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Michael Handelsman, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Oscar Rivera-Rodas, Carolyn R. Hodges, LaVinia Jennings

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

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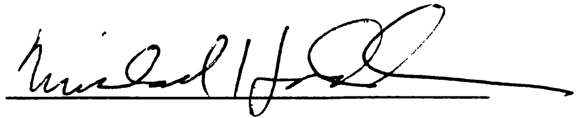

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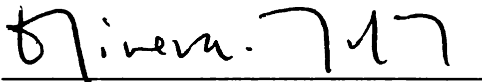

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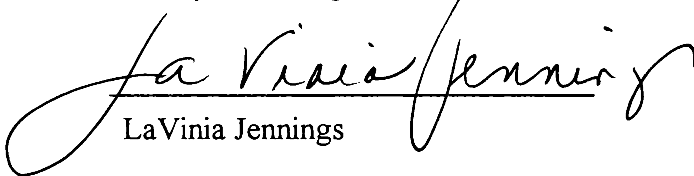

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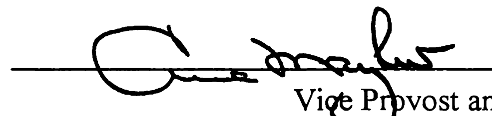

Vice Provost and
Dean of Graduate Studies

The Development of Literary Blackness in the Dominican Republic

A Dissertation

Presented for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Dawn F. Stinchcomb

August 2001

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By

Dawn F. Stinchcomb

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Abstract

The concept of Dominican racial identity presents a problem in the investigation of Afro-Dominican literature. While Whiteness may be the cultural and physical standard for the Dominican, people of African descent have always been the majority in the Dominican Republic. This demographic and historical reality helps explain why Afro-Dominican literature has evolved despite efforts to erase their African ancestors from official history.

Nineteenth-century Dominican literature forged the definition of Dominicanness that is still accepted today. By establishing the native Indian woman as the mother of Dominican identity, the nation's foundational writers gave darker Dominicans a racial background that replaced their African, and therefore, "inferior" past. Consequently, much of contemporary Dominican culture and history reflect the nineteenth century's literary campaign of denial.

Although the twentieth century began with a European fascination with all things Black, a literature that was exploitative and racist emerged, reducing the complexity of an entire Diaspora to a few simplistic and stereotypical symbols. This poetry known as *poesía negroide* evolved in three stages that ranged from the most superficial and exploitative representations of Black culture (i.e.; Haitian), to a protest against the oppression of the Black, and ultimately, to an idealization of the mulatto woman or *trigueña* as being representative of Dominican culture. Although *poesía negroide* is sometimes mistakenly

understood to be Afro-Dominican literature, the *negroide* poets did not consider themselves to be Afro-Dominicans nor did they ever think in terms of an Afro-Dominican literature.

Literary expression is as varied as the ethnicity of its authors, and Dominican literature written by people of African descent is an integral part of traditional Dominican literature characterized by a common language and the common goal of defining Dominican identity. Unfortunately, literature that appropriates Blackness remains on the margins of canonical literature because its themes challenge an official history of distortion that continues to be the basis of Dominicanness. This dissertation argues that all traditional expressions of a Dominican discourse of national identity reveal an inherent tension that requires new readings consistent with the Dominican Republic's multicultural and multiracial heritage.

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Introduction

Blackness, Dominicanness, and National Identity Politics

> *We cannot deny the fact that the power structure in Dominican society and, consequently, the material resources as well as the ultimate authority on how to teach Dominicanness to the population remain in the hands of the old Trujillo guard and their ideological offspring. As a result, the truth about the ethnic and historical origins of the Dominican people persists as an unsettled, contested issue, with the proponents of definitions stemming from privileged portrayals of the old colony's ruling minority invariably retaining the upper hand.* (Silvio Torres Saillant "Introduction to Dominican Blackness" 53)

One of the most recurring topics in Latin American literature is that of identity. If approached from several perspectives, the topic of identity can lead to the recognition of the many ethnic and racial facets of Latin American culture. Unfortunately, because the cultures of Latin America have often been perceived as the product of one heritage created primarily by the Spaniards and native Indians, many contributions of the African peoples, who also participated in the construction of the Spanish American nations, have been erased from official histories of the region. In fact, the influence and importance of Blacks in Latin America were once so controversial and little known that Richard L. Jackson considered the discovery of a text by an Afro-Hispanic in Latin America "a privileged find" due to long-standing racism and the fact that many Afro-Hispanic

people had to overcome the tendency to deny their own Blackness (*Black Writers in Latin America* 6).

With regard to Afro-Hispanic literature specifically, the "Black-as-subject" preceded the "Black-as-author" by a hundred years in Latin America. With the exception of the few known slave narratives of the nineteenth century, Afro-Hispanic authors did not make their literary appearance in Latin America until the 1930s, when they began to confront openly the tensions of racial identity (Patee 70).

The most obvious struggle for Afro-Hispanics has been with their own national identity that has been shaped by a racist rhetoric that traditionally has denied their very existence. The "whitening" of Latin America has been a common strategy to "improve" the population of many countries through immigration policies and social pressures based upon aesthetic prejudices. Historically, Dominicans have attempted to "whiten" their population via various means: immigration, miscegenation, and finally, by redefinition.

The need to establish the island as White is explained by its history. While the decimation of the indigenous population on the island by disease and the Spanish conquest was carried out in the first half of the sixteenth century, an ever-growing and highly profitable African slave trade began officially in 1501 and accounted for the rapid growth of the Black population on the island. Beginning in 1684, Santo Domingo's ruling Spanish elite responded to the emerging African presence by attempting to attract poor white immigrants from

the Canary Islands to increase the number of Whites on the island (Moya Pons, 107). Notwithstanding immigration policies, census results of seventeenth-century Santo Domingo demonstrate that of the 10,817 inhabitants, fewer than 2000 were Whites, and that by the end of the eighteenth century, of the 103,000 reported inhabitants, approximately one third was White (Larrazábal Blanco 180). The attempt to "whiten" the population of the Dominican Republic failed not only because original Dominican families continued to emigrate to other Spanish colonies, but also because the families from the Canary islands refused to inter-marry with the Blacks whom they considered inferior (Moya Pons 197).

It is important to note that census polls taken in Santo Domingo in the seventeenth century contradict the national rhetoric of the existence of Indians on the island. The redefinition of Dominicans' racial identity began with Haiti winning its independence from France in 1794 and establishing itself as America's first Black country. Because of the constant disputes about border territories between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the first Haitian invasion in 1801 was no surprise to its Spanish-speaking neighbors. After freeing the Dominican slaves, the Haitian leader Toussaint L'Ouverture gained the support of the majority of the Dominican population and weakened the power of the ruling government. His ideal of the island being indivisible and ruled by former slaves caused the Dominican Republic's White privileged class to search for ways to preserve its Iberian culture and sovereignty. Many Dominicans abandoned their

property and fled the island for other Spanish colonies such as Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Venezuela (Moya Pons 192).

Spain's neglect of Santo Domingo since the sixteenth century, when it explored and proposed to conquer and colonize other territories in the New World, left its first colony, Santo Domingo, utterly vulnerable to the Haitian invaders. The white Dominicans—the creoles—who had once been in power allowed French troops to use their territory in order to ambush the Haitians in 1802. European rule was restored on the island and slavery, which had been abolished during the Haitian invasion, was now reinstated. The creoles were satisfied although they realized that their sovereignty had been breached. The French decided to take over the eastern as well as the western side of the island, destroying any possibilities of the formation of an independent republic by the Dominicans. The French met little resistance because the creoles felt no loyalties to the freed blacks of Haiti. One must bear in mind that Dominicans, by and large, still identified themselves as Spaniards, and therefore White. Consequently, although the extreme poverty that resulted from the Spanish neglect of the colony since the late sixteenth century had almost completely equalized all of Santo Domingo's free inhabitants socioeconomically by the seventeenth century, to account for the obvious physical differences between the white descendants of the Spaniards and the descendants of their African slaves, Dominicans recognized only two groups that would define Dominicanness: *blancos* (Whites and lighter Mulattos) and *blancos de la tierra* (darker Mulattos). As for the majority of the

population, which was black—*negros*, slaves or the offspring of African slaves—their existence in Dominican discourse began to be erased (Moya Pons 197).

The Haitians, under Jean Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe, did return to the eastern portion of the island and fought in vain against the French several times in order to reunite it. It was not until the French declared war against the Spanish that the Dominicans sought to be free from the French. With the help of the English, the Dominicans were freed in 1809. However, the English occupied Santo Domingo for another year. Sovereignty in Santo Domingo thereafter was short-lived.

The Haitian occupation of 1822-1844 under the command of Jean Pierre Boyer inspired the white ruling class to seek support from both its powerful neighbor of the north, the United States, and from Spain. As Spain still did not recognize the former colony of Santo Domingo as an independent country, it was not willing to commit itself to serving as a protectorate of Dominican sovereignty (Moya Pons 301). Having been denied protection by Spain, the Dominican Republic sought military support from the United States. Although the majority of the Dominican population was of African descent in the nineteenth century, Silvio Torres Saillant argues that no one ever saw the Dominican Republic as a Black nation in those times; he points out that in 1846, at the request of the Dominicans, United States Vice-President John C. Calhoun supported the Dominicans (at least politically) in their struggle against the domination by

Blacks ("Introduction to Blackness" 2). Years later, after concluding that "[t]he inhabitants are, with very few exceptions, white" (Hancock 50), and considering the many economic benefits that the United States could reap, President Ulysses S. Grant sent envoys between 1869-1870 to investigate the possibility of annexing the country as the southernmost state. Obviously, many investors from the United States were reluctant to venture into a country marked by continuous turmoil and political strife. When the proposal for annexation was rejected by a majority of the Senate, Grant investigated the situation in Santo Domingo. It was decided that "in Santo Domingo a revolution does not mean any difference in political principles or anything of that sort; it simply means that a certain number of 'citizens' plot together in order to seize the government and get the officers and emoluments that are incidental thereto" (Hancock 51).

Despite the best efforts of President Grant, Senator Wade, Andrew D. White, and Samuel G. Howe, the Senate never accepted the proposal. In 1905, Henry J. Hancock, a friend of the Dominican Manuel de Jesús Galván, wrote his article entitled "The Situation in Santo Domingo," in hopes that the Roosevelt administration would revive the treaty at the request of the Dominican government to annex it to the United States "for its own self-preservation." He wrote:

> One must not confuse the Republica Dominica [sic] with the black republic of Haiti as it is depicted by St. John. In Haiti a language which passes for French is spoken, and in the Dominican Republic

> the tongue spoken is the customary American-Spanish. The habits, manners and customs of the two countries was (*sic)* owing to the difference of race and refusal of the white Dominican to be governed by the black Haitian. It is true here, as in all other of the West Indian countries, that the half-bred Negroes are the leaders of the revolutions. (50)

Thus, from the inception of the independent nation, Dominicanness has always indicated a difference from all that is Black. Yet despite efforts to persuade Europeans to immigrate in order to outnumber Blacks on the one hand, and the efforts to encourage racial mixing to absorb the unwanted Black physical traits that began in the late sixteenth century on the other, the majority of the population of the Dominican Republic is still quite visibly of African descent. Since the nineteenth century, considering their need to differentiate themselves from Haitians, the only way to successfully "whiten" the Dominican population has been to impose a racist rhetoric that would redefine "Whiteness." Classification of people by phenotypes, which Dominicans have traditionally used, is one way the racist rhetoric manifests itself in Dominican society. What is considered attractive, *de buena apariencia* is a number of traits that Europeans are believed to have: thin lips, straight hair, and lighter-colored skin. The phenotypic opposite of these traits—thick lips, kinky and/or curly hair, and darker-colored skin—are described as *ordinarios* (ordinary), *malos* (bad), or *haitianos* (Haitian) and would therefore be the definition of "Blackness".

Dominican history has clearly played a very significant role in literary expression. Afro-Dominicans have had to endure centuries of absence due to the highly racialized Dominican rhetoric that became the country's official discourse for national identity. Evaluating history to assess exactly when race and ethnicity became issues in Dominican history is possible through the analysis of literature. As this dissertation traces the development of literary blackness chronologically, it begins with the explanation of Dominican identity or Dominicanness. Since Dominicanness is the opposite of all things Haitian, the denial of a Black identity in this Caribbean nation begins in earnest during the nineteenth century. However, the Afro-Dominican as author appeared long before the disappearance and denial of an African past.

Dominican Poetry and its Colonial Legacy

The preferred genre of literature of the seventeenth century in the Spanish colonies was primarily poetry, and the poetry was overwhelmingly patriotic, supporting Spain and the Spanish Empire. The late eighteenth century marked the end of the Spanish monopoly in the New World territories. The island of Hispaniola had been Spanish territory since 1492 and suddenly, without prior notice to the island's inhabitants, a third of the territory was given to the French in the Treaty of Basilea of 1795. The inhabitants of the Spanish colony now called Santo Domingo were extremely displeased with the decision of Carlos IV. The poetry during this tumultuous period expressed a strong Dominican sentiment, as

opposed to the declaration of a Spanish identity. It is important to note that one poet who lamented the French occupation of the western side of the island of Hispaniola and the loss of Spanish territory was a freed Black man called Meso Mónica. Because of his ability to speak in verse, he was known as the "moreno improvisador."

During his day, Meso Mónica was treated as a novelty due to the fact that seventeenth-century Dominicans were astounded by the talents of this Black shoe cobbler. Rumors traveled through the country about this "*negro poeta*" who was able to respond in verse to any question, and poets and other intellectuals constantly challenged him to poetic duels (Caamaño de Fernández 52). Although the author of the following verses sent in a letter to Mónica is unknown, they are used here to preface Mónica's response to the insulting challenge:

Tu ridícula figura
me hace estos versos versar:
no tiene que codiciar
tu escandalosa pintura
y para más desventura,
sordo eres de conveniencia.
amigo, preste paciencia.

Mónica, tu infeliz suerte
lamentas con justa razón,

pues publicas que un ladrón

es de tu casa el escuerte.

Esto es para que en la muerte,

que presto te ha de asaltar,

no halles nada que testar

sino tu esqueleto y huesos.

Contempla en estos sucesos

y déjate de versar.

Díme, negro como pez,

¿quién te ha enseñado a versar,

que en versos sabes llorar

la falta de tu almirez?

¿Cómo, mostrando altivez

con la capa de humildad

tienes loca la ciudad

con almirez, sombrero y peso?

Todo esto en tí es suceso

para sacar tu utilidad.

In his reply, Mónica defends his poetry and affirms his Blackness. It is because of his response that he is identified here as the country's first Afro-Dominican poet:

Me dices con agudeza

que soy feo sin igual.

Mal pudiera yo enmendar
lo que erró naturaleza.
Si algo en el mundo pesa,
es el no ser buen cristiano,
ofendiendo al soberano
que me quiso redimir,
y me ha dejado morir
con el remedio en la mano.

Muy bien debes conocer,
que es mejor ser negro honrado
que no blanco malvado
dando a los jueces qué hacer.
Ahora le pongo a escoger
a tu ingenio sin segundo,
si es mejor ser en el mundo
el mas vil negro de Angola.
Que no ser blanco con cola
que lo lleve a lo profundo.

Pregunto a vuestro talento,
cuando al mío pones en calma,
si tienes de negro el alma,
memoria y entendimiento.

Que la tiene es argumento

que no permite disputa,

con lo que el suyo ejecuta

si mal no llego a entender,

querer quitar el poder

a potestad absoluta.

Although information about Meso Mónica (d. 1810?) is scarce, we know that he was born in Santo Domingo and that his given name was very likely Antonio Mónica. Despite his never actually having published any of his poetry himself, his verses were recognized by Spanish bibliographer Meléndez y Pelayo for their patriotism.

Because he died at the beginning of the nineteenth century, he never lived to see Santo Domingo as an independent nation. Meso Mónica's verses have been memorized and have miraculously survived by being passed down from generation to generation simply through recitation. However, Vicenta Caamaño de Fernández denies that all of the verses attributed to Mónica were actually his (53). She cites studies that have questioned the authorship of some of the patriotic poetry he is credited with having composed. One of the disadvantages of the oral tradition is that it makes it difficult to identify the author with exact certainty. The following verses were credited to Mónica in the nineteenth century and Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi includes them in his book first published in 1938.

Ayer español nací,

a la tarde fuí francés,

a la noche etíope fuí,

hoy dicen que soy inglés:

no sé que será de mí.

Llorar, corazón, llorar.

Los restos del gran Colón

los sacan en procesión

y los llevan a embarcar. (17)

Despite the controversy about the authorship of his verses, his poetry and its patriotic themes were revived in 1854 during the Haitian occupation, thanks to the efforts of the editors of the Dominican newspaper *El Oasis*, Nicolás Ureña de Mendoza and Manuel María Gautier. These men intended to collect and publish Mónica's verses in order to "pay tribute to an extraordinary man" with the objective of elevating him to a higher status than where "nature had placed him" (Rodríguez Demorizi 117).[1] These nineteenth-century intellectuals recognized this poor and illiterate Black man for his incredible talent to improvise poetry. As his poetry had not been written down before, all of Mónica's verses are dispersed through the oral tradition, and consequently, his authorship tended to be ignored. Nineteenth-century anthologies included the *negro poeta dominicano* of the eighteenth century, but he remained virtually forgotten until the late 1960s, when he was saved from oblivion and included in anthologies that document Black

[1] Although Rodríguez Demorizi cites that some Dominican historians contend that Mónica may be Black more by tradition than by fact, the mysterious writer called Meso Mónica was known as the "Negrito Poeta Dominicano" because of self-

writers and the treatment of Blacks in literature in the Dominican Republic.

The Modern Construction of Dominican Identity

It is clear that Dominican literature in the nineteenth century played a significant role in the formation of the Dominican national identity. The denial of Black identity in Dominican literature began with Manuel de Jesús Galván's (1834-1910) historic novel *Enriquillo: leyenda dominicana* (1882). Galván was one the strongest proponents of the idea of the Dominicans' delivering themselves to another White nation, such as Spain or the United States, to maintain its ideal of whiteness. Indeed, he forged the re-definition of "whiteness" to mean not Black, which begot the definition of Dominican as opposed to Haitian. Galván could not ignore the fact that the majority of Dominicans was not White despite their insistence upon being Spaniards. His novel returns the reader to the sixteenth century, the beginning of life in the Americas, when Blacks did not exist and when the Dominicans' fathers were Spaniards and their mothers were Indians. In this way he fictionalized a nation and an identity that was aesthetically and historically more pleasing to the beleaguered Creole who refused to accept that his racial and/or ethnic origins were at least similar to those of his Haitian enemy. Although Galván's romantic novel was and still is popular, not all members of the nineteenth-century Dominican elite were convinced that all of their compatriots were members of a homogeneous society. Juan Antonio Alix (1833-1917), for

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affirmations of Blackness expressed in his poetry. (See pages120-24.)

example, satirized the Dominicans who feigned white identity in his poem "El negro tras la oreja" ("Black Behind the Ear"). Nevertheless, by the end of the nineteenth century, the Dominican Republic, at least ideologically, had fully accepted both its identity as a nation devoid of Blacks and its new categorization as a country made up of descendants of the Taíno hero Enriquillo. This distortion of the facts, of course, made the appropriation of Blackness impossible.

It was in the twentieth century that darker-skinned Dominicans began to acknowledge some relationship, albeit a distant one, with the African slave. Unlike other Latin American countries where people of African descent represent a smaller proportion of the population and still claim their African identity, Dominicans prefer to identify themselves as *mulatos,* which diminishes their Blackness. In fact, the issue of Blackness is so foreign to many Dominicans that the term "Dominican Blackness" is considered an oxymoron (Jackson *Black Writers and Latin America,* 88). Indeed, because *mulatez* is the only acceptable racial marker that the darker-skinned Dominican is afforded, mulatez—a concept of racial mixture often associated with "whitening"—has pervaded Dominican identity and Dominican literature since the nineteenth century. Moreover, although most Dominicans acknowledge that they are no longer Spaniards, it is by no means an admission of Blackness. Therefore, darker-skinned Dominicans continue to fall well within the definition of Dominicanness while maintaining the dichotomy between the national identity and the non-Dominican one.

The above-mentioned dichotomy was reinforced during the *trujillato*, the thirty-one-year dictatorship of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo y Molina (1891-1961) which began in 1930. The intellectual elite of the country had been given power over the nation at the end of the nineteenth century. During the *trujillato*, the intellectual elite was given the responsibility of controlling nationalistic and social thought in accordance with the policies of Trujillo's totalitarian government (Mateo 13). The creation of a nationalist spirit was one of Trujillo's main objectives. He was the general of the Army when the United States removed its troops that had occupied the nation from 1916-1924. His country was in political and economic ruin, and he proposed to restore dignity and pride in the nation. However, his government was so oppressive that he and his politics pervaded every form of Dominican life. He created cultural myths to control the *bourgeoisie* and, eventually, the country as a whole. His first political action was to recreate the past, justifying all of his actions as acts done on behalf of all that was good for his nation. His most famous action was the massacre of more than 30,000 innocent Haitian workers and their families along the border with Haiti in 1937. This atrocity was justified to ensure the country's integrity (Mateo 16). Because the Haitians were blamed for the country's economic crisis, any illegal immigration to the Dominican Republic was seen as a military threat. Some Dominicans today still consider the 1937 massacre as an act of war, a kind of retaliation for yet another attempt by the Haitians to invade. Few, however, excuse Trujillo's brutality.

