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Title

Excerpt from Colonial Phantoms: Belonging and Refusal in the Dominican Americas, from the 19th Century to the Present (2018)

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/77h9m5hh>

Journal

Journal of Transnational American Studies, 11(2)

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Publication Date

2020

DOI

10.5070/T8112051016

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Colonial Phantoms

*Belonging and Refusal in the Dominican Americas,
from the 19th Century to the Present*

Dixa Ramírez



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS

New York

NEW YORK UNIVERSITY PRESS
New York
www.nyupress.org

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References to Internet websites (URLs) were accurate at the time of writing. Neither the author nor New York University Press is responsible for URLs that may have expired or changed since the manuscript was prepared.

ISBN: 978-1-4798-5045-7 (hardback)

ISBN: 978-1-4798-6756-1 (paperback)

For Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data, please contact the Library of Congress.

New York University Press books are printed on acid-free paper, and their binding materials are chosen for strength and durability. We strive to use environmentally responsible suppliers and materials to the greatest extent possible in publishing our books.

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Also available as an ebook

Introduction

At the Navel of the Americas

[T]he stranger [. . .] showed no colors [. . .]. It might have been but a deception of the vapors, but the longer the stranger was watched the more singular appeared her maneuvers. Erelong it seemed hard to decide whether she meant to come in or no — what she wanted, or what she was about.
—Herman Melville, “Benito Cereno” (1855)

The history of San Domingo was never completely written, and if it were, would never find a reader.
—J. Dennis Harris, *A Summer on the Borders of the Caribbean Sea* (1860)

In 1855, *Putnam’s Monthly* published Herman Melville’s novella “Benito Cereno” over three issues.¹ Melville based the story on the real-life account of a revolt on the *Tryal*, a slaving ship with Spanish-owned subjects from West Africa en route to Argentina. Melville’s narrative develops from the perspective of Amasa Delano of Massachusetts, who spots a slaving ship from his seal hunting vessel off the coast of Chile. Delano sees that “the stranger [*San Dominick*], viewed through the glass, showed no colors,” and, thus, did not reveal its provenance, ownership, or purpose.² From a better perspective, the ship then “appeared like a whitewashed monastery after a thunderstorm.”³ Closer still, it seems as if Delano has finally discerned what “the stranger” is about: “the true character of the vessel was plain — a Spanish merchantman of the first class, carrying negro slaves, amongst other valuable freight, from one colonial port to another.”⁴ And yet, Delano had not actually realized the “true character” of the ghostly ship, even after spending hours onboard the *San Dominick* asking its captain, the Spaniard Benito Cereno, his crew,

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and some of the enslaved subjects what had caused the ship's stranding. The rest of the story unspools the many ways in which Delano's perception repeatedly fools him.

After several hours of growing confusion and dread, Delano suddenly realizes that the ship's cargo, black "slaves," had mutinied weeks earlier and were holding the (mostly white) crew hostage. The world order to which he had been accustomed had been turned on its head. He could not fathom that the enslaved subjects on the ship had mutinied and turned "the order of things" upside down. The terror humming beneath the story is that the *San Dominick*, named by Melville as a direct allusion to the Haitian Revolution, allegorizes the threat of slave insurrection and black self-governance.⁵ Although "Benito Cereno" was written in 1855 and the real-life slave rebellion to which it referred took place in 1805, Melville set the novella in 1799, the middle point of the revolts and other myriad events now called the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804).

I start this book about Dominican cultural expression with "Benito Cereno" because it is an apt allegory for what generations of scholars have been unable to see: that anxieties about Haiti often applied equally to the entire island, Hispaniola, which in the early nineteenth century encompassed both Haiti and the eastern colony of Santo Domingo. The ghostly ship and the events onboard confused Delano because his world contained white masters and black slaves, and not black subjects holding whites captive while pretending to be enslaved. His worldview prevented him from "reading" or "perceiving" reality. Similarly, the Haitian Revolution augured over a century during which outsiders often did not care to differentiate between the two sides of the island, even beyond the twenty-two-year span (1822–1844) when the entire island was no longer under Haitian governance. Analyzing a variety of cultural expression by and about Dominicans from the late nineteenth century to the present, including literature, government documents, music, the visual arts, public monuments, film, and ephemeral and stage performance, *Colonial Phantoms* explores how Dominicans have negotiated the miscomprehension, miscategorization, and misperception—or what I call ghosting—of this territory.⁶

While my choice to open this book with the words of a canonical, white U.S. author may seem to undermine the project of centering Dominican cultural expression, I argue that it demonstrates how

inequalities of power influence perception, and, as such, fields of knowledge. This book is about Dominicans' attempts to assert themselves in the face of a willingly amnesic and relentlessly self-assured U.S. imperialism, or what Anne McClintock calls "the administration of forgetting" in the process of "imperial ghosting."⁷ Indeed, dominant Western discourses have ghosted Dominican history and culture despite its central place in the architecture of the Americas not only as the first Spanish colony in the hemisphere but also, alongside Haiti, as an exemplar of black self-rule. However, what Haiti came to represent in the Western imaginary overshadowed the other examples of free black subjectivity as they predominated for centuries on the eastern side of the island. In associating Santo Domingo/the Dominican Republic (hereafter called only the Dominican Republic, although this name officially applies only after 1844) with revolutionary Haiti, outsiders conflated what had been the toppling of the Plantation society par excellence with the majority mixed-race, free population that lived largely from cattle ranching and other forms of nonsurplus subsistence for centuries.⁸

I contend that the understudied Dominican example exists beyond the recognizable, and often oversimplified, visions of Haitian insurrection that inspired fear or hope in broader Western imaginaries. The free black and mixed-race negotiations of a slaveholding, impoverished, and scarcely populated society that developed in Dominican territory are too murky, compromised, and foggy to grab the kind of attention reserved for narratives of slaves toppling masters.⁹ Looking at Dominican history and cultural expression across several centuries may leave us sympathetic to Delano's confusion while gazing at the *San Dominick*: "It seemed hard to decide whether [it] meant to come in or no — what [it] wanted, or what [it] was about."¹⁰ The Dominican cultural expressions that I analyze in this book evince more tensions, silences, and loose threads than anything else. These loose threads signal what McClintock describes as "the ambivalent presence of ghosts," who "are fetishes of the in-between, marking places of irresolution" and who "embody the unsettling prospect that the past can be neither foreclosed nor redeemed."¹¹ According to Avery Gordon, "the ghostly haunt" points towards a something to be done. Gordon writes: "*Something is making an appearance to you that had been kept from view. It says, Do something about the wavering present the haunting is creating.*"¹²

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Indeed, Dominicans from the nineteenth century to the present day have endeavored to make themselves legible—to “make an appearance”—within New World histories and narratives that have erased, misunderstood, or inserted them as inferior Others—“kept them from view.” The “narratives of belonging” that I study throughout this book are Dominicans’ attempts to be legible as citizen-subjects with access to political, economic, social, and cultural participation within national spaces (including the Dominican Republic, the U.S., Spain, and elsewhere) and transnational or supranational imaginaries and histories such as the African diaspora, Latin America, the Latinx U.S., and the Atlantic world. Equally important to being legible and visible have been Dominican strategies of refusal, that is, of refusing the terms necessary for their legibility in dominant histories and narratives. Discussions of blackness have most frequently conjured these refusals since Dominicans have emerged in early twenty-first-century African American and U.S. Latinx discourses as exemplars of “black denial.”¹³ The country is often seen as “the racial pariah of the Americas,” to cite Raj Chetty.¹⁴ This propensity signals the illegibility of the country’s “strange” history within dominant Western discourses—including some African diaspora and Latinx discourses—because, in pathologizing Dominican ideas of race, these narratives do not consider that Dominican society beyond the capital city of Santo Domingo developed apart from, though in trade relations with, the Plantation system or what Ira Berlin calls a slave society (versus a society with slaves).¹⁵ Scholars of Caribbean and North American slavery have made the important distinction between societies with slaves and slave societies or what I prefer to call the Plantation, after Antonio Benítez Rojo. The Dominican context is singular in that, while it was a society with enslaved subjects for centuries, it was also, and crucially, a society with a majority free black population that lived beyond the purview of any colonial oversight, whether urban or rural.¹⁶ It should not be surprising, then, that distinct racial discourses would emerge from a slaveholding society structured in relationships not immediately legible to the novice imperial gaze, newly arrived to Dominican soil.

Through literature, music, and speech acts, island and diasporic Dominicans have expressed their dissatisfaction with how they have been described in dominant discourses. These Dominican cultural

expressions of refusal are not necessarily emancipatory. As I mentioned, they are often deeply ambivalent, signaling the persistent interruptions and unfinished imperial and national projects augured on the territory. These expressions run the gamut from ultraconservative, anti-Haitian nationalist literature to present-day Afro-Latinx activism. For instance, the canonization and subsequent whitewashing of an Afro-descendant woman poet (chapters one and two), portrayals and self-expressions of nonwhite Dominican men (chapter three), diasporic Dominican musical performers (chapter four), and female Dominican sex workers catering to foreigners (chapter five) cannot easily be understood through common dichotomies between a ruling class status quo, on one end, and subaltern resistance, on the other. My engagements with these examples of expressive culture and socioeconomic realms have necessitated nuanced analyses that challenge the dominant discourses of race, gender, class, and sexuality in the Americas and the African diaspora.

This book's main goals are twofold. First, I seek to contextualize and analyze Dominicans' cultural expressions produced after the nation's founding in 1844 to the present. Dominicanist scholars have shown that many of these texts either critique or propagate nationalist discourses.¹⁷ I extend their arguments by proposing that Dominican cultural expressions attempt to counteract the territory's ghosting within larger Western discourses, for better or worse. Second, I intervene at the level of knowledge production and analysis by disrupting some of the fields constructed to account for various modes of being in the Americas, which have not been able to discern, and, in some cases, have helped to obscure the kinds of free black subjectivity that emerged in the Dominican Republic. In so doing, *Colonial Phantoms* establishes a framework for placing Dominican expressive culture and historical formations at the forefront of a number of scholarly investigations of colonial modernity in the Americas, the African diaspora, geographic displacement (e.g., migration and exile), and international divisions of labor.¹⁸

Techniques of Ghosting

Techniques of ghosting, erasure, and silencing comprise some of the most powerful ways in which colonial, imperial, and nationalist entities wield their power.¹⁹ My preference for the term "ghosting" instead

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of erasure, silencing, fragmentation, trauma, or even haunting requires thorough explanation. While these other terms apply to some of the specific examples I investigate in this book, “ghosting” encompasses most of the ideas I wish to convey. In his Nobel laureate speech, Derek Walcott named fragmentation as integral to Caribbean history and culture: “[T]he way that the Caribbean is still looked at, illegitimate, rootless, mongrelized. [...] No people. Fragments and echoes of real people, unoriginal and broken.”²⁰ Literature and other forms of expressive culture, then, emerge as a “restoration of our shattered histories, our shards of vocabulary, our archipelago becoming a synonym for pieces broken off from the original continent.”²¹ While Dominican history and expressive culture can certainly be described as “fragmented,” the term does not evoke some of the active elements of the process or set of processes that created such fragments in the first place. Moreover, evocative words such as “shards” and “pieces” exist as objects beyond the realm of time. My analyses in this book rest more on continuities and repetitions, which exist through time. One of the most important ways in which hauntings manifest themselves is through repetition, either “ritualistic” (McClintock) or “involuntary” (Gordon). As Diana Taylor contends, “[t]he ghost is, by definition, repetition.”²² Thus, the mark of haunting is evident in the Dominican Republic, which has seen repetitions and rehearsals of several national and imperial projects.

For its part, while the term “haunting” urges us to consider what is being haunted, “ghosting” also compels us to ask *who* is responsible for creating the ghosts. “Silencing” also motivates us to name the actor(s) behind the act, as Michel-Rolph Trouillot does in his influential *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995), but it can leave us with the sense that the act of silencing has produced inert historical gaps. Instead, “ghosting” implies that the acts of erasure that are part and parcel of colonial, imperial, and many nationalist projects have produced not so much actual silence as other unwieldy and recalcitrant presences. To cite Renée Bergland, ghosts “refuse to stay buried.”²³ According to Avery Gordon, haunting “is an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known, sometimes very discretely, sometimes more obliquely.”²⁴ *Colonial Phantoms* endeavors to show how the ghosts of Dominican erasure have tried to

make themselves seen, heard, and recorded, as well as how Dominican subjects from the late nineteenth century to the present have engaged with them. Many of the cultural expressions that I discuss in this book suggest that acknowledgement of these ghosts opens us to the potential for redemption, healing, and, to cite McClintock, “the possibilities of alternative futures.”²⁵

It would be useful to outline the main ways in which the Dominican Republic has been ghosted within broader Western imaginaries:

1. Cultural producers (scholars, writers, journalists, cartographers, activists, and others) and policymakers, especially from Europe and the U.S., have ghosted how central the Dominican Republic was as a space where European and U.S. powers could rehearse their military, political, and economic imperialist projects.
2. Many Dominican nationalist cultural producers and policymakers, as well as cultural producers and policymakers from elsewhere, have ghosted the territory’s historical and demographic singularity. The Dominican Republic had a diverse economy based mostly on cattle ranching, wood, and tobacco (reliant on trade with Plantation neighbor Saint-Domingue/Haiti) with a majority free black and mixed-race population. This economic and demographic reality started in the late sixteenth century and endured, arguably, into the twentieth century.
3. Cultural producers and policymakers from outside of the island (non-Haitians and non-Dominicans) persistently called the entire island Haiti for most of the nineteenth century even when only the Western third of the island had this name and government. This matters immensely because when Haiti was founded, much to the dismay of the world’s ruling elite, especially those whose fortunes relied directly on slave labor, both sides of the island felt the cultural and material repercussions of the world’s wrath.²⁶
4. The ghosting of the Dominican Republic from dominant Western discourses, combined with at least a century of being associated (both accurately and inaccurately) with Haiti, means that categories of knowledge and disciplinary fields have been constructed and developed without considering its important example. This

led to present-day scholars of the nineteenth century, for instance, repeating earlier inaccuracies and silencings, and thereby perpetuating the ghosting of the Dominican Republic.²⁷

5. Because association with Haiti would prevent Dominicans from garnering the world respect necessary for economic and political survival—within the dominant white supremacist world order—many in the ruling and intellectual classes were desperate to show that they were nothing like Haitians.²⁸ In so doing, these cultural producers also erased or, at least whitewashed, Dominican forms of black subjectivity. They also elided the ways in which many black and mixed-race subjects in the Dominican Republic partook in the set of events now called the Haitian Revolution on both sides of the island.
6. By the late twentieth century, what had been a unique territory within the Americas had become another “third world” island-nation providing cheap labor, sun, sex, and sand.²⁹ This occurred through the consolidation of the Dominican nation-state, the persistence of U.S. involvement in Dominican politics and economy, the reliance on foreign tourism as the main driver of the national economy, and neoliberal policies and trade agreements that restructured the relationship between the Dominican Republic and other national economies. This present-day commonplaceness obscures—but does not eradicate entirely—the strangeness of prior centuries.

While these six forms of ghosting are deeply intertwined, their unequal effects reflect the difference in global power between the Dominican Republic and Europe/the U.S. I focus mostly on ghosting at the level of knowledge production, while remaining aware that extreme violence (e.g., state-sponsored genocide) has also been a central technique of ghosting. However, various forms of knowledge production have had immense material repercussions on the people who have lived on this island. For instance, mid-nineteenth-century scientific racism as a form of knowledge production emanating mostly from the Western powers and white elites in other parts of the world influenced how foreign visitors categorized the Dominican population. It also informed several Dominican scholars who wrote about the degeneracy of the country's

mixed-race and black populations. These visitors and scholars often had direct influence on policies that would affect the material circumstances, even the lives, of Dominicans.³⁰

Persistent misnaming of either or both sides of the island in various fields of scholarship and over two centuries has compounded archival erasure or miscategorization. That is, non-Dominican and non-Haitian scholars writing about the island referred to either side accurately or mistakenly as San Domingue/San Domingo/Saint Domingue/Santo Domingo/Hayti/Haiti/Hispaniola/Española.³¹ The western side of the island was first known as La Española/Hispaniola (alongside the rest of the island), Saint Domingue, and finally Haiti. The eastern side occasions more confusion; Hispaniola became Santo Domingo (also the name of the capital city), Spanish Haiti, and finally the Dominican Republic.³²

The ghosting of the Dominican Republic from dominant Western discourses matters for several reasons. First, the vast diaspora of Dominicans in the U.S. and Europe, and the way that Dominican cultural expressions (e.g., *bachata* and *merengue*, the literature of Julia Alvarez and Junot Díaz) and labor (e.g., factory and domestic work, baseball) have made deep marks in the U.S. and European mainstream, behooves us to get to know the cultural background of an emigrant population that tends to maintain ties to the homeland.³³ Second, it matters because the history of the Dominican Republic for centuries contained whispers of a way of being in the Americas that to some extent evaded dominant socioeconomic and political structures. And finally, it matters because, in Trouillot's words, "[h]istorical silences [signal] archival power at its strongest, the power to define what is and what is not a serious object of research and, therefore, of mention."³⁴ Even revisionist histories and antioppression activist efforts, especially when issuing from the North American and European centers of global power, can constitute acts of "imperial ghosting."³⁵

The term "navel" in this introduction's title serves as another allegory that clarifies this project. The navel sits at the center of the body. In this case, it symbolizes the geographic centrality of the island of Hispaniola within the hemisphere. Too, the navel represents a conceptual centrality and importance that nevertheless has been ghosted. The navel is the remnant of a once vital relationship, the umbilical cord that augured and fueled a history of the conquest and colonization of the Americas with

all of its attendant violence. Celsa Albert Batista describes the colony of La Española or Hispaniola as the “center for the rehearsal of Spanish colonialism in America.”³⁶ It was also the center for experiments in radical black freedom and self-governance as well as various forms of U.S. imperialism. That is, it is a symbol of the ghosted importance of this territory to the subsequent architecture of the Americas.

Because major fields of knowledge about the Americas have developed without revising their paradigms to allow for a conceptualization of the Dominican Republic, I have had to construct a reading practice that can discern the “lower frequencies,” to cite Lisa Lowe, humming beneath nationalist, imperialist, and diasporic narratives, both popular and academic.³⁷ The texts I analyze not only “unearth that which the colonial experience buried and overlaid, bringing to light the hidden continuities it suppressed,” to invoke Stuart Hall, but also “produce identity” in a “*re-telling* [rather than discovery] of the past.”³⁸ Seen differently, Hall here distinguishes between a text as a filler of historical gaps and a text as the living ghost created by prior silencings. In the latter case, the text/ghost is an active presence with its own complicated vision of “what happened” and why it is speaking now.

Consider, for instance, the Dominican mythical figure of the *ciguapa*, a simultaneously alluring and terrifying creature whose feet face backwards. Ginetta Candelario argues that the *ciguapa* “is not a legend of Taíno origins that predates Spanish colonization of the island,” as she is popularly understood.³⁹ The *ciguapa* was, instead, the invention of Francisco Javier Angulo Guridi (1816–1884), a nationalist Liberal “navigating the Dominican Republic’s contradictory racial demographics, political economy, and geopolitics.”⁴⁰ In this sense, the *ciguapa* as a figure of contradiction and ambivalence manages several ghostings, including the violent genocide of indigenous people on the island and the suppression of black freedom as it predominated in this territory. This interpretation of the *ciguapa* resembles Avery Gordon’s reading of *Beloved*, the adult ghost who returns after being killed as a child in Toni Morrison’s canonical novel.⁴¹ Like *Beloved*, the *ciguapa* is “visible and demanding.”⁴² Unlike *Beloved*, however, the *ciguapa* emerges as a figure of obfuscation and distraction, rather than as a figure of “reckoning” who “makes those who have contact with her [...] confront an event in the past that loiters in the present.”⁴³ I want to suggest that

the act of invention for the purpose of denial and erasure does not produce vacancy or absence as much as it creates other contradictory, fleshy presences.

The Specter of Haiti

But if the revolution was significant for Haitians [...] to most foreigners it was primarily a lucky argument in a larger issue. [...] Haiti mattered to all of them, but only as a pretext to talk about something else.

—Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past* (1995)

While the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804) inspired many subjects of African descent, the world’s white elite recoiled in fear and horror.⁴⁴ Saint Domingue’s colonizer, France, denied Haiti recognition until the new nation agreed to an exorbitant debt payment that crippled the Haitian economy. Western powers did their best to banish Haitian history, culture, religion, and people from world history, demonizing what remained.⁴⁵ In Gina Ulysse’s words, “Haiti had to become colonialism’s *bête noir* if the sanctity of whiteness were to remain unquestioned.”⁴⁶ To be sure, as Sean X. Goudie writes, “an active silencing or disavowal of the Haitian Revolution in the archives has been at the heart of Western modernity, not the least in the nineteenth-century United States.”⁴⁷ At a time when U.S. government officials and cultural producers consolidated the ideal of a white (male) citizenry, Haitian officials drafted a constitution that named its citizens as black.⁴⁸ According to Eric J. Sundquist, “Haiti came to seem the fearful precursor of black rebellion throughout the New World, becoming an entrenched part of master-class ideology in both Latin America and the United States.”⁴⁹ This matters within the context of this book because the specter and fear of Haiti applied to the entire island, in terms both practical and theoretical. In a practical sense, texts about nineteenth-century Haiti/Saint Domingue/Santo Domingo are quite often about the entire island and even explicitly about the Dominican Republic—even when that latter name never surfaces. Its proximity to Haiti and its *oneness* with it from 1822 until 1844 meant that the fate of the eastern, formerly Spanish, territory was tied to Haiti’s.

