, ideas, products, and money is relevant. My interpretation of Aurora Arias' "Novia del Atlántico" suggests that what celebrants of this "new global order" describe as the potentially flattening effects of globalization and the "free market" are hardly evident; instead, the gender, racial, and regional hierarchies that supported colonialism persist in similar guises. National histories also sideline those who refuse to conform to interrelated gender and racial standards that maintain the patriarchal structure of the Dominican nation. This concept is most clear in chapter four's interpretation of Vicioso's personal essay "Dominicanyorkness: A Metropolitan Discovery of the Triangle" when the little girl who is taught to hate her black phenotypic traits in the homeland becomes a woman who embraces her African ancestry in the diaspora. Far from reinforcing these beauty and behavioral standards, Vicioso's experience in the diaspora opens her national vision to an African Diaspora, trans-Caribbean, and transnational vision. Like Díaz's novel, Vicioso's essay stretches the country's border and constructs a vision of Dominican national identity that is inclusive and based on

alliances and not on what Dominicans supposedly are not: working-class migrants, Haitian, black, or feminist.

As I finished this dissertation, the US economy entered its so-called Great Recession manifested in high unemployment rates and the generalized sense that the US is no longer the world's wealthiest, most powerful nation. The economic flux of the last few years has both resulted in and is the result of social, cultural and political changes in the US that are well beyond the scope of this dissertation. Future analyses of the issues that I discuss in this dissertation must consider how the recession affects the neocolonial global order in which the working-class labor of racialized third world women is in high demand. US citizens and residents are feeling the effect of the dearth of the jobs, mostly in the manufacturing sector, that have been exported to places where companies can pay workers low wages and where the laws protecting these workers and the environment are lax if not inexistent. Overall, it is difficult at this moment to assess how this recession affects Dominican and other racialized women. Perhaps the recession has resulted in an increase of jobs for women in countries like India, Mexico, and the Dominican Republic. Perhaps it means that these companies will pay these already low-wage earners even less, while other companies may file for bankruptcy leading to an increase in unemployment worldwide. In the case of racialized migrant women workers, the caretaking economy that has historically valued their labor likely suffered due to middle and upper-middle class employers' decreased spending power. Is the demand for third world women's labor that Saskia Sassen, Barbara Ehrenreich, and Arlie Russell Hochschild discuss still relevant?¹³ Will Caribbean countries like the Dominican Republic have the power to re-

negotiate the free trade “agreements” binding them to US interests in light of China’s growing global economic power? How will any of these changes affect the late twentieth-century patterns of migration that I argued presented some continuities and discontinuities from the late nineteenth-century moment of the young Dominican nation? Perhaps Dominican migration is entering an entirely new epoch whose shape and pattern is not currently discernible. As such, this dissertation closes with an open invitation to consider these changes as they emerge in the future.

¹ Hernández’s current transnational success as a merenguera, which included performing in New York City’s Central Park SummerStage concert series in 2011, has only heightened interest in her earlier career as a novelist.

² I was also present at the event as an observer.

³ According to its website, Casa de Teatro is funded by the León Jiménez firm, which has a reputation for sponsoring cultural events in the country, and the Cervecería Nacional. In other words, it is privately sponsored by national companies.

⁴ In the original: “atractivos carteles [. . .] ha[n] colocado la fotografía de nuestra distinguida autora en lugares visibles a lo largo de las avenidas de mayor circulación en Santo Domingo, rivalizando así en popularidad, para satisfacción de sus amigos y relacionados, con políticos, ediles y congresistas, cuyos rostros han invadido los espacios públicos de nuestra urbe.”

⁵ In the original: “Dos años más tarde, la novela fue reeditada en Puerto Rico y hoy en día se estudia en universidades de Estados Unidos, Canadá y Bélgica.”

⁶ One such case occurred at the First International Congress of Music, Identity, and Culture in the Caribbean in 2005, dedicated to the theme of Merengue in Dominican and Caribbean culture. The ethnomusicologist Carlos Stafi, a Brazilian who received his doctorate at the University of Natal in South Africa and who now teaches percussion at the Universidade Estadual Paulista in Brazil, presented a paper on the *güira*, a tin instrument resembling a cylindrical cheese grater that is scratched with a special comb-like pick. The sound is an integral part of *perico ripia’o*, a traditional merengue, and more modern forms of merengue, but no one had bothered to pay much attention to this instrument.

⁷ During the summer of 2004, I worked with Alex Wolfe, the director of the documentary *Santo Domingo Blues: The Story of Luis Vargas, the Supreme King of Bitterness*, which is about bachata music. Wolfe first heard and fell in love with bachata, a guitar-based music associated with poor rural regions of the country and traditionally despised by the Dominican elite, at his local Dominican-owned bodega in New York City.

⁸ There are important exceptions to this. For instance, nineteenth-century scholar Pedro Franciscó Bonó studied the figure of the *montero*—a kind of Dominican mountain peasant or hunter.

⁹ Lauren Derby suggested that this is also due to the lack of confidence in “lo criollo,” that is, the local culture, due to multiple successive foreign interventions.

¹⁰ This access to certain networks is a reminder of the diaspora subjects’ privilege. However, these diaspora Dominicans are no more the norm within the larger diaspora community than are the cultural elite on the island.

¹¹ *Carnaval de sodoma*, a novel that helps carry the torch of Latin American brothel literature, was adapted into a film in 2006 by Mexican director Arturo Ripstein.

¹² Here, one may also recall Roberto Cassá’s gendered insults directed at Angelita Trujillo as discussed in chapter two.

¹³ Here, I refer to the arguments made in relation to the feminization of global labor in Sasken's *Globalization and its Discontents* (1998) and in Ehrenreich's and Russel Hochschild's *Global Woman* (2003).

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