Trujillo was such a demagogue that he expected his dictatorship to be immortalized in literature, especially in poetry. Andrés L. Mateo describes the poetry dedicated to Trujillo as "characteristic of the total myth: his vision of history, use of the past as ideology, messianism, Catholicism, Hispanism, anti-communism," (188, translation mine). Trujillo believed that he would be loved and remembered for the good he did on the behalf of his country. Indeed, he rebuilt and modernized Santo Domingo after the hurricane of 1930 that destroyed the nation's capital; he supplied electricity to the *pueblos,* and during the *trujillato,* television and radio stations appeared for the first time. Trujillo, however, controlled the media and the intellectual elite to the extent that if there were any people brave enough to question his absolute power, they were swiftly silenced. For that reason, Trujillo was able to establish himself as a kind of feudal lord over the Dominican nation. Mateo explains that Trujillo's domination obligated all writers to participate in the Commemorative Anthologies of his regime (188). It was not until his death in 1961 that the first protest literature against Trujillo began to be published. Thus, it is not surprising that the end of the *trujillato* enabled Dominicans to explore an *afro* identity that differed from the traditional concept of national identity.

Trujillo succeeded in completing the racialization of Dominican identity and culture in his thirty-one years of absolute power due in large part to his political apprentice Joaquín Balaguer (1906) who served as Vice-President during the *trujillato*. Balaguer became president in 1966 and maintained power for four

terms in the next twelve years despite national and international opposition. Balaguer served again as President, being elected for his fifth term in 1986, and remained in power, though blind and eighty years old, until 1990. His sixteen years in power resulted in continued economic decline, political corruption, and marked anti-Haitian sentiment. Like Trujillo, Balaguer also instilled in the Dominican a fear of a new Haitian invasion, which, among other concerns would be devastating to the Dominican phenotype. His essay, *La isla al revés*: *Haití y el destino dominicano* (1982), not only fomented terror in the Dominican people to the extent that the expression of anti-Haitian sentiment became the mantra of all Dominicans with political aspirations, but it also reaffirmed a nationalistic rhetoric of identity that reminded Dominicans of their phenotypic superiority to Blacks. Clearly, within such a racially charged society as the Dominican Republic, any author who might have proposed to appropriate Blackness in literature would not have been popular or accepted as "Dominican."

Although Balaguer stated that ever since the Haitian invasion of 1801, Haiti had ceased to be a military threat to the Dominican Republic, all Dominicans still had reason to fear what historically had worried Dominicans since the nineteenth century: Black skin, Black genes and Black culture (*La isla* 35). It was usual practice in the Balaguer regime to assassinate a political enemy's character by questioning his racial/ethnic heritage. The accusation that a relative of presidential candidate José Peña was Haitian was enough to dampen his chances to be president in the 1980s. Non-political Afro-Dominicans suffered as

well. The voice of Juan Sánchez Lamouth, an Afro-Dominican poet of West Indian descent, fell upon deaf ears in the early to mid-twentieth century in his own country.

Though the importance of the Afro-Dominican voice has not received attention within the Dominican Republic, foreign critics of Afro-Hispanic literature have questioned its absence from Dominican anthologies in light of the prevalence of the island's several African-American cultures, e.g. the Haitians, the West Indians, and the former slaves of the United States. Such North Americans as Richard L. Jackson, Marvin Lewis, Clementina Adams, James D. Davis, Miriam De Costa-Willis and the Caribbean writer Ian Smart, have written extensively on this subject. All are accomplished scholars of Hispanic literature of the Diaspora who have contributed to bringing Afro-Hispanic literature to the forefront of literary criticism and history. They argue that the Dominican Republic is unique, since a unified movement of Black identity and Black self-awareness has never existed, although the majority of its population is of African descent.

Rationale for this Dissertation

The purpose of this dissertation is to study the condition of race in Dominican literature. Specifically, I will analyze the extent to which Afro-Dominicans have contributed to Dominican literature, and the reasons behind the public's denial of such a contribution. The understanding of the terms *Blackness,*

Black, mulatez, cocolo and *Afro-Dominican* is vital to the appreciation of this literature. For the purposes of my analysis, literary *Blackness* will refer to the self-identity associated with one's African roots. The term *Black* will refer to a person of African descent, excluding mulattos. *Mulatez,* which denotes the racial mixture of someone of European and African descent, is a condition not to be confused with the mulatto in the United States who has always been considered a Black. The derogatory term *cocolo*, in Dominican literature as in Dominican society, refers to the Black men and women laborers from the English-speaking islands of the Caribbean who immigrated to the country during the early twentieth century to work on the railroad and sugar cane plantations. The term *Afro-Dominican* will be used to identify Dominicans who affirm their Blackness. According to Silvio Torres Saillant, "Blackness" is not a term understood from the North American perspective ("Introduction to Dominican Blackness" 5). He contends that this concept is non-existent in the de-racialized society that is the Dominican Republic. Because Dominicans consider themselves to be of a race other than that of African Americans in the United States or Haiti, we can assume that the term "race" has an alternative meaning in the Dominican Republic.

The meanings of the terms race, nation and ethnicity largely depend upon the perspective of the person who is discussing them and the context in which they are discussed. As David Howard has stated, "...racial legacies are of primary importance among a population where cultural, linguistic and religious differences are limited" (1). The term race in the Dominican Republic is limited to

a determination based upon the social and cultural significance given to physical attributes and the commonalties due to phenotypes. Declaring the Dominican Republic a nation that is the most "instinctively Spanish and traditional" in the Americas, Joaquín Balaguer continued in the twentieth century to perpetuate the myth established by the founders of the country in the nineteenth century (*La isla* 63, translation mine). Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic, determined primarily by skin color, is a conscious effort on the part of the government to create a people of common origins and national history. As ethnicity needs a support base within its community, ethnicity and its semantic companion—i.e., race—do play a significant role in Dominican nationalism. Clearly, Dominican nationalism is profoundly racist because it is constructed upon the denial of its African past. Concepts such as what is an *indio* or a *negro* have conveniently been altered by arbitrary and capricious notions of racial purity (Baud 76). From the research that Michael Handelsman has done on the concept of plurinationalism, we can relate the problematic of colonialism and of nationalism in Ecuador with the problematic of race in the Dominican Republic: those in power will always want to give the impression of ignoring or erasing the differences between people of one nation "in the name of harmony and national unity" (*Lo afro y la plurinacionalidad* 196, translation mine). In the Dominican Republic, this became possible when the racial composition of its people was understood to be indigenous and European.

The indigenous component that replaced the racial and cultural importance of the African in the nineteenth century represented a very small portion of the population. After the first Haitian invasion of 1801, Dominican literature and politics collaborated to produce a Dominican identity devoid of Africans. Torres-Saillant discusses several explanations for the Dominicans' refusal to make any self-affirmations about their African identity in his article "Introduction to Dominican Blackness." He cites the nation's tendency to let the Western world define its racial identity as "other than black" [2], its adherence to the "negrophobic, Eurocentric, and anti-Haitian nationalist discourse" [5], its acceptance of the concept of a "deracialized social consciousness" [33], and finally, the public's ignorance [42] as justification for the absence of an *afro* identity on the island. But because such obvious efforts historically were made to distinguish Dominicanness from Blackness, the "negrophobic, Eurocentric, and anti-Haitian discourse" so apparent in Dominican society and reflected in its literature, completely negates the possibility of the Dominican Republic ever having been a "deracialized society."

Because Dominican national rhetoric is pervaded by anti-Haitian, and therefore anti-African sentiment, despite the fact that Africans and people of African descent have played very important roles in the creation of the Dominican nation, only emphasizes the impossibility of a social consciousness that is devoid of racial distinctions. The vilification of Haitians in general does not allow room for Dominicans to recognize that it was the Haitian leader Toussaint L'Ouverture

who gave independence to the Afro-Dominican slave in 1801, and that in 1822, Jean-Pierre Boyer restored the freedom of those who had been returned to slavery during the French occupation of the island (1802-1809). The fact that Francisco del Rosario Sánchez, one of the three *padres de la patria* (founding fathers of the nation), as well as many of the soldiers who accompanied him in the war for national independence, was a descendant of African slaves is never mentioned. Since the seventeenth century, psychological disassociation from their African heritage was further simplified because the majority of Afro-Dominicans, being of mixed descent, had achieved social ascendance. Due to the generalized poverty of the colony which contributed to the decline of the economic importance of slavery, the bases for a sense of solidarity among Blacks in general eroded (Torres-Saillant "The Tribulations of Blackness," 135). Blackness, therefore, became synonymous with slavery, and lexical terms identifying the Dominican population with their mixed ancestry were preferred since their population, unlike that of Haiti, was predominantly *mulato*.

In the chapters that follow, I intend to show a marked development of literary Blackness in the Dominican Republic despite the prevailing rhetoric that denies the existence of Blacks. I trace and discuss a form of Afro-Hispanic criticism that allows for the investigation of all literature, and I identify the principal movements that have led to an afrocentric form of literature. This criticism will demonstrate how even the literature that supposedly ignores, denies,

or exploits the Black's existence plays a significant role in the development of Afro-Dominican literature.

Chapter One will present Dominican literature's role in the construction of the concept of nationalism. Because literature often functions as an expression of a nation's cultural code, I have selected works that are folkloric in nature to allow for penetration into the ethos of the nineteenth century. This chapter will include examples of nineteenth-century poetry that exemplify the didactic nature of Dominican literature. It will begin with an analysis of the historical novel *Enriquillo* (1882) written by Manuel de Jesús Galván, which first established the Dominican nation as an exclusive creation of Europeans and Native Americans. Galván's novel, written after the second Haitian occupation (1822-1844), returns the reader to sixteenth-century Hispaniola, the original Spanish name given to the island. His narrative attempts to bring to heroic status a little known Taíno Indian whom he credits with the rebellious spirit of the Dominicans. He attempts to demonstrate the symbiotic relationship between the Spaniards and the Indians that was threatened by avaricious behavior on both parts, but was restored. Though his true name, *Guarocuya,* is not widely recognized, Enriquillo is idolized and has been celebrated as the Indian father of the nation. Galván's novel, which Doris Sommer describes as "neatly written" (*One Master for Another* 256), completely ignores the existence of the African and his participation in the development of the nation. This novel demonstrates the intentional absence of the black Dominican vis-à-vis his diminished role in the formation of Dominican society.

There are no African, Black or mulatto characters in this novel, and the perils of slavery are limited to the perspective of the Taíno and his suffering. Because the darkness of the Dominicans' skin was explained away by their relation to the heroic Enriquillo, they were immediately differentiated from the Haitian invaders (i.e., the barbaric Africans) and identified as a nation of *indios.* Consequently, I credit Galván with the creation of Dominican identity. By posing his novel as a Dominican legend, he is successful in making himself an authority on Dominican history and, in effect, manages to re-write history and to exclude the existence of the African during the times of the Conquest. Having supplanted the African with the Indian in the ethnic history of the nation, Galván fictionalizes a nation of Whites in order to promote the support of the re-annexation of the country to Spain. The fact that Galván fought against the efforts of the members of *La Trinitatria*, the revolutionaries who formed the independent nation, calling them "traitors" (*La razón*), has been long forgotten in the Dominican Republic. After the restoration of the second republic in 1865, however, Galván changed his political ideology and worked obediently under the black Dominican president with the suspiciously French surname, Ulises Hereaux. Galván's former racist ideology was softened as he worked with Hereaux for the modernization of the Dominican Republic.

The attempt to modernize the new nation began with Galván's novel that erased the African presence in Santo Domingo. The atavistic Haitian could have no place in the modern world due to his Africanness. For that reason, the gap

between Blackness and Dominicanness grew even greater. Under Hereaux, modernization gave all Dominicans an opportunity to ascend socially through the perpetuation of the myth of the social race that was created as a result of Galván's reincarnation of the exterminated Dominican Indian. The intention was to foster the atmosphere of difference between the Dominicans and the Haitians, as most Dominicans accepted the "Whiteness" of the nation as per Enriquillo as the legitimate expression of the Dominican Republic's national origins. However, not all Dominicans saw the Mulatto who is the racial prototype of Dominicans as their racial or cultural equal and they ridiculed his attempt to compare himself to the creole.

Juan Antonio Alix (1833-1917) was one of the creole poets who disagreed with the Dominican preoccupation with his social ascendance through racial categorizations. His poem of 1893, "El negro tras la oreja" ("Black Behind the Ear"), satirizes the Dominicans' belief that their country is "White." His didactic poetry attacks the Dominican rhetoric that feigns a racial democracy. Although Alix does not appropriate a Black identity, he does not reject the possibility. Alix's poem chastises others whom he says look foolish trying to pretend they are not Black. As his poetry generally exemplifies only the folkloric role that the Black plays in Dominican literature, Alix is presented in the first chapter that analyzes the "absence" of the Black in Dominican literature.

In light of the racial prejudice that characterizes Dominican literature and distorts the nation's self-portrait, the literature I identify as having the "Black-as-

subject" almost exclusively discusses the Black as being the victim of foreign influence or bestows an immense amount of pity on him. As Michiel Baud outlined in his book on ethnicity, it is almost impossible to discover with accuracy the motives of Dominican racism. Nevertheless, we can with some precision identify the negative stereotypes most often discussed in the literature of anti-Haitian sentiment, e.g, the inability to communicate well in Spanish, the lack of culture, primitivism, and the lack of hygiene (126). For many of the Dominican writers of this literary period, the epitome of Blackness is the Haitian who encompasses all that is atavistic about the Americas. For Balaguer, the Haitian is responsible for all that is wrong with the Dominican Republic, especially hunger and disease, and moral decay (*La isla al revés* 41). When Martha Cobb argues that the "literature of the Americas has reinforced the stereotype of black people as an indistinguishable mass" (133), I contend that she is speaking specifically of the "poesía negroide," which is the poetry that characterizes the "Black-as-subject" period in Latin America. Recognizing that Dominican writers participated in this literary current that was so popular in numerous other countries, Balaguer attributes their participation to the "imaginative manifestation intended to ennoble vulgar material" (211, *translation mine*).

The second chapter of the dissertation will deal with the issue of race in the Dominican Republic as it appears in selected works of literature written since the nineteenth century, but before the emergence of the "Black-as-author," and it will include literature of "poetic negrism," i.e., imitation of "Black talk" (Jackson

Black Image 41). The Dominican *negroide* poets recognized in contemporary anthologies are Domingo Moreno Jimenes (1894–1966), Manuel del Cabral (1907-), Tomás Hernández Franco (1904-1952), Pedro Mir (1913-2000), and Rubén Suro (1916-). Most of these writers had little knowledge of the Black experience and recognized the popularity that *poesía negroide* was gaining in Latin America and the Caribbean. Thus, Blackness celebrated in "poetic negrism" is largely a *faux* Blackness, a Blackness cast almost exclusively in rhythmic phrases and African-sounding words. These Dominican writers demonstrate the evolution of *poesía negroide*, which I divide into three categories: superficial aesthetics, social protest, and the introduction of the New Antillian.

This first category is a *faux* Blackness in which the author uses African animals, references to jungles, musical instruments (especially drums), magic, dialect, and/or religious rituals to imitate a certain African mystique. Often times, the Black is the Haitian and appears in Dominican literature as the symbol of atavistic and animal-like behavior. Manuel del Cabral is the Dominican Republic's most prolific writer of *negroide* poetry and has poems that exemplify all three categories mentioned above. In the first category, del Cabral preferred to use either the *cocolo* or the Haitian as his subject who evoked a more picturesque and folkloric quality than the Afro-Dominican (Caamaño de Fernández 93).

In general, the works that feature the "Black-as-subject" in this first category will be analyzed for their treatment of the difference between *Blackness* and *Dominicanness*. Though great amounts of pity may be expressed for the

Black character, there is no real appropriation of Blackness in any of these works, not even when the writer is of African descent. These writers were simply not interested in identifying with Blackness, and therefore, they maintained their literary distance from the use of the term in a Dominican context. In effect, neither they nor their Black characters were Dominicans.

The second category is marked by the recognition of the human qualities of the Black and often includes a tone of social protest as it denounces the exploitation suffered by Blacks. Some of the poetry by Nicolás Guillén and Emilio Ballagas of Cuba contains some of the best examples of this second category. In the Dominican Republic, del Cabral's poems "Pulula," "Trago," "El herrero" from *Compadre Mon*, and "Negro sin casa" from *Trópico negro* (1942) are excellent examples of the Black-as-subject poetry used for social protest.

The third category in the development of Black-as-subject poetry is characterized by an expression of the New Antillian, the mulatto. Cuba's Nicolás Guillén can be credited with beginning this third category in 1930 with the publication of his book *Motivos de son*. The first Dominican poet to follow Guillén was Rubén Suro. Suro's book of poetry *Poemas de una sola intención* (1984) contains more than 30 poems written between 1934 and 1968, all of which are examples of *poesía negrista*. An important innovation in the literature of this latter category of *poesía negrista* is that the Black is no longer the foreign born and marginalized Haitian or *cocolo*. In this poetry, it is often impossible to distinguish between the Haitian, *cocolo* or Dominican subject because there are

no longer linguistic clues. In effect, the *negrista* poet, without appropriating Blackness, expresses a sincere concern for the exploited Black worker of any national origin.

Tomás Hernández Franco's poetry exemplifies the principal characteristics of mulatto poetry. The theme in his poetry, different from the ones previously mentioned, is racial mixture. His most noteworthy work is *Yélida* (1942), an epic poem that narrates the history of *mulatez* or racial mixture in the Caribbean. This is notable because literature characterized by the myth of the racial superiority of the Mulatto over the Black had never before been written in the Dominican Republic. In this way, Hernández Franco does not ignore the African presence on the island, but instead, celebrates *mulatez* in the cultural development of the country. His *mulata* character Yélida is a step forward and a step away from the primitiveness of the Africanized Haitian.

Pedro Mir (1913-2000), the first *negrista* poet to be discussed, was also most interested in redefining the Caribbean identity. Although he never used the term *mulatez,* his term *trigueña* has the same connotation. His attempts to interpret Blackness exhibit thematic patterns that Martha Cobb cites in works that form concepts of the black experience. She identifies four basic patterns: 1) physical, spiritual or ideological confrontation with a White world and its value system; 2) sociopolitical and psychological ambiguities of black life under white racism which have blurred any lines of separation in the consciousness; 3) the search for authentic identity in order to establish a sense of self outside of the

Euro-centered cultures; and, 4) liberation governing the realities of black thought and action (*Harlem, Haiti and Havana* 133). Mir's poetry and essays exemplify the category of confrontation. In those works, he denounces the "white" value system in the Dominican Republic that encourages the denial of one's African heritage. Mir was himself a mulatto born in San Pedro de Macorís who wrote about the poor Dominican's exploitation during a time when it was socially and politically unpopular to criticize any national policy. In Mir's attempt to call attention to the exploitation of the poor, rural *trigueña*, he used this image of the New Antillian as a means of social protest.

Poetry is not the only genre in which social protest appears. A novel that depicts the Black-as-subject and criticizes exploitation suffered by Blacks is Ramón Marrero Aristy's (1914-1959) *Over,* bravely written in 1939 during the *trujillato*. Because the novel's fictional plantation mirrors Dominican reality beginning with the early twentieth century, it became highly controversial in the years of the dictatorship. In effect, *Over* captures the disparity between the wealthy and the poor in a racial hierarchy that still exists in the Dominican Republic.

Since its inception, the dominant class in the Dominican Republic has tried to eradicate what it has considered the less desirable elements of African culture that would impede success in its system of exploitation. This process of deculturation included laws that prohibited African religions, languages, rituals, and the freedom of movement of Africans on the island. Manuel Moreno

Fraginals defines deculturation as "the conscious process by which, for purposes of economic exploitation, the culture of a group of human beings is uprooted to expedite the expropriation of the natural riches of the territory the group inhabits, and/or to utilize the group as a source of cheap, unskilled labor" (6). Consequently, everything African was unlawful at first, and considered un-Dominican by the end of the nineteenth century. Moreno Fraginals also explains that the consequence of deculturation as a "hegemonic tool" of domination is that "the dominated class takes refuge in its culture as a means of identity and survival" (6). Thus, the "Black-as-author period" of Dominican literature is the literary consequence of 200 years of deculturation in the Dominican Republic.

One should bear in mind that this literary period in the development of Afro-Dominican discourse was not possible until after the death of Trujillo in 1961. As explained earlier, Trujillo ran an oppressive regime that not only forbade any anti-Dominican thought—i.e., any idea that opposed his manner of governing—but also quickly disposed of political rivals, imagined or real. After Trujillo's death, when the Dominican Black became author of his own story and portrayed his own people and their experiences, the image of Africa as the homeland came into existence. Coulthard has pointed out that "apart from the feeling of exile, of longing to return 'home,' the poems of Africa take the form of a highly emotional evocation, lamentation over the past greatness and the present humiliation and also a consciousness of the 'presence' of Africa in the Caribbean, people of African origin and African customs and words" (42).