As Trouillot argues, the Haitian Revolution and the creation of a black state of Haiti made world leaders and others so anxious that it was unmentioned or excised during some of the most crucial moments in hemispheric history.⁵⁰ For instance, in 1819, U.S. president James Monroe ignored the existence of Haiti as a nation-state and, several years later, again made no mention of Haiti during his “articulation of the famous Monroe Doctrine asserting American primacy in the hemisphere,” to cite Sara Fanning.⁵¹ The subsequent Congress of Panama of 1826 systematically also excluded Haiti (the entire island at the time) at the insistence of the U.S. president, John Quincy Adams, and in the interest of slaveholders in his country. (Paradoxically, its absence from these moments of consolidation of U.S. imperial power did not protect Haiti from future U.S. aggression and involvement.) Haiti’s weight as representing what the world’s white ruling class most feared — black insurgency and self-autonomy — required a political and economic embargo. Thus, Haiti — the entire island for a crucial twenty-two years — underwent a systematic, sinister erasure, active and hostile, when the new nation-states of the hemisphere recognized each other.

Because of this global stance against Haiti, many nineteenth- and twentieth-century Dominican nationalists were eager to suppress Dominican connections to Haiti. In their efforts to convince foreign powers that Dominicans were nothing like Haitians, many Dominican officials rejected the ways in which many black and mixed-raced Dominicans had participated in slave revolts over the centuries, cheered for black insurrection in neighboring Saint Domingue, and welcomed Haitian governance over the whole island.⁵² Mixed-raced categories in the Dominican racial spectrum emerged as part of a strategy of communicating to U.S. imperial officials in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that, while most Dominicans were not “white” in the way that the U.S. government described it (which at the time could also exclude Spaniards, for instance), they were also not “black” in the way that the Haitian constitution of 1805 proclaimed the country to be.⁵³ This book builds on and coexists with recent scholarly and activist attempts to undo some of the damage occasioned by anti-Haitian Dominican nationalism as refracted through anti-Haitian U.S. imperial desires.⁵⁴

At the same time, the Dominican Republic helped U.S. leaders consider the language of free black subjectivity because it already existed

there in a greater degree of autonomy and expanse than in the rest of the hemisphere. Pockets of black freedom, beyond maroonage, existed all over the Americas. However, what was unique to this territory is that this freedom from the surveillance of a white supremacist colonial and then national gaze was a predominant, if often suppressed, social element. During his time as U.S. president (1869–1877), Ulysses S. Grant pushed for annexation of the Dominican Republic: “The acquisition of San Domingo is an adherence to the ‘Monroe doctrine’; [. . .] it is to make slavery insupportable in Cuba and Porto Rico [*sic*] at once, and ultimately so in Brazil.”⁵⁵ Grant’s case encompassed nothing less than a future-driven map of a slavery-free, U.S.-led hemispheric order. To Grant, the Dominican Republic would not only host the rehearsal of this project, but already contained the seeds of this future. Grant did not have to go through the trouble of figuring out how best to deal with recently freed black subjects; Dominican territory provided a glimpse of free black subjectivity. In seeing that the future did not lie in slaveholding societies such as Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Brazil, Grant looked to the island that showed what universal free black subjectivity and (male) citizenship looked like.

A Singular Colony

In order to understand the depth of what Dominican nationalists and European and U.S. political and cultural leaders ghosted, I must expand on the various forms of ghosting I outlined above. The Dominican Republic was the site of the first rehearsals of European empire in the hemisphere. There, Spanish colonists experienced their first successes—the first European city, the first sugar mills, the first enslaved indigenous and African subjects, and so on—and, from the colonists’ perspectives, their first failures—the first indigenous rebellions, the first maroons (black and indigenous), the collapse of the first plantation economy in the Americas, and so on. Lynne Guitar argues that “[i]t was on Hispaniola that many of the patterns were formed that governed relations between African slaves and their new masters, patterns that spread to the other Spanish colonies across the Americas—patterns that included rebellion.”⁵⁶ While many have learned about Spain’s conquest of places like Mexico and Peru, few consider that Spain used the administrative

knowledge and actual administrators they had rehearsed on Hispaniola to acquire better results elsewhere.⁵⁷ The vast corpus of information available about other Spanish colonies such as Mexico and even Cuba stemmed in great part from their wealth and the strength of colonial control. Scholarship about the Dominican Republic has often been based on the scant writings of confused outsiders or local elites isolated in a few main cities.

The centuries that followed Spanish neglect of Hispaniola are worth describing. What is now the Dominican Republic became a “forgotten” Spanish colony by the late sixteenth century, after its burgeoning sugar mill economy declined and the Spanish crown turned its attention to other islands and the mainland.⁵⁸ Unlike other Spanish colonies, a strong Spanish administrative presence had ceased to exist soon after the Spanish takeover of the island in the late fifteenth century. For hundreds of years, the territory became what Juan José Ponce-Vázquez calls a “de facto borderland,” in which buccaneering and a contraband trade in hides flourished, racial mixture was more the norm than the exception, and slavery ended with the unification of the island under Haitian governance in 1822.⁵⁹ A society with a majority black and mixed-race rural population that was not centered on a Plantation system while reliant on one of the strongest Plantation societies the world ever saw — Saint-Domingue — rendered it unique among other slaveholding societies in the Americas. Analyses of race in the Dominican Republic that emphasize its strangeness, even absurdity, often adopt frameworks built to understand nations whose history and demographics differ markedly from the Dominican Republic.⁶⁰

Demographic data evince the inapplicability of racial and other paradigms constructed to apply to places such as the U.S., Cuba, and Haiti. Eric Paul Roorda, Lauren Derby, and Raymundo González argue that “[o]ne distinctive feature of the Dominican Republic is that by the seventeenth century, freed people were more numerous than enslaved people, a feature some travelers noted with a degree of shock and dismay.”⁶¹ In 1791, the total population of the Spanish colony of Santo Domingo comprised 125,000 people, 12 percent of them enslaved.⁶² The percentage of whites and nonwhites is generally unknown for this year. This gap in knowledge is noteworthy, since neighboring colonies recorded this information carefully.⁶³ A source from 1808 states that out of the

total population of 50,089 on the eastern (Spanish) side of the island, 13,191 were white, 7,052 were black, and 29,992 were mixed race.⁶⁴ Sibylle Fischer states that “there were relatively few slaves before 1822 in Spanish Santo Domingo—15,000 out of a population of 120,000—and the economy did not depend on large-scale plantations.”⁶⁵ In 1791, neighboring Saint Domingue (soon-to-be Haiti) had a population of 520,000 (four times the number of people in half the space of the territory of Santo Domingo), 86.9 percent of them enslaved. In Cuba in 1827, when the island was still far from independence and the abolition of slavery, the total population was 704,487 with a 40.7 percent enslaved population.⁶⁶ For the 1840s on the Dominican side of the island, David Dixon Porter, a U.S. Navy admiral, reported that “5,000 are white, 60,000 are quadroons, 60,000 are light-skinned mulattoes, 14,000 dark-skinned mulattoes, and 20,000 are of pure African descent.”⁶⁷

While any census data involving racial denomination is tenuous at best (e.g., how were degrees of racial mixture determined?), these numbers nevertheless reveal a few key points. First, the central government apparatus responsible for gathering population data was weaker in Dominican territory than in neighboring colonies. Second, distinguishing between the various racial classes and their attendant places in society was utterly important in places such as Saint Domingue and Cuba, where the Plantation predominated and which were French and Spanish colonial centers, respectively. Compared to these places, Santo Domingo was barely able to account who among the free people were white or not white for some of its colonial history. Pedro San Miguel corroborates that “unlike other Caribbean societies, in the Dominican Republic [...] a plantation economy that prevented the rise and existence of a peasantry did not exist.”⁶⁸ The thorough racial mixture of the majority of the population, the low density (in 1681, for instance, the territory contained less than 10,000 people), the low number of large plantations, and the relatively low number of enslaved subjects vis-à-vis the rest of the population means that it should be a challenge to consider the Dominican case alongside places such as Cuba and Brazil.⁶⁹

Although Plantation frameworks constructed to understand places such as Cuba and Jamaica do not apply neatly to the Dominican case, this territory was nonetheless a European slaveholding colony and, as such, a white supremacist and patriarchal hierarchy prevailed. Nonwhite

subjects, enslaved and free, resisted in both small- and large-scale ways but, however frail the colonial system, white men were still considered superior in law and in practice.⁷⁰ In 1634, a free mixed-race woman had a party with her family and friends in Santo Domingo. One of the guests was a Spanish soldier who, reports Juan José Ponce Vázquez, “started to dismantle the decorations.”⁷¹ The hostess intervened, asking him to stop, and he asked her “whether she was crazy addressing him in such a manner and whether she thought she was talking to another *mulato* like herself.”⁷² The soldier also hit her on the head, creating a bloody wound. In 1680, colonial authorities “issued a summons” to a free *mulata*, Juana Maldonado, for having an affair with a white man of the upper class. This “caused a great deal of gossiping and scandal in this Republic” and Maldonado was ordered to move to another neighborhood and to cease contact with the upper-class man.⁷³ Authorities also “scolded” her for good measure. The unnamed white man of the upper class was neither reprimanded nor punished. These seventeenth-century examples remind us of the crucial gender, class, and sexual dimensions to the question of race as they emerged in this colony. While this society spurred the creation of various forms of black freedom, it was still governed, however loosely, by a patriarchal colonial regime. That is, although “a colorful assortment of saucy and insubordinate characters continued to move about and resist authority,” the administrative and intellectual classes in power sought to curtail these recalcitrant behaviors.⁷⁴

A form of the Plantation did arrive to the Dominican Republic in the late nineteenth century, following the abolition of slavery in the U.S., Cuba, and Puerto Rico.⁷⁵ At this time, foreign owners acquired permissions and sanctions to open large sugar plantations, especially in the southeast region.⁷⁶ There were long-term effects of the arrival of the most advanced form of the Plantation, including the imposition of a new form of land value that was the beginning of the end of the autonomous peasantry. Frank Moya Pons argues that “the plantation is [in the late twentieth-century] the dominant agricultural system in the Dominican Republic.”⁷⁷ However, as Moya Pons also corroborates, “its appearance was not linked to the initial process of forming the Dominican nation.”⁷⁸ In other words, the logic of the Plantation—which, according to Trevor Burnard and John Garrigus, “was the main driving force shaping most aspects of European colonization in the Atlantic World” in the

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—never superimposed itself over the whole of Dominican society as it did in other Caribbean colonies.⁷⁹

Black Masterless Men in *El Monte*

La caza era una actividad de los hombres. (Hunting was a man's activity.)

—Raymundo González, “Ideología del progreso y campesinado en el siglo XIX” (1993)

I was struck by the free, frank, and manly way in which these men look and speak, evidently showing they feel their importance as freemen very different from the same class in Cuba.

—Samuel Hazard, *Santo Domingo: Past and Present, with a Glance at Hayti* (1873)

Some of the general characteristics of the Dominican society developed by former slaves, indigenous people, wayward white colonists, and their progeny include the subsistence farming of small sections in unfenced and shared land, the thoroughness of racial mixture, and the importance of free movement on horseback.⁸⁰ It is a history of nonwhite subjects' insubordination through, for instance, buccaneering—which Eric Paul Roorda, Lauren Derby, and Raymundo González, after Julius S. Scott, describe as a “contraband economy of black ‘masterless men’”—and various other forms of resistance to colonial power and white supremacy.⁸¹ In 1772, the governor attempted to reduce the number of free blacks and increase the number of whites in the colony. After reviewing the proposition, a prosecutor of the Council of the Indies agreed that the blacks, who were *derramados*, or spilled all over the island, constituted a significant threat to the colonial order.⁸² At the same time, he considered the governor's plan to be a losing battle. A few years later, in 1784, Colonel Joaquín García was aghast at the behavior of free nonwhites on the island. He complains to colonial authorities that “[f]ree persons of color [...] travel across the colony with ‘absolute confidence and impertinence’ and confuse their identity with that of their white neighbors ‘as if there were no more classes [dividing society] than free or slave.’”⁸³ As cited by Raymundo González, García recommends that the new

laws of the *Código Negro Carolino* (the Black Code) of 1784 in Santo Domingo be applied not only to slaves but also — and *especially* — to free nonwhite subjects who comprised the real threat to the colonial order in this territory.⁸⁴

The white elite subjects clamoring for the Spanish crown's attention yearned not only for a slaveholding society, which the colony was at the time, but also for a society organized by Plantation logic, in which nonwhites remained subservient to whites, especially in behavior. Spanish colonial laws supported this desire. Citing Dominican historian Carlos Larrazal Blanco, Franklin J. Franco writes, "although within the limitations of the time, most mulattos had no trouble in gaining their freedom [. . .] the ordinances regulating everyday social interactions in Hispaniola stipulated that 'blacks, mulattos, or terceroons shall be as submissive [and respectful] to every white person as if each one of them were his master.'"⁸⁵ Unlike other Spanish colonies, however, Santo Domingo's general impoverishment, combined with the lack of colonial infrastructure, prevented the ordinance's stringent enforcement.⁸⁶ Late eighteenth-century Martinican traveler, writer, and lawyer M. L. Moreau de Saint-Méry commented that in Santo Domingo, "prejudice with respect to colour, so powerful with other nations, among whom it fixes a bar between the whites, and the freed-people, and their descendants, is almost unknown in the Spanish part of Saint-Domingo."⁸⁷ The many laws preventing free nonwhites from parity with whites, observes Moreau de Saint-Méry, "are absolutely disregarded in the Spanish part."⁸⁸ After assuring readers that white elites "would turn with disgust from an alliance with the descendents of their slaves," he makes the almost offhand comment that "the major part of the Spanish colonists are a mixed-race: this an African feature, and sometimes more than one, often betrays; but [. . .] its frequency has silenced a prejudice that would otherwise be a troublesome remembrance."⁸⁹ To this white Martinican (French) member of the elite, the "white" Spanish subjects were only tenuously so; their bodies betray phenotypically their African ancestry. How could white elites enforce race hierarchies when their own nonwhiteness was an open secret?

As these examples demonstrate, black insurgency and autonomy, along with other ways of expressing the self that subverted Plantation logic, worried colonial administrators and white elites living on and

visiting the eastern part of the island. The space in which this form of black freedom and autonomy proliferated was called *el monte*. Raymundo González describes *el monte* as “the site of thousands of dispersed and anonymous freed blacks and mulattos who were living in the mountains a life of autonomous subsistence in the wilderness.”⁹⁰ Its archetypal subject, *el montero*, was a man who hunted wild pigs, goats, and cattle in a practice called *montería* (see Figure I.1).⁹¹

Assuming that this socioeconomic role and archetype was gendered masculine, what can be said of the women of *el monte*? The archives I have consulted reveal examples of recalcitrant free black and mixed-race women in the cities, as the two examples I relayed earlier demonstrate. Moreover, the colonial archive includes many examples of “*mujeres de peso en la vida económica y social*” (women with social and economic weight), as Frank Moya Pons writes, as well as “poor women who went to church and supported their families by working as servants,

seamstresses, food sellers, dessert makers, prostitutes or concubines.”⁹² But women living beyond the purview of the colonial administration, out in el monte, are almost entirely invisible in writings about montería.

Because of the degree to which the practice of montería and other forms of black autonomy in el monte rendered the territory singular among its Caribbean counterparts, it is difficult to avoid the potential conclusion that much of this singularity existed in the realm of men as it emerges in most writings about Dominican rurality. I wonder about women in el monte (and men who were not or could not be monteros) because gender, both embodied and rhetorical, is a crucial component of analysis. In *La parole des femmes* (1979), Maryse Condé suggests that Caribbean women’s literature—and women’s perspectives—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.”⁹³ However, two challenges to this goal of centralizing women’s cultural expressions present themselves in a study of el monte. First, the written archive genders this space of black freedom and autonomy as masculine. And second, for much of Dominican history, women (and men) in el monte had limited if nonexistent access to recording their thoughts and ideas for posterity.

That the central mode of living in el monte, montería, was “man’s work” does not mean that women did not occupy central roles. Rather, women do not appear as distinctive from other Caribbean women in the sources I have consulted.⁹⁴ If anything, writes Celsa Albert Batista, colonial administrators considered “the [enslaved] African woman as a ‘mechanism against insurgency’” and as a tool of domestication.⁹⁵ While my focus here is on free people and not on enslaved subjects, there is a discursive precedent in this territory that enslaved female subjects and black women in general represented a domesticating force. To colonial administrators, free black subjectivity was tied to the masculine endeavor of montería and other subsistence activities unprofitable to the colonial administration, and, as such, as an always subversive identity and performance. Samuel Hazard, a white journalist traveling with an official delegation sent by President Ulysses S. Grant to consider annexation of the Dominican Republic, records his surprise at the “manliness” of the men he encountered.⁹⁶ Part of the same official commission

as Hazard, Frederick Douglass described the country as being “a place where the man can simply be a man regardless of his skin color. Where he can be free to think, and to lead.”⁹⁷

When nonelite women do appear in (male) foreigners’ nineteenth-century narratives, the writers’ heteronormative gaze circumscribes their accounts. Samuel Hazard’s “sudden” encounter with rural Dominican women washing clothes in a river, for instance, paints an Eden-like scene of “forty or fifty women of various ages [. . .]. Some were entirely nude, some with only a waist-cloth, but all industriously washing away and chattering like parrots.”⁹⁸ The traveling group’s “astonished gaze” turned into outright voyeurism as they “stop[ped] to look.”⁹⁹ J. Dennis Harris, an African American proponent of black separatism in the Caribbean, observed in 1860 that Dominican “women are frequently good-looking, but seldom spirited. The prevailing question seems to be, How low in the neck can their dresses be worn? and [*sic*] the answer is, Very low indeed!”¹⁰⁰ For their part, Dominican elite writers “disavowed black women as ‘tristes extranjeras’ (sad foreigners),” as Lorgia García-Peña maintains.¹⁰¹ Conversely, argues García-Peña, “the (white) woman’ became the guardian of dominicanidad” as elite writers “whitened the nation-woman through Europeanized descriptions of feminine beauty.”¹⁰² These foreign and Dominican literary elite perspectives generally obscure, if not outright erase, a clear understanding of how women in *el monte* may or may not have subverted Caribbean models of free black subjectivity.

Some of the chapters in this book explore how the spirit of the *montero* emerges in late twentieth- and twenty-first-century quotidian and stage performances not only among Dominican men but also among Dominican women. As Lauren Derby argues, *monteros* became the model of masculinity that would evolve into the modern-day *tíguere*, a nonwhite, streetwise hustler and Dominican masculine archetype (chapter three). Thus, when Dominican women performers and writers adopt *tíguere* traits, they insert themselves into what had been a masculine genealogy for centuries, rejecting the single model of idealized white Dominican femininity (chapters two, four, and five).

Ghosting El Monte

The nineteenth-century urban bourgeoisie writing Dominican national identity into being feared the society and culture that predominated in el monte. Raymundo González emphasizes the extent to which el monte—and rumors about what happened there—made deep and long-lasting marks on what colonial administrators and other elites concentrated in the main cities and plantations thought.¹⁰³ According to Pedro L. San Miguel, this anxiety stretched into the national period: “Since the founding of the Republic, in 1844, the peasantry had constituted a social sector difficult to control by state organisms. For this reason, starting in the late nineteenth century, state efforts were largely routed to ‘domesticate’ the peasantry.”¹⁰⁴ El monte as a racialized imaginary was an allegory for a backwardness that prevented progress and modernity. As a space that existed in reality, many nationalists turned to modernization in the form of agricultural and land reform, an extreme of which emerged in the many foreign-owned sugar plantations in the eastern region of the country starting in the late nineteenth century. Others focused on widespread education as the primary vehicle for modernity and nationalization, thus folding Dominican citizens into the national body. This “fanatical” attention to education and other forms of modernization were central elements of positivist, Liberal ideology that predominated in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Dominican writing.¹⁰⁵

One crucial exception to this generalized attitude about modernization and progress in late nineteenth-century Dominican thought was Pedro Francisco Bonó, who wrote the novel *El Montero* (1856). Bonó’s nationalism connected the montero subject to the territory’s history of black freedom. What other intellectuals saw as rural backwardness, Bonó saw as the seeds of an inspiring future. In an 1887 letter to presidential candidate General Gregorio Luperón, Bonó describes the island of Santo Domingo as “the nucleus,” “the model,” and the “embodiment” of “the destinies that Providence is setting aside for the blacks and mulattoes in [the] Americas[s].”¹⁰⁶ Bonó not only acknowledges that the country was primarily black and “mulatto” but also that, alongside Haiti, it was representative of the mixed-race and black future of the Americas. Unlike Bonó, most intellectuals at this time adhered to an idea of modernity reliant on the ghosting of el monte.