The second half of the twentieth century has offered fertile ground for the production of an Afro-Dominican expression. Although there were numerous Afro-Dominican authors, with various approaches to their themes, the intentions of their Black expression were remarkably similar. In her article about the patterns apparent in Black literature, Martha Cobb discusses the aesthetic basis for the definition of a Black expression as a literary art. She suggests that a symbolic imagery transforms themes into metaphors of the Black experience of life, a spoken voice affirms a Black humanity and a silent voice of the inner consciousness responds to its Black reality, and a structural style that originated in Black oral traditions expresses Blackness ("Ortiz, Glissant, and Ellison" 5). The poetry I identify as "Afro-Dominican" meets Cobb's criteria of a Black expression.

Contemporary Dominican literature attempts to re-define Dominicanness. Dominican literature of the late twentieth century written by Dominican authors from Puerto Plata, Samaná, San Pedro de Macorís, Baní, and the other areas where the population historically is largely of African descent and foreign is providing yet another perspective of nationality. The third chapter of my dissertation will reflect upon the cultural movements devoted to the development of the Afro-Dominican nation that includes *cocolo* literature. In this chapter, I will study the poetry by Dominico-Haitian writer Jacques Viau Renaud (1942-1965) and discuss Juan Sánchez Lamouth (1929-1969) and Norberto James Rawlings (1945) as representatives of *cocolo* poetry. These different examples of

Afro-Dominican literature will be analyzed as evidence of the re-definition of Dominican identity.

Any study that deals with the "Black-as-author" in Dominican literature must necessarily examine the poetry of Aída Cartagena Portalatín (1918-1994) and of Blas Jiménez (1950). As there are many facets of this theme in Dominican literature, Chapter Four will include the poetry of Aída Cartagena Portalatín as representative of Dominican women's participation in the formation of this new Dominican society. With regard to Blas Jiménez, his four books of poetry, *Aquí... otro español* (1980), *Caribe africano en despertar* (1984), *Exigencias de un cimarrón en sueños* (1987), and *El nativo* (1996) constitute the first attempt to create consciously through literature an Afro-Dominican nation. Jiménez also uses his works to portray the *mulatos* who have used their skin color to differentiate themselves from the Dominican Black. In this final chapter, Blas Jiménez and Aída Cartagena Portalatín emerge as the founding voices of Afro-Dominican literature. Whereas Cartagena was primarily interested in portraying the Dominican woman with all of her complexity, Jiménez's poetry is undoubtedly "an affirmation of all of the constitutive values of a cultural being" (Pérez 94, translation mine). Indeed, his poetry and essays have come to epitomize revolutionary literature with the intention of creating an Afro-Dominican identity and nation.

Theoretical Approach

My theoretical approach in this dissertation will be anchored in an Afro-Hispanic criticism that has evolved since the 1960s and which offers some of the critical tools necessary to assess and evaluate the extent to which Afro-Dominicans have expressed their Blackness in literature. I will trace the evolution of Afro-Dominican literature through three stages: 1) the denial of African existence in the nineteenth century; 2) the "Black-as-subject" which marked the first half of the twentieth century; and 3) the appropriation of Blackness that emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century with the "Black-as-author." I will demonstrate that the concept of Blackness in the Dominican Republic has evolved within the context of the above-mentioned literary development that I refer to as "literary Blackness" in the Dominican Republic.

Because Afro-Hispanic criticism is such a relatively new form of literary criticism, some may question its literary importance. Yvonne Captain believes that this is due to the fact that this form of criticism has lost its freshness. She accuses Afro-Hispanists of simply restating the obvious—that racism exists in Latin America. In her 1994 article published in the *Afro-Hispanic Review,* she challenges us to take advantage of the twenty-first century to "strive for perpetuity" in our field of interest, lest what interests us about the field of Afro-Hispanic literature be considered "trivial and dated matters" (7). This new century promises to be one in which the voices of all people can be heard due to globalization and a growing interest in interdisciplinary studies. The difference

between the ways of approaching the study of literature of the past and the future will be influenced by the multiple images of Latin American identity that we will find in the literature written in this century.

My objective is not only to reveal the existence of an African identity in the Dominican Republic, but also to demonstrate the extent to which the development of an Afro-Hispanic discourse has enriched Dominican literature. Thus, my afrocentric reading of the material covered in this dissertation is not intended to cultivate simplistic dichotomies that evoke an "us-against-them" mentality. Rather, I argue for an afrocentrism that bridges the particularities of Afro-Dominicanness with an overarching sense of Dominicanness on the one hand, and which contributes to a more complex and comprehensive understanding of the Dominican Republic and its literature, on the other.

Chapter One

Corroborating the Rhetoric: The Issues of Race, Color, and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Dominican Literature

Literature has played a very significant role in Dominican nation building since the late eighteenth century. At that time, as is true today, politics and literature were inseparable. While much of Latin American literature was written to motivate the New World colonies of Spain to make the first moves towards independence, independence literature was less important in nineteenth-century Santo Domingo. One must bear in mind that Dominican didactic literature was not born out of necessity to convince its compatriots to seek independence from Spain. Unlike what occurred in other countries of Spanish America, Dominican literature's interest in independence emerged from a desire to be free of any association with its Black history, or more specifically, the presence of the Black African in the Dominican Republic.

In his history of Dominican literature, former president Joaquín Balaguer credits the nineteenth-century Dominican intellectuals for having created an impressive literature in spite of two national incidents that occurred during the formation of the Dominican nation. The first of these incidents is the signing of the Treaty of Basilea of 1795 that granted the French the western one-third of the island. The second incident is the Haitian invasion and occupation that occurred

in the nineteenth century. He describes these incidents as being "almost catastrophic" in that both caused the *en masse* flight of some of the wealthiest Dominican families, and also, that both put the country in danger of losing all contact with the "civilized" world (*Historia de la literatura Dominicana* 79). Balaguer divides Dominican literature of the nineteenth century into five stages that depict different moments in the nation's political history: from the Treaty of Basilea of 1795 until being freed from foreign rule in 1809; from the Reconquest by the Spaniards in 1810 to the end of the period referred to as "foolish Spain" in 1821; from the Haitian occupation in 1822 until Independence in 1844; from Independence in 1844 until the re-annexation to Spain in 1861; and from the restoration of Dominican sovereignty in 1865 until the death of Ulises Heureaux, the first president of the republic, in 1899 (*Historia de la literatura Dominicana* 80).

The political movements of nineteenth-century Santo Domingo clearly spawned a growing sense of nationalism. However, Balaguer's literary history overlooks the racialization of Dominican nationalism and identity. Indeed, a close reading of nineteenth-century Dominican literature not only reveals a struggle for self-definition, but it also uncovers a version of history that is the expression of a dominant discourse of Dominicanness imposed by the country's ruling elites.

Dominicanness and the Anti-Black Sentiment

The mere fact that Dominicanness has traditionally meant "not-African" does not explain how the anti-African, anti-Haitian, and anti-Black sentiment became internalized in the Dominican Republic's complex social construct, however. In his article "*Les ètapes de l'Anti-Haïtianisme en Republique Dominicaine: le role des historiens,*" Lil Despradel describes the causes of what he refers to as "the dialectic movement of the Dominican anti-Haitian sentiment" in a three-tiered superstructure (65, translation mine). First, he describes the manifestation of a racial and cultural prejudice; secondly, he explains the cultural alienation of the Dominicans; and, finally, he identifies a certain antagonistic and defensive nationalism (65).

To identify the origins of what Despradel has identified in his description of the stages of anti-Haitianism, one must return to Dominican history. He contends that the origins of this type of racism within the Dominican dominant class began in the colonial period.

> En effet, lorsque conquérants et vaincus appartiennent à deux groupes ethniques distincts, les premiers s'efforcent de construire un système de différenciation ethnique capable d'exprimer l'inégalité sociale qu'ils défendent. (65)

For there to be a conqueror and a conquered, there must first be two distinct ethnic groups to justify the social inequality that they defend. Though official

histories do not document their arrival until 1496, many historians believe that Columbus brought the first slaves to the island in 1493. These slaves were Whites, Berbers, and Blacks who very likely were smuggled in as human contraband. Official documents refer to 1501 as the date of the authorized importation of human forced labor to the island. These slaves were not *bozales,* slaves brought straight from Africa, but slaves from Spain who already had been Christianized in compliance with orders from the governor of the island, Fray Nicolás de Ovando. According to the governor's fears, Africans were a bad influence on the otherwise peaceful slaves—i.e., Whites, Berbers, and Natives—all of whom were escaping to live in the mountains of the still uncharted regions of the island.

In the early sixteenth century, Spain admitted the complete loss of its aboriginal population as forced labor and the possibility of quickly exhausting all of the natural resources it could find on the island of Hispaniola. By the seventeenth century, Spain became considerably neglectful of its first colony in the New World. Moreover, as Spain began to lose interest in this Caribbean Island, Hispaniola grew increasingly vulnerable to Spain's enemies. English pirates often intercepted the shipments of gold and supplies transported between the Caribbean and Spain, and the French slowly usurped territories encroaching upon the island, until eventually occupying the western one-third of it. In 1795, Spain officially recognized the western portion of the island as French territory and thereafter, only the eastern two-thirds of the island belonged to Spain. The

latter became known as Santo Domingo and the former as Saint Domingue. The fact that the French now had control of a contiguous territory that once belonged to the Spanish was always difficult for the competitive Spanish Crown to accept. Until then, it had enjoyed an almost complete monopoly in the Caribbean.

As natural resources were depleted, Spain directed more of its attention to its colonies in other parts of the Caribbean, North America and South America. Spaniards seeking fortune in the New World were no longer interested in settling in Santo Domingo. Though the American-born Spanish Creoles on the island may have continued to think of themselves as Spaniards, the colony grew less and less like Spain. In addition, due to neglect from Spain and periodic destruction from the region's tropical storms, Santo Domingo's white upper class slowly found itself facing economic ruin. Indeed, despite an abundance of land, there were not enough slaves to work it and even fewer Whites to oversee the human chattel. Consequently, many of the upper class opted to abandon their property to seek their fortunes in the other colonies.

After several centuries of participating in the African slave trade, coupled with the exodus of the island's Whites, Santo Domingo's white elite gradually became a racial and ethnic minority. Despite Spain's refusal to send more African slaves to its first colony, the Black population continued to grow due to illegal immigration and an illegal slave trade. African–born slaves forced to work in Saint Domingue escaped to the eastern side of the island and lived freely. The Dominicans granted them and other slaves who dared to cross the border their

freedom in an attempt to precipitate the economic ruin of their French slave masters. With the increase of Blacks and the decrease of work, the upper class Whites, who were descendants of the Spanish conquerors, found themselves at the same level both socially and economically with the mulatto-blacks, who also were descendants of both the Spanish conqueror and his black slave. The fact that Blacks were no longer social inferiors led many Whites to emigrate. Furthermore, despite Spain's attempts to attract poor men from the Canary Islands to Santo Domingo in hopes of increasing the White presence, "whitening" the island failed. Not only did the Whites refuse to inter-marry with the mulatto women, but also several storms and small pox epidemics decimated the population of the European émigrés.

By 1794, when the Africans of Saint Domingue freed themselves from slavery and formed the first Republic in the Americas, many of Santo Domingo's inhabitants were living in utter poverty, a condition that seemed to equalize most of its people, despite their ethnic origins. Notwithstanding the leveling effects of a stagnant economy that largely were responsible for the seemingly liberal racial ideology that attenuated racial barriers and facilitated miscegenation, the descendants of the Spanish colonizers were still interested in differentiating themselves from the masses of brown people. In a futile attempt to maintain some semblance of the times when the Spanish crown played a more active role in their lives, the inhabitants of Santo Domingo had separated themselves into three distinct classes: *blancos* (creoles), *blancos de la tierra* (mulattos) and *negros*

(African slaves). However, this process of "*blanqueamiento*", or whitening, caused the Mulatto to be ashamed of his African past to such a degree that he adopted the racism of his colonizer (Despradel 67). The nineteenth-century Mulatto of Santo Domingo considered himself different racially and socially from the Dominican Black and, therefore, superior to him. It is for this reason that during the Haitian occupation, the Mulatto was considered as much a threat to the freedom of the slaves as the White.

The "White Flight"

Many of the wealthiest Dominican Creole families emigrated from Santo Domingo soon after the first Haitian invasion in 1801. The del Monte family was one of the wealthiest white families that abandoned its property and immigrated to Cuba. Specialists in Latin American literature recognize the del Monte family name, for several members of the family are well-known writers.[2] Although born in Santo Domingo, the del Monte brothers, Francisco Muñoz y Félix María, left the Dominican Republic at very young ages and moved with their family to Cuba; consequently, both Cuba and the Dominican Republic claim them as native sons. Their poetry is mentioned in this chapter which examines the absence of the Black in Dominican literature of the nineteenth century despite the fact that the del Monte brothers did include the Black as subject. However, the Blacks in their poetry are unmistakably Haitians. This is significant because the literature of the

[2] Domingo del Monte y Aponte, a cousin of the Dominican brothers Francisco and Félix del Monte, is known for publishing many Cuban abolitionist novels in the late nineteenth century.

nineteenth century decidedly ignores the fact that the majority of the Dominican population at the time of the invasion was already Black. Caamaño de Fernández names Francisco Muñoz del Monte, Félix María del Monte, Gastón Fernando Deligne, Arturo Castro, Eulogio C. Cabral y Bartolomé Olegario Pérez as the country's first authors of *poesía negroide,* writers who use the Black as subject in their literature (62). However, these writers simply repeated the anti-Haitian rhetoric of the post-occupation period. The Black depicted in their literature is consistently identified as a foreigner. The depiction is also consistently negative. In the following excerpt of the poem, "Mi cumpleaños," by Francisco Muñoz del Monte (1800-1865), the Haitian is negatively portrayed as not only an invader but also as barbarous and bloodthirsty:

> También entonces
> Fatal discordía en mi país ardía,
> Y la sangre francesa y la española
> Empapaban los campos encantados
> De la aurífera Haití, do lo africano
> De tez tostada "libertad" gritando,
> La libertad buscaba envuelto en sangre.
> Mas sus furores yo no comprendía,
> Y con leda sonrisa contemplaba
> Al implacable negro que quemaba
> De su señor la habitación umbría,
> Y en el cañaveral que cultivaba
> El tizón encendido sacudía. (Caamaño de Fernández 63)

Del Monte's description of general chaos is due to wanton acts of violence. His choice of vocabulary simplistically depicts incomprehensible acts of terror that the Haitians supposedly caused in his country on the day his family escaped the island. His verbs are limited to describing destruction by fire (*ardía* and *quemaba*); he laments the blood and blood-soaked lands (*sangre*, *empapaban los campos*, envuelto *en sangre*) of Frenchmen and Spaniards; he invokes terror in his description of the *africano* who, although he yells "Liberty," deprives others of their freedom with animalistic depravity. His poem is similar to other poems expressing the same anti-Haitian sentiment. The implicit audience of del Monte's poetry was White. His intention was to produce fear in the hearts of all Dominicans since the invading Haitians only wanted to shed the blood of white landowners. One will recall that Haitians and Dominicans never formally agreed upon the national borders that separate the two countries, and while black Dominicans were still slaves and under control, the freed and angry Haitians were a very real and persistent threat.

The Haitian Invasion and Occupation

With the idea of freeing all from slavery and delivering all Dominicans from Spanish control and thus unifying once and for all the entire island under the name of Haiti, the Haitians frequently invaded the eastern two-thirds of the island during the first half of the nineteenth century. Because the majority of the Dominican population was of African descent and hated slavery, Haitian rule was

well-received at first. Opposition to Haitian rule became more common, however, as the white Dominican elite affirmed its Spanish roots, even though Spain made no attempts to defend its colony against the Haitians. The Spanish Creoles would not tolerate being ruled by former slaves and, therefore, sought the help of all the powerful nations in Europe and the United States, the only white independent country in the New World. Though none of the three super-powers of the period would pledge to help disinterestedly, the Spanish Creoles eagerly sought to be the protectorate of England, France, or the United States. While England had already lost control of its American colonies and lacked interest in taking on a new one, the United States had seriously considered annexing the eastern portion of the island until the Senate abandoned the project. As for France, which still did not recognize Haitian independence, the idea of having an opportunity to gain control over the entire island was very attractive.

Between 1802 and 1804, the French took control of Santo Domingo and defended the Dominicans against the Haitians. However, they also committed two transgressions in the eyes of the majority of Dominicans: they reinstated slavery and invaded Spain in 1808. Once again, Dominicans felt very Spanish. With the help of the English, the Dominicans expelled the French and accepted the English occupation of Santo Domingo. Although Spain restored its power over Santo Domingo a year later in 1809, its attention was again diverted from Santo Domingo. Because Spain was preoccupied with defending its interests in

the rest of Latin America, it again ignored its first colony, leaving it vulnerable to further Haitian invasions.

The longest Haitian occupation took place from 1822 to 1844. The number of Blacks grew tremendously during the Haitian occupation. Haitian leaders invited Blacks from the United States and the English-speaking Antilles to enjoy freedom from slavery and discrimination on the unified island governed by Blacks. Several thousand Blacks, the majority of whom came from Philadelphia, settled in the areas of Samaná on the northern coast of the country, and Santiago, just north of the capital city (Caamaño de Fernández 21-22). These black groups were expected to contribute to the economic growth during the Haitian occupation, providing labor in the sugar cane industry. The idea of inviting free blacks to immigrate was not new to the Haitians. In 1804, Haitian leader Jean Jacques Dessalines offered a reimbursement of $40 to American boat captains for every Black American brought from the United States (Hoetnink 5). The first immigrants arrived in Santo Domingo in 1824. Many of them died of small pox while others, having come from urban areas, never fully adapted to the rural lifestyle of the island and returned to the United States (Hoetnink 6). Other freed black immigrants from the United States, however, did stay in either the capital of Santo Domingo or in the Bay of Samaná. Besides the Haitians and Blacks from the United States, there was also an equal number of Afro-Cuban artisans and Blacks from the Dutch Antilles, the latter of whom were referred to as "*cocolos,*" who settled on the eastern side of the island beginning in the late 1800s (Caamaño

de Fernández 21-22). Therefore, Jean Pierre Boyer's attempt at creating a Black nation during the Haitian occupation was not a total failure.

Although the white Dominicans and many Mulattos wanted to fight against the political as well as racial changes that their country was experiencing, they realized they were outnumbered and powerless without external aid. As foreign help had not been previously without its disadvantages, many Dominicans were apprehensive about inviting another country to assist them in their struggle against the Haitian menace. Though some Dominicans feared that any protectorate arrangement would threaten their way of life, the Spanish Creoles were more concerned about a Black occupation than white imperialist control. When Spain could not protect them and the United States would not, a number of the colony's more educated and wealthy members began laying the groundwork for independence. In 1838, a secret coalition—*la Sociedad Trinitaria*—was formed and began plotting the end to Haitian unification and the beginning of a sovereign Dominican nation.

Dominican Independence Day was first celebrated on February 27, 1844, when the Dominicans freed themselves of Haitian rule. The Dominican Republic's inexperienced leaders had considerable difficulties establishing the sovereignty of this new nation. Since there still were no official borders between the two territories, the lines separating the new nation and the Republic of Haiti were blurred, making the Dominicans susceptible to yet another Haitian invasion and occupation. Haitians had pledged to achieve the indivisibility of the island

and, therefore, they would become a perpetual thorn in the sides of the Dominican elite who wanted to establish the Dominican Republic as a "white" nation. Moreover, the Dominican Republic still had not won its freedom from Spain, its original colonial master. Because Spain had lost many of its original colonies by 1840, it was unwilling to give up its first one so easily. Spain was encouraged to intervene by the few Dominican Creole politicians living there in exile who still considered themselves Spaniards. Those Creoles felt that Haiti was still a military threat, and they were willing to sacrifice Dominican sovereignty to return to the safety of being a Spanish protectorate. Since the majority of the Dominican population was of African descent, the creoles would not be successful in returning the country to Spanish control without first convincing the darker Dominicans of the advantages of being Spanish. Thus, didactic literature in the Dominican Republic was born out of a political necessity.

Enriquillo and Dominican Identity

Manuel de Jesús Galván (1834-1910) was the most famous of these early creole politicians and one of the Dominican Republic's most prolific writers. His novel *par excellence* was a historical novel written to remind Dominicans of their Spanish heritage. *Enriquillo: leyenda dominicana (Enriquillo: Dominican Legend*), published in its entirety in 1882, depicted the colonization of Hispaniola between the years of 1503 and 1533. Although Galván cites heavily from the chronicles written by the island's first historians (e.g, Friar Bartolomé de Las

Casas, Gonzalo Fernándes de Oviedo, and Antonio Herrera), Galván's novel makes no mention of the presence of Africans on the island. It uses as a starting point the massacre of the Indians in 1503, and then examines what inspired the rebellion of the last Taíno Chief Guarocuyá, baptized Enrique. Enrique was the leader of the rebellion in which he and his followers left the city to live in the mountains of the province of Bahoruco from 1519 to 1533. Galván's purpose was not only to establish the Chief called Enriquillo as a Dominican hero, but also to create an indigenous national identity in the Dominican Republic, and finally, to convince the general public to support the restoration of Spanish rule over Santo Domingo.

Enriquillo is a novel that cannot (or should not) be separated from neither the literary nor the historical context of its publication. Romanticism was the literary current most prevalent during the mid-nineteenth century, and a key aspect of literary romanticism in Latin America was *indianismo*. This component of the romantic novel was developed around the Indian and his traditions as the subject of a purely sympathetic narration that exhalted visions of noble Indians who had been victimized by the Spanish (Meléndez 9). Rodó explains the nineteenth-century writers' fascination with the Indian by pointing out that "los escritores volvieron los ojos al manantial poético de la inocencia y los dolores de los pueblos indígenas, y este orden de motivos concordaba con la pasión de autonomía que era el carácter de aquel tiempo" (202).

According to Meléndez, almost all aspects of the *indianista* novel already existed in the literature written during the conquest. The nineteenth-century authors simply chose to follow a well-known model initiated by Bartolomé de Las Casas whose *Historia de las Indias* was written between 1552 and 1561 and was published for the first time in 1875, precisely during the highpoint of the *indianista* narrative (Meléndez 13). The reading of the cruelties documented in Las Casas' *Historia* during the years soon after Independence only encouraged anti-Spanish sentiment in the former colonies. This sentiment became especially strong in the Dominican Republic, as Dominicans found importance in convincing each other of the need to be free of Spanish rule. Because of this fact, Concha Meléndez identifies the *indianista* literary tradition as strongest in the Dominican Republic, as opposed to other countries of Latin America (108).

Beginning with the middle of the nineteenth century, the history of the Dominican Republic drastically changed culturally and politically. Manuel de Jesús Galván openly supported the re-annexation to Spain because he believed that "Spanish domination is the anchor or health of all social principles, against the deleterious elements that threaten Santo Domingo" (Sommer "El otro Enriquillo"117; *translation mine*).[3] As Sommer notes, the "deleterious elements" were, of course, the Haitians. With the expulsion of the Haitians, the Dominicans gave themselves freely to several European empires, including the Spanish for a second time (1863-1865), despite the resistance from the pro-Republican and pro-

[3] Cited from the national political newspaper *La razón*.

Haitian patriots. With the restoration of the Republic in 1865, Manuel de Jesús Galván never abandoned his political and sentimental loyalties to Spain. He continued serving the crown in a political capacity abroad; it was during this period of exile that he wrote *Enriquillo*.

Unable to persuade his darker Dominican compatriots to fear Haiti more than the possibility of slavery under Spanish rule with his essays in the period's only national newspaper *La razón,*[4] Galván realized that the majority of his Dominican readers felt they had more in common with their Haitian neighbors than with Spain. For this reason, he chose to return the reader to the beginnings of the colony. On the one hand, he would remind them of the greatness of Spain by illustrating the compassion of the Spanish conquerors while diminishing the importance of their role in the extermination of the Indians. On the other hand, he would help them find a common heritage shared by all Dominicans that would differentiate them ethnically, racially, and culturally from the Haitians. His novel employed techniques of nineteenth-century romantic fiction while emphasizing its didactic nature. He called it a "Dominican legend" to remind his reader of Dominican history. By comparing his novel with official texts of Dominican history, he immediately gave it legitimacy. In his novel, he footnotes the exact passages from the chronicles from which he bases his fiction, allowing the novel a privileged position of authority. However, there still exists in his "Dominican legend" an omission of historical facts that appeared in the chronicles. Galván's

[4] Galván was one of the editors of this weekly newspaper published by the government during the annexation period between 1862-1863.

choice of material altered history just enough to distort the historical foundation of Dominican culture. Consequently, the Dominican reader was encouraged to re-examine his perceptions of the Spanish Empire of the sixteenth century and question his recently–proclaimed political loyalties. Doris Sommer argues that "[t]he reader that sympathizes with the novel praises what erroneously is considered historical faithfulness, while its critics, on the other hand, consider the novel an embarrassing falsification of the facts" ("El otro Enriquillo" 117; translation mine). Indeed, Galván's novel manipulated historical information of the Conquest to the extent that he fictionalized the Dominican nation through the omission of several facts about Blacks cited in the island's first official histories.

The first historical omission one encounters is with reference to the indigenous population in Santo Domingo at the time of the rebellion of 1519 to 1533. In the year of the conquest and at the beginning of the sixteenth century, it had been estimated that the Indian population was between 400,000-500,000. By the middle of that century, the Indians had almost completely disappeared. According to the chronicles written by Oviedo, only 500 remained ten years after the conquest (Tolentino Dipp 93). With the distortion of the historical facts, the reader not only can be deceived into believing that the indigenous population was large, but also that there existed only Spaniards, Indians, and mixtures thereof in the sixteenth century. Certainly, Galván was not counting on the ignorance of his public concerning the existence of the African slaves that dated from the sixteenth century. Even if the readers did not know about the existence of the African in

Santo Domingo since 1496, by virtue of their family histories they would have known that during the time of the rebellion in Xaraguá (1519-1533), African slaves represented the majority of the population of Santo Domingo. The reader would have been aware that Las Casas had asked the Spanish king to introduce more African slaves to the island in order to defend the Indians "because with them (the Africans) they would be able to sustain the land and that would leave the Indians free" (Larrázabal Blanco 24). Although Galván did indeed acknowledge the fact that it was Las Casas who had the idea to liberate the Indians, his novel neither includes the fact that the liberation of the Indians was at the expense of the Africans, nor does it refer to Las Casas' retraction of that racist strategy in 1531. Actually, there is only one reference to the slavery of the Africans in the entire novel. Since that reference was not directed specifically towards slavery, it did little more than describe the wealth of the Viceroy de Cuéllar, on the patio of whose house arrived the "lines of Blacks, domestic Indian and European servants..." (Galván 166, translation mine)

Another gap in the novel concerning Blacks has to do with the rebellion at Xaraguá. Although in the novel Galván cites from the historical texts written in the sixteenth century to describe the flight by the Indians to the mountains long before the rebellion of Enriquillo, he fails to mention that the African slaves also fled and that they lived peacefully with the Indians (Tolentino Dipp 251). The chronicles written by Ovando did mention the problem with the maroons, the runaway slaves, in the colony. They were said to have had a bad influence on the

Indians; in 1501 Ovando was convinced of the need to avoid importing the "negros bozales," the slaves who arrived directly from Africa, and other people of "suspicious faith" (Saez 29). Clearly, the Spaniards blamed the wild African savages for the Indian flight. The letter from Carlos V that the novel says promised the Indians "absolute grace and perfect liberty...if they gave up their arms; offering them land and cattle... on whatever point of the island they selected for residence" (Galván, *Enriquillo* 470; translation mine), is a vivid example of how Galvan's text skewed much of the information about the Blacks and their participation in the rebellion of Xaraguá. The chronicles of Oviedo, Las Casas, and Herrera tell us that the liberty and protection of the Indians were also at the expense of the freedom of the maroons and other non-Christian Indians who had escaped with the Indian chief, Enriquillo, a willing collaborator of the slave masters.

Although Galván intended to make an Indian hero out of the last chief of Xaraguá, Guarocuyá (baptized Enrique), he denied completely a moralizing motive in *Enriquillo*, declaring his novel to be simply a "testimony." In his "Retrospective Summary" published in the third edition of the novel in 1909, he explained:

> Carece hoy, por lo mismo, de todo interés contradictorio en el campo de la política militante, la presente obra; y por cuanto los referidos prólogo y dedicatoria proclamaban el fin moral positivo que la había inspirado, quedan suprimidos en esta nueva edición,

> como signo de imparcialidad absoluta; y en sustitución de ámbos se complace en consignar el testimonio e de cordial é imperecedera gratitud á todos los favorecedores de *Enriquillo* que aún viven , y sea por muchos años... (Galván II)

The testimony that his novel offers is one that coincides with the concept of culture that he and the other defenders of Spanish imperialism had espoused. His implied reader in the nineteenth century would see in Enriquillo the birth of a nation that was founded on the mixture of the European and Indigenous races, and characterized by a history in which they could all be proud. Galván artistically described a romanticized version of Dominican history that depicted the inhabitants of the colony as descendants of the last Taíno chief who struggled against the inhumanity of greedy and cruel Spaniards. However, behind that whitened version of history there looms the African reality that Galván denies in order to differentiate the dark-skinned Dominican from his black Haitian neighbor. With the publication of his "Dominican legend" in the nineteenth century, Dominicans were led to believe that only blancos, mestizos and indios lived there. In fact, thanks to the publication of this novel, Galván created the myth of the existence of Indians well into the sixteenth century. Consequently, those Dominicans who were not White were now identified as descendants of Enriquillo.

The Dominican "Social Race"

The Dominican Black was no longer socially permitted to express his cultural and ethnic differences from the Spanish Creole. He could identify the blackness of only the Haitian with the blackness of the slave and thereby forget his own African origins. For the sake of securing a better position in society, the Dominican of African descent creates a new racial identity—the "social race." When faced with the darkness of their skin compared to the skin color of white "superiors," the darker Dominicans resort to a social defense mechanism designed to create an identity based upon their indigenous ancestors who were exterminated in the sixteenth century. Thus, for the Dominican an indigenous ancestry implies a racial ascension as the Indian brings him closer to the model of the white man (Despradel 67-68).

Since the original publication of the complete novel, there have been more than ten editions published of Enriquillo in the Dominican Republic. With the exception of the first edition, all the publications include a copy of a congratulatory letter from one of the founding fathers of Spanish American freedom, José Martí, dated September 1884 in New York. The inclusion of that letter has importance in that Martí intended to applaud the efforts of the author of Enriquillo for having written "the American poem." Martí describes the novel as "innovative and enchanting" in its attempt to "write our American history" (Galván IV; translation mine). Very likely, its appearance as a novel in support of the Indian is what won it so much praise. Cuba, in 1884, was still a colony of the

Spanish Empire. Martí undoubtedly saw in *Enriquillo* an attempt to recover the indigenous past by opposing Spanish rule, and for that reason, he applauded the book. Nevertheless, a more critical reading reveals that the novel does not offer a perspective particularly favorable to the Indian because there is no attempt to protect him from the historical inaccuracies nor is there any interest in probing the cultural complexities of Native Americans.

However, *Enriquillo* does have several things in common with other *indianista* works of the nineteenth century. As *Enriquillo* opens with the explanation of the events that led to the massacres of 1503, " it cultivates itself in America during the nineteenth century, it inspires itself in the misadventures of the aborigines of the New World upon facing the European conquistadors" (García Cabrera 6; translation mine). It also idealizes the Indian by romantically describing the inhabitants of Xaraguá as "a benign race of clearest understanding, and gentile physical forms" (Galván 7; translation mine). *Enriquillo* distinguishes itself as a romantic prototype through its oppositions between the "noble savage" and uncivilized people.[5] In fact, these oppositions between the positive characteristics of the indigenous culture and the negative ones of the conquistadors are the only ones that exist in the narration. Meléndez characterizes the depiction of the Indian as a "civil example" which is one of the four main elements of the *indianista* novel (71). Nevertheless, there are few evil characters in the novel. Galván was very conscious of who would be his reading

public and for that reason, his narration did not insist upon contrasting the Spanish and the Indians. Meléndez notes:

> En Enriquillo.... hay evidente propósito de parte del autor de realzar las nobles hazañas de la nación española y afirmar que la crueldad de la Conquista fue un hecho de circunstancias propicias al desarrollo de la ambición. (118)

In the end, his intention was to convince the Dominicans to support the return of their state as a Spanish colony, and that would be impossible if he had made all the Indians good and all the Spaniards evil. Instead, Galván tempers the characteristics of the Indian with the bad while identifying a selected few Indian characters to represent the noblest of all the attributes afforded a man who might otherwise be noted as a "savage."

The first image of the noble savage in the novel is seen in the description of Higuemota, the aunt of Guarocuyá, whose name had been changed to Doña Ana de Guevara to indicate that she had converted to Christianity. The fact that the Indian had interest in the state of his soul would imply his humanity according to Catholicism, the preferred religion of the nineteenth-century Dominican reader. Another way to emphasize that image of the nobility of the Indian was by giving him an education that was not common to people of his race. In *Enriquillo,* the "good" Indians showed their ability to communicate well in Spanish, the language of the colony. Chief Enriquillo himself was said to have "received the best

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5 The traditional portrait of the "noble savage" has always been a "a noble and virtuous race living in a state of savage simplicity, and implies a contrast between the moral excellence of that race and the vices which were sapping the strength

education that one could get at that time" (Galván 76; translation mine). The third way to inspire a positive perspective of the Indian was by means of his physical description. The Indian with European physical features always gave the impression of being more "human." When Galván describes Mencía, the daughter of Higuemota as "a true reflection of the beautiful characteristics of her father, that gentle young Spaniard" (10), it is to depict her as beautiful because of her European features; in that way she can not be confused with an Indian savage.

The aesthetics of beauty are inherent in the concept of the noble savage, but as Fairchild explains: "[u]nfortunately, the virtues of the ugly are never so apparent as those of the beautiful" (9). Tamayo, the servant of Enriquillo is the only Indian character who is not portrayed as a noble savage. From his physical appearance in the novel, it is obvious that he is not equal to Higuemota, Mencía or Enriquilllo. He is differentiated first by his association with Roldán, another historic character already vilified.[6] Afterward, the narrator distinguishes Tamayo from the other Indian characters by emphasizing his undesirable physical qualities. With reference to historical events before the rebellion at Xaraguá the narrator explains:

> Su amo le había impuesto el nombre español de Tamayo, por haber encontrado semejanza entre algunos rasgos de la fisonomía

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of the more complex and pretentious civilization" (See Fairchild 2-5).

[6] In 1496, in the absence of Columbus, his servant Francisco Roldán directed a rebellion upon his arrival to the New World. In this small reference, Roldán clearly is depicted as a bad Spaniard for having created the insurrection against the Columbus family (Mir *Tres leyendas* 35).

> del indio con los de otro criado de raza morisca que tenía ese nombre. (49)

The reference to Tamayo's Moorish heritage is, for the attentive reader, an indication of the color of the Indian's skin, which was surely dark. This also serves as another aesthetic reference. The author makes a difference between the designated good Indians and Tamayo at the conclusion of the novel when he is separated from Enriquillo because he has committed murders during the rebellion. Later, the narrator makes a direct reference to "la crueldad de Tamayo, contrastando con la clemencia y generosidad de Enrique" (445).

A strictly *indianista* intention does not define *Enriquillo.* Rather, Galván was celebrating the Dominican's Indian heritage to avoid admitting the Dominican's ethnic similarity to the Haitian. It is no wonder that Sommer contends that "Galván's objective in *Enriquillo*, to deny the historical ties between his mulatto-black country and the revolutionary Black tradition of Haiti, prepare his legitimization of the harmonious coexistence between ruler and ruled" (*One Master for Another* 54). Thus, Galván's solution to the problem of the Black's presence in the Dominican Republic was merely to ignore it by excluding Blacks from his *leyenda dominicana.* Indeed, Galván's novel corresponds to his political agenda for the Dominican Republic and reflects much of the racism and anti-Haitianism of the nineteenth century.

The development of Dominican nationalism is due in large part to the ideology that emphasizes the cultural differences of two peoples. The Dominican

Republic's behavior and attitudes toward Haiti define Dominican nationalism. Despradel states that being Dominican "significait pour ces secteurs de la population avoir un voisin qui constituait un ennemi traditionnel: le peuple haïtien" (68). This anti-Haitian attitude of the Dominican Republic traditionally has been justified as a defense against Haiti's official policy of expansion which is clearly expounded in the Haitian Constitution: "l'ile était une et indivisible."

Though Galván failed to return Santo Domingo to Spanish rule, he was successful in creating a sense of national identity or Dominicanness. By rejecting the eighteenth-century concept of Dominican racial classification (*blancos, blancos de la tierra,* and *negros*), he reincarnated the Dominican *indio*, who replaced the *negro.* The term *negro,* being permanently likened to slavery, lost all meaning in relation to Dominican reality. It was more appropriately placed upon everything Haitian which was considered the complete opposite of Dominicanness. In fact, any Dominican "Indian" could have his Dominican identity questioned by simply contradicting official Dominican rhetoric.

Because Blacks and Mulattos historically supported the Haitian expansion movement of the early nineteenth century, after the Dominican Republic had declared its independence in 1844, it was not uncommon for Black and mulatto Dominicans to be accused of being pro-Haitian. In spite of the fact that Blacks and Mulattos played significant roles in the establishment of the sovereignty of the Dominican Republic, suspicions about their political loyalties were often raised (Despradel 75). Not even Francisco del Rosario Sánchez, Gregorio

Luperón and José Joaquín Puello, all original members of *la Trinitaria* and Blacks, were above suspicion. Their obvious African roots and the amicable relations they maintained with the government of Haiti after the declaration of Dominican independence subjected them to all kinds of accusations.

The disdain for blackness in the Dominican Republic began with the colonial period. In order to justify the oppression of the Black and Indian slaves, the Spaniards had to distinguish themselves from their slaves and servants. After manumission, when the creole landowners were no longer in the majority nor as wealthy as their forefathers, they differentiated themselves from Blacks by creating a social structure in which the color of the skin determined one's place in society. However, it was not until the establishment of the nation of the Dominican Republic that Blackness entered the realm of "otherness," of everything not Dominican. The non-White majority of the Dominican Republic had to re-identify itself according to the model expressed in Galván's *Enriquillo.* The historical novel *Enriquillo* is the historical text that defined Dominicanness in the nineteenth century. However, not all Creoles accepted the ideology to which Galván and other pro-Hispanists and pro-Indian (as opposed to black) intellectuals subscribed. For some of the Dominican Republic's intellectuals, the idea of achieving social ascension by simply changing the racial label imposed upon a man of African descent was ridiculous.

"Black Behind the Ear"

José Antonio Alix (1833-1917) was the most celebrated writer who believed that if the Dominican could choose to ignore his African roots, he could not eliminate them. While most Dominican poets of the late nineteenth century chose to ignore their African roots and whitened their heritage by emphasizing their European and indigenous past, Alix's poetry challenged Dominican society by confronting it with its African roots. Through the use of popular language, Alix managed to combine the didactic nature of neo-classical literature with the folkloric aspects of rural Dominicans and their oral tradition.

The poem for which he is most famous, "El negro tras de la oreja" ("Black behind the Ear"), found in Caamaño de Fernández' *El negro en la poesía dominicana* (55-56), is a satire of Dominican customs and traditions of the late nineteenth century. Alix was from Cibão, a rural province with a rich African cultural heritage. Runaway slaves from Haiti settled there and added to the population of people of African descent who already constituted the majority. It is interesting to note that Alix grew up in a region where the expression "Black behind the ear" was used frequently to indicate that a person whose physical appearance agreed with the image of "whiteness" actually had a black ancestor.[7] In this poem, Alix's criticism of the Dominican obsession with appearing "white" is most apparent from the didactic nature of the poem.

> Como hoy la preocupación
> A más de una gente abruma,

Emplearé mi débil pluma
Para darle una lección;
Pues esto en nuestra Nación
Ni buen resultado deja,
Eso era en la España vieja
Según desde chico escucho
Pero hoy abunda mucho
"el negro tras de la oreja". (1-10)

Alix states that the concern about the issue of racial purity needed to be addressed and for that reason he would teach "a lesson" with the poem. He makes clear that this is an old notion when comparing what the concern is *hoy,* today, with what it was *en la España vieja.* Then he states that it has no place in their country, which he emphasizes by using the possessive *nuestra* (our). By choosing to use the plural possessive, Alix implies inclusiveness about nationhood. In the second stanza, Alix adopts an accusatory tone. He contends that no one white would ever insist upon being white; hence, the reader understands the criticism lodged against a Dominican elite that is obsessed with whiteness. The poem's disparaging tone begins with the assertion that those who obsess most on their "whiteness" are not of pure blood and, therefore, look foolish.

In the third stanza, Alix tells an anecdote of the absurdity of the elite's discrimination of someone whom they suspect of having African ancestry. However, in the fourth stanza, he indicts the very same people for being so ashamed of their African past that they would rather be beaten than to admit to

[7] This expression is also a part of African American culture of the United States and has the same meaning.

having a Black grandmother. The final two stanzas are humorous. He mocks ignorant people who have never been told that they have African ancestry. Nevertheless, he offers advice to those having "Black behind the ear":

> El que se crea preocupado
> Que se largue allá a la Habana.
> Que en tierra dominicana
> No le da buen resultado. (61-64)

These two examples of literature of the nineteenth-century Dominican Republic demonstrate a "color struck" Dominican obsession. While Manuel de Jesús Galván insisted upon creating Dominicanness vis-à-vis the cultural mixture of European and indigenous elements, Juan Antonio Alix insisted upon accepting Blackness as a fact of Dominican reality. Galván used literature to erase the African from Dominican history and replaced him with a noble savage who was Indian. The absence of the African in Dominican literature of the nineteenth century was due in large part to the national concern of maintaining a European appearance ethnically and culturally. One will remember that, constitutionally, all Dominicans are "white" despite appearance and ancestry.