Technological, agricultural, and educational progress, and the literature that propagated these values, started to fold more Dominicans into a centralized nation. However, only a small group of people, mainly literate men of the leading classes, could perform and embody the role of being standard-bearers of patriotism in practice and in the national imaginary. 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.”¹⁰⁷ While the 1874 constitution required schooling for all Dominicans, as Neici Zeller points out, “the budget for such a goal was only 3 percent of the government’s total expenditures.”¹⁰⁸ The intellectual elite in Santo Domingo and other major cities thus comprised what Angel Rama calls the *la ciudad letrada* (the lettered city), contrasting with the *cuidad real* (real city) that the rest of the population represented. The “real city,” which was in fact mostly rural, was home to “the illiterate, indigenous or Afro-descendent majorities.”¹⁰⁹ Pablo Mella maintains that some of the periodicals that dominated the cultural scene in the country served “as a synecdoche that pretended to represent discursively the Dominican Republic as a whole.”¹¹⁰ Though useful, the binary of “real” versus “lettered” city has its limits in a late nineteenth-century Dominican context. For instance, intellectual elites in the Dominican case were not always racially distinct from the subjects in the “real city,” as this territory had had black and mixed-race political and cultural leaders since the colonial era.¹¹¹

In ghosting *el monte* through and within these constructions of a “modern” imaginary, Dominican intellectuals also ghosted the African or black components of Dominican society and culture.¹¹² In part, this stems from the fact that “blackness” as a signifier had been relegated both to *el monte* and, after the Haitian Revolution, to Haiti. Indeed, to many ruling elites, especially those in favor of foreign annexation, Haiti represented a national threat that required intervention from more powerful nations, including the U.S. However, antiannexationist intellectuals, often followers of the “Blue” political faction, considered the U.S. as a threat to Dominican sovereignty and national identity.¹¹³

Despite ruling elites’ and foreign scholars’ propensity to see elites’ writings as accurate reflections of the whole population, Dominican nationalist discourses themselves contain evidence of the singularity of the

territory's history and society. For instance, it is remarkable that a Eurocentric, patriarchal elite considered an Afro-descendent woman, Salomé Ureña, the country's most important poet in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. This occurred in the midst of many proannexationist Dominican officials' and intellectuals' attempts to render the population and its culture "whiter" to an interested U.S. gaze. Yet Ureña's blackness was entirely unremarked during her lifetime and her image was phenotypically whitewashed in the many sculptures and paintings dedicated to her (chapters one and two). Another example of the contradictions evident in Dominican nationalism, the Dominican icon of montero masculinity, the *tíguere*, both resists white supremacist constraints and, at the same time, can perpetrate extreme forms of violence on noncompliant subjects (chapter three). These cases escape the frameworks of either triumphant resistance or abject failure, and, I argue, get to the heart of what is so strange and confusing about the Dominican case to many outsiders. Thus, dominant scholarly paradigms have not been able to account for Dominican modes of being in the hemisphere's history and therefore ignore, misunderstand, and perpetuate its ghosting.

The Dominican Nation-State and Geographic Displacement

Colonial Phantoms traces the long arc starting from the late nineteenth century, when Dominican territory remained singular in the ways I described above, to the present day, when the Dominican Republic is a "third world" nation among many in dominant developmentalist thought. Smoothing out the prickly difference characterized by the autonomous, anonymous black subjects who proliferated in the most remote areas of the territory required strengthening the surveillance of both the nation-state and an increasingly powerful U.S. empire. The latter had a direct influence on the territory through the terroristic U.S. military regime in the country from 1916–1924.¹¹⁴ These changes, combined with the consolidation of a conservative Dominican nationalism during the Trujillo dictatorship (1930–1961) and after, especially under the governments of Joaquín Balaguer (1966–1978 and 1986–1996), transformed the Dominican population in significant ways. For instance, the majority of the population shifted from rural to urban. Frank Moya Pons writes that "for more than 400 years, and especially during the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, rural customs predominated in Dominican society."¹¹⁵ Still in 1920, in the midst of the U.S. occupation, 86 percent of the population lived in the countryside.¹¹⁶ But, by 2010, 74.4 percent of the country's population lived in cities.¹¹⁷ The vast emigration of Dominicans to places such as the U.S., Puerto Rico, Europe, and elsewhere also started in the 1960s. In 2010, the total population in the Dominican Republic stood at nearly 9.5 million, while the Dominican population in the U.S. alone was 1.5 million.¹¹⁸ There are also sizable populations of Dominicans in Europe and other parts of the Americas.

Unsurprisingly, scholarship on the Dominican Republic outside of the island has emerged most keenly in relation to the issue of twentieth- and twenty-first-century migration.¹¹⁹ Scholars have been particularly interested in how Dominican migrants influence the politics, the economy, and the culture of the homeland and the countries with significant Dominican populations. Some of the narratives I analyze demonstrate that the diasporic space is ambivalent in that it can echo and even surpass the nation's dominant racist and patriarchal ideologies or it can fuel dramatic reevaluations of nationalist narratives. Despite the diversity of viewpoints represented in the diaspora, as well as the racial, educational background, and gender of diasporic subjects, mainstream Dominican sources on the island often portray *dominicanos ausentes* (absent Dominicans) or *dominicanos en el exterior* (Dominicans in the exterior) as threats to national stability.

However, the long *durée* of this book gives me the opportunity to prove that conversations about *dominicanos en el exterior* emerge also in nineteenth-century writings. (Exile and migration were central concepts in prior centuries, but here I refer to the national period.) Cultural arbiters and government officials have considered emigration a problem to the cohesion of the Dominican nation-state since the middle of the nineteenth century (chapter one). Various forms of geographic displacement, especially exile and migration, have a long history in the Caribbean region and its letters. I group exile and migration under the single category of geographic displacement to emphasize that political (i.e., involuntary exile) and economic (i.e., voluntary migration) motivations to flee one's homeland are quite often inseparable from each other.¹²⁰ When I write about the geographic displacement of Dominican subjects, I write also of how their gender, race, and class embodiment

and position emplace them differently within national, imperial, and diasporic imaginaries. In other words, I focus not so much on the fact of these waves of Dominican exiles and migrants as much as on the ways in which they have been *perceived* in these national and transnational contexts. Working-class and poor nonwhite Dominicans have also experienced the pain of exile or led transnational lives throughout the nation's history. However, because they represent the ghosted singular history of Dominican territory that developed outside of dominant hemispheric paradigms, nationalist Dominican literature and history do not celebrate these subjects.

While I am aware that terms such as "migrant," "exile," and "refugee" can help identify different motivations behind displacement, they can also obscure the larger structural forces at play, including imperial aggression and neoliberal policies. Some of these terms are raced and classed to such an extent that the only reason some exiles are not considered migrants is that they are educated, from the elite classes, and raced as white. In the nineteenth-century Dominican context I analyze, some so-called exiles did not have to leave the country because of political persecution—the standard definition of an exile. Moreover, so-called migrants are often fleeing an instability both economic and political, but their racial and class status may preclude them from the privilege of seeking asylum or even calling themselves exiles.¹²¹

With this in mind, 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.¹²² According to Silvio Torres-Saillant, "Exile was and still is a constant element of the Caribbean experience."¹²³ The Dominican Republic is no exception to this regional characteristic. In spite of the recent claims by conservative nationalists that *los ausentes* are a threat to the stability of the nation, "[e]xile literature is often part of a nation-building project, despite its location outside of the geographic patria."¹²⁴ Many texts produced by diasporic Dominicans re-script national narratives, as I show especially in chapters two to five. However, going against some currents in the study of the Dominican and other Spanish Caribbean diasporas, I resist the impulse to see the diasporic space and the narratives it warrants as always emancipatory. Some of this scholarship overlooks the fact that many Dominicans who have never left the

country have also been activists, scholars, artists, and writers resistant to conservative Dominican nationalism.¹²⁵

In the nineteenth century, many elites escaped political persecution by living in what they called *destierro* or *exilio* (exile). This fact has resulted in the almost comical irony that many present-day Dominicans call for the cultural and political exclusion of diasporic Dominicans while conjuring the ghosts of nineteenth-century patriots who spent more time living in exile than in the homeland.¹²⁶ How, then, do we explain the dichotomy between present-day Dominican ideologues' veneration of some nineteenth- and early twentieth-century exiles as ideal patriots and simultaneous disavowal of current diaspora subjects? Throughout the Americas, the idea of a patriot is connected irrefutably with the creation of "modern" and "civilized" nation-states. Yet his image reflects the vestiges of European colonialism since these nation-states—with the partial exception of Haiti— inherited European racial and gender hierarchies of what modernity and civilization meant. *Colonial Phantoms* pinpoints the racialized, gendered, and class-based contours of ideal patriots who can continue to symbolize the nation even when geographically displaced. For instance, although the white, upper-class Juan Pablo Duarte, the Dominican founding father (1813–1876), spent the last thirty years of his life in exile, he continues to exemplify the nation's Eurocentric, patriarchal ideals. Nonwhite exemplars of Dominican patriotism, such as Francisco del Rosario Sánchez (1817–1861), undergo phenotypical whitening in commemorative imagery, tightening the knot that binds patriotism to whiteness.

When Dominicans migrate from the countryside to Dominican cities and when they emigrate from the Dominican Republic to other countries, they often carry traces of the country's singular history and its subsequent ghosting in embodied memories (chapters four and five).¹²⁷ The Dominican subjects that create and reside within the cultural texts I explore in this book re-create and engage with the ghosting of the territory's history and singularity ephemerally in gestures and speech and more lastingly through the written word. We may consider not only diasporic Dominican writers such as Junot Díaz and Julia Alvarez, who have transformed U.S. Latinx literature, but also musical artists such as Romeo Santos, a Bronx-born Dominican–Puerto Rican singer whose medium is *bachata*, a rural Dominican genre. In

the summer of 2013, Santos performed two sold-out shows at Yankee Stadium, to an audience of 100,000, surpassing the ticket sales of Pink Floyd and only matched by the likes of Jay Z and Paul McCartney at this venue.¹²⁸

However, migrant Dominicans also incorporate gestures, ephemeral acts, languages, and other cultural expressions of both mainstream and minority cultures in the “host” countries of which they become a part. As Michelle M. Wright warns: “While the passing down of knowledge from generation to generation is cherished by almost all collectivities, it does not operate as smoothly as most discourses describing it would prefer.”¹²⁹ This nonlinear mish-mash is hardly a symptom of international migration; Dominicans on the island have been influenced by non-Dominican cultural expression for centuries. Nevertheless, as I endeavor to show throughout this book, Dominican nationalism, subaltern encounters with national and imperial powers, and Dominican narratives of blackness all engage with Dominicans’ coloniality and refuse various forms of ghosting.

Many of the works of Firelei Báez, a Dominican-Haitian artist who grew up in Miami, instantiate the processes of unghosting that I argue has shaped various forms of Dominican cultural expression.¹³⁰ At least four of her artworks engage with the interplay between officialized forms of (Western) knowledge and, to cite Báez, the “often-inaccessible narratives dealing with histories outside of the global north.”¹³¹ These pieces — *Prescribed Seduction* (2012), *Blind Man’s Bluff* (2012), *Man Without a Country (aka anthropophagist wading in the Artibonite River)* (2014–2015), and *Untitled (Memory Like Fire is Radiant and Immutable)* (2016) — incorporate pages ripped from deaccessioned library books. Báez collates the portraits, words, and visualized ideas of the apostles of the Western canon with women “sourced from revealing videos online [...]. These women perform publicly, but are unable to act as the central figure outside these videos because of cultural norms.”¹³² In *Man Without a Country* and *Untitled*, Báez adds colorful rogue limbs and dancing feminine figures to the mostly colorless library pages and maps. Several pages show small, almost imperceptible, nonwhite men wading in large bodies of water. Recalling the treacherous journeys of Caribbean migrants surrounded by water, one of the men holds a large,

black plastic bag full of his belongings and another one is weighed down by two children on his back. Unlike the portraits of male scholars and government officials in the other pages, the waders' and the dancers' appearance in deaccessioned (i.e., worthless) books illuminate these subjects' subalternity and marginality.

On the other hand, the artistic inclusion of these subaltern figures onto these newly value-less pages prevents what Báez calls the "erasure" of "unsavory histories."¹³³ Indeed, these waders, dancers, migrants, and, in other pages of this piece, laborers give new life to and highlight the grotesque qualities of official histories. On one of the pages, Báez drew women dancing irreverently on top of a dour portrait of U.S. chemist James C. Booth (see Figure I.2). Red flame-like lines shoot out from Booth's head and eyes, turning him both devilish and carnivalesque. Other pages show the ghostly imprints of two photographs of Dominican dictator Rafael L. Trujillo and some of his officials, overshadowed by outlines of feminine, heeled bodies rendered in a botanical print.

On other pages, Báez obscures the portraits of "great men" with adornments both monstrous and beautiful, such as colorful dots of various sizes that resemble ink droppings. In *Untitled (Memory Like Fire is Radiant and Immutable)*, short, flowing hair strands cover three quarters of another portrait sitter's visage. Because hair does not usually grow on that part of a man's face, the result is both startling and comical. The serious countenance contrasts absurdly with the jellyfish-like waves of hair. He becomes a scholarly Chewbacca, a hapless prairie dog, or a Lucha Libre wrestler donning a furry mask (see Figure I.3). The hair strands reach backwards, suggesting a windy day that may at any moment obscure his vision. His eyes peek through temporary hair partitions. This specific man is Trujillo, a dictator who required veneration from his constituents on the pain of death. Báez's revision of his portrait disrupts the respect, gravitas, and hushed tones images such as these demand from the viewer, inviting mockery and revulsion. These mangled portraits are akin to a schoolchild's doodling, though certainly much more skillful and deliberate. As such, they repeat the almost sacrilegious act of not paying proper homage to either books or these outsized "great men" of history and knowledge. These acts of cheeky recalcitrance

and refusal destroy the idealized visualities of imperial and patriarchal power through the creation of fragmented and irreverent images that invite the viewer to wonder: "What am I looking at?" Bález's work urges us to scrutinize Captain Delano's gaze and, in so doing, we render *him* the stranger.

The Chapters

Confirming the long-term transnationalism of Dominicans, the texts I analyze in this book were produced by and about Dominicans (and some non-Dominicans) either on the island or in the U.S., Europe, and other sites of the Dominican diaspora. The late twentieth century saw an important change in cultural demographics; the growth of the Dominican diaspora has accompanied an increase in access to information technologies, especially for Dominicans who migrate to the U.S., which has led to a democratization of who can record and share (not only produce) their cultural expressions. The book's shift from the written word in the nineteenth century to a great variety of cultural texts from the twentieth century to the present reflects this important shift.

The mid- to late nineteenth century, after the first republic (1844–1861) and a brief Spanish annexation (1861–1865), was a crucial period for the creation of a unified national culture. The herculean task of deciphering what it meant to be Dominican was always tied to either attracting or stalling imperial attention, depending on the political faction. Chapter one, “Untangling Dominican Patriotism: Exiled Men and Poet Muses Script the Gendered Nation,” studies the conundrum that is Salomé Ureña (1850–1897), a nonwhite woman of the lettered elite who became the most celebrated poet in Dominican history. Studying poems, letters, speeches, and essays by Ureña and some of her contemporaries, I propose that Ureña's patriotic writings, and her never-mentioned blackness combined with her elite class status, allowed Dominicans of the intellectual and ruling elite to satisfy two intertwined impulses. The first was to construct a national identity that could explain Dominican difference from Haiti, and, as such, secure a seat at the (white supremacist) global table. The second, more subterranean or ghosted impulse, was a tacit acceptance that a nonwhite woman such as Ureña could only be considered “the muse of the nation” among an elite that valued whiteness because Dominican territory had a history of black freedom and leadership.

Chapter two, “Race, Gender, and Propriety in Dominican Commemoration,” homes in on the gendered and raced contours of nationalist commemoration from the late nineteenth century to the present day, especially as it pertained to Ureña. I argue that the endurance of Ureña's

legacy as the face of Dominican literature and education relied both on her phenotypical whitening in sculpture and painting and on the perpetuation of a selective reading or total elision of some of the subversive desires expressed in her work. The first half of the chapter focuses on which visual and rhetorical motifs remained and which changed so that Ureña could continue to be celebrated as a national icon well into the explicitly antiblack Trujillo and Balaguer regimes. Although Ureña's nonwhiteness was never mentioned either during or after her lifetime in the hundreds of pages dedicated to her life and work, her image was phenotypically whitened in commemoration, proving that her status as the nation's foremost poet coincided with the white supremacist impulses of the nation's elite. The second half of the chapter examines select writings by two twenty-first century feminist and diasporic Dominican women writers, Julia Alvarez and Sherezada (Chiqui) Vicioso, that resurrect an Ureña closer to the woman of "flesh and bone" and not the ghostly vestige she had become through commemoration. By the time that writers such as Alvarez and Vicioso create their versions of Ureña, feminist and critical race studies, the advancement of and greater variety of cultural dissemination technologies, the increase in Dominican literacy rates, and the astronomical growth of a diasporic Dominican community with a different vocabulary of race have all contributed to a moment when Alvarez's and Vicioso's recuperative acts are not only possible but could also compete with other dominant Dominican narratives.

Chapter three, "Following the Admiral: Reckonings with Great Men's History," examines how European colonialism, U.S. empire, and Dominican patriarchal nationalism intersected for over a century to create the Columbus Lighthouse Memorial in Santo Domingo. These entities, however, cannot account for subaltern subjects' relationships to monuments such as the Lighthouse and the history that they celebrate. To get at this "history from below," I analyze Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, the Dominican-American film *La Soga*, and the controversy surrounding the 1985 murder of pop merengue icon Tony Seval in police custody. Juxtaposing these narratives, I contend that working-class island and diasporic Dominican men, most of them nonwhite, resist the persistent nationalist and imperialist violence that the Lighthouse celebrates through the performance of a distinctly Dominican hypermasculine performance known locally as *tigueraje*. While

resistant to Eurocentric patriarchal history, these performances are nevertheless masculinist and, as such, prioritize the enactment of violence on noncompliant subjects, including women and queer subjects.

Chapter four, “Dominican Women’s Refracted African Diasporas,” engages the creative and antihegemonic apertures that become possible from a diasporic space and imaginary by analyzing the cultural expressions, including literature, music, and performance, of several diasporic Dominican women. I resist the teleology of blackness in which Dominican subjects do not know that they are “black” until they arrive in the U.S. The women artists I analyze stretch the boundaries of who is an ideal national (U.S. and Dominican) and diasporic (Dominican and African) subject. I juxtapose the various ways in which aforementioned writer Chiqui Vicioso and musical artists Amara la Negra and Maluca Mala perform what they view as their black identity, which prompts us to acknowledge the prismatic – and nonlinear – nature of the African diaspora.

Chapter five, “Working Women and the Neoliberal Gaze,” focuses on several cultural texts about nonwhite Dominican women who work within economies created or strengthened by neoliberal policies. I focus especially on what Amalia Cabezas calls “economies of desire.” By analyzing the photo series and personal account of a U.S. sex tourist, a short story by Dominican writer Aurora Arias, sex worker testimonies, and several recent films, I argue that the sites of sex labor and sex tourism reveal the extent to which post-1980s global market demands have folded Dominican society and culture into a dominant neoliberal global paradigm based on so-called free trade agreements. I demonstrate that the temporal and spatial logics of these neoliberal paradigms are reinstantiations of colonial world hierarchies, and that, as such, Dominican women working within these economies of desire negotiate centuries-old racist associations of nonwhite Caribbean women with hypersexuality or natural caretaking abilities, or both.

The brief “Conclusion: Searching for Monte Refusals,” ponders how subaltern subjects, before the democratization of who can record and disseminate their worldview, refused or in some way manipulated the interpellating, imperial gaze.

Together, these chapters evince Dominican negotiations with various forms of ghosting from broader Western imaginaries. The texts I analyze

show traces of the Dominican Republic's singular history as a territory in which the white colonial gaze could not entirely eradicate black freedom in el monte. The narratives that emerge from the clashes between colonial/national/imperial purviews and these ghosted forms of black self-rule manifest Dominicans' attempts to create inclusive (e.g., *afrolatinidad*) and exclusive (e.g., anti-Haitian Dominican national identity) forms of belonging, as well as their refusals to acquiesce to dominant racial narratives (e.g., the one-drop rule that determines blackness in dominant U.S. discourses).

3

Following the Admiral

Reckonings with Great Men's History

Columbia

[. . .].

You're terribly involved in world assignations

And everybody knows it.

You've slept with all the big powers

In military uniforms,

And you've taken the sweet life

Of all the little brown fellows

In loincloths and cotton trousers.

—Langston Hughes, "Columbia" (1933)

The guarded secret is buried alive by forms of obfuscation
and denial. [...] The crypt becomes part of the landscape.

—Anne McClintock, "Imperial Ghosting and National
Tragedy" (2014)

In the spring of 2015, popular *dembow* artist Enmanuel "El Alfa" Herrera was arrested for insulting the three men recognized as the Dominican founding fathers in a video uploaded to YouTube.¹ Filmed at the capital's Plaza de la Bandera (Flag Plaza), the video shows El Alfa pointing to the Dominican flags, turning to the camera, and saying, "¡Duarte Sanche' y Mella, mamaguevo!" (Duarte, Sanchez, y Mella, cocksucker!) Because of the Dominican proclivity to drop the "s" at the end of certain words, it is unclear if he meant the insult in the plural or the singular, which might have clarified its object. Despite this uncertainty, Judge John Henry Reynoso issued a warrant for El Alfa's arrest on behalf of the Ministerio Público. Several constituencies raised a furor over El Alfa's disrespect for the founding fathers. The president of El Instituto Duarteño (Duarte

Institute), César Romero, asked for a boycott of the artist and the destruction of his albums.² *El Caribe*, one of the country's most important newspapers, affirmed that it had "censored" El Alfa's insults because "the founding fathers and the emblematic plaza demand respect."³ Just a few days after his arrest, El Alfa's punishment was made public; he was to clean the Plaza de la Bandera and to sing the national anthem for two hours over the course of fifteen consecutive days. Another element of the punishment was to hand out educational pamphlets about the founding fathers at stoplights throughout Santo Domingo.⁴ In his subsequent apology via press release, El Alfa proclaimed: "I apologize to my fans and to the Dominican people because they are the *patria*, it was never my intention to offend them, nor the hero martyrs of my country [. . .]. I said [the slur] because people were speculating that I stayed in the United States to get [immigration] documents when in reality I was working. I was happy to be back in my homeland and I made this video clarifying to many people that what was being said was not true."⁵ Interviewed after the completion of his second day of punishment at the Plaza de las Banderas, El Alfa states: "I'm totally fine with the decision taken."⁶

The case of El Alfa serves as a perfect starting point for a discussion about several shifts in post-Trujillo Dominican society: the population becoming mostly urban for the first time in the territory's history; the fall of subsistence agriculture alongside the rise of un- or underemployment; the massive emigrations to other countries especially after the U.S. government loosened restrictions through the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965; and the imposition of international trade agreements such as the CAFTA-DR (Dominican Republic–Central American Free Trade). Within this context of questionable national sovereignty, the policing of Dominican citizens' behavior toward commemorative objects signals the desperate—but no less dangerous—attempts to protect conservative ideas of nationalist identity. El Alfa's arrest and subsequent punishment reflect a justice system and government that does not tolerate free speech and that insists on the performance of an uncritical and blind defense of a specific form of patriotism. Moreover, El Alfa's shaming over having had to live temporarily in the U.S. to make ends meet reveals the discomfiting reality of many working-class Dominicans, many of whom live in perpetual transmigrancy.⁷ This kind

of transnational existence involves uncertainty more than the unfettered possibility often imagined by celebrants of globalization.⁸ El Alfa's case also evinces the struggle between official nationalist history and the resistance of subaltern voices. On one side stand the three white or whitened founding patriarchs. On the other side stands El Alfa, the racialized, criminalized, and transmigrant "urban music" performer who reminds the status quo of the always threatening "monte" society.