Literature accomplished the "whitening" of the Dominican population after European immigration attempts to "whiten" failed. Literature was successful because it changed the way the "black" majority viewed itself. The creation of a socio-political structure that erased all descendancy of slavery from history made it unpopular to admit one's African ancestry. Moreover, all vestiges

of African identity became a source of shame. The official national rhetoric taught Dominicans to feel proud of a cultural heritage rooted in the civilized Spanish conqueror and the noble Indian woman. Such a paradigm penetrated all facets of Dominican society to the extent that it became a barrier between Dominican self-identity and the recognition of the black slave's participation in the formation of Dominican society.

With the publication of Galván's *Enriquillo* in 1882, literature became a very important means of expression, especially for those who cultivated a national rhetoric of exclusion. The promotion of nationalism was integrated into the art of Dominican writing. However, the Dominican Republic's most famous writers are often better known for the theme and content of their poetry rather than for their innovations. Nineteenth-century Dominican writers fascinated with the Indian as the example of purity and innocence, modeled their Indian characters after the poetic symbolism that Bartolomé de Las Casas assigned them in his *Historia de Las Indias*. By incorporating words from an indigenous language (e.g, *Igi aya bonghe*—death before slavery) into their national rhetoric, Dominicans used the rumored rebelliousness of the last Taíno chief, Enriquillo, as the national symbol of sacrifice and bravery. Dominican patriotism became dependent upon the Indian as the national hero in the nineteenth century at the cost of the national memory of the Blacks who were ultimately responsible for Dominican sovereignty.

The nineteenth century's ideology of excluding Blacks fostered a sense of shame of one's African heritage and it became an insurmountable obstacle of denial for the Dominican Mulatto while making any expression of Blackness in literature a mere impossibility. Even during the government of a "Black" president with a French surname, Ulises Heureaux, Dominican writers of the late nineteenth century found themselves bound to the literary traditions in which the African slave and his descendents were simply "disappeared."

Chapter Two

The Black as Subject in Dominican Literature of the Early Twentieth Century

Compared to the rest of Latin America, it is evident that the desire to declare intellectual and political independence from Spain began much later in the Dominican Republic. The island's history and negrophobia discussed in the previous chapter explain why Dominicans insisted that they were an extension of the European continent. For many creoles, the geographical separation from Spain led them to emphasize the cultural characteristics they had in common with their Spanish ancestors. The color of their skin and other physical features could vary, but the one element that remained constant from generation to generation was their language. Language became the "unifying principle" that defined the Hispanic "race" for Dominicans as well as for other Latin Americans (Piedra 307). The fact that Africans and Indians could learn Spanish resulted in their cultural assimilation and social integration. Consequently, the discourse of *hispanidad* became an effective means of unifying a profoundly syncretic society.

The one aspect of Dominican culture that appears to have eluded the Dominicans' hispanized self-portrait, however, is the Africanized Spanish they

speak. In fact the Spanish spoken in the Dominican Republic today has lexical similarities derived from an ethnic and cultural fusion of the contact between black Africans and white Spaniards (Caamaño de Fernández 29). Although there is a consensus that the Dominicans, regardless of race, had close contact with one another since the early days of colonization, Humberto López Morales denies that the Spanish spoken in the Dominican Republic is influenced greatly by African languages and that the Caribbean Spanish differs from the Spanish spoken in Andalucía (258). Dominican ethno-historian Carlos Andújar Persinal explains the attitude of his compatriots by observing:

> El dominicano, por lo común, rechaza esas raíces negras, generando como ha de esperarse en un pueblo de una alta presencia mulata, pero profundamente alienado... En nuestro caso, esta distorsión ha ido creando una especie de racismo consciente e inconsciente, todo lo cual crea, en consecuencia, un rechazo implícito a todo lo que el dominicano hace y tiene una raíz negra. (9)

Despite the continued debates about the influence of African languages in the Caribbean, López Morales does agree with Andújar Persinal that the dialect and vocabulary common to the Caribbean is equally common on the coasts of Venezuela and Colombia, where they also had a substantial slave population (30). Jorge Morel in his *Estudio lingüistico de Santo Domingo* concludes that the

elements of African culture in the Dominican Republic are obvious only sporadically in Dominican culture. Accordingly, "Los africanismos resultan limitados, pues carecen de prestigio social en las clases de mayor instrucción. Aunque creemos en la eventual desaparición de algunos creemos que mantendrán vigencia aquellos relacionados con la música y el baile" (198). Be that as it may, one cannot ignore that the Dominican Republic's obsession with projecting itself as European in its physical appearance, history, and literature has greatly hampered the development of Blackness ideologically. Thus, long before there existed a concept of Blackness in the Dominican Republic, there first existed an obsession with Whiteness.

European Literary Influences

From the late nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth century, Dominican poets were careful to follow the lead of established and emerging literary trends produced in Europe. Moreover, anthropological studies directed by Maurice Delafosse (1870-1926) and Blaise Cenrars (1887-1961) of France and Leo Frobenius (1873-1934) of Germany stimulated interest in Africa and Africans. The ethnologist Frobenius, in particular, dedicated his professional life to the investigation of African literary culture. His expeditions, which took place between 1904 and 1915, allowed him to compile and publish literature of the African oral tradition. His Black Decameron (1910) was the first to note the similarities between European themes of chivalry and fantasy in African

literature. As for Latin American literature, and that of the Dominican Republic in particular, the ethnographic, sociological and literary studies of these Europeans inspired the first works of the literary trend I identified in my "Introduction" as "Black-as-subject."

Black-as-subject literature described the lives and actions of African peoples from the perspective of the white imagination. Vicenta Caamaño de Fernández credits France to be the birthplace of this type of literature, citing *Batoula* (1921) by René Maran as one of the most significant works of this genre (88). The exotic nature of the African motivated interest in black culture which inspired the appearance of the African in Western literature. This new literature did little more than perpetuate the stereotypes of black people as an "indistinguishable mass" (Cobb 133). Because of the growing popularity of jazz and blues music, Europeans had become enamored with certain elements of Blackness exhibited specifically in the culture of the North American Black of the south at the start of the twentieth century. This European interest in Black arts brought recognition to the "Harlem Renaissance" of the United States, to the Black authors of the Lesser Antilles, and to the cultural, historical and sociological importance of the Black in the Caribbean. The Black was no longer invisible, and suddenly, certain characteristics of his Blackness were *en vogue*.[8]

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[8] Spaniard Federico García Lorca dedicated a book of poetry and essays to the Blacks he encountered during his only trip

Poesía negroide

Soon after the imitative forms of "Black talk" became popular in European literature, Puerto Rican and Cuban writers began writing poetry imitating African rhythms and creating symbols of Africa that were accepted as a type of American folklore. White Puerto Rican Luis Palés Matos published his negrista poetry, Pueblo negro in 1930, in the same year that Afro Cuban Nicolás Guillén published his Motivos de son. The presence of the African in a Caribbean setting emerged in poetry by means of repeated primary symbols that express Africanness through animals, voodoo, and primitiveness (Coulthard 77). The appearance of the Black as subject in literature emerged when the non-Blacks attempted to imitate in their poetry what they perceived to be elements of Blackness (e.g, language, rhythm, and rituals). The subjective exploitation of Blacks in the literature of Whites became known as poesía negroide, poetry with black themes consistent with European expectations. Because the former colonies in the Caribbean had substantial contact with the subjects of this new poetry, it was no surprise that many writers of the Greater Antilles recognized the existence of peoples of African descent in their nations and took advantage of their presence to learn "black talk" from them. Little of this literature, however, was authentically Black. Indeed, Richard Jackson considers the literature of this Black-as-subject period an example of "poetic negrism," the result of the exploitation of Black culture in the poetry of white authors. Jackson accuses the

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to the Americas in the early 1930s. Among those poems is "El rey de Harlem" in which García Lorca utilizes some of the

writers of poetic negrism of being little more than "good practitioners of skilled manipulation of language" while they attempted to imitate "black talk" using certain symbols and African-sounding words for rhythmic and musical effects combined with aesthetic elements of folklore and rituals particular to the Africans (The Black Image 41). Making the same observation, Vicenta Caamaño de Fernández explains:

> Formas imitativas de lo hispanonegroide lingüístico y folklórico manifestarán desde temprano a nivel popular y a nivel culto la interpretación y recreación artística del mundo del hombre de color, y servirán igualmente desde antaño para exponer y revelar condiciones anímicas, culturales y sociopolíticas que son propias de aquél. (31)

Despite the fact that Cubans were curious enough about their compatriots of African descent to conduct between 1916 and 1924 what Caamaño de Fernández considers "monumental investigative works" (88) on the contributions of Africans in Cuban culture, Dominican intellectuals participated in this type of vanguard literature only through imitation and repetition of fashionable models from abroad. The Dominican *negroide* poets recognized in contemporary anthologies are Domingo Moreno Jimenes (1894 –1966), Manuel del Cabral (1907-), Tomás Hernández Franco (1904-1952), Pedro Mir (1913-2000), and Rubén Suro (1916-). These Dominican writers demonstrate the evolution of

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most common symbols appropriate to this genre (See *Poeta en Nueva York*).

poesía negroide, which falls into three categories: superficial aestheticism, social protest, and the introduction of the New Antillian.

The poetry belonging to the first category is marked by an attempt to reproduce a folkloric air using aestheticism, exoticism, and false symbolism. The Black exists in much of the folklore of children's literature found in the Caribbean and Venezuela. In most cases, the historical explanations of when these nursery rhymes and children's games were created and why these Black characters were included has been lost forever. Yet, the fact that they exist side by side with the poetry of this literary movement is proof of the perseverance of the Black as subject throughout Dominican literary history.[9]

Chronologically, the first of these Dominican *negroide* poets is Domingo Moreno Jimenes. Vicenta Caamaño de Fernández specifically mentions his book of poetry, *Obras poéticas. Del gemido a la fragua* (1879), as containing various poems (e.g, "Siesta", "Maestra", "El haitiano", "Oleo" and "Islas mentales") that contain elements of the above-mentioned superficiality (83-86). Nevertheless, he is not included here among the other authors of *poesía negroide* because the Black is only rarely the subject in his poetry, and therefore, his participation in the development of literary blackness is not as significant as that of the others.

Manuel del Cabral

Manuel del Cabral is the Dominican Republic's most prolific writer of

negroide poetry and has poems that exemplify all three categories in its evolution.[10] In the first category, the *cocolo* has only an aesthetic function in the poem "Aire negro."

> Cantan los cocolos bajo los cocales.
> Ya la piel del toro muge en el tambor.
> Los temibles lirios de sus carcajadas:
> Sus furiosas lunas contra el nubarrón.
>
> Las cocolas cantan cánticos calientes,
> Cantos que retuercen vientres de alquitrán
> Y entre sus corpiños tiemblan cocos negros
> que a los cocolitos vida blanca dan. (*Trópico negro* 17)

In this poem, the most obvious characteristics are the use of alliteration and rhyme. The rhythm of the poem is maintained throughout by the use of the words beginning with the same sounds; i.e., *cantan, cocolos, cocales*, etc. The poem illustrates the shallow stereotypes associated with the *cocolo* woman. She is depicted as sensual and exotic with a slightly erotic reference to her "*cánticos calientes*" and the bouncing of her breasts. More importantly, when del Cabral refers to the *cocolas* breasts as "cocos negros," he undermines maternal

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[9] Several books on folkloric literature in the Dominican Republic have been published, but I have found two books extremely helpful with his study of the development of *poesía negroide*: Edna Garrido de Boggs' *Folklore infantil de Santo Domingo* (1980) and *Poesía popular dominicana* (1938) written by Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi.

[10] Rubén Suro is chronologically the first Dominican to publish books of *poesía negroide*. I have placed him out of order chronologically and will deal with him later in the development of *poesía negroide* because much of his poetry was published many years after having been written, allowing Manuel del Cabral's poetry to be published first. For this reason, I believe it is best to begin the study of this type of poetry with Manuel del Cabral, who is credited as being the father of this genre in the Dominican Republic.

symbolism with a burlesque image designed to provoke laughter rather than offer any real insight into life in a *cocolo* community.

His book entitled *Compadre Mon* (1940) is an epic poem that is divided into three long parts, each containing several sections. In the first part, entitled "Compadre Mon en Haití", the poem "Sol gallero. Poema 29" reflects the superficiality that characterized much of the *poesía negroide.* Despite the inclusion of some African words, African culture is trivialized:

> Y Bolo y Colú:
>
> Ya le uno la rumba, y el otro el vudú,
>
> Ni el bongó de Haití
>
> Tan caliente el aire pone por aquí…
>
> - Habla, bembú.
>
> ¿Cuánto va tú?
>
> - Tu bolsillo al mío,
>
> - Habla, bembú. (43)

El *bongó*, an African drum, *vudú* (a syncretic African religion), and the term *bembú*, which means thick-lipped, are often used in *poesía negroide.* Del Cabral intended to create Africanness in this depiction of Haiti by using rhythms identified with Black communities.

Besides its limitations, however, several poems from *Compadre Mon* constitute the initiation of the second category in the development of *poesía negroide.* In this second category, there emerges a recognition of the human

qualities of the Black and a tone of social protest that denounces the exploitation suffered by Blacks. In "Pulula," del Cabral pays tribute to a Black laundress. In the following excerpt, there are still a few characteristics of the first category of the evolution of *negroide* poetry. Mention of the voodoo deity Bocó and the use of the *amuleto* (a bone amulet worn around a person's neck for good luck) are used to identify the Black subject as Haitian and therefore, African. However, the author acknowledges the black woman's difficulties, which differentiates it from the poetry of the first category.

¡Qué Bocó sobó tu hueso,
que tampoco tiene olfato:
no huele aún que el sudor
te lo compran barato…
ni siquiera por antojo
ha querido ver por qué
le lavas hasta los pies
con el agua de tus ojos!

Pulula, también Pulula:
se ve que es de piedra el dios,
cuando pides por los dos…
¡Tú la carga y tú la mula!

Si con tan blanco amuleto

tan oscura suerte cargas,

un hueso negro, tal vez,

Te daría suerte blanca. (119)

The theme of exploitation is not limited to white Dominicans who control Blacks. In "Trago," del Cabral accuses the white foreigner of exploiting the black worker and in "El herrero," he condemns the *cocolo* and other English speaking Blacks for exploiting the Haitian worker.

Mira este negro. ¿Lo ves? Ganándose un cobre diario,

Hay quien le baja el salario por el color de la piel…

Allí nomás, donde el negro masca inglés,

Está en América y es lo que más – sin ella, a veces-

A América se parece.

Pero ya con brazo o manco, no le da reposo el blanco,

Y cuando le da reposo, si no está muerto de filo,

Descansa, pero en tranquilo… calabozo.

Y así explotado hasta el juego, perro el siglo, y yo su hueso…

El negro si no está preso, siempre está bajo del verdugo

Y mi silencio de hierro se me rompe ante el haitiano.

¿Por qué el hombre se hace hermano más que del negro, del perro?

Y le dije: buen mañé, por hombre que soy, no dejo

Que hagan blanco en tu pellejo; es más que por ti, por todos

Que te defiendo; sé yo que no es por tu piel, sino

por algo qué está en el fondo. (144)

Clearly, the second category of *poesía negroide* differs from the first because it allows greater depth into the depiction of the Black. The poet replaces the stereotypical images of Black life that were obvious in "Cánticos negros" of the first category with words of social protest. Blacks in this poetry are worthy of support from Whites because they are seen for the first time as human beings.

Rubén Suro

The third category in the development of Black-as-subject poetry is characterized by an expression of the New Antillian, the Mulatto. The first Dominican poet to contribute to this stage was Rubén Suro. Suro's book of poetry, *Poemas de una sola intención* (1984), contains more than 30 poems written between 1934 and 1968, all of which are examples of *poesía negrista.* Two of these poems, "Rabiaca del haitiano que espanta mosquitos" (1934) and "Monólogo del negro con novia" (1935), fit well in the first catcgory of *poesía negroide.* Four others, "Negro Antillano, constructor de carreteras" (1935), "Letanía del cañaveral" (1939), "Proletario" (1939) and "Sonsón, bailarín mulato" (1937), are superb examples of *poesía negroide*'s third phase.

Although many of Suro's poems of the middle to late 1930s have a Marxist interest, "Rabiaca del haitiano que espanta mosquitos" (1934) and "Monólogo del negro con novia" (1935) differ from the others because they do

not show any particular interest in describing the plight of the Black worker. In these poems, Suro allows the Black to speak through a Haitian dialect as evidenced in "Rabiaca del haitiano que espanta mosquitos," where the poetic voice identifies itself as Haitian in a monologue with a mosquito.

> Yo diga biolente:
>
> ¡animá del diable
>
> que e lo que tu hable!
>
> ¡laguese de aquí...
>
> y si no se laga...
>
> me bua di p'Haiti! (31)

The superficiality and stereotypical treatment of Blacks that characterize *negroide* poetry are evident in this poem's reference to a Black who talks to a mosquito while warning him that if he bites a black man he will be poisoned.

In "Al negro antillano, constructor de carreteras," Suro recognizes the forgotten highway worker during the period of construction and modernization that Trujillo began in the 1930s. Suro laments the exploitation of the worker from whose efforts the country benefits, but the Black worker himself is never justly compensated. An important innovation that characterizes this third stage of *poesía negroide* is that the Black is no longer the foreign born and marginalized Haitian or *cocolo*. Rather, it is often impossible to distinguish between the Haitian, *cocolo* or Dominican subject because there are no longer any linguistic clues. In this way, the *negrista* poet, without appropriating Blackness, expresses

a sincere concern for the exploited Black worker of any origin, suggesting a broader diasporic perspective.

Eres quien haces las rutas
¡y es raro que tu las sigas!
No ves más que polvoreadas
Y te espantan las bocinas. (17)

In his "Letanía del cañaveral," Suro criticizes foreign investment that has returned the Black sugar cane worker to his condition of virtual slave while the foreign companies, all of them from the United States, make huge profits.

El azúcar de mi tierra
tiene sabores de sal...
¡la Antilla canta en la "mocha"
y sangra el cañaveral!
El azúcar de mi tierra
tiene sabor de retama...
¡el negro de sol a sol
y el blanco de siesta en cama!
El azúcar de mi tierra
tiene colores muy blancos...
¡las angustias se refinan
y el "over time" llena bancos!
El azúcar de mi tierra

Acíbar del paladar,

Entre los gritos del hambre

¡como diablos va a endulzar!

El azúcar de mi tierra

sabe lo mismo que yo,

¡que *el de aquí sembró* la caña

y *el de allá ...* la cosechó. (19)

Suro defends the exploited Black and the Dominican worker with a poetic voice that is suspiciously Marxist. However, it is only in his poem "Proletario" that he actually mentions Marx and Lenin in his call to arms:

¡Aguardas al mesías, que aunque lo crean utópico,

saldrá un Karl Marx de América o algún Lenin del Trópico! (25)

Notwithstanding some European influences in Suro's poetry of the late 1930s, his principal contribution to poesía *negrista* was addressing the element of race mixture in a Caribbean context.

Although Suro's "Sonsón, bailarín mulato" shares some characteristics of *poesía negroide*'s stereotypical use of musical instruments, exoticism, African words and African religious terms, this poem distinguishes itself from the earlier poetry because it expresses the nature of *mulatez* in the Dominican Republic. At the same time that the poem describes in erotic detail the movement of the bodies to the African *rumba*, its objective is to celebrate the mixture of the two races, as Nicolás Guillén did in his Afro-Cuban poetry.

Sangre ardiente. Hembra y ron

(detrás, ¡La Superstición!)

las razas se dan las manos

en el son.

Negro y blanco son hermanos

del otro lado del son,

con el ron

sin el ron

con el son

sin el son. (35)

Despite Suro's interest in the Mulatto, he cannot be credited with renewing the Mulatto's importance in the twentieth century. This honor belongs to one of his contemporaries, Tomás Hernández Franco. Much like Galván did in the late nineteenth century with his novel *Enriquillo* (1882), Tomás Hernández Franco proposed to redefine Dominican identity. However, this time, the Indian would not be resurrected.

Tomás Hernández Franco

Tomás Hernández Franco's poetry exemplifies the third category of *poesía negroide* while, at the same time, maintaining a loyalty to the features of the first category. The novelty in his poetry, unlike the ones previously mentioned, is the theme of racial mixture. His first book of *poesía negroide*,

Canciones del litoral alegre, was published in 1936. However, it is his epic poem *Yélida* (1942) for which he is most remembered. This poem narrates the history of *mulatez* or racial mixture in the Caribbean. More importantly, it argues that the Mulatto of the Greater Antilles was "supremely different from everyone else in other places that was a product of the White and the Black" (Hernández Franco 24-25, translation mine). Hernández Franco differentiated the Afro-American of the United States and the Afro-Caribbean of the Lesser Antilles from the Afro-Caribbean of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic largely because of his belief that the former surrendered to the protestant culture of the European, whereas the latter rebelled until his death. Because of this belief, he described in his poetry actions that reflect his Black characters' rebellious spirit.

Yélida tells the story of a Norwegian man named Erick who marries a Haitian woman, Madame Suquí, after she prays to Legba and Ogún, two of the most powerful deities of the African pantheon. The poem makes several stark contrasts between the two main characters; i.e., Erick is extremely white and Madame Suquí is extremely black; Erick is catholic and Madame Suquí practices voodoo. Notwithstanding these obvious differences, the birth of their daughter Yélida represents the creation of a new race; in this way, the poem celebrates *mulatez* as an integral part of the country's cultural history. Hernández Franco suggests that both European and African culture and religion have positively influenced the Dominican Republic. In the prologue of the third edition of the book *Apuntes sobre la poesía popular y poesía negra en Las Antillas* (1999),

Andrés L. Mateo quotes Hernández Franco who explains:

> Compruebo el hecho cierto y agrego: he considerado al negro como el más vital, el más fundamental, vehículo de supervivencia del indio en las Antillas y al mismo tiempo y en la misma zona, como el más vital, fundamental, vehículo de supervivencia para el español. De todos ellos ha surgido el mulato, con una ilimitada escala de graduación de pigmento, superiorísimo a cualquiera de los tres en el marco de sus islas, especialmente adaptado a su clima, especialmente adaptado a su lucha, especialmente adaptado a su vida. (13)

His *mulata* character, Yélida, is a step forward and a step away from the stereotypical primitiveness of the Africanized Haitian so evident in the promiscuous and superstitious Madame Suquí.

The poem is separated into five distinct sections that provide the history leading up to the creation of a Mulatto people on the island of Hispaniola. The first two sections depict the characters stereotypically—Erick as the innocent white man seduced by the promiscuous and superstitious Haitian prostitute Madame Suquí—and sets the tone for the story that will unfold.

> Erick tenía veinte años y era virgen dentro de sus botas de hule
> y creía que los niños nacen así como los peces
> en la noche quieta de los reposos del mar
> pero el tío contaba entre dientes largas historias de islas

con puertos bruñidos y azules

donde centenares de mujeres desnudas subían carbón al barco

donde había pájaros verdes hirviendo de palabras obscenas

y donde en la noche florecía el burdel con hondo aliento de tam-
tam. (11-12)

The naïveté of Erick is contrasted with the savvy of the Haitian prostitute who has summoned his soul from Norway to her; his will to control his destiny is futile against the power of the African gods to whom Madame Suquí prays:

Erick amó a Suquiete entre accesos de fiebre

escalofríos y palideces y tomaba quinina en grandes tragos de tafiá

para sacarse de la carne a la muchacha negra

para ahuyentarla de su cabeza rubia

para que los brazos y el cuerpo se le fuera

aquel pulido y agrio olor de bronce vivo y de jungla
borracha

para poder pensar en su playa noruega con las barcas volteadas

como ballenas muertas.

Pero Suquiete lo amaba demasiado porque era blanco y rubio

Y cambió el amuleto de mamaluá Clarise

Por el corazón de una gallina negra

Que Erick bebió en viernes bajo la luna llena con su tafiá y su
quinina

Y muy pronto los casó el obispo francés

Mientras en la montaña el papaluá Luipié

Cantaba el canto de la Guinea y bebía la sangre de un chivato
blanco. (21-22)

Upon Erick's death, his soul attempts to return to Norway, but is impeded by the power of the Black gods who wish to keep him on the island.

Viajeros por los hondos caminos del subsuelo adornados de
tumbas

donde dialoga el fósil con la raíz podrida

y el hueso suelto espera la trompeta

y se hace oscuro el secreto del agua

que lava las pupilas insomnes del mineral perdido

por la grieta y la gruta y el estrato

los dioses de leche y nube con el sexo de niño

buscaron al otro dios de los mil nombres

el dios negro del atabal y la azagaya

comedor de hombres constelado de muertes

Wangol del cementerio y del trueno

el dueño del ojo vidriado del zombí y la serpiente. (42)

Although the Nordic gods pursue possession of Erick's European blood, the existence of Yélida as the first example of *mulatez* has made it impossible for

them to recapture European culture. The Afro-Caribbean represents the appropriation of European culture in its Americanized form.

Although Hernández Franco's poetic history of *mulatez* differs only slightly from the superficial Black-as-subject poetry of the first category, *Yélida* is placed with the poetry of the third category due to the poem's theme of *mulatez.* A significant amount of this poem emphasizes the negative stereotypes that depicted Black and Haitian women in the poetry of del Cabral. However, the character of Yélida was meant to be accepted as a depiction of Afro-Caribbean life, a depiction that accepts both an African past and an Afro-Caribbean present.

Negrista literature

Hernández Franco was the white Dominican author who explained how Africans contributed to Dominican identity. However, his perspective was not the only one to establish a link between Dominicans and Africans. As another example of *poesía negroide* in the Dominican Republic, there exists a facet that is called *poesía negrista*, not to be confused with the English word "negrism." The *negrista* authors examined in this chapter, Pedro Mir and Ramón Marrero Aristy, admit that Blackness is an essential part of Dominicanness. Although many *negrista* writers are Mulattos, as is the case with Mir and Marrero Aristy, they do not necessarily appropriate Blackness for themselves. It is for this reason that these poets are placed in the same category with the white writers who used the Black as the subject in their works.

Pedro Mir

Beginning in the early 1930s, with Trujillo as president, the majority of literature was dedicated to praising the Dominican dictator, the "Redeemer." Although Pedro Mir, the first of two *mulato* authors to be presented this chapter, began publishing in the late 1930s, he adamantly opposed Trujillo's government, and his poetry made no mention of Trujillo. Like Hernández Franco, Mir was most interested in redefining the Caribbean identity and although he never mentioned *mulatez,* his use of *trigueña* had the same connotation. Mir neither romanticized European descent nor proposed to use literature to denounce Haitian influence on the Dominican Republic, nor did he abandon social protest in his literature. His most famous poem on the theme of the *trigueña* was "Poema del llanto trigueño" (1938), a piece dedicated to the Dominican factory worker.

> Es la calle del Conde asomada a las vidrieras,
>
> aquí las camisas blancas,
>
> allá las camisas negras,
>
> ¡y dondequiera un sudor emocionante en mi tierra!
>
> ¡Qué hermosa camisa blanca!
>
> Pero detrás: la tragedia.
>
> El monorítmico son de los pedales sonámbulos,
>
> el secreto fatídico y tenas de las tijeras.
>
> Es la calle el Conde asomada a las vidrieras,
>
> aquí las piyamas blancas,

allá las piyamas negras,

¡y dondequiera exprimida como una fruta mi tierra!

¡Qué cara piyama blanca!

Pero señor, no es la tela,

es la historia del dolor escrita en ella con sangre,

es todo un día sin sol por cortar veinte docenas,

es una madre muriendo el presente del hambre,

es una madre soñando el porvenir de la escuela.

Es la calle el Conde asomada a las vidrieras,

aquí los ensueños blancos,

allá las verdades negras,

¡y dondequiera ordeñada como una vaca mi tierra!

Rompo el ritmo, me llora el verso, me ruge la prosa

¿Es que no hay nadie que sepa la historia de las camiseras? (29-30)

The first part of the poem describes the Dominican reality in a series of metaphors that depict one important dichotomy: white dreams versus black realities. His Dominican worker, *la trigueña*, is not only the symbol of exploitation, but is a clear expression of the depth and vitality of the poem's central figure. Unlike previous descriptions of Blacks who were mere caricatures rather than real people, this *trigueña* suffers, sacrifices, dreams, and refuses to succumb to the stereotypes traditionally used to deny Blacks their humanity. Mir's reference to the popular downtown commercial district of *El Conde* further

suggests protest against national politics and exploitative business practices. The mulatto woman, full of dreams of having a better life in the city for herself and for her children, comes to *El Conde* from the *campo* to work. Despite her best efforts and sacrifices, and though she never accomplishes her goal, she is the epitome of dignity, hard work, and a relentless spirit that will later serve as a model for future generations to emulate.

The concern for social justice is an important feature in *negrista* literature that is apparent not only in Mir's poetry, but also in the only novel written by Ramón Marrero Aristy. The novel *Over,* bravely written during the height of the *trujillato* in 1939, the popular name of the thirty-one year dictatorship of Rafael Leonidas Trujillo, describes the inhumane and exploitative treatment of the farm laborer. It is included with Mir's poetry to demonstrate the fact that social issues in literature were not limited to any particular genre.

Ramón Marrero Aristy

Ramón Marrero Aristy's *Over* is a novel of the Latin American *Bildungsroman* genre. Unlike the European pattern, in Latin America the story of the protagonist traces a "coming of age" that ultimately leads to disenchantment and a rejection of the adult world. Specifically, the novel recounts the experiences of the young and lazy protagonist who for lack of better opportunities, takes a job running a company store for the Black cane cutters employed by a foreign sugar company. The novel takes place during less than a year, from the time Daniel

leaves his *pueblo*—where he is considered the good-for-nothing son of the *cacique* (most powerful man of the town)—to find a job working in the *batey*, to the point where he decides to abandon his mentally ill wife to pursue a new life outside of the misery of hunger, unemployment, and desperation that he has come to know.

The people who live in the *batey* are desperate Blacks (Haitians, *cocolos* and Dominicans) who have resigned themselves to accepting the conditions in which they live because they have assumed that life can get no better than the present. According to the text, "La mayor parte son haitianos que no quieren abandonar la República; los menos son criollos gastados que han perdido la voluntad de marchar a otro sitio. Todos juntos forman una parte de la humanidad cuya hambre no se apaga jamás" (162).

Over is autobiographical and is based on the author's experience as a *bodeguero* (shopkeeper) at a young age in a *batey* in La Romana province. Marrero Aristy was familiar with the abuses which foreign Black labor suffered at the hands of the North American industrialists, and used his novel to give testimony of those abuses. The novel bears witness to the injustices of the avaricious men represented by the symbol of the "over," the margin of profit that the stores must earn daily by unfairly raising the prices of the staples that the underpaid worker needs for his basic sustenance. The field workers are *cocolos* and Haitians; the overseers and *bodegueros* are overwhelmingly Dominican; and the owners and managers of the companies are all Whites, either Germans or

North Americans. Daniel serves as the guide on the reader's journey into life on a *batey*, allowing insight into the various cruelties for which these foreign sugar companies are infamous. Daniel changes from the selfish disinterested son of a wealthy man to a *bodeguero* (shop owner) whose amount of power parallels that of his father's, and ultimately, he becomes the speaker for the proletariat.

Although some critics could find no innovation in this novel, Daniel's critical commentaries throughout the novel hint at an emerging Marxist ideology. Daniel notes the dehumanizing effect that the *batey* has on all of its workers. From the beginning of the novel, the reader is made aware of the injustices imposed by the wealthy foreign companies upon the poor and predominantly Black workers. Marrero Aristy establishes a tone that relates race to the type of treatment one receives on the *batey*. When Daniel enters the *Central azucarero* for the first time in search of a job, he recalls being told that Mr. Robinson, the manager, once fired a man simply for saying "Buenos días" to him "debido a su costumbre de no mirar ni saludar a quien no pertenezca a su raza" (20). Once accustomed to life on the *batey*, Daniel becomes more empathetic to the treatment of men in general as he describes the animal-like conditions of the starving workers who arrive to the *batey* from Haiti and the British West Indies. Thus, he laments: "En un corral de alambre de púas, encerrados como ganado, vigilados por los policías del central que rondan cajijuntos, armados de revólver y machete, son contados y apartados, para ser remitidos a las diversas colonias" (76).

The novel's criticism is not limited to Daniel Comprés' descriptions of

the inhumane conditions that the Black worker suffers in order to have the privilege of working at this *batey* for his white employers who export their profits. Marrero Aristy also allows several supporting characters to speak directly about the lack of humanity on the *batey* from their personal point of view. *El inglesito*, a nameless *cocolo* character of the novel, criticizes his compatriots for being unable to free themselves of slavery like the rest of the world.

> ¿Quién escapa de las manos de Inglaterra? Los negros de mi país no aprendieron nada de la guerra mundial, que debió enseñarles mucho. En la guerra quedó demostrado que el fusil manejado por el blanco y el fusil manejado por el negro son igualmente poderosos, y eso ha debido sacudirles, servirles de ejemplo para comprender que no hay razas superiores ni razas inferiores. Estos países son tierras de promisión para los blancos, desde que Colón puso el pie aquí. Ayer esclavizaron a los indios, los despojaron de sus tierras y su oro, violentamente, y les dieron muerte cazándolos con perros, porque entonces las cosas se hacían en esa forma. Hoy viene a despojarnos y a servirse de nosotros, "solicitando" permisos de los gobiernos—respaldados por su gran nación—para hacer inversiones "que favorecerán al país," pero el fin y los resultados son los mismos. Ya no traen negros del Africa, porque no hay necesidad de ir a buscarlos tan lejos, ni de pagarlos tan caros. Las ideas de Padre las Casas se pueden seguir practicando con haitianos y cocolos alquilados. (98)

In several instances, Daniel's testimony also refers to the anonymous black voices

of the batey that complain of the lack of opportunities for a better life outside the *batey*: "Con frecuencia les oía decir: --En este tiempo hay que soportar patadas, si es necesario, para no perder lo que nos proporciona el pan" (193). Moreover, some of Daniel's Dominican friends comment on the situation:

> Los gobiernos castigan a los desesperados que matan a los explotadores y cometen actos de terrorismo, sin entrañas. Cegados por su fiebre de atesorar dinero, y empecinados en conceptos de superioridad racial, explotan, oprimen y siembran tal rencor en los hombres, que cuando el día del estallido inevitable llegue, la venganza de las masas lo arrasará todo como un huracán!.. (197)

The latter comment is probably the most threatening in the novel because it was not made by a Black, who would be considered a foreigner, but rather by a Dominican who sympathizes with the rural Black worker. The fact that Marrero Aristy does not refer to the nationality of the exploited worker is what compares him thematically to the poetry of Pedro Mir. Haitian, *cocolo,* or Dominican, the rural Black worker is praised in the poetry of Mir, and in this novel his participation in Dominican modernization is acknowledged.

Though Marrero Aristy does not account for the large Haitian population, it is well known that in the rural countryside the majority of people in the Dominican Republic was still Haitian at the time of the novel's publication. Despite the efforts of nineteenth-century Dominican politicians to reach an agreement over the borders that separated the Dominican Republic and Haiti,

Haitians continued to penetrate what Dominicans believed to be their territory for more than a century. These Haitians had lived apart from Dominican society because they believed these territories were an extension of Haiti. With jobs in the rural areas being extremely scarce, the cheap labor provided by the Haitians was preferred both to the *cocolo,* of which there were too few, and to the rural Dominican. For motives that are still uncertain today, Trujillo interpreted the existence of Haitians on Dominican territory as an act of invasion and ordered *all* of them executed in 1937.[11]

Over has been praised as a "poema épico en prosa" and a "novela símbolo" by some Dominican critics and has been completely ignored by others. Although the Haitian and *cocolo* do speak in dialect in this novel, the use of their dialects is still stereotypical and in accordance with the prejudices of the times that ridiculed their inability to communicate well in Spanish. In effect, the voices used to denounce the inhumanity of the *batey* speak in perfect standard Spanish while the rural dialect of the Dominican of the Cibao is disallowed. Notwithstanding the muffled voices of the marginalized, this novel still depicts a sub-culture of the Dominican Republic that may be unknown to the urban Dominican, yet is very much a part of the Dominican reality.

Over did not openly criticize the *trujillato*, yet the censorship imposed by the dictator kept the public from discovering this novel. Marrero Aristy enjoyed a very public political life during the *trujillato* that eventually allowed him great

[11] The fact that Marrero Aristy neglects to mention this massacre that occurred two years before the publication of his novel may imply that his novel was written long before it was published.

literary fame amongst Dominican intellectuals. At first, Trujillo tolerated him because of the dictator's desire to give the United States the impression of being a democratic leader (Graciano 58). However, when Trujillo and the United States came to have irreconcilable political differences, Trujillo's henchmen assassinated Marrero Aristy. As he lived the very same story that he told in *Over,* Marrero Aristy's career abruptly ended.

Dominican literature in the Black-as-subject period, beginning in the early 1930's, began as an imitative literary form that attempted to recreate "black talk," identified by rhythmic meter and African sounding words, as well as a number of antiquated notions about what Africanness was. Manuel del Cabral is the most popular of the Dominican poets of "poetic negrism," and his poetry exemplifies the existence of a true evolution of the Black-as-subject period. Although the Black remained a subject who was unable to speak for himself throughout this literary period, Pedro Mir and Ramón Marrero Aristy attempted to speak in defense of the Black worker who was becoming more visible in society. In doing so, they helped redefine Dominican identity in the twentieth century by allowing for a broader vision of Dominicanness. This more inclusive definition acknowledged for the first time an African past.

Notwithstanding their contributions to the evolution of *poesía negroide* and Afro-Dominican literature, Pedro Mir and Ramón Marrero Aristy never really affirmed their own Blackness. Both men were Mulattos, and although concerned about injustices that all poor men suffered, neither spoke openly of his African

heritage, nor equaled himself to the Haitian, the *cocolo* nor the Black Dominican. Since officially all Blacks were considered foreigners during the presidency of General Rafael Leonidas Trujillo, the concept of Blackness was alien to Dominicans. Therefore, the Black remained an outsider, a visible but mute element of the Dominican population that was reduced to merely a caricature in Dominican literature.

Chapter Three

Haitians, *Cocolos* and African Americans: The Authors of Contemporary Afro-Dominican Literature

The Afro-Dominican existed and still exists in the Dominican Republic despite a national rhetoric that makes great efforts to deny the African origins of its citizens. Haitians, *cocolos*, African Americans, and descendants of slaves from Cuba all began to increase the already large population of people of African descent of the country beginning in the nineteenth century. The descendants of these people who came to work the land either as slaves, freed men, or *cimarrones* (runaway slaves) today call the Dominican Republic home. Nevertheless, some of these descendants are part of the uncounted population of *negros* that are not considered officially "Dominican" due to laws that do not recognize the existence of "undocumented" workers and their families. These "others" are consistently labeled "foreigners."

The Dominican Republic, like any other country, has laws that help to define who can be considered a citizen. Legally, children born to persons "in transit" can not claim Dominican citizenship. Therefore, tourists and visitors who may or may not be in the country legally can not claim citizenship for themselves or for children who may be born during their visit. Of course, this law protects the Dominican government from the unnecessary expense of providing healthcare

and education to the thousands of illegal immigrants whom the government estimates are on the eastern part of the island. However, this law also serves to deny those same services to hundreds, perhaps thousands, of undocumented people who have lived on the island for generations, even before this law was created.

The majority of these people of African descent had grandparents or great-grandparents from Haiti or the islands in the Lesser Antilles who came to the Dominican Republic to work on the railroad or the plantations. Today, most of these people's descendants have assimilated into what is called "Dominican culture." They have married Dominicans and their children bear Hispanic names. However, in many cases, this assimilation has led to "deculturation." As a result of social influences, some families have lost touch with their heritage and have accepted the ethnic and cultural ideal of the Dominican majority which supports a concept of culture that is based upon the European and indigenous beginnings romanticized in the nineteenth century.

In her article, "Merging of Two Cultures: The Afro-Hispanic Immigrants of Samaná, Dominican Republic," E. Valerie Smith cites several reasons for the common occurrence of the Hispanicizing of English surnames. Smith alleges that the assimilation was not always voluntary. In her investigations, she found many families who said that first names and/or surnames of family members had been changed on official records because of recording errors. Spanish-speaking clerks often "corrected" the spelling of the English names of babies on birth certificates

by translating them; also, the barely literate applicants may have misspelled their own names on official documents (12). Because changing official documents could be expensive (if possible at all), and because a Spanish surname relieves the Black immigrant from the stigma of being a foreigner in the country, many immigrants simply kept the new names. This fact may explain why official Dominican census records erroneously declare the black population of the descendants of immigrants to be small.

Because the peculiar concept of Dominican nationalism has emphasized a culture constructed to oppose everything Black, Dominicans are very quick to cite the many differences between the Haitian culture and their own. Dominicans are Catholic, they say, while Haitians practice African religions; Dominicans speak Spanish, while Haitians speak what their neighbors consider a "deformed" form of French; Dominicans are physically and culturally European, while Haitians are completely "African." Thus, when proposing the need for a dialogue about literature and cultural identity, Antonio Lockward Artiles, a *cocolo*, cited Dominican sociologist Pablo Mariñez who states that

> la élite intelectual dominicana no reconoce la existencia del color negro en el país sino el llamado 'color indio' mientras esa élite exalta la hispanidad y fomenta en el pueblo la ideología de que el negro es "el otro," el africano, el haitiano o el cocolo, es decir, el inmigrante de las islas de colonización inglesa o francesa. (1)

In effect, the "European" culture of the Dominicans is believed to be what separates them from the "savage" and "primitive" African culture of the Haitians. As explained in previous chapters, this absolute denial of African heritage within national identity has inhibited Dominican Blacks and Mulattos from affirming their African roots, whether it is in literature or any other aspect of life in general.

Notwithstanding efforts to (mis)represent the nation and Dominicanness, the Dominican Republic has never been without influences from African cultures. One must bear in mind that the Dominican Republic became the home to freed slaves from the United States during the second Haitian invasion from 1822-1844, to Haitians seeking jobs, and to West Indians (known pejoratively as *cocolos* in the Dominican Republic) beginning in the late nineteenth century, but primarily in the early twentieth century. The descendants of these men and women from diverse cultural backgrounds still reside in the Dominican Republic.