As I mentioned in earlier chapters, the power of the nation-state strengthened throughout the twentieth century, especially during the Trujillo dictatorship (1930–1961) and during the ultraconservative and repressive Joaquín Balaguer presidencies that followed (1966–1978 and 1986–1996). National unification became possible once the central state could account for all of its subjects, thereby eradicating the autonomous, anonymous monte that had predominated throughout the territory for centuries. El Alfa was able to record and disseminate his defiant act because he had access to a new form of information technology, YouTube; unwittingly, however, the YouTube video became the prime piece of evidence in a case against his "lewd" patriotism or antipatriotism, depending on the intent of his act. At the moment that "the archive" includes voices such as El Alfa's—a nonwhite, working-class, and transmigrant Dominican man with a tenuous hold on a steady income—it immediately becomes a site of surveillance and prompt discipline. Such is the materialist and pervasive power of official national history in perpetrating the active silencing of alternative interpretations of national belonging. El Alfa is relatively fortunate; in other contexts, he could be among the hundreds, if not thousands, of Dominicans who were disappeared and murdered during the Trujillo regime and into the present for their anti-status quo speech acts.

By analyzing various works of prose fiction, film, as well as a grandiose public monument, in this chapter I contend that certain performances of Dominican masculinity are small-scale individual negotiations with large-scale, systemic patriarchal patriotism at both the national and imperial levels. However, I also illustrate that these negotiations of island and diasporic Dominican hypermasculinity themselves often invoke and repeat masculinist violence. To expose national and imperial history as it has been constructed and imposed from above, I analyze the fascinating story behind the Columbus Lighthouse Memorial in Santo

Domingo. The monument itself celebrates conservative Dominican nationalism, but its fraught construction uncovers Dominican nationalists' long-term ambivalence toward their inferior position in relation to imperial powers such as Spain and the U.S. In many ways, the feverish celebrations of Columbus in the late nineteenth century restructured U.S. relations with the Dominican Republic. In particular, Dominican officials and intellectual elites' own fixations with Columbus, and their unique role as being in the city he and his family founded, shaped a new discourse with the U.S., replacing or at least placating some of the anxieties over Dominican connections to Haiti.

The importance of the Columbus Lighthouse project to cultural leaders of both the Dominican Republic and the U.S. confirmed that both countries tied their fates to the spirit of Columbus, an identification between ideal citizenship and white masculinity. In both cases, this patriarchal and Eurocentric vision of ideal patriotism excluded women and most nonwhite men. Moreover, Dominicans involved in the Lighthouse project leveraged the relationship that Columbus had with this territory to secure participation in global discussions about modernity and progress. Paradoxically, doing so required the disinterring of ancient bones and resurrecting a centuries-old spirit.

While the Lighthouse serves as a totemic celebration of Columbus's spirit, Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007) and the Dominican-American film *La Soga* (2009), written by its lead actor, Manny Pérez, reveal the deeply violent maintenance required in supporting this history from above.⁹ Crucially, both texts also uncover working-class Dominican and diasporic Dominican men's uncomfortable positions as men empowered by their masculinity but marginalized by their race and class within hemispheric hierarchies. Indeed, both texts also intimate that participating in the maintenance of patriarchal nationalist and imperial status quo has been one of their only vehicles for socioeconomic mobility. On the other hand, they also unspool the suffocating pressure of performative masculinity and the repercussions of compliance as well as the inability or refusal to conform.

The Specter of Columbus and the Rise of U.S. Imperialism

This monument will be like the light of a terrible shooting star with millenarian ambition, a star that has disappeared but that still shines strangely under the low nocturnal sky of the Caribbean sea.

—Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá, *Caribeños* (2002)

This lighthouse is the symbol of the man who has revolutionized history more than anyone else since Jesus Christ, and once they get over their orgy of criticisms, everyone will love it.

—Peter Morales Troncoso (1992)

What is it about Columbus that leads writers to paroxysms of hyperbole?¹⁰ A pamphlet dedicated to the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, otherwise known as the Chicago World's Fair, renders breathless homage to the sailor:

In the inauguration of the World's Columbian Exposition and the carrying through of the project, honor was done to one man. No other event in the history of the universe has ever transpired where such gigantic preparations were made, occupying several years of time, engaging for months the attention of the brightest minds of the nation, causing the expenditure of millions and millions of dollars, bringing to one central point all of the civilized nations of the earth, all in the honor of one name. *The spirit of Christopher Columbus* can rightfully stand with majestic dignity before all other spirits, while they bow in obeisance, for none who have passed away have ever received such homage. Nor among the living can there be found any one name to which such adulation will ever be paid. In this, the name of Christopher Columbus stands alone.¹¹

This kind of exalting discourse around the sailor was common in the late nineteenth-century era of "colonofilia" (Columbusphilia), to borrow Christopher Schmidt-Nowara's term.¹² The Chicago World's Fair was just one of the many celebrations of Columbus pivoting around Eurocentric, patriarchal understandings of U.S. subjectivity in the late nineteenth century. Columbus's legacy had become a vehicle through

which Italians and Irish Catholics could assimilate into ideal U.S. national belonging. Fraternal organizations such as the Irish American Knights of Columbus, founded in 1881, and the Italian American Sons of Columbus Legion, founded in 1896, celebrated members' appropriate American whiteness.¹³ Michel-Rolph Trouillot argues that "the final measure of Chicago's success [in the World's Fair of 1893] is the extent to which it naturalized Columbus," and "this more American Columbus was also a whiter Columbus."¹⁴ Rolena Adorno identifies Washington Irving's nineteenth-century biographies of the Admiral as an even earlier moment of Columbus's incorporation as a U.S. icon, representative of enterprising individualism.¹⁵ As I will demonstrate later in this chapter, the ways in which celebrations of Columbus eased white immigrants' incorporation into the U.S. body politic in the nineteenth century simply do not extend to most Dominican immigrants, who are often racialized as black, arriving in the U.S. a century later.¹⁶

Columbus also came to symbolize Eurocentric visions of national identity in the Dominican Republic. Frederick A. Ober, commissioner to the West Indies for the 1893 Chicago World's Fair or World's Columbian Exposition, reports that President Ulises "Lilís" Heureaux sought to secure a U.S. loan in exchange for a Dominican exhibit at the Fair.¹⁷ An added bonus, reports an incredulous Ober, was that the exhibit would include "the most sacred remains of Don Christopher Columbus."¹⁸ Ober excerpts at length the official memo from the Dominican Ministerio de Fomento y Obras Públicas (Ministry of Development and Public Works) regarding the offer. In exchange for Dominican participation in the World's Fair, including the alleged remains, "it will be necessary for the Dominican government to effect a loan, in the United States, of one hundred thousand dollars [\$100,000], in gold, interest on the same to be at six (6) percent; and the principal to be refunded at the rate of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) annually."¹⁹ Moreover, if Ober as commissioner could secure the loan, "he may reserve the sum of twenty thousand (\$20,000) for the construction of a Government building at Chicago, said building to be an exact reproduction of the old castle in this Capital [of Santo Domingo], known as the 'Homenage.'"²⁰ Ober's recounting of his interactions with Heureaux and other Dominican officials remains vaguely mocking throughout but especially in his dictation of Heureaux's thick Dominican accent: "Now, Mistair Commissionaire,

it es not ze honaire zat we want, but ze loan.”²¹ Despite this condescending amusement, Ober signed the memo “in the presence of the late President Heureaux, who looked smilingly on, nodding his approval.”

“This precious document,” as Ober describes it, evinces a small nation’s attempt to stake a claim on its place in hemispheric affairs. Aware of the worldwide fever around the quadricentennial celebrations of Columbus’s arrival to the so-called New World, Dominican officials astutely surmised that Columbus’s historical connection to this country, and his physical remains specifically, were a valuable bargaining chip. That the memo also demanded a special building replicating a palace in Santo Domingo is more than an appeal to be recognized by this imperial power. The building would be physical manifestation of the Dominican Republic in U.S. territory; a symbolic inclusion in world affairs to follow decades of misrecognition or outright exclusion; and a sense that the Dominican Republic had been instrumental to a U.S. imaginary and, as such, had a right to mark a U.S. city’s skyline.²²

In the late nineteenth century, the urban elite that codified Dominican nationalism sought to enshrine the legacy of the sailor. Skipping over the previous three centuries of Spanish disregard, these nationalists returned to the conquest as it reminded them and the rest of the world that Santo Domingo was the founding site of European “civilization” in the hemisphere. When Salomé Ureña penned the poem “A la patria” (1874) she crowned the Dominican Republic the “reina del mundo de Colón” (queen of Columbus’s world), alluding to the entire hemisphere.²³ A few years later, she wrote the exalting “Colón” (1879), commemorating the finding of his alleged remains in Santo Domingo’s Primada de América Cathedral. When construction of the Lighthouse was finished in Santo Domingo in 1992, Columbus’s legacy symbolized a conservative Dominican government’s celebration of colonialism and the pride of being the first colony in the Americas. This adherence to the values that Columbus has come to represent brought the Dominican Republic closer to Eurocentric, patriarchal ideals of the nation-state.

Indeed, the continuing idealization of Christopher Columbus was central to the conservative historical narratives that became officialized especially through the intellectual and political work of Joaquín Balaguer. To officials like Balaguer, who spearheaded the completion of the Lighthouse over a century after the initial inception of the idea,

official commemorations of Columbus in the Dominican Republic would perhaps remind an uninterested world that this small country deserved a place in the Western imaginary. Balaguer recognizes Columbus as a “world-historical individual” who helped uncover and propel history toward what G. W. F. Hegel calls a World Spirit.²⁴ The completion of the Lighthouse, then, could remind the world that Columbus had exalted this island’s beauty and founded a city there before anywhere else.

While Balaguer put money, effort, and power behind enshrining Columbus’s name and legacy at the head of official, masculinist history, he could not prevent how the Dominican population and the rest of the world would react to the construction of the Lighthouse. Columbus’s legacy, and his spirit, was unwieldy in great part because it was not alone: it had to contend with the ghosts of *el monte*. The cultural practices, gestures, stories, and music of the vast majority of Dominicans who migrated from the countryside to the urban centers throughout the twentieth century, and then migrated to the United States, Europe, and so on, emerge as phantasmagorical expressions that persistently knock against the walls of official history.

Although countless statues, streets, cities, institutes, and other commemorative objects around the world bear Columbus’s name, few memorials so well replicate the hyperbole that surrounds him as the Columbus Lighthouse Memorial (see Figure 3.1).

Balaguer ensured the completion of the Columbus Lighthouse Memorial in time for the 1992 quincentennial celebrations of Columbus’s stumble into the New World. Before I analyze further the larger significance of the memorial, I delve into the long and fascinating history behind its construction and some of the controversy that surrounded it in 1992. Dominican historian Antonio Del Monte y Tejada conceived of the idea of a Columbus lighthouse in 1852.²⁵ Impetus to build it came in 1877 when Columbus’s alleged remains were exhumed in Santo Domingo. After this discovery, the Liberal Dominican nationalists of the *Sociedad de Amigos del País*, the same group who awarded Salomé Ureña, organized a fund to build a Columbus memorial in which to house the recently found remains.²⁶ In 1879 and 1880, the Dominican government tried and failed to build a monument.²⁷ Though not a lighthouse, “an elaborate marble mausoleum was erected [. . .] in time for the quadricentenary celebration in Santo Domingo’s cathedral.”²⁸

By the late nineteenth century, political and mass media discourses in the U.S. infantilized places such as the Dominican Republic as wayward children in need of instruction and also feminized them as helpless maidens in need of rescue.²⁹ What had originally been a Dominican project became a U.S.-led pan-American project, signaling the shifting world order.³⁰ In 1923, the Pan-American Union, predecessor to the Organization of American States (OAS), “started planning the construction in Santo Domingo of a commemorative lighthouse dedicated to Christopher Columbus’ legacy.”³¹ According to Robert Alexander González, “The history of U.S. imperialism is intertwined with the building of the Columbian memorial.”³² González further maintains that the architectural aims of the project reflected “an Old World–New World dichotomy,” while the competition process “mirrored U.S.–Latin American relations.”³³ U.S. desires to consolidate its imperial power in the hemisphere meant that it had a stake in cultural representations of official hemispheric history. The celebration of the project in the U.S. media in the early twentieth century fits this narrative. A *New York Times* article grandiosely decreed: “May the beacon, flashing north and

south symbolize the clearer light of understanding between the two continents, and help to dispel the mistrust which has too often in the past darkened pan-American relations.”³⁴

In 1927, the Dominican Republic promised funds and land for the project.³⁵ Architectural design competitions, organized by U.S. architect Albert Kelsey, were finally held in 1929 and, two years later, the committee chose a design by Manchester-educated architect Joseph Lea Gleave.³⁶ Detailing his various inspirations, Gleave described his design as “an Aztec serpent or a human body lying prostate,” as well as “reminiscent of aeroplanes, ships, motor cars.”³⁷ These descriptions evoke the sense that the Lighthouse was supposed to represent both progress and technological innovation as well as to render tribute to what was considered the indigenous past. Impediments to its construction abounded, including World War II, Lea Gleave’s death in 1965, and Trujillo’s inability to share the spotlight; in 1955, the dictator organized an expensive, international fair in his honor rather than Columbus’s. Under Balaguer’s presidency and with Dominican architect Teófilo Carbonell’s modifications, construction began finally in 1986. The Lighthouse was finished in time for the quincentennial celebrations of Columbus’s “discovery” of the New World in 1992, fulfilling Balaguer’s dream.

The result was met with humorous contempt from various corners of the world. Visitors report on the monument’s “surreal scale” and resemblance to a catacomb.³⁸ Puerto Rican writer Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá describes it as “massive, oppressively monumental.”³⁹ He also adopts sinister words such as “funereal temple,” “sepulcher,” and “ultra-tomb,” as he tries to “appreciate its ungraceful posture.”⁴⁰ “The Columbus Lighthouse [. . .] is a horizontal structure, like a recumbent beast, designed to throw its light vertically, upward,” decrees a *New Yorker* article, continuing that “[i]t has the look of a concrete pyramid with one long extended arm: a humped, dinosaur look; an anonymous, inert grayness.”⁴¹ An article in the *Nation* states that “[f]rom the ground level it doesn’t look like a cross, or like a lighthouse, or like anything, for that matter.”⁴²

To the world, the Lighthouse in Santo Domingo seemed like another sign of the country’s backwardness rather than the culmination of a project that U.S. officials had earlier considered of high importance. After all, a U.S.-led commission had chosen the winning design. Against

Balaguer's intentions, the monument rendered Santo Domingo conspicuous in its failure to attract the international praise he had expected. The widespread disapproval among Dominicans, combined with the worldwide protests against the quincentennial celebrations, rendered the Lighthouse and its octogenarian creator a global punchline. The fact that "the country was ill-equipped economically to afford such a gaudy and expensive (multi-million dollar) display of commemoration" upset many Dominicans.⁴³ Indeed, 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."⁴⁴ The humiliating reality was that such ostentatious displays of Columbian celebration were no longer acceptable, especially at the site that inaugurated Native American genocide.⁴⁵ Ironically, while government officials from around the hemisphere turned their backs on the Lighthouse, many of them continued to celebrate an official Columbus Day — as in the case of the U.S. — and to support persistent economic and political disenfranchisement of their countries' indigenous and black populations. Perhaps it was the Lighthouse's exorbitant, monumental tone rather than its Eurocentric, colonialist message that jarred the sneering invitees.

Cementing the sense that the construction of the Lighthouse satisfied only the interests of a conservative elite was the removal of poor residential housing at the construction site. 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."⁴⁶ Even former Balaguer supporters wanted the blind octogenarian out of office and many people began calling the project "Faro a Balaguer."⁴⁷ 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."⁴⁸ In fact, Balaguer's behavior regarding the Lighthouse broke many of the ties that he had for decades established with the Dominican people. While people's confidence in Balaguer as a patriarch stemmed from his adherence to the crucial duties of gift-giving and patronage, as Christian Krohn-Hansen asserts, his

behavior regarding the Lighthouse, seen by many as taking resources from the people rather than giving, changed some of his previous followers' attitudes toward him.⁴⁹

Rumors recorded in Dominican and U.S. mass media around the construction of the Lighthouse portray Balaguer's greed for power as tempting a malevolent higher power to sweep down in punishment. For instance, reports "prophesied that Balaguer would die on the day of the Columbus quincentennial."⁵⁰ Many saw the death of Balaguer's sister Emma just days before the inaugural event as evidence of the curse of Columbus.⁵¹ Rodríguez Juliá remarks that this chatter rendered the monument "a sort of macabre joke stemming from a dark, merengue-esque curse. [...] The fukú persists."⁵² Even *The New York Times* mentions *fukú*, or curse, in an article about the Balaguer administration's failure to attract many international dignitaries to the quincentennial celebrations: "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 of Columbus will bring enduring trouble."⁵³ Rodríguez Juliá details two earlier examples of a so-called Columbus curse or "fucú a El Almirante."⁵⁴ In 1937, four Dominican-Cuban airplanes were flown to promote the "grandiose idea" of the Columbus Lighthouse. The event, however, did not go according to plan since, depending on the source, either one or three of the planes crashed.⁵⁵ Like so much of the discourse around the Lighthouse, it is difficult to sort fact from rumor. A few years later, a beauty contest was held in Santo Domingo to celebrate Columbus's first trip to the Americas. However, one of the worst earthquakes of the century interrupted the coronation.⁵⁶ During the late twentieth-century construction of the memorial, 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" to build the structure.⁵⁷

Interpret some of the international mockery aimed at Balaguer and the Lighthouse as stemming from a disgust with the project's anachronistic celebration of a turn-of-the-twentieth-century ideology. In the Dominican Republic, the monument's representation of history, visible from miles away and for generations to come, triggered a deep

discomfort and distrust among many people. Columbus's legacy is, at its very root, an affirmation and celebration of a violent patriarchal and Eurocentric hierarchy that requires work to maintain. The Dominican Lighthouse Memorial displaced an entire neighborhood and cost millions of public funds that had multiple better uses. Student groups, displaced residents, and others protested against the construction of the monument, leading to a violent police response in which at least two protestors were killed.⁵⁸ This strenuous hyperbolic work, combined with the monstrous size and expense of the site, elucidates the power behind its evocation of an enduring social-racial New World order in which certain lives, stories, and histories simply matter less. In this world order, one of the few avenues for socioeconomic progress available to non-white Dominican men is helping to support these violent patriarchal structures through enactments of hypermasculinity in both official and off-the-record positions.

The Spirit of Columbus, or the Fukú of the Admiral in *Oscar Wao*

I believe that Trujillo must be killed again in the Dominican people's imaginary of power. He must be killed again, and, how does one kill Trujillo again, well, by empowering a democracy that does not justify him.

—José Miguel Soto Jiménez (2011)

Complex personhood means that even those who haunt our dominant institutions and their systems of value are haunted too by things they sometimes have names for and sometimes do not.

—Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters* (1997)

While the Columbus Lighthouse perpetuated an official Dominican history that excluded and alienated a majority of Dominicans, the controversy surrounding the findings of Columbus's alleged remains in Santo Domingo in 1877 reveals also Dominicans' surprising insouciance in the face of Spanish power and the legacy of colonialism.⁵⁹ The "discovery" of these remains in the Cathedral must be seen in the context

of the War of Restoration that had just reestablished Dominican sovereignty after annexation to Spain from 1861 until 1865. The Dominican Republic had been annexed to Spain in 1861, a decision so unpopular with the population that a war broke out that finally restored the independence of the Republic in 1865. Thus, when Dominican authorities claimed vociferously that Columbus's remains were in Santo Domingo and had not been transported to the Spanish colony of Cuba in 1796, they performed a peculiarly anti-Spanish Hispanophilia. As Schmidt-Nowara recounts, this claim infuriated Spanish authorities. Dominicans (and the Italian priest who announced the finding) not only had the gall to claim Columbus's remains but also to criticize Spain for its negligence of Columbus's legacy. Spanish authorities spared no resource and expertise to counteract Dominicans' claims, including sending a report detailing their contestation of the claims to several nations in the Americas and Europe but pointedly not to the Dominican Republic.⁶⁰ A century later, during a visit to the country in 1976, the Spanish monarchs refused to be photographed by the altar with the infamous remains, despite the entreaties of the Dominican diplomatic corps. Their refusal of the cheeky requests was not surprising, "because they understood that it could be interpreted as an affirmation of [the remains'] legitimacy."⁶¹ Although objects sent by countries around the world — including Japanese samurai armor — are prominently displayed in the Lighthouse museum, its primary aim is to celebrate Santo Domingo's story of origin as the Ciudad Primada de América.⁶² Though the actions taken by Dominican authorities throughout the century starting with the finding of the remains and culminating with construction of the Lighthouse reflect a deeply entrenched colonofilia, I am struck by a Dominican disinterest in complying with colonial ideas of Spanish superiority. When considering that authorities stood firm in their conviction that the remains were in Santo Domingo in 1877, requested outrageously that the Spanish sovereigns pose next to the controversial remains in 1976, and finally built a monstrous edifice to house these remains in 1992, what emerges is a remarkably anti-imperialist colonofilia.