The province of Samaná, for example, has been the traditional home of the descendants of the estimated 6000-13,000 freed Black slaves from the United States who emigrated to the Dominican Republic by invitation from Haitian President Jean Pierre Boyer in the early 1820s. The majority of the first Blacks are believed to have either died during the trip or returned to the United States after discovering that the invitation to live in a Black nation meant doing the very same work they had done for a White slave master (Hoetnink 7). However, those who arrived and stayed on the island were absorbed by a Dominican population whose majority was of African descent. Although Dominican anthropologist

Fradique Lizardo cites that there were sixteen cities where these Blacks settled (85), the majority of them made their homes in the northern coastal area of Samaná Bay, forming the native English-speaking population of Samaná.

In her article about the immigrants of Samaná, E. Valerie Smith says that the "descendant families have become relatively acculturated to Dominican culture, establishing a cohesive sense of regional and national pride in society" (10). However, she sates that the English language forms a central part of their expression of individual culture and the family has served to perpetuate their *otherness* within Dominicanness. Though the *samanesas* consider themselves Dominicans, they function on the margins of Dominican society due mostly to the fact that the province is separated from Santo Domingo by a large mountain range that has helped them remain culturally autonomous.

Because much of the country remained scarcely populated, its borders, especially the northeastern and rural areas, were left easily accessible to invaders and allowed for the cultural "undesirables" to exist without assimilating to Dominican society. When the Dominican Republic claimed its independence from Spain, one of the first goals of the new presidency (Pedro Santana, 1844-1848) was to populate the country. In a governmental decree, Santana encouraged immigration both to populate the country and to "whiten" the Dominican "race" (Inoa 93).[12] This decree took several years to put into effect. The second president of the Republic to serve a full term, Buenaventura Báez

[12] Decree 123, which legalized immigration for Caucasians, was established on July 7, 1847.

(1849-1853), was actually the first to enforce this rule. Since 1850, "interest in attracting Whites to the Dominican Republic formed an important part of the governmental policy" (Inoa 94, translation mine). In 1875, the National Congress approved a law that forbade entry into the country by anyone but "hombres útiles y laboriosos que contribuyan material y moralmente a su progreso" (Inoa 95). Thus, Jews expelled from Russia were allowed to immigrate to the Dominican Republic, and in 1884, farmers from the Canary Islands also were invited to the Dominican Republic.

Although these efforts were designed to curb the immigration of Blacks to the country since the inception of the first Republic, the sugar industry was in need of workers. Because the new white immigrants were not willing to do the necessary work, the sugar industry of the 1870's was in a crisis without the cheap black labor (*braceros).* After having brought *braceros* from the Turk Islands, the first plantation was opened in 1872. Unfortunately, these Blacks were quickly returned to their country of origin, and the plantation was closed by the authorities for not having complied with the decree of 1867 which specified all Blacks as undesirables (Inoa 96). In his book about the *cocolos* of Santo Domingo, Julio César Mota Acosta cites the years between 1881 and 1889 as the period of the greatest demand for sugar in the European and North American markets, causing the first major migration of workers from the English and Dutch-speaking Antilles.

Despite the laws prohibiting it, the immigration of Black men from the English-speaking islands of the Lesser Antilles continued until the twentieth century. Eventually, the laws became less rigid and the Dominican government reluctantly supported the measures to increase the numbers of *braceros*. Mota explains that the Dominican sugar industry was booming in the early twentieth century, but the Dominican worker was not willing to work without better wages and conditions. For that reason, the principal players in sugar production, the white Europeans and North Americans, preferred importing labor from the Lesser Antilles as their source of cheaper labor (7-9).

North American sugar factory owners preferred the Haitians and cocolos for their familiarity with that type of work. The desperation of the hungry Haitian worker and his proximity to the sugar cane mills made him readily accessible. However, the protestant North American bosses considered the *cocolos* to be their best option because of religious similarities and the ability to communicate in English. Be that as it may, the fact that the foreign worker was preferred over the Dominican is the most likely cause for the renewed anti-Black sentiment in the Dominican Republic. With regard to the *cocolos*, they were not only hated because they were mistaken for Haitians due to their skin color. Rather, the *cocolo* still had very little in common, culturally speaking, with the Dominican: the *cocolo* worker was protestant, was dark-skinned like a Haitian, and did not speak Spanish.

Beginning in the 1920s, during the years leading to the Great Depression, all foreign-born workers were blamed for the difficult economic times suffered by the Dominican lower/rural class. The creation of an entrance tax that would be imposed upon all immigrants who were not Caucasian was the Dominican government's attempt to slow the rapid growth of Black workers. This racially motivated tax was justified as a way to "garantizar el nivel mulato de la tez y mejorar el color de la República Dominicana hacia un blanco puro" (Mota Acosta 13). Though considered somewhat less offensive than the Haitian, the *cocolo* was still Black and was perceived as a threat to the Dominican ideal of Spanish identity. Mota Acosta accuses the Dominican press of the early twentieth century of perpetuating the anti-*cocolo* sentiment. Citing from Santo Domingo's newspaper *El Tiempo,* Patrick Bryan records the negative publicity the *cocolos* received, first, by being referred to as "locusts," and also by accounting for half of the prison population on the island at the time (cited in Mota Acosta 24). In the national daily newspaper *Listín Diario* of December 1900, the *cocolos* were referred to as "negras nubes de mendigos" (black clouds of beggars) (Inoa 106).

One should bear in mind that the use of the word *cocolo* to identify these West Indians in the Dominican Republic was another example of the hatred that Dominicans expressed against these Black immigrants. As an issue of many debates, the meaning of *cocolo* is not easily understood. Inoa acknowledges that there are several popular theories. Some Dominicans believe that the term comes from a linguistic corruption of the word "Tórtola," which is one of the islands of

the Lesser Antilles from where many of the *cocolos* came. Therefore, it would be applied to all people of the West Indies. A second theory is that the word is applied to all Black people who arrived illegally to the island to work as *braceros*. In contrast, in the prologue to Julio César Mota Acosta's book *Los cocolos en Santo Domingo* (1977), the late Pedro Mir defined the word as "any Haitian that crossed the border" (6 translation mine). Clearly, the Dominican anti-*cocolo* sentiment stems from Dominican anti-haitianism. Furthermore, it can be no coincidence that despite Law 279 of 1832 that made immigration illegal and identified the importation of workers as a political and/or biological threat to Dominican security and whiteness, a crime punishable by substantive fines, *cocolo* immigration continued to be tolerated in the anti-Haitian environment that has characterized the Dominican Republic.

Law 279 "limited immigration of Blacks, people with physical illnesses, anarchists, Asians, Africans, people originally from Oceania, and all people from European colonies in the Americas" (Inoa 126). However, the Haitian immigrant was the largest of the Black population and was already present on the island. The Haitians were, of course, the chosen scapegoats for all of the Dominican Republic's political, social, and economic ills. If not for the general population's acceptance of the vilification of the Haitian, Trujillo's 1937 plan to massacre all Haitian workers in the country could not have been possible. The *corte*, as the massacre is traditionally called, was an official effort to rid the country of the African element that most threatened the physical and cultural similarities that

Dominicans believed they had with the Spanish. After the *corte,* many Haitians, some of whom had always lived in the Dominican Republic, returned to Haiti, leaving their jobs on the sugar plantations and the railroad. The *cocolo* was again needed as a *bracero*. When the *zafra* or the sugar harvest was over, the *cocolo* was legally obligated to return to his country of origin, but few could afford the trip home. Even today, in the provinces of San Pedro de Macorís, Puerto Plata, Azua, Barahona and El Seibo, the regions of the country where the sugar cane industry flourished in the nineteenth century, the *cocolo* is still the dominant Black immigrant group.

Literature of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century recognized the Haitian and *cocolo* presence in the Dominican Republic. However, both ethnic groups were far from being treated as anything more than caricatures. For the most part, this literature reflected anti-Black sentiment in the nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century, when *negrista* poetry was created, some Dominican poets chose themes of social protest to speak for the oppressed Black worker in general. However, it was not until the second half of the twentieth century that there was a Black voice to be heard. The literature was probably not given much attention then, because the authors were considered "foreign."

Poets and descendants of Black immigrants like the late Juan Sánchez Lamouth (1929-1969), of West Indian descent, and the late Antonio Viau Renaud (1942-1965), of Haitian decent, wrote about the plight of the immigrant in the

1960s. Other third generation *cocolo* writers include the lawyer Antonio Lockward Artiles (1943) and the historian Mateo Morrison (1947). Norberto James Rawlings (1945), of African American and West Indian descent, is one of the most famous contemporary Dominican writers of *cocolo descent* who revisits his heritage in his literature as a reminder of the history of Dominican immigration and the contributions of the country's immigrants.

Juan Sánchez Lamouth

During the later years of the *trujillato*, between 1948-1969, the son of a *cocolo* family, Juan Sánchez Lamouth (1929-1969) published and sold his poetry on the streets of Santo Domingo. Clearly autobiographical, his lyrical poetry strives to express the suffering he felt as a member of the oppressed working class in the Dominican Republic. Unfortunately, his fame emerged posthumously. Between 1954 and until his death in 1969, he published 12 volumes of poetry. His poetry is undeniably melancholic; the themes of death, loss and despair are repeated. However, all of his poems, regardless of theme, deal with the difficulties encountered by the common man. The majority of his poems propose resolving problems with the help of God.

Undoubtedly, as a member of a marginalized culture within the Dominican Republic, Sánchez Lamouth was painfully aware of his African origins. Consequently, his poetry did not depend upon the use of negative nomenclature common in the Dominican Republic. He simply addressed "the

humanity and the problems of the proletariat" (Jaime Julia 14) that is, the problems of the people of the lowest socio-economic strata.

In the poem "Los Lamouth," the poet celebrates his own *cocolo* family declaring "Esos Lamouth llegaron del Sur de Martinica vivieron trabajando, eran gentes muy buenas" (248). Despite their poverty, he contends that they were hard workers and interested in artistic endeavors. His poem also expresses a melancholy due to loss. In the first stanza, he states that the members of his maternal family were more honorable than the wealthier people, but were sad people who had lost their voice: "[e]ran seres muy tristes, perplejos en los tiempos/ se dejaban arrebatar hasta el silencio." Although this loss of voice is not explained in this poem, "A un grano de café verde" does offer insight into Sánchez Lamouth's feelings about being a black man in the Dominican Republic. As the poetic voice speaks to a coffee bean, its personification is obvious:

> Muy pronto serás negro como noche sin luna
>
> y tendrás más esperanzas que la del verde actual
>
> Oro negro del agro, rondan tu corazón
>
> ángeles bellos...
>
> Quién llegaría a pensar que tu serías
>
> el grano del monte que tienen más problemas
>
> Quizás llegaría un día en todos los países
>
> que un saco de café cueste más que un caballo,
>
> y en la amarilla Arabia hasta más que un Serrallo

> Gloria negra del campo desplazador del mal de las edades
>
> qué bien te cuidan las ciudades blancas
>
> qué bien peina la brisa tus antenas. (30)

With the personification of the new coffee bean, Sánchez Lamouth addresses loss by discussing the plight of the mature, black bean. The coffee bean, that will ultimately benefit the white man, is paralleled to the black man. In ancient civilizations, the bean was the symbol of reincarnation and the bean would symbolize the soul of a man. It can also symbolize an embryo and, therefore, may suggest the future birth of a man. The fact that Sánchez Lamouth speaks to the coffee bean in its green form only corroborates this ancient symbolic interpretation. In speaking to the green bean, the poet is actually directing his warning to the black man's soul. Therefore, he speaks to the future Black man that has not yet been born. This type of symbolism is common in Sánchez Lamouth's poetry. James J. Davis cites the use of it in his article "Ritmo poético y negritud" in which he analyzes the poem "Poema al café." The poet recognizes the coffee bean and the black man in the Americas as examples of items removed from Africa to be exploited on the American continent (182).

Sánchez Lamouth wrote several other poems that captured the conditions the exploited workers suffered in the Dominican Republic. In "El Oeste," he recreates the Black flight, the return of the *braceros* to Haiti after the *corte* of 1937. Many of the Haitians who were "returning" to Haiti out of fear of another *corte* had actually been born in the Dominican Republic. Because many had

entered the country illegally, Trujillo's *corte* made no distinctions between Haitians who had lived on the land for several generations and those who had recently entered in search of jobs. Border disputes between the two countries on the island had been violent since the nineteenth century.[13] The antagonism between Haitian and Dominican peasants escalated in the years following the *corte*. The abused and rejected masses of Blacks who returned to Haiti often crossed the border by walking through the shallow Río Massacre in the northwestern corner of the Dominican Republic. Reference to the masses of black immigrant workers as "black clouds" that appeared in the Dominican newspapers in the early twentieth century, reappears in this poem which portrays this difficult situation that characterized the Haitians.

> Cansados,
>
> llegaron a ese largo rincón de mariposas,
>
> acreditaron su amor a los reguíos,
>
> sintieron escozor del empedrado,
>
> sintieron la extremaunción de los conucos,
>
> nadie miró hacia el llano de los últimos vuelos.
>
> -Finalmente quedaron consagrados
>
> a ver correr las nubes-

---

[13] Thousands of Haitians entered the Dominican Republic to work on the plantations or the railroad in the twentieth century, but several thousand others had already lived and worked in the Dominican Republic since the nineteenth century. When criticized for the brutality towards the Haitians by foreign powers, Trujillo claimed no prior knowledge of the incident and justified it as a border dispute among peasants (Moya Pons 519).

Era el paisaje oscuro del oeste
con sus extremidades manchadas de abandono.

Llegaron al oeste,
el oeste era el mismo de los salmos humildes,
estaba la jaula azul nivelada al trapecio,
¿qué amazona del amor los aguardaba?

Nada,
ni un silvestre perfume siquiera.
el oeste está lleno de ranas amarillas.

Caminemos,
ya diremos,
el oeste huele al temor de Dios (72).

Sánchez Lamouth describes Haiti in purely negative terms. He opens the poem with a description of the masses arriving to the "rincón de mariposas," or corner of butterflies. This metaphor gives an image of the crowding of people in a very small area awaiting opportunity either to cross into the Dominican Republic

or to leave. Although the butterfly traditionally symbolizes metamorphosis or change as a positive symbol, in this poem the image is not optimistic.[14]

Haitian peasants often flock to the border towns awaiting opportunities to escape poverty in Haiti for what they imagine will be a better life in the Dominican Republic. Nevertheless, life in the Dominican Republic has not been positive either. The butterfly symbolizes the random, directionless existence of the Haitian workers. Now, forced to leave due to the feeling that they were no longer wanted in the Dominican Republic, they cross the border and never look back to the "llano de los últimos vuelos." They have no desire to look back on their lives in the Dominican Republic for fear of remembering the "sting" of being stoned (an allusion to having been ostracized); they also have no desire to remember their *conucos*, the small plots of land they would have to leave behind in order to return to a land that was foreign to them, i.e., Haiti. The conditions of extreme poverty that exist in the Republic of Haiti, as well as the unstable political situation, have encouraged a constant stream of Haitian emigration since the early twentieth century. For that reason Sánchez Lamouth describes Haiti as a "dark countryside with its extremities stained with abandon," a land neglected and abandoned by its poorest people because it has nothing to offer them.

"El Oeste" also includes elements of color symbolism in its negative descriptions.[15] The "jaula azul" is representative of the infinite emptiness found upon arriving to the final destination, Haiti. The blue cage is the Caribbean Sea

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[14] The image of the butterfly traditionally symbolizes the lives of the Maribal sisters who were killed during the *trujillato*

that surrounds the island of Hispaniola and prevents the Haitians from going further west. The entire island is symbolized by the trapeze as its position of suspension renders it dangerously inaccessible, while at the same time it is trapped within the confines of the Caribbean Sea. Since Haiti has nothing to offer these returning Haitians, and the Dominican Republic has deported them, the Haitians then feel trapped, as if in a cage, by the blue sea that surrounds the entire island.

Since the color yellow traditionally symbolizes death in many Pre-Columbian cultures, the "ranas amarillas" are a particularly negative symbol. Haiti is filled with them, as it has been abandoned by its people; the frog, then, arguably underscores Haiti's tragic history. Upon encountering difficult times, people are forced to abandon Haiti, and in their place, the yellow frogs mark their absence. While the color yellow implies that the travelers have left and avoided death (or abject poverty and suffering), upon their return their fate will not have changed.

Until this point in the poem, the poet refers to an anonymous mass of "cansados." Suddenly, Sánchez Lamouth includes himself amongst the rejected masses that are walking toward the west. This change in subject should not be seen only as an act of solidarity, but also as an expression of the conditions to which all Blacks are unfairly subjected.

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in 1961. However, there is no idication that this poem revers to the sisters.

[15] See *Dictionary of Symbols* by Jean Chevalier and Alain Gheerbrant.

"Los sordos de mi tierra" is a criticism of the sector of Dominican society that chooses to ignore the abuses of the Trujillo regime.

> Los sordos de mi tierra saben escuchar el número 40
> Suena como campana funeral doblando más allá de las
> Conciencias.
>
> Los ciegos de mi tierra sólo saben mirar la silla eléctrica.
> No es Sing-Sing y hay la que Trujillo hizo poner en La 40.
> Tripas, sesos y uñas, revólveres garrotes, puñales, bayonetas…
> Matar, matar fue sólo la consigna de los hombres que cuidaban la
> 40.
>
> En regolas de sangre nadaron los cadáveres;
> Trujillo fue un gran manager; dirigió hasta su muerte en la
> República,
> la negra factoría de la muerte.
>
> Madres, no dejen salir los niños, se oyen ruidos medrosos en la cárcel funeral de la 40. (254)

In this poem, Sánchez Lamouth emphasizes society's attempt to ignore the murders that occur in the prison on 40th Street. He gives the ability to hear to the deaf and the ability to see to the blind, albeit in their consciences. His ironic use of the verb "saber," which commonly means "to know," suggests that the public

is accustomed to the sounds of torture and that torture occurs because the public refuses to admit that it knows what happens to those arrested during the *trujillato*.

Sánchez Lamouth does not limit his criticism specifically to the plight of the country under Trujillo. In "Hambre," he also criticizes Dominicans for ignoring the suffering of poor people in general. In the following excerpt from the poem, the poet alludes to the color differences between the starving people in the country and the people who choose not to hear the hungry cries for help.

> Los gritos del hambre
> por más fuertes que sean
> no se escuchan.
>
> Un hombre
> que grita por hambre
> no puede ser interesante.
>
> Clara está la tierra
> pero se teme que el hambre
> pueda oscurecerla. (348)

Sánchez Lamouth is said to have lived in misery all of his life. His experiences in the Dominican Republic as the son of a *cocolo* woman and a dark Dominican epitomized the inhumane conditions that he describes in his poetry. The political situation of the Dominican Republic contributed to the extremity of

the poverty of the Black immigrants and increased the unhappiness that inspired Sánchez Lamouth to consider leaving the Dominican Republic. Determining whether he preferred that his departure be by exile or by death is not always clear in his poetry. In "Autodestrucción," Sánchez Lamouth implies that he prefers a personal exile.

> En la orilla de este escritorio
> estoy solo como un ser perdido.
> Hasta ayer estuve resguardado en aquel paraíso
> (Sonámbulo sin rosa y sin espinas)
> Hoy sé que hay un muro que me incomunica con las cosas,
> cierro los ojos y mi autodestrucción es como la nostalgia
> de una hoja en el aire. (26)

The poem expresses a feeling of the need for change. For the poet, this change is negative because it implies a lack of control, as a leaf carried by the wind.

In "Exodo y metamorfosis," however, the poet seeks a change in venue as a positive development.

> Uno se aleja y cambia,
> hoy siento que mi espíritu
> poco a poco se embriaga de distancia;
> veo en la biblioteca a las arañas
> que orinan a los libros empolvados.

Uno se aleja y cambia;

cualquier terreno es bueno,

no hay árbol que sea malo para el canto del pájaro,

cuando llega la noche aún sea desde lejos

vemos alguna lámpara que nos saluda

con sus sonrisas blancas...

Uno se aleja y cambia. (67)

The use of the impersonal *uno* does give the impression of a general feeling of the need for change. However, he personalizes the need when he evaluates his own sentiments toward distance. His personal exile begins when he is able to distance himself from the texts that spiders now defame. When the poet alludes to the lamp in the second stanza, he is not only speaking literally of light, but also figuratively. Traditionally, light has been used as a symbol of knowledge in literature, or hope, faith and guidance. However, equally prevalent is the use of light as the symbol of spirit. In this poem, he emphasizes change as a result of hope.

Information about his personal life reveals that Sánchez Lamouth was a troubled man who may have lacked hope. The conditions of this poet's life were especially apparent in his autobiographical poetry. Sánchez Lamouth often referred to his misery as evidenced in his poem "La enfermedad" written in 1965, a few years before his untimely death.

Sol de enero,

sol poético…

Juan Sánchez Lamouth

está enfermo.

Mirando hacia

el cielo obrero

sobre el polvo

de la aldea;

Juan Sánchez Lamouth

está enfermo.