These individual and collective performances of recalcitrance notwithstanding, the Lighthouse invokes a long-standing Caribbean tradition to consider Columbus's arrival as the start of a male-centric history. In

a noteworthy coincidence, two important scholars released their Caribbean histories in the same year with the same title, though in two different languages: Eric Williams's *From Columbus to Castro* (1970) and Juan Bosch's *De Cristóbal Colón a Fidel Castro* (1970). To these eminent scholars (or, perhaps, their editors), Caribbean history starts and ends with two, larger-than-life male figures. "The history of Dominican literature starts with the name of Columbus," writes Balaguer in *Colón: Precursor literario* (Columbus: Literary Precursor; 1974), "who left us, in his maritime diary and letters, the first descriptions of the island's nature and who knew how to feel and express the charms of the national landscape like none other and to still transmit a poetic and at times exceedingly literary vision."⁶³ In Balaguer's vision, Columbus's words bring the very existence of the island into being. That is, Columbus is the fount of this "new" world.

Junot Díaz's *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* also starts with Columbus's arrival but explodes it immediately. The novel not only quells persistently the celebration around 1492, but it also remixes the pseudohagiographies of the region's "great men." An immigrant novel, sci-fi tale, and bildungsroman, to name a few genres it instantiates, *Oscar Wao* focuses on the tragicomic life of Oscar de León Cabral, a Dominican American nerd who struggles to find a girlfriend and who is killed by a police captain before he can reconstruct his family's history. Narrated mostly by Yunior, Oscar's bully and sometime friend, the novel is also the history of the catastrophic fate of the erstwhile upper-class Cabrals, who are Oscar's maternal ancestors. Like Columbus and other world-historical men, Oscar's name entitles the novel while his legacy endures through Yunior's pen. Unlike these heroes of history, however, Oscar does not have the power to remap the world. Rather than a teleological retelling of Caribbean or even Dominican history, the novel's narration is nonlinear and multivocal. More directly, it testifies to the violence of these major historical actors. In so doing, it critiques the authoritarian leadership of men like Trujillo and Balaguer, who repeat the "spirit of Columbus," and, as such, reinscribe the wounds of the Spanish conquest on an already traumatized region.

In this sense, the Lighthouse as it emerges in the novel is a "concrete example of the interplay between inequalities in the historical process

and inequalities in the historical narrative.”⁶⁴ Though mocked by a global audience and physically distant from the rest of Santo Domingo, the Lighthouse looms metaphorically over a disenfranchised Dominican citizenry. There are only a few references to the Lighthouse in *Oscar Wao*. However, they reinforce its role as a totem to official history. The Lighthouse appears in a photograph that Oscar’s sister finds after the protagonist’s murder: “In the pictures Lola brought home are [...] shots of Oscar at the Columbus lighthouse, where half of Villa Duarte used to stand.”⁶⁵ For Oscar, the Lighthouse was simply a point on the tourist map of Santo Domingo. Within the narrative, however, it stands as the ghostly remains of a diaspora subject who is murdered before he can construct his family’s and, concomitantly, his nation’s history. The Lighthouse recalls not only Oscar’s ghost but also that of the poor neighborhood that it superseded. Thus, Díaz’s Lighthouse — despite its physical enormity — fails to usurp entirely the fragmented history of the Dominican people with its celebration of teleological progress. If anything, the novel’s references to the Lighthouse question this kind of linear history. After Oscar is kidnapped and led to his own beating in a sugarcane field, he notices the darkness around him: “Nighttime in Santo Domingo. A blackout, of course. Even the Lighthouse out for the night.”⁶⁶ This alludes to the fact that the Lighthouse’s illuminating capacity comes at the cost of many city residents’ household electricity. The most basic modern conveniences are secondary to the whim of a man — Balaguer — whose idea of progress is the entombing of Columbus.

The history that the Lighthouse celebrates signals the Cabral family’s inability to write its own story. The exorbitant power and vociferousness of men like Trujillo and Balaguer silenced, in many cases violently, most Dominicans’ versions of history. Both Trujillo and Balaguer were known to bend the will of history to aggrandize themselves. For Trujillo, this included the incarceration or murder of anyone whose ideas did not fit into his grand narrative as well as the *carte blanche* remapping of the country in his image: streets and plazas were named after his favorite (legitimate) children and the 500-year-old capital was renamed Ciudad Trujillo. Self-promotion for Balaguer meant protecting the reputation he had achieved as a conservative intellectual during the Trujillo regime by churning out anti-Haitian, Eurocentric narratives of the island. Crucially, Balaguer’s policies also led to wide-scale economic

disenfranchisement, forcing many Dominicans to emigrate to places such as the United States during his years in office.

Though the Lighthouse celebrates Columbus's "discovery" of the Americas and the evangelization of the region, in popular discourses and in *Oscar Wao* it more malevolently harnesses the power of what Yúnior calls "Fukú americanus."⁶⁷ While Salomé Ureña crowns Hispaniola as the "queen of Columbus' world" and other nationalists invoke Columbus as the start of a glorious history, *Oscar Wao* describes the island as "ground zero" for hemispheric calamity. The novel's first words invoke the name of Columbus, the Admiral:

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.⁶⁸

With these opening words, Díaz intertwines the events in the novel with the terrors of the conquest and its "midwife," Columbus. Fukú, as mentioned earlier, quite simply means curse—but with very specific culturally bound semantics. Citing Dominican folklorist R. Emilio Jiménez, Lauren Derby describes it as an "evil charge passed through bodily extensions such as clothing, house, touch, or even the uttering of one's name."⁶⁹ "Columbus" is one such name, which explains the literary and cultural preference for monikers such as "the Admiral." Jiménez further explains that people often take precautions against fukú's potential destruction, such as avoiding contact with the object, animal, or person who is said to have a fukú.⁷⁰ The scholar Antonio Olliz Boyd argues that fukú is the "transcendent force" and "metaphysical expression" of the spirituality of the enslaved African "transformed from its African image to accommodate the conditions of a new geographical and social

environment.”⁷¹ Too, Olliz Boyd connects the word to *fufu*, *fufú*, and *juju*, which are used in other parts of the Americas and also reference African and African diasporic spirituality.⁷²

Yunior’s narration frequently alludes to *fukú*, connecting it to supernatural power. He explains, “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. [...] Which explains why everyone who tried to assassinate him always got done, why those dudes who finally did buck him down all died so horrifically.”⁷³ Yunior can only describe Cabral family’s transgenerational punishment as a curse placed upon it by a malevolent, powerful spirit and its stand-in, Trujillo. Abelard Cabral, Oscar’s maternal grandfather, was a wealthy doctor who “possessed one of the most remarkable minds in the country.”⁷⁴ However, “[t]he Reign of Trujillo was not the best time to be a lover of Ideas, not the best time to be engaging in parlor debate [...] but Abelard was nothing if not meticulous. Never allowed contemporary politics (i.e. Trujillo) to be bandied about.”⁷⁵ Despite Abelard’s vigilance, one of his adolescent daughters is too beautiful to go unnoticed; when Abelard refuses to bring her to a party to be presented to Trujillo, he is sent to prison. Consequently, Abelard’s wife, Socorro, commits suicide soon after the birth of her third and final daughter, Belicia, while the other two daughters are dead within three years.⁷⁶ A torture called *La Corona* (The Crown) renders Abelard a “vegetable,” neither dead nor alive.⁷⁷ The extended family sells Belicia into servitude in the desert of Azua until a distant relative named *La Inca* rescues her.⁷⁸ Later, as a young woman, Belicia would endure a tragedy in the sugarcane fields that would lead to her emigration to the United States where she has two children, Oscar and Lola. Yunior, the narrator, believes that the Cabral family’s near-extinction results from a curse placed on them by Trujillo. As he puts it, “when he [Trujillo] couldn’t snatch her [Abelard’s daughter], out of spite he put a *fukú* on the family’s ass,” cementing the dictator’s all-encompassing power.⁷⁹

Moreover, “many people actually believed that Trujillo had supernatural powers! It was whispered that he did not sleep, did not sweat, that he could see, smell, feel events hundreds of miles away, that he was protected by the most evil *fukú* on the Island.”⁸⁰ *Fukú* or not, no one could escape Trujillo during his regime 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 Dominican state. For instance, invitations to regime events could not be declined, which explains Abelard's imprisonment after refusing to bring his daughter to a Trujillo party. Guests at these events had to conform to a strict protocol that included panegyrics. These theatrical declarations of the speaker's love of and loyalty to Trujillo became the standard conversational register.⁸¹ Just seven years after Trujillo had risen to power, a Trujillo intellectual wrote the following words to describe him:

Only average men leading average lives conform to the rules of general mediocrity. Mediocre men adapt themselves to universal standards; the great men of history are those who tower over the masses. [...] On two occasions, leaving behind his astonished aides and at grave risk of his life, he penetrated alone into an enemy guerrilla encampment. His personal magnetism and his power of persuasion won the day without need of using any weapons. The guerrillas laid down their arms.⁸²

Books published during the regime seem to all be dedicated to him. A 1933 book about Columbus by a Dominican author states: "To the honorable President of the Dominican Republic, General Don Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina, promoter of the Commemorative Columbus Lighthouse."⁸³ That the book was published in Buenos Aires just three years after Trujillo had taken over the country did not prevent the author from ensuring he rendered proper tribute. Two decades later, after Trujillo had amassed several honorary titles, a book of photographs of the Dominican Republic by Dutch Francis Stopelman opens with the following dedication: "Dedicated to the Supreme Commander Doctor Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina. / Benefactor of the Homeland and Father of the New Homeland. / This book is nothing but a very incomplete reflection of the great works realized by him, and of the incomparable beauty of the hospitable Dominican Republic."⁸⁴ Trujillo was not even the president in the year this book was published; his second son Radhamés held the courtesy title.

The hyperbolic forced adulation "charged" Trujillo's persona and name with significance and recalls the exalted praise heaped onto Columbus.⁸⁵ A writer for the newspaper *La Nación* states: "Men are not

indispensable. But Trujillo is irreplaceable. For Trujillo is not a man. He is [...] a cosmic force [...] Those who try to compare him to his ordinary contemporaries are mistaken. He belongs to [...] the category of those born to a special destiny.”⁸⁶ When conversations even in one’s home were subject to eavesdropping and denunciation by an undercover neighbor or housekeeper, Trujillo’s seeming omnipresence added to the perception and reality of his exorbitant power.⁸⁷

The events surrounding Trujillo’s assassination further evince the almost omnipotent aura that surrounded the dictator by the end of his regime. The attempted coup d’état after his assassination 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 assassins, some of whom had held high posts in the government, simply could not trust their fellow plotters’ words that Trujillo was truly dead. Hence, the macabre proof in the shape of Trujillo’s bullet-riddled body stuffed into the trunk of a car was evidence of a power impossible to eradicate through a single night’s events, even if these had led to the dictator’s physical death.⁸⁸

The interconnections between power, magic, and masculinity in Dominican lore, from Columbus to Balaguer, glue together the narrative strands in *Oscar Wao*. Although the standard anecdote in texts about Dominican magic is that of the scorned woman seeking to bring an indifferent lover into her arms, the religious history of the country leaves room for the masculinization of magic.⁸⁹ Because there were few priests in the impoverished Spanish colony of Santo Domingo — by 1809, only about a dozen priests remained — compared with the heavy presence of Catholicism in places like Mexico and Peru, the Spanish crown and the Catholic Church exerted little control over how people used spiritual practices to understand their world.⁹⁰ Popular, scholarly, and literary discourses about the supernatural and the usage of so-called black magic reveal that both men and women were considered potential sorcerers.⁹¹ That Dominicans did not consider magic exclusively feminine allows for a discursive precedent in their interpretations of Trujillo’s and Balaguer’s power as resulting from magical negotiations.

Indeed, in the literature and imagery of Trujillo, the tyrant's grotesque desires render him demonic, gendering magic as a masculine longing for money and power. For instance, *Oscar Wao* establishes that both Trujillo and Columbus have a similar relationship to occult power: "But in 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. No one 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*."⁹² Moreover, Trujillo's main moniker was, and continues to be, *el chivo* or the goat. For centuries, the goat has not only symbolized a creature who delights in luxury and wealth but also a demon-like, pagan figure and sometimes even Satan.⁹³

Derby reports that it was rumored that Trujillo had the help of a *muchachito*, which translates into "little boy," but that likely refers to a *baká*.⁹⁴ A *baká* is "a malevolent spirit that surrounds and protects the property of its owner under the appearance of an animal."⁹⁵ Furthermore, "the one who buys a *baká* is not always aware of the nature of the deal, and the brujo [witch doctor] who is in charge of its preparation can fool his patient."⁹⁶ Many descriptions of a *baká* identify it as a "[l]arge animal, usually black, of the dog family" and with "eyes [that] glow like fiery coals at night."⁹⁷ 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 also to amass wealth."⁹⁸ Anecdotes about buying a *baká* tend to contain the moral that neither power nor wealth is ever worth the loss of life, dignity, family, and friends that the purchase often requires. For instance, ethnographer Carlos Estaban Deive recounts the story of a man in the province of Eliás Piña whose sixteen-year-old son died suddenly because the father had promised him to a *baká*.⁹⁹

As with other manifestations of the occult, *bakás* are not always clearly instruments of evil. In *Oscar Wao*, Belicia's encounter with an otherworldly, mongoose-like creature is either fortuitous in that she survives a near-death experience, or catastrophic, in that her life following the event is filled with hardship: "So as Beli was flitting in and out of life, there appeared at her side a creature that would have been an amiable mongoose if not for its golden lion eyes and the absolute black of its pelt. This one was quite large for its species and placed its intelligent little paws on

her chest and stared down at her.”¹⁰⁰ The creature persuades Belicia to fight for her life: “*You have to rise now or you’ll never have the son or the daughter.*”¹⁰¹ In this moment of potential doom amid the cane fields, an omniscient creature pulls Beli from certain death. The discourse surrounding bakás in Dominican popular culture and in texts like *Oscar Wao* suggests that they are otherworldly manifestations of historical trauma.¹⁰² The Mongoose¹⁰³ comes to stand as the “wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available.”¹⁰⁴ Throughout the novel, the Mongoose appears in moments that echo earlier violent events in places as historically “charged” as sugarcane fields. It appears, for example in the description of Oscar’s dream after his first beating in the cane fields. The Mongoose demands to know: “More or less?”¹⁰⁵ Perhaps what it wants to know is whether or not Oscar will relent in his suicidal mission to court his romantic obsession, Ybón, who was a sex worker and the girlfriend of a police chief. However, the question remains vague, implying that the voice of this traumatic wound is ambivalent, neither good nor evil, rejecting what Maja Horn calls the Manichean impulses of the Trujillo regime.¹⁰⁶ If the Mongoose is the clue that trauma still determines the fate of colonial subjects, including the characters in *Oscar Wao*, then Trujillo and Balaguer are both victims of its violence and the figures who can provoke the eruption of these wounds.

Despite the ambivalence of the otherworldly, the tales reveal that harnessing the power of the occult for selfish desires 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, though there are important contextual nuances that determine how, when, and where these creatures manifest themselves. This is the spillage that results from the inadequacy of official explanations of extreme socioeconomic inequality.¹⁰⁷ Haitian-American writer Edwidge Danticat shares her own experience of hearing rumors of organ harvesting, one that shows how the powerful “other” can reach demon-like proportions:

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.¹⁰⁸

For Danticat and other poor Haitian children, fear took the horrific form of death for the benefit of the imperial power to the north. It cannot be surprising that a power that is so feared is transformed into a monster, and it applies not only to entire countries but also to individuals, such as Trujillo.

Tigueraje as Historical Echo in *Oscar Wao* and *La Soga*

After ascending through a U.S.-created police force, Trujillo schemed and plotted his way into the Dominican presidency in 1930. Trujillo's brand of masculinity humiliated a traditional social elite unable to accept a mixed-race man as a leader and he retaliated against his social exclusion by sleeping with as many of his upper-class officials' wives and daughters as he desired. Trujillo's countless (often coerced) mistresses, attention to immaculately pressed and tailored garments, displays of military medals, and sustained self-promotion as the nation's paterfamilias exemplified an unparalleled commitment to the idea of the *tíguere*. As Lipe Collado's classic *El tíguere dominicano* states and other scholars corroborate, the *tíguere* is a Dominican archetype, "a trickster who rises from poverty to a position of wealth and power, often through illicit means" and "the mythic paragon of barrio masculinity who gains power—riches, women, control over others—apparently from nothing."¹⁰⁹ The wife of a foreign minister on assignment in Santo Domingo "knew of [Trujillo's] humble background [. . .] and she met his parents, noting that 'both of them were quite dark in color.'"¹¹⁰ Eric Paul Roorda concludes that, "[e]ven so, she found that his personal style nearly neutralized his questionable social and racial status."¹¹¹ In this sense, "clothes came very close to making the man," according to Roorda, but Derby historicizes Trujillo's attention to fashion and comportment as rooted in *tigueraje*. She argues, moreover, that "Trujillo officialized [*tigueraje*] by bringing it into the corridors of power," which "forced a reluctant respect on the part of Dominicans."¹¹²

I now turn to Dominican men's quotidian performances of this particular kind of hypermasculinity referred to as *tigueraje*, whose definition I provide below. In my discussion of *tigueraje*, I follow Judith Butler's definition of gender as "performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they [acts, gestures, and desires] otherwise purport

to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means.”¹¹³ I argue that performances of *tigueraje* as they emerge in many Dominican and Dominican-American texts are small-scale signs of Dominican subjects’ struggle against *and* alongside the large-scale instantiations of colonial history manifested in the forms of Trujillo, Balaguer, and the Lighthouse. That is, *tigueraje* instantiates gendered modes of individual power that can be in line with colonial and patriarchal oppression or assert subversive, anticolonial subjectivity, or both.

The *tíguere*’s historical precedents have mostly emblemized resistance to colonial power. Among the *tíguere*’s historical predecessors were figures such as “the Creole of the sixteenth, the freed slave of the seventeenth, and the mulatto of the eighteenth — all figures of difference that threatened the social hierarchy through their status as strangers who had more latitude for movement in the social order than everyone else.”¹¹⁴ These subjects’ wiliness, however, could manifest itself in individualistic, rather than systemic, subversions. One need only think of the maroons who made deals with colonial administrations to capture enslaved subjects who ran away in order to protect their own enclaves or the nonwhite privateers working in the slave trade.¹¹⁵ Many of these predecessors to *tigueraje*, broadly speaking, “provide more evidence that transcolonial endeavors were often no more emancipatory than the imperial and national powers that gave birth to and succeeded them.”¹¹⁶ Trujillo embodies well this contradictory status; while his rise to power subverted the Dominican “old guard” elite, his regime consolidated antidemocratic, patriarchal power. *Tígueres* embody not ideal, legitimate masculinity exemplified by the founding fathers in official history, but, rather, an excessive masculinity that, in some instantiations, gained a certain mass approval after the *trujillato*. Carlos Decena considers *tigueraje* to be on a continuum with *locura* (madness) or the performative excess that men embodying “legitimate” masculinity eschew.¹¹⁷ As the *ur-tíguere*, Trujillo’s class-racial transgression and excess is part of what set him apart from other Latin American and Caribbean dictators.¹¹⁸

I press on the point that part of the *tíguere*’s excess stems from his nonwhite status, for only white men could embody legitimate masculinity in the Dominican colonial and national order.¹¹⁹ During the colonial

era, white men or convincingly white men could attain official forms of power. However, because of colonial Santo Domingo's unique situation as a colony composed greatly of a mixed race and free population "everyone had a potential claim to whiteness" and "the free mulatto in the Dominican Republic became a locus of fear and revulsion representing the antithesis of the civilized colonial order."¹²⁰ Indeed, tigueraje was and is a vehicle for class-racial mobility. Lipe Collado contends that "to name someone 'a Tíguere' is to assume that he was not one of those white guys in high social positions."¹²¹ However, that Collado's preface-writer denominates Columbus as the first "tíguere blanco" does not expunge the fact that the Admiral is also a genealogical precursor to more "legitimate" – white, elite – patriarchal figures.¹²² Not surprisingly, Trujillo's embodiment of iconic "mulatto" masculinity did not lead to "black consciousness." Indeed, his government and intellectual apparatus helped consolidate the nation-state with an antiblackness connected to anti-Haitian ideology. Despite the rebellious roots of the term, Trujillo's tigueraje evinces the replacement of "one phallus for another," to cite Maja Horn after Doris Sommer, and not a dismantling of the patriarchal coloniality of power evident in men as disparate as Columbus and Trujillo. Indeed, the tíguere is a persistently masculine figure who may subvert race and class, but who must maintain his manly status.

Many men, especially those like Oscar, cannot measure up. *Oscar Wao* captures both the humorous and alienating extent to which the hypermasculinity of the tíguere becomes synonymous with Dominicanness itself. 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."¹²³ *Oscar Wao* portrays characters that struggle not only with patriarchal structures of power in the form of men such as Balaguer and his henchman, *el capitán*, the man who kills Oscar, but also the oppressive pressure of performative masculinity. For instance, though not all tígúeres are handsome, impeccable grooming and sartorial style are central components of many forms of tigueraje.¹²⁴ Many Díaz readers complain that his female characters are always beautiful bombshells. Though this is certainly accurate, one must admit that Díaz's fiction also includes numerous examples of masculine beauty.

Unlike overweight, clumsy, and sweet-tempered Oscar, the capitán who ends up murdering him is described as “[o]ne of those tall, arrogant, acerbically handsome niggers that most of the planet feels inferior to.”¹²⁵ Standards of masculine beauty are so important that they save Oscar the first time el capitán beats him. According to Yuniór, it is fortunate that Oscar did not look like his “pana [chum], Pedro, the Dominican Superman, or like my boy Benny, who was a model,” but, instead, “was a homely slob.”¹²⁶ For el capitán, Oscar’s lack of beauty places him too low on the hierarchy of masculinity to even merit his death, at least initially. Belicia’s boyfriend in her youth, Dionisio, was “[h]andsome in that louche potbellied mid-forties Hollywood producer sort of way.”¹²⁷ And, of course, Yuniór’s muscular physique and ease with women stands in opposition to Oscar’s large, clumsy body.

The narrative’s odes to the capitán’s, Benny’s, Dionisio’s, and Yuniór’s handsomeness resemble mainstream Dominican and international societal odes to Dominican masculine beauty as personified most emblematically by Porfirio Rubirosa (1909–1965). Rubirosa married several well-known women, including Trujillo’s daughter Flor de Oro, Barbara Hutton, and Doris Duke, and he is rumored to have bedded almost every famous woman of the era. Rubirosa’s charisma, charm, beauty, and style were so powerful that he remained one of Trujillo’s most trusted confidantes even after divorcing Flor de Oro.¹²⁸ There are FBI files dedicated to him and his exploits because, after all, he was an ambassador for Trujillo. References to his phallus, including in Truman Capote’s last novel, apparently numbered in the hundreds, recalling racist obsessions with black sexuality.¹²⁹ The power that tígueres like Rubirosa had over women also evoked the “Latin lover” archetype.

When people encounter Oscar, they cannot align this history of Dominican masculinity and sexual prowess with him. The combination of Oscar’s personality, looks, and class-racial status preclude him from embodying either tigueraje or legitimate, white masculinity. By high school, Oscar had become the “neighborhood parigüayo [since he had] none of the Higher Powers of your typical Dominican male, couldn’t have pulled a girl if his life depended on it.”¹³⁰ Collado defines the *parigüayo* is a man who “lacks the minimum conditions to escape any difficult situation successfully” and “who always assumes that he will lose and who constantly pities himself.”¹³¹ Indeed, his inability to conform to a

Dominican ideal of hypermasculinity makes others doubt the authenticity of his Dominicanness: “Our hero was not one of those Dominican cats everybody’s always going on about—he wasn’t no home-run hitter or a fly bachatero, not a playboy with a million hots on his jock. And except for one period early in his life, dude never had much luck with the females (how *very* un-Dominican of him).”¹³² Moreover: “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.”¹³³ Oscar’s main problem is that he cannot perform ideal masculine Dominicanness, not that he cannot perform mainstream U.S. subjectivity. He does not search for acceptance within a white U.S. mainstream so much as within his diverse community in urban New Jersey. This community demands that Oscar conform to an idealized model of Latino masculinity. That Dominican hypermasculinity emerges as the dominant form of masculinity in *Oscar Wao* and other works by Díaz parallels the ubiquity in the U.S. media and popular culture of the hypermasculine figures of the baseball player, the drug dealer, and, recently, a more sensitive incarnation through crooning *bachateros* such as Romeo Santos whom I mentioned in the introduction.¹³⁴ Oscar’s lack of masculine prowess is precisely what challenges his feelings of belonging; not only is he a diasporic Dominican—an identity that already implies a tenuous relationship to the homeland—but he is also a diasporic Dominican who does not fit the strict, gendered parameters of Dominicanness. In this case, the diasporic space extends and exaggerates the gendered ideals of the nation.¹³⁵

In *Oscar Wao*, those who do not conform to Dominican gender norms are violently punished. To be a proper Dominican woman is to guard one’s virginity until marriage, to be obedient to one’s elders, and to physically embody femininity by taking up less space and exuding a soft grace (e.g., primly crossing the legs at the ankles when sitting). Crucially, a proper Dominican woman remains at home, at school, or in church. Both Belicia and Lola, Oscar’s older sister, fall short of these ideals. An adolescent Belicia lusts after a schoolmate who belongs to a white elite family. After she loses her virginity with him in a school closet, she is expelled from the prestigious school. This consequence shatters La

Inca's hopes that Belicia would regain the socioeconomic status of her deceased parents. The loss of her virginity and her dismissal from the school cement Belicia's failure as a "proper" young lady, already a challenge considering her dark skin and working-class status. Lola ignites an intergenerational war with her mother when she shaves her head, discarding a crucial bond to her white ancestry in the form of long, flowing hair. Belicia starts psychologically abusing Lola by calling her "ugly," cementing the connection between beauty, whiteness, and femininity.¹³⁶

As a Dominican boy, Oscar is victim to his mother's and his community's violence against those who do not conform to gender expectations. Unlike Dominican women, a Dominican man's realm is outdoors, in the "streets." To Belicia's distress, Oscar's love of reading keeps him inside. Fighting against his natural inclination, she would force him out to play: "Pa' fuera! his mother roared. And out he would go, like a boy condemned [...] Please, I want to stay, he would beg his mother, but she shoved him out — You ain't a woman to be staying in the house."¹³⁷ A similar moment of masculine instruction occurs in the film *La Soga*, which expresses the performative vigilance and instruction required to achieve ideal models of upright, nonexcessive masculinity. The film's protagonist Luis Valerio, played by Manny Pérez, seeks to avenge his father's murder by a transmigrant Dominican drug dealer visiting Santiago. In the meantime, Luis works as the henchman/assassin of General Colón, whose *raison d'être* is to incarcerate or kill criminal returning deportees. Toward the end of the film, Luis discovers that the deportees can pay off Colón to save their lives.

A country butcher's son, Luis is expected to learn his father's trade. The problem is that Luis becomes attached emotionally to the pigs that are meant for slaughter. Echoing the gendered bullying that Oscar undergoes in *Oscar Wao*, Luis's father and cousin Tavo tease him by calling him *maricón* (faggot). Through their homophobic slurs, Luis's father and cousin inculcate Luis into appropriate Dominican masculinity. This moment is akin to the testimonies of Carlos Decena's queer Dominican male informants, in which masculinity emerged "as a straightjacket, an apparatus of collective surveillance and regulation of what is supposed to be a male body."¹³⁸ When Luis finally acquiesces to perform his familial duty, his father responds: "My son, you are a very sensitive boy. And we don't have the means to be sensitive all the time."¹³⁹ In his father's

eyes, Luis's hesitation to kill an animal evinces not only a worrisome effeminacy but also unsustainable *lujo* (luxury). Hardworking men of the Cibao, the country's "heartland," such as Luis's father, must confront violence head on. If this quality does not come naturally, it must be learned. Luis discovers that the best way to lessen the pig's suffering and to maintain the integrity of its blood is to stab it through the heart. After witnessing his father's murder, Luis proves his mettle as an appropriate Dominican *varón* (man) by stabbing the man that he and Colón later kill in jail by injecting a deadly serum into the man's heart.

La Soga pits the masculinity that his father teaches Luis to embody against the "excess" of *tigueraje*, which by the 1980s had become most closely embodied by so-called Dominican *cadenués*. These were men who fashioned themselves in what Dominicans considered the garb of black Americans, an unacceptable kind of Americanness: thick gold chains, "doo-rags," cornrows or dreads, sports jerseys, and expensive cars with blaring music. *La Soga* follows suit with this association of signifiers through its consistent racialization of deportees as embodying a non-Dominican blackness that is antithetical to respectable and acceptable Dominicanness (see Figure 3.2).¹⁴⁰ Luis's *chacabanas* (i.e., guayaberas) and Colón's military uniform, as well as both characters' lighter skin and straighter hair, racializes them as "whiter" within a Dominican racial and masculine hierarchy (see Figure 3.3). Their whiteness and self-fashioning brings them closer to embodying ideal patriarchal patriotism. Like the term Dominican *cadenués*, argues Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, the term *cadenué* connoted a "new kind of Dominican, soiled by life in

the United States. Both also came to express the danger that the corrosion of Dominican identity in New York might seep back across the border.”¹⁴¹ However, as Hoffnung-Garskof further contends, the class-racial anxieties around this criminalized figure preexisted the explosion of emigration to the U.S. Indeed, they echo and intersect with the anxieties focused on the *tíguere* discussed above. In the Dominican media of the late twentieth century, the *tíguere* became coterminous with the Dominican *cadenu* in that the criminality that the *tíguere* had always symbolized began to correlate directly with the criminality that many Dominican media outlets ascribed to diasporic and transmigrant Dominicans.¹⁴²

After the exponential growth of the Dominican diaspora after 1965, but especially in the 1980s and '90s, the criminalized so-called Dominican *cadenu*s stood on one side and the kind of *tíguere*s made acceptable and official by men like Trujillo and Rubirosa stood on the other side. Among the latter, we can include the protagonist, Luis, in his *chacabanas*, and his boss, General Colón, in his military uniform. They embody the swagger of the homegrown *tíguere*, who contrasts with the Dominican *cadenu*'s representation of a foreign, black criminality. Both kinds of *tíguere*s, however, do the bidding of U.S. authorities personified by FBI agent Simon Burr. Burr and Colón would receive cash payment from Dominican deportees in exchange for their lives. Unlike Colón, who is brought to justice for his corruption at the end of the film, Burr remains unpunished. Burr ignores Colón's desperate phone calls

after the latter is caught. The message of the film in this sense is clear: U.S. power is omnipresent and unpunishable.

Although the film's villains are General Colón and agent Burr, it is difficult to ignore the racialization of the migrant deportees as black. (This racialization is an inverse of Salomé Ureña's and the founding fathers' whitewashing.) In an early scene, Luis and two other henchmen chase an unarmed, dark-skinned man, Fellito Polanco, through a Santiago slum. Contrasting with the three henchmen, who wear stylish sunglasses and travel in an expensive truck, Fellito runs on foot wearing tattered, filthy clothing (see Figure 3.4). The chase ends when the three men surround Fellito at a dusty clearing that serves as the center of the slum. The entire neighborhood, including many children, witness the impromptu execution. After telling a few jokes at Fellito's expense and shooting his foot, Luis shoots him in the chest as his screaming mother watches helplessly. The shooting of Fellito's foot displays Luis's sadistic undercurrent and demonstrates that, to a certain extent, he revels in his power and forgets his father's childhood lesson to lessen his victim's suffering. Fellito's dirty clothing, as well as his presence in the slum, suggests that he did not have the funds necessary to pay off Colón and save his life. At this point in the film, Luis remains unaware of Colón's corruption. The assassins display the corpse on the back of a truck with a cardboard sign on his chest that interpellates him as a "*Vende-droga*" (Drug dealer), a warning to anyone who views the macabre display.¹⁴³

Too, the film taps into a long history of Santiago's symbolic representation of Dominican whiteness within which Fellito exemplifies a foreign, criminal blackness. Analyzing an image of Olivorio Mateo, an Afro-religious leader killed by U.S. occupying forces in 1922, Lorgia García-Peña writes: "Olivorio's performative diction of black masculinity placed him in direct confrontation with the powerful allegiance of the Hispanophile elite and the US empire."¹⁴⁴ Fellito Polanco emerges in the film as a similarly unincorporable black subject from the perspective of the criminal, yet sanctioned, white or light-skinned Dominican police force and the U.S. agent controlling the whole operation. Before Luis kills Fellito, one of the other henchmen reads the official accusations against him: "Fellito Polanco is a wanted man. Killed an FBI agent in New York. A criminal, a deportee, a junkie, and a drug dealer. Not only does he sell drugs, but he sells them here, in Santiago!"¹⁴⁵ Of relevance here is the emphasis on Fellito's audacity to corrupt Santiago, the capital of the Cibao, with drugs. The location of this corruption is critical since the idea of a white peasantry in the Cibao was at the heart of twentieth-century nationalist literature. Crucially, this peasantry differed from the resistant peasantry of *el monte* that emerged in the seventeenth century, as I discussed in the introduction. In the idealized version that emerged in the twentieth century, peasants were white hardworking tillers of the land who provided the nation with the fruits of their labor. Indeed, the white rural peasant in this nationalist imaginary ghosts the anxiety-inducing black and mixed-race peasants who, to invoke Raymundo González, lived anonymously and autonomously. According to Pedro L. San Miguel, this white peasant "became the prototypical inhabitant of the Hispanophone Antilles."¹⁴⁶ While this idealization of the white peasant emerged also in neighboring Cuba and Puerto Rico, it was on Dominican territory that a recalcitrant nonwhite free population, living removed from colonial and national purview, predominated for centuries.

Texts such as Ramón Emilio Jiménez's *Al amor del bohío (tradiciones y costumbres dominicanas)* and Balaguer's influential *La isla al revés* uphold the Cibao as having preserved this ideal of Dominicanness.¹⁴⁷ The valley is surrounded by a mountain range that, in Balaguer's perspective, protected Dominicans from Haitian incursion. These texts erased the many examples in which nonwhite Dominicans in this region resisted

the logic of the Plantation as represented by local, nationalist, and imperial power. Moreover, they codified the idea of “[b]lack revolt and revolutionary events [. . .] with blacks from ‘afuera,’” in the words of Sara Johnson.¹⁴⁸ As I have mentioned throughout, Dominican nationalism ghosted the free black subjectivity that had predominated in the territory in part by associating “blackness” with foreignness. To cite Rubén Silié, “the black [subject . . .] and, even more, his culture cease to be creole [native to this territory], both going back to being considered African.”¹⁴⁹ That which became authentically Dominican (autochthonous to the territory), continues Silié, is a culture associated with whiteness and Hispanicity, however accurate or not that may be.

In this way, *La Soga* traffics in racialized tropes through which waged or “aboveboard” labor and business ownership are respectable and, as such, “whiter” or acceptably Dominican, while labor traditionally considered to be done by non-Dominicans (e.g., sugar cane cutter) and “black market” labor (e.g., drug trafficking) are nonrespectable and, as such, represent a foreign blackness (e.g., Haitian, Anglophone West Indian, or African American). The “good” tíguere fashions himself in a style considered local and traditional, while the Dominican *cadenu* or “bad” tíguere fashions himself in what is considered to be the style of a foreign blackness. The first either masquerades as or *is* the law, while the second, when not outright illegal, *is interpellated as* illegal because it is stereotyped as a foreign blackness that is incompatible with Dominicanness. As scholars such as Sylvia Wynter and Maria Elena Martínez corroborate, from the earliest days of Spanish colonialism, *de jure* and *de facto* laws have defined the black subject as someone who is neither native to the Americas nor has any rights to/within the land.¹⁵⁰ Nationalist projects throughout the Americas hardly strayed from colonial hierarchies of race.¹⁵¹ Indeed, most portraits of blackness throughout Spanish-speaking Latin America demonstrate that subjects considered black are often assumed to be foreign. For instance, Afro-Argentines are assumed to be from Uruguay or Brazil, Afro-Puerto Ricans are assumed to be Dominican, Afro-Mexicans must have Cuban ancestry, and so on.¹⁵² In the Dominican case, the fact that the majority of the population has visible (i.e., phenotypical) black ancestry means that the foreignness of blackness common to the Americas instantiates somewhat differently. Unassimilable blackness is rendered foreign through racialized tropes

of labor and a set of equivalences whereby both the “Haitian” field laborer (who is often Dominican), for instance, and the Dominican York drug dealer, in another instance, are both associated with the “illegality” of undocumented subjects, not only with the “illegality” of their labor. Torres-Saillant proposes that “[t]o speak as a Dominican-York presupposes the recognition of an intrinsic marginality. It implies an acknowledgment of one’s voice of alterity.”¹⁵³ This alterity is generalized so that, although stereotype of the undocumented Dominican drug dealer as a foreign body arose first in the U.S., his criminalization extends into Dominican mass media stereotypes.

Thus, *La Soga*’s concern for an uncorrupted Santiago replicates a conservative Dominican racialized social order and suggests that black men such as Fellito Polanco remain unincorporated national subjects both in the U.S. and in the Dominican Republic. Perversely, a corrupt transnational alliance directs the men most concerned with “purging” Santiago of criminality. Though *La Soga* indicts the antidemocratic leadership of men such as Colón, as well as the U.S. officials who support it, it also replicates the exclusion of certain, usually black, Dominican subjects who do not belong and can never be ideal citizens. The blackness that men like Fellito embody is repudiated in both Dominican and U.S. contexts. Light-skinned, appropriately masculine men such as the police captain in *Oscar Wao* and Luis in the film, on the other hand, embody a new kind of ideal Dominican patriarchal patriotism.

Both *Oscar Wao* and *La Soga* evoke the inescapability of the post-Trujillo nation’s patriarchal legacy, even in the diaspora. Like other diasporic or transnational narratives, or both, these texts betray the sense that for many migrants “the trauma of diaspora is not ‘merely’ the loss of a homeland [. . .] but, more chillingly, the awareness that home and all its assaults [follow] the fleeing subject into the clean, empty space of escape.”¹⁵⁴ While *La Soga* ends with a smiling Luis behind the butcher counter of a New York City supermarket, an unconvincingly optimistic scene, most of the film revolves around Luis’s chasing of men who cannot escape General Colón’s and Simon Burr’s corruption, whether in New York or in Santiago. In the novel, Oscar returns to his native Dominican Republic in order to research and write his family’s history. If Oscar’s inability to perform Dominicanness in the diaspora stems from his failure to perform hypermasculinity, in the homeland his diasporic

status also renders him an outsider. When he visits Santo Domingo, he tries to ignore “that whisper that all long-term immigrants carry inside themselves, the whisper that says *You do not belong*.”¹⁵⁵ On the other hand, his murder at the hands of an authoritarian leader’s henchman renders his Dominicanness unquestionable, since even he—a citizen of the United States—must come to grips with the aftershocks of the island’s violent history.

“El capitán,” the jealous boyfriend who murders Oscar, is the masculine antithesis of the novel’s hapless antihero. The capitán’s exorbitant masculinity manifests itself in his violence. Moreover, he exemplifies how appropriate masculinity beholden to rightful patriarchs, such as Balaguer, eases socioeconomic mobility: “The Twelve Years [of Balaguer’s rule from 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 ride-dance).”¹⁵⁶ Sadistic duties such as these allowed many men during the Trujillo and Balaguer eras to rise up in the ranks. So many Dominicans became these men’s victims or knew their victims that a collective fascination with some of these tortures remains, a mode of reckoning with this historical trauma. A footnote in *Oscar Wao* describes the head of Trujillo’s secret police, Johnny Abbes García, as “[a]n enthusiast of Chinese torture techniques, Abbes was rumored to have in his employ a dwarf who would crush prisoners’ testicles between his teeth.”¹⁵⁷

Not surprisingly, women tend to be more vulnerable to unfettered patriarchal power, as exemplified by the horrific violence that Belicia endures before her escape to the U.S. As an independent and beautiful young woman in Santo Domingo, Belicia meets Dionisio, alias the Gangster, “a flunky for the Trujillato, and not a minor one.”¹⁵⁸ His success was indebted to a sharp business acumen and loyalty to Trujillo:

The Gangster’s devotion did not go unrewarded. By the mid-forties the Gangster was no longer simply a well-paid operator; he was becoming an *alguien*—in photos he appears in the company of the regime’s three witchkings: Johnny Abbes, Joaquín Balaguer, and Felix Bernardino [. . .]. In the forties the Gangster was in his prime; he

traveled the entire length of the Americas, from Rosario to Nueva York, in pimpdaddy style, staying at the best hotels, banging the hottest broads [. . .], dining in four-star restaurants, confabbing with arch-criminals the world over.¹⁵⁹

Dionisio's loyalty both to Trujillo and to a brand of violent Dominican hypermasculinity paves the way for his socioeconomic prosperity. In other words, he is a perfect tíguere. Belicia's and Dionisio's passionate affair results in Belicia's pregnancy. Her refusal to get an abortion enrages him. After all, he is married to one of Trujillo's sisters, an "important item he'd failed to reveal."¹⁶⁰ Belicia narrowly escapes being killed by Dionisio's wife's minions at first, but, just like her son decades later, her obstinacy, optimism, and foolish love invites catastrophe. She gets into a car she thinks belongs to the Gangster but which, in fact, holds the men who will beat her until they believe her to be dead. It is a miracle that she survives for

[t]hey beat her like she was a slave. Like she was a dog. Let me pass over the actual violence and report instead on the damage inflicted: her clavicle, chicken-boned; her right humerus, a triple fracture [. . .]; five ribs, broken; left kidney, bruised; liver, bruised; right lung, collapsed; front teeth, blow out. About 167 points of damage in total [. . .]. Was there time for a rape or two? I suspect there was.¹⁶¹

Only La Inca's prayers and a visa to the U.S. save Belicia's life. That a similar event led to Oscar's violent death also proves that the oppressive forces that caused the disintegration of the Cabral family, starting with Abelard's imprisonment, persist. Dionisio and the capitán, as representatives of Trujillo and Balaguer, respectively, emerge in the novel as masculinist manifestations of the trauma haunting Oscar's and countless other Dominican families, that is, the spirit of Columbus or fukú of the Admiral.¹⁶²

In both *Oscar Wao* and *La Soga*, the U.S. emerges both as a site of potential liberation and as the shadowy power behind much of the oppression and violence on the island and in immigrant U.S. communities. The U.S. passport, for instance, is both empowering and useless, demonstrating that the privilege of double citizenship comes with

limitations for racialized and non-ideally gendered subjects. Oscar's mother, Belicia, escapes certain death by fleeing to the U.S., away from the Gangster and his furious wife. However, a U.S. citizen like Oscar must grapple continually with a Dominican legacy of patriarchal violence, which Columbus augured and whose apex Trujillo and Balaguer represented. Sadly, Oscar's attempts to defend himself during the first encounter with the capitán by proclaiming, "I'm an American citizen," do not keep the angry police officer and his sidekicks from beating him to his near death.¹⁶³ 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."¹⁶⁴ This simple, and humorous, exchange indicates that Oscar's U.S. citizenship offers little protection if he cannot defend himself physically "like a man." More significantly, it shows that having a U.S. passport cannot secure protection from the homeland's violence, trauma, and masculinist standards.

Toward the end of *La Soga*, a Dominican representative of the U.S. consulate hands Luis a U.S. passport with a new identity, an escape. But for the most part the film portrays the U.S. as an ambivalent space for Dominican migrants or exiles. Most of the few scenes in *La Soga* that take place in the U.S. are centered on criminal activity and violence. The exception comes in the last scene of the film, which shows the predominantly Dominican space of Washington Heights in an entirely new light, literally. Unlike the earlier scenes in the U.S., which are shot in gray and blue tones, this final scene displays a sunny, optimistic cityscape. Put differently, the earlier U.S. scenes portray migration to the U.S. as *una lucha* (a struggle) against the cold, the bleakness, the unfriendliness, and the crime, alluding to a cultural tradition that emerged in the late twentieth century, especially in popular music, describing migration as a difficult process.¹⁶⁵ The last scene, however, shows the U.S. as a land of possibility and opportunity. The difference in how these scenes are shot may seem irrelevant, but they demonstrate a shift in what the U.S. represents in the film. Luis and his paramour, Jenny, wake up in a sunny apartment. With Jenny's playful urging, Luis departs for his job as a supermarket butcher. In the last shot, Luis stands behind the butcher counter and transforms a thoughtful countenance into a smile. The scene suggests that Luis and Jenny are safe, an unconvincing illusion since the film opens with the public execution of a deportee who cannot escape the claws of a corrupt

FBI agent. Moreover, although Luis embodies an ideal of Dominican masculinity, he must escape to the U.S. to save his life. This outcome casts doubt on the notion that adherence to gendered and raced ideals secure a successful integration into either nation. Finally, Luis's new neighbors in the diaspora may very well include the family members of his and Colón's victims. Despite the size of the Dominican diaspora around the world, there is an intimacy and closeness instantiated by the fact that Junot Díaz and Manny Pérez are cousins.

In this chapter, I analyzed the architectural apogee of and two cultural reckonings with the legacy of the conquest. I argued that Columbus's legacy reemerges not only in the countless celebrations and monuments in his honor but also in texts in which subjects struggle to comprehend and survive the exorbitant power of male leaders such as Trujillo and Balaguer. Both *Oscar Wao* and *La Soga* showcase how Dominican subjects, especially men, struggle against or support the unrelenting violence necessary to maintain Eurocentric, patriarchal conceptions in both national contexts and the wider neocolonial context of U.S.-Dominican relations. Dominican popular discourses around these modern-day echoes and repetitions of Columbus's legacy — that is, the legacy of layered colonialisms — adopt the language of the supernatural, infusing the larger Dominican public's sense that money and political power remain in the hands of a few. Part of the enduring struggle against this power from above is the dissemination of diverse stories that counteract the power of official history, a task improved by an increased access to a wider array of communication technologies in the last few decades. However, the gendered and raced socioeconomic hierarchies established during the colonial period endure even in this much-celebrated "globalized" world. While more Dominicans can make public their dissent, neoliberal restructuring of what was supposed to be a democratic government after Trujillo has fueled massive geographic displacement, both within the country and internationally, as well as the continued political and economic disenfranchisement of Dominicans who do not conform to race and gender ideals.

Coda: Masculinist Hauntings

On October 24, 1985, popular merengue performer Tony Seval was brutally tortured and murdered under police custody in Santo Domingo.¹⁶⁶ Two days earlier, police had arrested him on false charges of drug possession. His band Tony Seval y Los Gitanos, formed just a little over a year earlier, had reached great acclaim with their catchy merengue songs and the outrageous outfits the band members donned on their weekly gig on the *Show del Mediodía* (Noontime Show). This show united the *pueblo* in a performance of Dominicanness, for the noon hour was when even working Dominicans returned home to eat the most important meal of the day. In the early 1980s, it was common for merengue groups to acquire a signature “look,” and Seval worked with his neighborhood tailor to ensure Los Gitanos would stand out from the fray. My father, José Ramírez Valdez, who was Los Gitanos’s pianist, recalls not only the namesake gypsy costumes but also those clearly meant for comic relief, including a costume of pajama sets and nightcaps made out of women’s stockings.¹⁶⁷ People who met Seval always described him as charismatic; my father remembers him as *jocoso* (playful), constantly joking around. Combining this charm with his brilliance as a musician, the astuteness necessary to stand out from the fray, his attention to garments, and his socio-geographic move from his hometown of La Romana to fame in the capital, Seval had all the elements of the kind of *tigueraje* capable of catapulting someone to folk fame.

The band never got the chance to perform in their pajama costume, for Seval was arrested right after their Tuesday rehearsal on the week it was to debut. Though the murder happened two days later, my father remembers being told the very next day that Seval was dead. I can only imagine the disbelief and shock, for Seval was a beloved member of his community and, increasingly, of the entire nation. His arrest alone must have been surprising, but his murder was so exorbitant, so unbelievable that it quickly became a national symbol of military and political abuse. Thousands of Dominicans all over the country mourned and protested his death by lighting candles they placed outside their homes in what is often described as a “spontaneous” act that lasted for days.¹⁶⁸

The climate of fear was so intense that my mother and father had to sneak back home using back alleyways after Seval’s funeral. My father

remarks that he and his bandmates had been too afraid to meet to talk about what happened. After all, they had witnessed Seval's arrest since it occurred at the end of the band's weekly rehearsal. The indignation of the *pueblo* at Seval's savage murder in prison was so great that the president at the time, Jorge Blanco, accompanied by Chief of the Military Manuel Antonio Cuervo Gómez, had to make a televised statement. No one believed the official version, which stated that Seval had gotten into a fight with other prisoners. Seval's corpse, full of stab wounds, including on the soles of his feet and in his armpits, told a story of horrific torture. My father recounts that other prisoners had heard his screams. Though the official narrative also accused Seval of being *endrogado* (on drugs), an autopsy revealed that Seval had no traces of drugs or alcohol in his system. Unlike many other musicians of the early 1980s, my father confirms that Seval did not use drugs.

At least two, at times intertwining, versions of the reasons behind Seval's arrest and murder have emerged.¹⁶⁹ The most widely known is that Seval had been having an affair with a military or police officer's girlfriend. To several people, this would explain Seval's hyperbolic torture, a sign of a "crime of passion." The second version emerges in a 2013 television interview with Seval's widow, Josefina Camarena, finally unafraid to tell her story. According to Camarena, Seval had come home a few days prior to his capture telling her that he had seen "algo que es problemático" (something that was problematic) involving high-ranking officials.¹⁷⁰ Camarena recalls that Seval told her that he had gone to pick up a young woman he had been seeing: "You know how those girls are with musicians."¹⁷¹ She assures the viewer that this did not bother her, "because he fulfilled his role as a husband and as a father, you see? And as a son, too."¹⁷² She continues:

And then he told me that he went into [Chief of the Military] Mr. Cuervo Gómez's house and they were unloading a van. He went into that house to get the girl, and a guard, who noted his presence, asked Mr. Cuervo Gómez who was this man who was there. And when Mr. Cuervo Gómez went there, he [Seval] told him who he was. Then the mother of the young woman [that Seval had gone to pick up] told him [Cuervo Gómez] that [Seval] was the girl's fiancé and in that moment was when the problem started. Well, I see a car [. . .] and five men get out, one

with a [baseball] bat, another gets out with [...] one of those things that you hit a horse with [...] and the others have [fire]arms. 173

This is the tumult of the arrest that my father had not seen, but had heard, while he was still packing up his keyboard after the rehearsal. Once Camarena learned that Seval had been detained, she went to the police precinct, which was crowded with people demanding that Seval be released. During the interview Camarena fought back tears as she remembered how beloved Seval was by the community. She had been told that he would be released the next day, but when she went to pick him up, she learned that Seval had been killed.

My father notes that both versions of what had led to Seval's murder are compatible. It is possible, for instance, that Seval was romantically involved with a high-ranking official's girlfriend and had also seen this official doing something illicit. In any case, the public knew that the official version of the story *no cuadabra* (did not add up) and his murder revealed the depth of military and police impunity. Considering that this occurred neither during the Trujillo dictatorship nor during Balaguer's governments highlights my claim that Seval's murder stemmed from an entrenched, generational, and systemic masculinist violence. The root cause was not a single man, but an entire social-political structure. Indeed, in 1984, under Jorge Blanco's government, the aforementioned General Cuervo Gómez had ordered a military intervention against national protests of the government's handling of the economy. Dozens of civilians were killed in this intervention.

One of Los Gitanos's biggest hits was the song "El muerto" (The Dead Man), for which the band made a playful music video. In the early 1980s, it was quite rare for Dominican artists to dedicate resources to making a music video, a fairly new way of disseminating music. After his murder, Seval's humorous portrayal of a ghost stalking a beautiful woman in the video seemed to foreshadow his death. Dressed in fashionable clothes evoking an early 1980s Michael Jackson, Seval/the dead man haunts the woman. At one point she takes recourse at the local precinct, where, of course, police can do nothing to help her. Seval stands behind the policeman on duty, who does not see *el muerto*. On the wall behind both of them is a painting of the map of the island. The policeman laughs at the woman while making a gesture with his hand demonstrating that he

believes her to be insane. “El muerto” also laughs at her. The video ends in a plot twist: the woman drags *el muerto* into the bedroom because, apparently, she cannot get enough of him sexually.

Many Dominicans interpreted Seval’s portrayal of a ghost as foreshadowing the tragedy that befell him. However, I consider the video and song “El muerto” to have a triple interpretation, because “the dead man” is both victim and torturer. First, the video portends Seval’s untimely death. Second, the video and the lyrics can also stand for the voices of the disappeared who reemerge continually to haunt the present. The song’s catchy chorus warns: “It is not in your best interest to be haunted by a ghost, because I’m going to scare you, because I’m going to push you, because I’m going to pull you, because I’m going to scratch you.”¹⁷⁴ “El muerto” and the *pueblo*’s reaction to Seval’s murder evoke the traumatic “wound that cries out,” in Cathy Caruth’s words, as the repetitive and deafening roar of patriarchal history tries to silence it.¹⁷⁵ After all, the “disappeared,” like Seval, Oscar, and the victims of Luis Valerio, General Colón, and Agent Burr, do not, in fact, disappear; official historical narratives cannot do away with the memories of the populace. Though Seval enacted the gendered charm and violence of the *tíguere*, he was ultimately the victim of another instantiation of the structural violent patriarchal forces I have discussed throughout this chapter. However, Trujillo’s, Balaguer’s, and Blanco’s official versions cannot erase the stories that emerge in innocuous conversations, even in the diasporic New York City space where my father recalled Seval’s murder.

Finally, “El Muerto” is a disturbing portrayal of a man stalking a woman relentlessly, confirming that playful performances of *tigueraje* often rely on violence against women and nonideally masculine subjects. In one scene, a group of men point and laugh at the woman because she is frightened by the *el muerto*/Seval as he follows her. Since they cannot see him, the bystanders conclude that she is *una loca* (a crazy woman). Seval and the video’s directors almost certainly did not intend for the video to be interpreted through a feminist lens, as I have done here. We may recall as well that Oscar is not only a sad *parigüayo* (loser), but also, from another perspective, an obsessed stalker of several uninterested women. If anything, these three intertwined readings of *tigueraje* demonstrate that “life is complicated,” to cite Avery Gordon.¹⁷⁶ This is especially the case when it comes to ghosts and hauntings.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

- 1 Melville, "Benito Cereno," 145–146.

Harris was an African American activist searching for a more hospitable country for his brethren either in the Dominican Republic or in Haiti. See Harris, *A Summer on the Borders of the Caribbean Sea*, 27.

Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 183.

- 2 Melville, "Benito Cereno," 161.

- 3 Melville, "Benito Cereno," 163.

- 4 Melville, "Benito Cereno," 163.

- 5 See Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, and Grandin, *The Empire of Necessity*.

- 6 This ghosting is so pervasive that it is beyond the scope of this book to include all the examples in which Santo Domingo/the Dominican Republic should have been studied but was not. However, we may consider scholarship within the burgeoning field of Afro-Latin America, which rarely includes the Dominican case. Several tomes dedicated to the study of black Latin America neither mention this first site of African slavery in the hemisphere nor seek to explore how ideas of blackness or whiteness developed there. For instance, the two-volume *Blackness in Latin America and the Caribbean*, ed. Whitten and Torres, which includes thirty-six articles by many different authors, does not contain a single essay on the Dominican Republic.

- 7 Anne McClintock, "Imperial Ghosting and National Tragedy," 820. Thanks to Anne McClintock for introducing me to the term "ghosting" and the literature around it.

Raphael Dalleo also opens his book with the words: "U.S. Imperialism is built on amnesia" (*American Imperialism's Undead*).

- 8 These two economies were intertwined. As Anne Eller writes: "At Saint-Domingue's height, colonists relied heavily on the Santo Domingo cattle trade" ("All Would Be Equal in the Effort," 127n93). See also Soler, *Santo Domingo Tierra de Frontera 1750–1800*.

I borrow Antonio Benítez-Rojo's capitalization of the word "Plantation" to differentiate between a single plantation and a "society dominated by plantation economy" (*The Repeating Island*, 317n8). Juan José Ponce-Vázquez calls Santo Domingo a "post-plantation" society ("Unequal Partners in Crime," 3).

- 9 In *Tropics of Haiti*, Marlene Daut also argues for complicating calcified narratives of what it meant to be revolutionary during the Haitian Revolution.

- 10 Melville, "Benito Cereno," 146.
- 11 McClintock, "Imperial Ghosting and National Tragedy," 827.
- 12 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 178–179, emphasis mine.
- 13 See, for instance, the controversial *Miami Herald* article "Black Denial" by Frances Robles, which held that Dominicans' preference for straightened hair was irrefutable proof that the entire citizenry denied their blackness. See also "Black in the Dominican Republic," *HuffPost Live*, and Gates, "Haiti and the Dominican Republic."
- 14 Chetty, "La calle es libre," 41.
- 15 Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*. See also Knight, *The Caribbean*.
- 16 There are many works about the Plantation system and its effects in modern-day societies across the Americas. See, for instance, Kutzinski, *Sugar's Secrets*; Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection*; and White, *Ar'n't I a Woman*. For an analysis of how white supremacist violence also defined urban slavery, including in Santo Domingo, see Ponce-Vázquez, "Unequal Partners in Crime," and Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives*.
- 17 Here I include the varied scholarship of Raj Chetty, Lorgia García-Peña, Angela Hernández, Maja Horn, Danny Méndez, Néstor Rodríguez, Doris Sommer, Silvio Torres-Saillant, and Sherezada (Chiqui) Vicioso.
- 18 For an elaboration of displacement as both migration and exile in relation to Hispanophone Caribbean writers, see Pérez Rosario, "Introduction: Historical Context of Caribbean Latino Literature," in *Hispanic Caribbean Literature of Migration*, 1–20.
- 19 See Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*; Bergland, *The National Uncanny*; Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*; and McClintock, *Unquiet Ghosts of the Forever War*.
- 20 Walcott, *The Antilles*.
- 21 Walcott, *The Antilles*.
- 22 Taylor, *The Archive and The Repertoire*, 142. For more on repetition and state violence, see Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*; Guidotti-Hernández, *Unspeakable Violence*; and García-Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad*.
- 23 Bergland, *The National Uncanny*, 5.
- 24 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, xvi.
- 25 McClintock, "Imperial Ghosting and National Tragedy," 827.
- 26 With Haitian governance in 1822 came the final abolition of slavery in this former Spanish colony, rendering the island the sole example of a black-led nation-state in the midst of a sea of slaveholding colonies. That is, throughout the nineteenth century and, arguably, beyond, Dominicans—alongside Haitians—had to contend with the contempt of a world that was not ready for black freedom and autonomy. See Eller, *We Dream Together*, which "recounts the immense opposition to self-rule directed toward the island" (1).
- 27 In 2000, Chris Dixon writes that "Haiti had changed little since the 1820s [to the 1850s]" (Dixon, *African America and Haiti*, 97). But there was an important change during these 30 years; in the 1820s, Haiti was the entire island, while in the

1850s, the western third of the island was Haiti and the other two-thirds were the Dominican Republic. That is, an entirely new nation had been founded during these years. In 2014, Greg Grandin repeats the misnamings that had been prevalent for two centuries. Referencing Herman Melville's novella "Benito Cereno," Grandin writes: "Melville settled on calling the ship San Dominick, identifying it with Haiti's old French colonial name, Santo Domingo" (Grandin, *The Empire of Necessity*, 197). This is, of course, not Haiti's old French colonial name and is, instead, the Dominican Republic's old Spanish name. This book then cites an 1855 New York City lecture by Charles Wyllys Elliott, which invokes a 1521 slave revolt on the plantation of Columbus's son. Grandin then notes that Elliot had "reminded his audience that Haiti used to be called Santo Domingo" (Grandin, *The Empire of Necessity*, 199). In a fascinating replication of mistakes, Grandin fails to mention that this plantation was in what had already, by 1855, become the Dominican Republic.

What concerns me about these inaccuracies in otherwise rigorous and necessary scholarship is that they have the unmistakable handprint of U.S.-centricity. Sean X. Goudie offers a sobering critique of "how scholars and critics, in treating Caribbean presences in works authored by U.S. authors, turn to the Caribbean according to a North-South trajectory to spy out influence without ever relocating themselves according to a South-North directionality, a reality that reflects their and their field's institutional location, hierarchies of assumption, and investments" (Goudie, "The Caribbean Turn in C19 American Literary Studies," 135).

- 28 See Torres-Saillant, "The Tribulations of Blackness," 127.
- 29 When I use the terms "first world" and "third world" instead of terms such as "center" and "periphery," "global north" and "global south," or "West" and "rest," I do so purposefully. Unlike these other terms, first world and third world have been uncritically used from developmentalist perspectives. The reader should assume that my usage of these terms always includes scare quotes though I cease to include them after the first mention in each chapter.
- 30 See Franck, "The Land of Bullet Holes," 260–264; Moscoso Puello, "From Paris to Santo Domingo," 195–200; and Lugo, "El estado dominicano ante el derecho público."
- Coincidentally, as Matthew Jacobson asserts, "[s]cientists and politicians freely cited the first-hand accounts of white travelers in order to assert this or that truth about Africa or Asia, and yet those accounts—like the travelers' experiences—had already been structured by technologies, modes of seeing, a set of social relations, and an epistemology entwined in the project of Euro-American exploration and imperial expansion" (Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 11). It becomes clear that travel writing and scientific racism built on each other.
- 31 See, for instance, Bell, preface in *Black Separatism in the Caribbean*. He clarifies for the potentially confused reader the variety of spellings and names used

by the two authors in the anthology. Sundquist and Eller also note the variety of spellings referring to one or both sides of the island. See Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 140n; and Eller, “‘Awful Pirates’ and ‘Hordes of Jackals,’” 90n50.

32 Consider, for instance, that the 1806 Spanish version of a French book translated the title *La vie de Jean-Jacques Dessalines, chef des noirs révoltés de Saint-Domingue* (1804) into *La Vida de J.J. Dessalines, gefe de los negros de Santo Domingo*. The Spanish edition mistakenly translated Saint Domingue (future Haiti) into Santo Domingo (future Dominican Republic). See Dubroca, *Vida de J.J. Dessalines, gefe de los negros de Santo Domingo*.

33 According to the U.S. census of 2010, the Dominican population was 1.5 million. See Motel and Patten, “Hispanics of Dominican Origin in the United States, 2010.”

34 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 99.

35 McClintock, “Imperial Ghosting and National Tragedy.”

36 “centro de ensayo colonial español en América” (Batista, *Mujer y esclavitud en Santo Domingo*, 23).

37 Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents*, 58.

38 Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora,” 224, italics in original.

I borrow Ginetta Candelario’s definition of identity based on “the relationship between institutions and individuals, and between official discourse and everyday life practices.” She continues: “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 identities of a given individual will be more or less salient in different circumstances and contexts” (*Black behind the Ears*, 6–7).

39 Candelario, “La ciguapa y el ciguapeo,” 101.

40 Candelario, “La ciguapa y el ciguapeo,” 103.

41 Morrison, *Beloved*.

42 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 140.

43 Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 139.

44 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 97.

45 See Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*; Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*; Johnson, *The Fear of French Negroes*; Dubois, *Haiti*; and Ferrer, *Freedom’s Mirror*.

Julia Gaffield, however, argues against the notion of Haiti’s diplomatic and commercial isolation after the Revolution. See *Haitian Connections in the Atlantic World*.

46 Ulysse, “Why Representations of Haiti Matter Now More Than Ever,” 39.

47 Goudie, “The Caribbean Turn in C19 American Literary Studies,” 132.

48 See Fischer, “Appendix A: Imperial Constitution of Haiti, 1805,” in *Modernity Disavowed*, 275–281.

49 Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 32.

If we consider how the rights of Haitian migrants and their Dominican descendants have been under attack throughout the twentieth century in the Dominican Republic—and, in the late twentieth-century U.S., the refusal to

- grant Haitians refugee status unlike their Cuban counterparts—the legacy of white supremacist reactions to black Haitian self-determination endures still.
- 50 C. L. R. James’s influential *The Black Jacobins* ([1938] 1963) remains one of the most canonical accounts of the Haitian Revolution. See also Scott, “The Common Wind”; Fick, *The Making of Haiti*; Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity*; and Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*.
- 51 Fanning, *Caribbean Crossing*, 55.
- 52 To learn more about these subjects, see Michel, *La Revolución Haitiana y Santo Domingo*; Franco, *Blacks, Mulattos, and the Dominican Nation*; Lora, “El sonido de la libertad”; Johnson, *The Fear of French Negroes*; Ferrer, *Freedom’s Mirror*; Nessler, *An Islandwide Struggle for Freedom*; and Eller, “All Would Be Equal in the Effort” and *We Dream Together*.
- 53 See Candelario, *Black behind the Ears*.
- 54 See, for instance, the work of Sherezada (Chiqui) Vicioso, Angela Hernández, Pedro L. San Miguel, Pedro Mella, Quisqueya Lora, Silvio Torres Saillant, Ginetta Candelario, Lauren (Robin) Derby, April Mayes, Lorgia García-Peña, Néstor Rodríguez, Micah Wright, Danny Méndez, Anne Eller, Graham Nessler, Edward Paulino, Raj Chetty, and Maja Horn. I am particularly inspired by these scholars’ refusals of conservative Dominican nationalists’ outright fabrications on which rest their ideologies, often anti-Haitianist, antipoor, and misogynist.
- 55 Grant, “Making the Case for U.S. Annexation,” in Roorda, Derby, and González, eds., *The Dominican Republic Reader*, 159.
- 56 Guitar, “Boiling It Down,” 42. See also Moya Pons, *La otra historia dominicana*, 77–81.
- The Spanish brought the first African slaves to the Americas in 1502, but they soon fled and took “refuge with the native people” (Gibson, *Empire’s Crossroads*, 43). For more information on the hemisphere’s first sugar mills, see Benítez-Rojo, *The Repeating Island*.
- 57 According to Guitar, Spaniards brought with them enslaved subjects of African, indigenous, and mixed descent to settle other parts of the Americas. See Guitar, “Boiling It Down,” 43.
- 58 Sagás and Inoa, eds., *The Dominican People*, 1.
- 59 Ponce-Vázquez, “Unequal Partners in Crime,” 5. See also the introduction to Roorda, Derby, and González, eds., *The Dominican Republic Reader*, 1–8, and González, *De esclavos a campesinos*.
- The main reason for the impoverishment of the territory is that the Spanish became distracted by the wealth to be plundered from the Aztec, Incan, Mayan, and other indigenous societies located especially on the continent. According to historians Eric Paul Roorda, Lauren Derby, and Raymundo González, “a full two years could pass without Spanish ships stopping at local ports” at the height of the colony’s impoverishment (*The Dominican Republic Reader*, 88).
- 60 See, for instance, Howard, *Coloring the Nation*; Sagás, *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic*; Stinchcomb, *The Development of Literary Blackness in the*

comuneros (shared lands) in the nineteenth century, see Moya Pons, “The Land Question in Haiti and Santo Domingo,” and Turits, *Foundations of Despotism*.

- 91 See Davis, “La Montería,” in Roorda, Derby, and González, eds., *The Dominican Republic Reader*, 446.
- 92 “mujeres pobres que iban a la iglesia y mantenían sus familias con su trabajo de sirvientas, costureras, vendedoras de comida, fabricantes de dulces, prostitutas o concubinas” (Moya Pons, *La otra historia dominicana*, 104).
- 93 “[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” (Condé, *La parole des femmes*, 39).
- 94 See Batista, *Mujer y esclavitud en Santo Domingo*; Bush, *Slave Women in Caribbean Society*; Shepherd, Brereton, and Bailey, eds., *Engendering History*; Sharpe, *Ghosts of Slavery*.
- It should not be surprising that traces of black and other nonwhite women would be difficult to find across the written archives of the Western world. Scholars of gender and race in the Americas have had to cobble together fragments using various established methods or create new methodologies wholesale, including M. Jacqui Alexander, Saidiya Hartman, Jenny Sharpe, Barbara Bush, Celsa Albert Batista, Sara Johnson, and Marisa J. Fuentes, to name just a few.
- 95 Citing Larrazábal Blanco’s *La esclavitud del negro en Santo Domingo*: “la mujer africana como ‘mecanismo de contra insurgencia’” (Batista, *Mujer y esclavitud en Santo Domingo*, 20).
- 96 I have not found any source that specifies Hazard as a white man, but the exclusion of this descriptor in the nineteenth-century U.S. context usually means that the person is white. For more on Harris, see Bell, preface in *Black Separatism in the Caribbean*. For more on Hazard, see Candelario, *Black behind the Ears*, 53–57.
- 97 Cited in García-Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad*, 9.
- 98 Hazard, *Santo Domingo*, 184.
- For more on Dominican women in the archive, see Lora, “Las mujeres anónimas de inicios del siglo XIX dominicano.”
- 99 Hazard, *Santo Domingo*, 184.
- 100 Harris, *A Summer on the Borders of the Caribbean Sea*, 43.
- 101 García-Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad*, 52.
- 102 García-Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad*, 52.
- 103 See González, *De esclavos a campesinos*.
- 104 “Desde la fundación de la República, en 1844, el campesinado había constituido un sector social de difícil control por los organismos estatales. Por tal razón, desde fines del siglo XIX, los esfuerzos estatales se encaminaron, en buena medida a ‘domesticar’ al campesinado” (San Miguel, *El pasado relegado*, 139). See also González, *De esclavos a campesinos*, 142.
- 105 Martínez Vergne, *Nation and Citizen in the Dominican Republic*, 8. See also Zeller, *Discursos y espacios femeninos en República Dominicana*.

- 106 Pedro Francisco Bonó, letter to Gregorio Luperón (1887), quoted in Hoetink, *The Dominican People*, 188.
- 107 “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” (Cassá, *Salomé Ureña*, 13).
- Around this time, the few women fortunate enough to receive any education were unable to advance beyond basic literacy. 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, *Salomé Ureña*, 22). By 1887, the number of schools around the country had increased to 300 with about 10,000 students (Alvarez Leal, *La República Dominicana*, 29).
- 108 “el presupuesto para dicho propósito era sólo un 3 por ciento de los gastos totales del gobierno” (Zeller, *Discursos y espacios femeninos*, 19).
- 109 “las mayorías analfabetas, indígenas o afrodescendientes” (Mella, *Los espejos de Duarte*, 39). Here, Mella refers to Rama’s writings directly. That is, he is not suggesting that the “real city” in the Dominican Republic includes “indigenous” people.
- 110 “sirviendo también como sinécdoques que pretenden representar discursivamente a la República Dominicana como un todo” (Mella, *Los espejos de Duarte*, 39).
- 111 In the late seventeenth century, for instance, the archbishop of the colony complains to the Spanish crown about rumors that in just a few years the whole government will be controlled by blacks and “mulattos” and that there is already a town governed by two “mulattos.” See Ugarte, *Estampas coloniales*, vol. 2, 132–133.
- 112 See Silié, “El hato y el conuco”; González, “Ideología del progreso y campesinado en el siglo XIX”; Eller, *We Dream Together*; Torres-Saillant, “The Tribulations of Blackness.”
- 113 For more on these political factions, see Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic*.
- 114 For more on the U.S. occupation of the Dominican Republic (1916–1924), see Calder, *The Impact of the Intervention*; Tillman, *Dollar Diplomacy by Force*; and García-Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad*.
- 115 “Durante más de 400 años y, particularmente durante los siglos XVIII y XIX, la vida dominicana estuvo dominada por formas campesinas” (Moya Pons, *La otra historia dominicana*, 111).
- 116 Moya Pons cites these numbers from the 1920 national census (*La otra historia dominicana*, 355).
- 117 Mejía, “RD tiene población de 9.4 millones.”
- 118 Motel and Patten, “Hispanics of Dominican Origin in the United States, 2010.”
- 119 Among these we can include the following monographs: Moya Pons, ed., *La migración dominicana a los Estados Unidos*; Grasmuck and Pessar, *Between Two Islands*; Duany, *Quisqueya on the Hudson*; Torres-Saillant and Hernández, *The*

Dominican Americans; Torres-Saillant, *El retorno de las yolas*; Martínez-San Miguel, *Caribe Two Ways*; Sagás and Molina, *Dominican Migration*; Suárez, *The Tears of Hispaniola*; Candelario, *Black behind the Ears*; Soy, *Dominican Women across Three Generations*; Hoffnung-Garskof, *A Tale of Two*; Flores, *The Diaspora Strikes Back*; Heredia, *Transnational Latina Narratives in the Twenty-First Century*; Pérez Rosario, *Hispanic Caribbean Literature of Migration*; Decena, *Tacit Subjects*; Méndez, *Narratives of Migration and Displacement in Dominican Literature*; Roth, *Race Migrations*; Graziano, *Undocumented Dominican Migration*; and García-Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad*.

- 120 According to Torres-Saillant, “nuestra emigración es una expatriación” (“our emigration is an expatriation”) (“El retorno de las yolas,” in *El retorno de las yolas*, 18).
- 121 Consider, for instance, Haitians’ attempts to seek asylum in the U.S. in the 1990s, only to be sent back to a politically unstable homeland—unstable, in great part, due to U.S. intervention.
- 122 This is evident in interviews with contemporary Caribbean writers such as Antiguan Jamaica Kincaid, Guadeloupien Maryse Condé, Haitian Dany Laferrière, among many others, who often explain that their geographic displacement has nourished their literary and scholarly output. This is also the case of deceased intellectuals and writers like Martinicans Aimé Césaire and Frantz Fanon and Haitian Marie Chauvet, whose work either centralizes or, in the case of Chauvet, necessitated exile. We may also consider 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.
- 123 Torres-Saillant, *Caribbean Poetics*, 25.
- 124 Kanellos, “A Schematic Approach to Understanding Latino Transnational Literary Texts,” 39.
- 125 Maja Horn’s *Masculinity after Trujillo* provides a wonderful analysis of some of the literary efforts produced in the latter half of the twentieth century. See also Ricourt, “From Mamá Tingó to Globalization,” and García-Peña, *The Borders of Dominicanidad*.
- 126 I wrote an op-ed about this issue for the Dominican press. See Ramírez, “Por un patriotismo que no se base en el odio ni en la exclusión.” See also Torres-Saillant, “El retorno de las yolas,” 31–33.
- 127 For more on how rural Dominicans influenced or challenged the culture of Dominican cities, see Martínez Vergne, *Nation and Citizen in the Dominican Republic*, and Hoffnung-Garskof, *A Tale of Two Cities*.
- 128 Rohter, “In the Language of Romance, Romeo Santos Is a True Superstar.”
- 129 Wright, *Physics of Blackness*, 49.
- 130 Ortíz, “A Future Yet to Be Unfolded,” 12.
- 131 Báez, “Firelei Báez,” 26.

132 Báez, “Firelei Báez,” 26.

133 Báez, “Firelei Báez,” 25.

CHAPTER 1. UNTANGLING DOMINICAN PATRIOTISM

1 Coronado, *A World Not to Come*, 69.

I presented an early version of this chapter at the American Studies Association meeting in Los Angeles in 2014 (“‘Gozamos, sufrimos, amamos’: Charting the Reading Practices and Politics of Late Nineteenth-Century Dominican Exiles.”)

2 “elegantemente adornad[a]”; “flores, cuadros, luces”; “azafates con dulces y licores” (Justo, “Ovación al genio,” 44 and 46).

3 “rendir el tributo de estimación y de justicia a la Avellaneda dominicana” (Justo, “Ovación al genio,” 44).

4 “magníficos tercetos de óperas y con deliciosos vales nacionales” (Justo, “Ovación al genio,” 45).

5 “Penson nos regaló un extenso, muy extenso, demasiado extenso trabajo literario” (Justo, “Ovación al genio,” 46).

6 “se dió la lectura a una *Oda a la Patria* de la eminente poetisa Ureña (Justo, “Ovación al genio,” 46).

7 “la legitimación de la irrupción de las mujeres de las clases medias y altas en el trabajo y en la esfera pública” (Brea and Duarte, *Entre la calle y la casa*, 19).

8 For more on how gender roles were legally enforced in Santo Domingo toward the end of Salomé Ureña’s life and the early twentieth century, see Martínez-Vergne, *Nation and Citizen in the Democratic Republic*; Zeller, *Discursos y espacios femeninos en República Dominicana*; and Mayes, *The Mulatto Republic*.

9 Borrowing from Robin Bernstein, I consider “a script as theater directors do: a script is a dynamic substance that deeply influences but does not entirely determine live performances, which vary according to agential individuals’ visions, impulses, resistances, revisions, and management of unexpected disruptions” (Bernstein, *Racial Innocence*, 71).

10 Patriotic women writers had preexisted Ureña. For instance, Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi attributes some of the popularity of General Pedro Santana as a politician to Manuela Aybar o Rodríguez’s verses (Rodríguez Demorizi, *Poesía popular dominicana*, 206–7). Aybar o Rodríguez, known as La Deana (1790–1850), printed her own verses at home “in pamphlets that she herself disseminated and that had great demand” (“repartidos por ella misma, en volantes que tenían grandísima demanda” (Rodríguez Demorizi, *Poesía popular dominicana*, 206). However, her poetry never reached the level of national adulation as Ureña, perhaps in part because it was partisan. Though Ureña and her family were Liberals, Ureña’s works were often read as “pure” evocations of patriotism that transcended political party.

11 The instances are numerous. For just one example, see F. A. de Meriño’s “Fiat Lux!” in which he calls Ureña “la musa de Quisqueya” (the muse of Quisqueya) (in Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, ed., *Salomé Ureña y el Instituto de Señoritas*, 84).

the female tradition has faced exclusion, which has resulted in its near silencing. By recuperating the pan-Caribbean legacy, this study is able to engage in a comparative approach that allows the female voices to resonate strongly, amplified by mutual echoing” (Ferly, *A Poetics of Relation*, 2).

- 97 Alvarez, *In the Name of Salomé*, 356.
 98 Bhabha, “Are You a Man or a Mouse?,” 59.
 99 Imbert Brugal, “The Manly Intellectual Woman,” 170.
 100 Because I did not have a recorder with me at this time, I am paraphrasing her statement, made in Spanish, from memory.
 101 Alvarez, *In the Name of Salomé*, 94.
 102 Alvarez, *In the Name of Salomé*, 280–281.
 103 See Pedro Henríquez Ureña, *Memorias, diario, notas de viaje*, 29–30.

CHAPTER 3. FOLLOWING THE ADMIRAL

- 1 Hughes, “Columbia.”
 McClintock, “Imperial Ghosting and National Tragedy,” 824.
 An early version of a section in this chapter was published as “Great Men’s Magic.” I also presented portions of this chapter at the 2010 Comparative Literature Association Meeting in New Orleans (“Discourses of the Trujillo Dictatorship from a Present-Day Exile”), the 2014 Latin American Studies Association Congress in Chicago (“The Columbus Lighthouse as Symbol of Dominican Intellectual Masculinism”), and at the 2015 Coloquio Internacional del Programa de Estudios sobre Latinos en los Estados Unidos at Casa de Las Américas in Havana (“Dominicanos de ‘pura cepa’: El patriotismo, el transnacionalismo, y la esfera pública”).
 The *dembow* musical genre speeds up the beat of *reggaetón* and adds repetitive lyrics.
- 2 Guzmán, “Ministerio Público apresó a ‘El Alfa’ por offender a padres de la Patria.”
 3 “expresó que los padres de la de la Patria y el emblemático lugar merecen respeto” (Guzmán, “‘El Alfa’ se disculpa por palabras obscenas que dijo contra los padres de la Patria.”)
 4 See Enecia, “El ‘Alfa’ tendrá que limpiar la Plaza de la Bandera y cantar el Himno Nacional” and “‘El Alfa’ cumple segunda día de sanction limpieza Plaza de la Bandera.”
 5 “Pido disculpa a mi público y al pueblo dominicano porque ellos son La Patria, nunca fue mi intención ofenderlos, ni a los heroes mártires de mi país [. . .]. Dije eso a raíz de que las malas lenguas estaban especulando que yo me quedé en Estados Unidos para hacer papeles, cuando en realidad estaba trabajando. Estaba contento de estar en mi tierra e hice ese video aclarándole a muchos que no es verdad lo que se dice” (quoted in Guzmán, “‘El Alfa’ se disculpa por palabras obscenas que dijo contra los padres de la Patria.”)
 6 “Yo me siento totalmente bien con la decisión que se tomó [. . .]” (“‘El Alfa’ cumple segunda día de sanction limpieza Plaza de la Bandera”).

- 7 A “transmigrant” is a subject who lives part-time in both the homeland and a “host” nation (Grasmuck and Pessar, *Between Two Islands*). “El Alfa,” who mentions that he lived in the United States for a few months for employment, is a good example of this kind of mobility. Rather than cause for celebration, this status emblemizes the limited economic opportunities for transmigrants in both places. Silvio Torres-Saillant cautions against uncritical celebrations of this kind of transnational life: “The wisest thing at this juncture would be to contain the compulsion to celebrate. The transnational condition is not an idyl [*sic*]. Though hailed by journalists and scholars, it is often tragic. [. . .] Only the well-off can achieve multilocality without sorrow” (Torres-Saillant, *Diasporic Disquisitions*, 35).
- For more on Dominican migration, trans- or uni-directional, see also Hernández, *The Mobility of Workers under Advanced Capitalism*; Pessar, *A Visa for a Dream*; Sagás and Molina, eds., *Dominican Migration*; Martínez-San Miguel, *Caribe Two Ways*; and Hoffnung-Garskof, *A Tale of Two Cities*.
- 8 See Torres-Saillant, *Diasporic Disquisitions*.
- 9 To my knowledge, no one has written critically about *La Soga*. In contrast, scholarly analyses of *Oscar Wao* abound, though few of them engage with the Dominican history and culture on which the novel is based. This chapter builds on some of these conversations, especially those that revolve around questions of masculinity and imperialism. See Mahler, “The Writer as Superhero”; Hanna, “Reassembling the Fragments”; Horn, *Masculinity after Trujillo*; Machado Sáez, “Dictating Desire, Dictating Diaspora”; Mermann-Jozwiak, “Beyond Multiculturalism”; Harford Vargas, “Dictating a Zafa”; González, *Reading Junot Díaz*; Hanna, Harford Vargas, and Saldívar, eds., *Junot Díaz and the Decolonial Imagination*; Ostman, *The Fiction of Junot Díaz*; and Saldívar, *Junot Díaz*.
- 10 “Este monumento será como la luz de una terrible estrella fugaz con ambición milenaria, astro que ya desaparecido aún billa extrañamente en el bajo cielo nocturno del mar Caribe” (Rodríguez Juliá, *Caribeños*, 95).
- Director of the Dominican Permanent Commission for the Celebration of the Fifth Centennial, referring to the criticisms of the construction of the Columbus Lighthouse. Quoted in French, “For Columbus Lighthouse, a Fete That Fizzled.”
- 11 *Columbus Memorial*, n.p., emphasis mine.
- 12 Schmidt-Nowara, *The Conquest of History*, 58.
- 13 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 123 and 133–134.
- 14 Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 133.
- 15 Adorno writes: “Thanks in large measure to Irving’s success, the feats of Columbus were identified with early North American history and the account of Columbus’ deeds with the foundation of its letters” (Adorno, “Americanist Visions,” 19).
- 16 For more on whiteness and citizenship in the U.S. in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*.

- 17 Ober writes a long report on his travels to the West Indies for the World's Fair called *In the Wake of Columbus*. A few years later he published another account of his travels through the Caribbean, which included this account about Heureaux. See Ober, *Our West Indian Neighbors*.
- 18 Ober, *Our West Indian Neighbors*, 195.
- 19 Ober, *Our West Indian Neighbors*, 195.
- 20 Ober, *Our West Indian Neighbors*, 195–196.
- 21 Ober, *Our West Indian Neighbors*, 191.
- 22 Coincidentally, Jean du Sable, born in what is now Haiti, founded the settlement that is now Chicago. See “Jean du Sable, Explorer Who Founded Chicago.”
- 23 Ureña de Henríquez, “A la Patria,” in *Poemas y biografía de Salomé Ureña*, 14.
- 24 See Magee, *The Hegel Dictionary*.
- 25 See Cestero, *Colón*, 55, and González, *Designing Pan-America*, xvii.
- 26 “Efemérides de la Sociedad ‘Amigos del País: desde su instalación hasta el día.”
- 27 González, *Designing Pan-America*, 108. For more on Columbus's remains, see Moya Pons, *Los restos de Colón*.
- 28 González, *Designing Pan-America*, 108.
- 29 Earlier that century, the Monroe Doctrine established the U.S. government's paternalist stance toward the Caribbean, Latin America, and other formerly European colonies.
- 30 In response, Latin American intellectuals and politicians turned to a variety of Eurocentric discourses to invoke the irremediable cultural and spiritual differences between a *Latin America* and the Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and capitalist North America. For influential examples of this Latin American anxiety vis-à-vis U.S. imperial designs, see Cuban José Martí's “Our America” (1891), Uruguayan José Enrique Rodó's *Ariel* (1900), and Nicaraguan Rubén Darío's “A Roosevelt” (1904). For examples of U.S. media perspectives on Latin America, see Johnson, *Latin America in Caricature*.
- 31 Rodríguez Juliá, *Caribeños*, 77.
- 32 González, *Designing Pan-America*, 106. The Pan-American Union Building in Washington, DC, and the Columbus Lighthouse Memorial “were supposed to have been a pair” in “the name of U.S.-defined Pan-Americanism” (González, *Designing Pan-America*, 106).
- 33 González, *Designing Pan-America*, 107.
- 34 “The Columbus Lighthouse.”
- 35 Rodríguez Juliá, *Caribeños*, 77.
- 36 Candelario, *Black behind the Ears*, 280, and Rodríguez Juliá, *Caribeños*, 79.
- 37 Cited in González, *Designing Pan-America*, 138.
- 38 González, *Designing Pan-America*, 144.
- 39 “masivo, opresivamente monumental” (Rodríguez Juliá, *Caribeños*, 93).
- 40 “apreciar su posadura nada grácil” (Rodríguez Juliá, *Caribeños*, 93 and 109).
- 41 Reid-Dove, “Waiting for Columbus,” 72.
- 42 Rosenfeld, “Goodbye Columbus,” 231.