Esta vez no es de pasaje

ni de amores pasajeros…

Juan Sánchez Lamouth en la aldea

está enfermo de miseria . (249)

This poem and several others speak directly to the immense sadness the poet experienced. In "Donde el poeta presiente su temprana muerte," the poet obsesses with these feelings of melancholy and predicts his own death to which he looks forward: "Lo mejor que me queda es esta muerte que trabaja/en mi cuerpo noche y día"(227). Despite his predictions of a violent death, the poet expects positive results from his own death, as his voice will be heard by future generations:

Andando, andando

estos ámbitos tienen sus palabras,

morir le era tan dulce,

ahora podremos recordar su voz entre el silencio azul

Andando, andando

Señores cuantas lilas

¿Dónde sembraron a aquel poeta negro?

However, the theme of death is not always meant to be offered as an answer to his earthly problems. In "Razones," Juan Sánchez Lamouth does not romanticize death. In fact, he maintains that in death, the dead continue to suffer the same conditions that characterized life on Earth.

Los muertos pobres tienen

Capataces subterráneos.

El árbol del bien y del mal

Eleva sus raíces

Florecido de demonios vesperales.

Los muertos pobres tienen

Una rosa que nace sin perfume.

Por esta sierpe

Un ángel manchan de carbones

Los altos mausoleos.

Alabemos la sordera de ese cielo,

Azul únicamente por mirarlo los muertos.

Los muertos pobres tienen

Muchas cosas que saben los poetas. (393)

In "Los indios subterráneos," death no longer has a negative connotation. The natives of the island exist beneath the earth just as they once did on the earth, especially before the arrival of the Spanish.

Nuestros indios nos miran desde abajo.

Ahora siembran los frutos del subsuelo

y tocan sus tambores funerarios.

Babeques, que ahora gozan libertad de raíces

llenando de areítos la aldea de las lajas,

llorando por las glorias de aquella España ciega

que no supo dejarlos como muestra de arte.

Nuestros indios enseñan sus frutos antillanos

rebeldes al crepúsculo de la sangre diezmada;

América aún conserva sus amuletos negros;

ellos siguen poblando la Isla subterránea. (352)

In death, the natives populate the Netherworld that Sánchez Lamouth proposes will allow them the freedom to continue transmitting their culture. It is interesting to note that the Netherworld is not Heaven, nor is it Limbo. Rather, Sánchez Lamouth creates a space for the native that transcends death and cultural extinction.

Ironically, the poet also addresses the racial situation of the country that replaces the African with the long-exterminated Indian. No longer a victim, the Indian celebrates his freedom in the Netherworld with music and dance, while at the same time, mourning the loss of his own being due to his extermination. However, this poem is ambiguous. Sánchez Lamouth also laments the loss of the Indians as he masks a protest against the use of racial labels. This ambiguity is emphasized in the second stanza, in which the Dominicanism *babeque* is used. This lexical term has at least three meanings in the Dominican Republic. When consulted, some Dominicans claim the term comes from the *Taíno* language and means shack or hut. Others believe that the word means Indians, but has a positive as well as a negative connotation. As a positive term, it may mean child-like and innocent. However, in a negative context, it means stupid and foolish, coming from the Spanish word *baboso*.[16] Because of the word *areítos*, which is a *Taíno* word for songs and dances that pertain to the culture, the preferred

[16] In some areas in Latin America, the Native American is considered primitive and therefore, modern-day racial epithets often include a reference to the culture, physical attributes, or language of the Indian.

definition of *babeques* for this analysis is that of Indian with a positive connotation.

Sánchez Lamouth's poetry reflects a deeply troubled man. Although a member of a cultural minority in the xenophobic and negrophobic Dominican Republic, he rarely equated the origin of his problems to his race. However, his poetry is replete with lamentations that he used to express his profound melancholy due to his socio-economic position. He can not be mistaken for a *cocolo* who had assimilated Dominican popular culture. In his poetry, one encounters his sense of being an outsider. In "Tarjeta de presentación" he reclaims his identity as both Black and Hispanic.

> Mi nombre: Juan
>
> Color: negro latino
>
> Ocupación: poeta
>
> Bienes: la poesía
>
> Seña particular: una herida profunda que me supo abrir la oligarquía

This poem, while an example of the few times Sánchez Lamouth directly mentions race in his poetry, is also a satire of Dominican politics. His "identifying mark" is his deep wound that the elites have inflicted upon him. As a Black in the Dominican Republic, Sánchez Lamouth was abused by a system that obligated him, as well as all Dominicans, to be able to prove his identity upon request. The *cédula*, or national identification card, was created during the

trujillato to be able to differentiate the Afro-Dominicans from the Black Haitians. This poem recreates the national information card. However, in the spaces provided, Sánchez Lamouth has not answered the way he would be obligated to by law. The two most noticeable differences between his answers and Dominican standards are his color identification and the omission of his two surnames.

His color should have been identified by one of the many racial labels assigned to Dominicans, usually beginning with the word *indio.* His having used the word "Black" with the word "Latin" is an indication that Sánchez Lamouth chose not to ignore his African roots while affirming a European identity. Having been born to a *cocolo* mother in a *cocolo* community, he had ample opportunity to experience first hand the prejudice inflicted upon his people. Although it is not certain to what extent his possibilities for economic improvement had been limited due to his ethnicity or race, it is certain that he lived in utter poverty his entire life. It is also unclear whether his Afro-Dominican father was a *cocolo*; but as explained earlier, his last name, Sánchez, is not necessarily proof that he was a Dominican by birth. His paternal surname, which would be listed first on his *cédula*, is Spanish, while his maternal surname would identify him as being a black foreigner by Dominican standards. By choosing to use only his given name Juan, the poet draws attention to his desire to be recognized without reference to racial and ethnic origins.

Sánchez Lamouth was a poet profoundly concerned with the inherent racism in his country. In "Fábula de la tristeza y la alegría" he contrasts the

desires of *niños negros* and *niños blancos* who are separated not only by eastern and western territories, but also by materialism and spiritualism. The poet's own religious feelings consistently creep into his poetry; where the *niños blancos* seek fortune, the *niños negros* seek salvation.

> Hay cuatro niños subidos sobre el gran árbol del misterio
>
> Los niños negros están más arriba,
>
> Los niños blancos están más abajo
>
> Los niños blancos buscan nidos y frutas,
>
> Los niños negros procuran a Dios. (345)

Because of Sánchez Lamouth's concern with the racial inequalities in his country, he is included in modern anthologies of Afro-Hispanic literature though his poetry does not claim to affirm Blackness. Some of his poetry's thematic and stylistic similarities to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s essays and speeches have proven that Sánchez Lamouth was a subscriber to the ideology espoused by King.[17] However, Sánchez Lamouth did not change the course of Dominican nationalism as he knew it, nor did he attempt to do so. His poetry, like King's essays and speeches, demonstrated a strong love for both his people and an even stronger faith in a Protestant God to whom he turned to end his suffering. Unfortunately, this poet's life ended before he received the critical acclaim his poetry deserved.[18]

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[17] Amongst Sánchez Lamouth's unedited poetry discovered after his death in 1969 was a poem dedicated to the slain African American Civil Rights leader who dies soon before Sánchez Lamouth. An excerpt from this poem appears in "Ritmo poético, negritud y dominicanidad" by James J. Davis (182).

[18] Juan Sánchez Lamouth died of an illness due to many years of alcohol abuse.

Jacques Viau Renaud

Jacques Viau Renaud was another poet who died before receiving any critical acclaim. Born in Haiti in 1942, he moved with his father to the Dominican Republic in 1948 to work in the fields. Though facts about his childhood are unknown, Viau Renaud alluded to the difficulty of life on the plantation in his poetry. Unlike Sánchez Lamouth, Viau was emotionally committed to two nations, Haiti and the Dominican Republic. He was extremely patriotic and ultimately gave his life for his patriotism during the Dominican Civil War in April 1965.

Two years after Trujillo's assassination, Juan Bosch was elected president in 1963 with more than 65% of the popular vote (Moya Pons 529). However, months later, a *coup* to end Bosch's ineffective government ended in a full-scale civil war that was won with the military support of the United States. Faced with a war between Bosch's "communist" government and the combined forces of Trujillo-supporters led by Joaquín Balaguer and the anti-Communist Cuban refugees, Black immigrants joined forces with Bosch's "constitutionalists" to fight the greater evil—the United States military intervention in Dominican affairs. Viau Renaud was an officer and was killed in a mortar attack during the first days of the war. Much of his unedited poetry was published posthumously in two volumes, *Permanencia del llanto* (1965) and *Poemas de 1963* (1985).[19] A

[19] I was unable to obtain a copy of this book.

friend and a *cocolo* writer, Antonio Lockward Artiles, paid homage to Viau Renaud, remembering him as a Dominican patriot. In "Los escritores dominicanos," one finds the end of an untitled poem written by Viau Renaud in 1963 in which he offers a concept of national identity that embraces both the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

He querido hablaros de mi patria,
de mis dos patrias,
de mi isla
que ha mucho dividieron los hombres
allí donde se aparearon para crear un río. (5)

Although Viau Renaud's poetry, like the poetry of Juan Sánchez Lamouth, asserts no strong ties to the negritude movement, much of his poetry reveals a definite solidarity with the underclass. His poetic style tends to highlight patriotic themes composed of seemingly irreconcilable dichotomies that are united by the poetic voice. One such example is found in Pedro Conde's anthology of young Dominican poets. "Canción de gestas" shows a compassionate poet who pledges his allegiance to the future heroes who will be responsible for improving the plight of all workers.

Yo, cantor de gestas
Dormidas aún,
marcho hacía el mañana de todos,
y para todos.

Marcho pesadamente a través de las lianas,

y las trampas del presente.

Marcho atado al proletario,

al obrero de manos rocosas,

donde un río de sangre

y de siglos enfermos

corren.

Voy con la mano asida de la suya,

aunando mi angustia a su angustia,

a sus veinte años desmoronados.

Más llegará el día en que todos tendremos veinte años. (33)

Clearly, Viau Renaud combines two negative images to create a positive one. The poem expresses the hope of reclaiming in the future what has been wrongly taken away in the past. The *lianas*, the vines that trap him, make his progress difficult, but the poet continues to march "tied" to the working man. The poet's arduous journey leads him to a "river of blood." Undoubtedly, this is a reference to the Massacre River that was said to run red with blood after the murder of Haitians in 1937. While lamenting the waste of young lives, the poet foresees the day when everyone's youth will return, and at that time, past wrongs will be redressed.

In the following two stanzas from “Canción de gestas,” Viau Renaud uses light, a traditional symbol of optimism, to portray both negative and positive images. In the first one, the sun suggests an abundance of positive energy. In the second stanza, light emanates from a bonfire of those who exploit workers.

> Lleno de soles,
> de pan fecundo,
> tal vez amargo
> pero nuestro,
> de todos
> de todos los que alimentan las máquinas
> con sus entrañas,
> la tierra con su llanto.
>
> Se hará luz
> desde una hoguera de cuerpos achicharrados
> morirán los que trituran al hombre,
> escalando las nubes
> para dormir en un pedazo azul
> su gula saciada.

Viau Renaud continues to juxtapose positive images in one stanza with negative ones in the next, culminating midway through the poem in a utopian fantasy of a united world.

Levantaremos nosotros a la paz de mañana,

desde la alegría sin diques.

Se repetirá el milagro:

el pan se multiplicará en un desierto de rostros

y sonrisas

habrá para todos,

será para todos,

de todos;

y para los caídos

un coro de niños asomados a la alborada,

poseyendo la alborada.

Las miradas de los hombres

será arrollo pastoreando el valle,

sus montañas,

y las gargantas.

y la humanidad será un Yo inmenso,

no habrá más que un pueblo,

una sonrisa

de todos,

para todos,

nacida de los cantos masacarados de hoy.

From the apocalyptic-like description of the world's destruction by a "flood of chains" being broken, and the "eternal euphoria" associated with eternal youth, Viau Renaud offers a "new rainbow," albeit indistinct.

> Morirá el negro,
>
> el blanco,
>
> el mongol
>
> y el mestizo,
>
> nacerá el hombre.

"Canto de gestas" written in 1963 exemplifies Jacques Viau Renaud's dedication to the worker. It makes no specific mention of the role that races and racism play in oppression in any country; however, the above stanza demonstrates that the poet was keenly aware of the divisiveness of racial labels. His choice not to address specific concerns about race may be due to his own oppression in the Dominican Republic as a Black Haitian dedicated to the creation of a country that might consider him a man above all else.

The books of poetry written by Juan Sánchez Lamouth, a *cocolo*, and Jacques Viau Renaud, a Haitian by birth and Dominican by choice, demonstrate that the descendants of black immigrants working in the Dominican Republic have a rich cultural and literary tradition, despite having been condemned to cultural and physical marginalization in the Dominican Republic. Their ability to assume multiple national identities preceded the Afro-Caribbean transnational identity that has become more prevalent in literature of the late twentieth century .

Norberto James Rawlings

Norberto James Rawlings was born on the sugar plantation "Consuelo" in San Pedro Macorís in 1945. His father was an immigrant from Jamaica and his mother, although born in the Dominican Republic, was the daughter of African American parents who had come to the Dominican Republic during the Haitian occupation. The primary school education that James Rawlings received, like that of the children of other *cocolo* families, was provided in English by the Episcopal Church on the plantation. At the age of ten, he began his formal education, and it was in a school off the plantation that he began to learn to read and write in Spanish (Davis, "Entrevista" 16). In his interview with James J. Davis, James Rawlings admitted that he yearned to express himself artistically and actually moved to Santo Domingo to study painting before beginning to write (16). He never felt quite fulfilled with painting and looked for other artistic outlets until after the Civil War in 1965. It was then that he knew that he would have to write to express himself. James Rawlings has indicated that although he began writing poetry in 1965, all that he wrote at that time has been lost. His first major work of poetry, *Sobre la marcha* was published in 1969 (Davis "Entrevista" 16).

Davis describes James Rawlings poetic trajectory as one that includes the themes of human suffering, oppression, injustice, inequality, and alienation ("Ritmo poético" 179). According to James Rawlings, in that book he wrote about daily life and historical moments that he was living during that time when he became "conscious" of his identity and origins, and realized that his family

deserved a tribute for their lives and sacrifices (Davis, "Entrevista" 16). The poem for which James Rawlings is most recognized as a *cocolo* poet is "Los inmigrantes." This is his homage to the *cocolos* who emigrated from their nations to work until exhaustion on the railroad or in construction. Their efforts led to the modernization of the Dominican Republic and helped increase the wealth of the foreign plantation owners without ever being officially recognized or adequately compensated. In this excerpt, he describes the sacrifice of the workers:

> No tuvieron tiempo
> -de niños-
> para salir entre sus dedos
> los múltiples colores de las mariposas.
> Atar en la mirada los paisajes del archipiélago.
> Conocer el canto húmedo de los ríos.
> No tuvieron tiempo decir:
> -esta tierra es nuestra.
> Juntaremos colores.
> Haremos bandera.
> La defenderemos. (56)

In later stanzas of the poem, James Rawlings specifically names the *cocolos* who stayed and continued to offer the Dominican Republic a service for which they were never justly compensated.

> Los que quedan. Estos.

Los de borrosa sonrisa.

Lengua perezosa

para hilvanar los sonidos de nuestro idioma

son

La segura raíz de mi estirpe.

Vieja roca

donde crece y arde furioso

el odio antiguo a la corona.

A la mar.

A esta horrible oscuridad

plagada de monstruos.

Óyeme viejo Willy

Cochero fiel enamorado de la masonería.

Óyeme tú, George Jones, ciclista infatigable.

John Thomas, predicador.

Winston Brodie, maestro.

Prudy Ferdinand, trompetista.

Cyril Challenger, ferrocarilero.

Aubrey James, químico.

Violeta Stephen soprano.

Chico Conto pelotero. (60)

It is interesting to note that in James Rawlings' attempt to express and affirm his identity with the Black immigrants and their problems with assimilation that he chooses to write in Spanish. By using Spanish, the poet is able to speak to all Dominicans as a fellow Dominican, regardless of their ethnic and cultural backgrounds, while addressing other third-generation descendants of *cocolos*. His objective is simply to recognize another facet of Dominicanness. Davis has argued that in this poem James Rawlings "uses the reality of the immigrants to stress his motive of declaring that the time for absolute social justice has arrived" ("Ritmo poético" 179). As the poet screams in the opening of poem "XVI", "Yo no soy un extranjero más/ Soy sencillamente uno de ustedes (26)," it is clear that expressing his Dominicanness is of primary importance in *Sobre la marcha*.

Like the *cocolo* poets before him, Norberto James Rawlings does not use racial terms to limit his audience or his message. James Rawlings, Juan Sánchez Lamouth, and Jacques Viau Renaud all were equally familiar with the plight of the black man in the Dominican Republic, but their poetry rarely mentions race. Nonetheless, some literary critics credit James Rawlings with the introduction of the concept of negritude in his country. In his interview with Davis, James Rawlings denies an intention to write as a black writer, but admits that subtle elements of what is considered literary blackness appear in his writing. He explains the subtlety in this way: "[l]o hay en el sentido de que los cocolos son una minoría étnica en la República Dominicana que ha pasado a integrar la nacionalidad dominicana sin pelear por ese lugar" ("Entrevista" 17). With

Blackness being inherent in him and other *cocolos,* James Rawlings feels no pressure to affirm his Blackness. Instead, as a third generation Dominican, he feels the need to affirm his Dominican identity and to throw off the label of "foreigner."

Conclusion

The black immigrant was always considered an outsider in the Dominican Republic because of his cultural and religious practices that were rejected by a Dominican oligarchy enamored with the country's myth of Europeanness. The freed slaves from the United States, the Haitians and the Blacks from the West Indies shared both the experience of being oppressed minorities and the struggle of survival in a country where they were unwanted. This led to a synthesis of cultures and the creation of a common view of the world and of Dominican society (Rodríguez Demorizi 7). Assimilation to the greater Dominican society was discouraged by both the immigrant's family and by the Dominicans. Since the majority of these immigrants resided in Samaná during the late nineteenth century, it was officially the place for those non-Hispanic groups and Blacks who did not fit the Dominican cultural ideal (Rodríguez Demorizi 9). This was later re-emphasized by the massacre of the Haitian immigrants during the *trujillato.*

The physical marginalization of the black immigrant at first occurred naturally because Samaná was separated from the rest of the country by a canal. The canal served as a natural barrier to the other parts of the country, allowing the

samanesas to exist almost as an independent country with *patois* being the one language with which all immigrants could communicate. When the canal disappeared, the immigrant population of Samaná was then subject to legal racial discrimination motivated by the Trujillo regime. Samaná was no longer inaccessible due to modernization and construction of bridges and highways. For some anthropologists, Trujillo's intention to unite the country with expansive highway projects actually diminished *samanesa* culture, converting it into a superficial expression of folklore used to promote tourism in the province (Rodríguez Demorizi 8).

Although many critics have declared the Black immigrant culture of Dominican Republic dead, Antonio Lockward Artiles, a descendant of *cocolos*, confirms its existence as well as its awareness of its Blackness within a Dominican context. Since Jacques Viau Renaud, no other Dominican writer has admitted Haitian descent, so the issue of the affirmation of blackness can not be contextualized within Dominican-Haitian literature. Similarly, descendants of *cocolos* and of African Americans in the Dominican Republic are not writing to celebrate their blackness either. However, Lockward Artiles denies that the Dominican *cocolos* have ever distanced themselves from the West Indian movement for Black freedom and Black pride. He points out that a picture of Marcus Garvey hung in the homes of all the Black families employed at the sugar mill "Consuelo" in San Pedro de Macorís (Lockward Artiles, "Los escritores" 6). As discussed above, one of the writers who grew up with an especially strong

sense of Black Pride is Norberto James Rawlings. Critically acclaimed by Spanish American literary critics, he is considered the poet "who most genuinely represents the voice of this immigration" (Lockward Artiles, "Los escritores" 6, translation mine).

Until the mid-1960s, Dominican literature did not include the voices of Afro-Dominicans. The general public's denial of an African heritage has always been considered the justification for the lack of an Afro-Dominican expression in literature. However, Afro-Dominican literature has indeed existed. The first Afro-Dominican authors of contemporary Dominican literature were descendants of immigrants: third generation *cocolos*, Haitians, and/or African Americans from the United States. Their literature has made no apologies for their heritage, although their literature rarely addresses race and the problems assigned to it. As the representatives of the first modern literature written by Afro-Dominican writers, Juan Sánchez Lamouth, Jacques Viau Renuad, and Norberto James Rawlings offer an alternative view of Dominicanness. All three writers not only proposed to demonstrate loyalties to their ethnic or racial heritages, but also they intended to erase all doubt about their Dominicanness.

Chapter Four

The Afro-Dominican Author Since 1961: Aída Cartagena Portalatín, Blas Jiménez and Afro-Dominican Identity

Because the prevailing racialized concept of nationalism was what ultimately defined Dominican identity, an Afro-Hispanic literary undercurrent has been in the nation's canonical literature throughout Dominican literary history, albeit unacknowledged by the intellectuals of the colonial period and nineteenth century. During the nineteenth century, Dominican identity was defined in opposition to the identity of the people who occupied the opposite side of the island—Haiti. An inherent enmity formed part of the national rhetoric and was apparent in all forms of Dominican culture. Literature, as a key expression of that culture, has manifested itself within the national sentiment and plays an important role in the dissemination of that culture.

Although the emergence of literature with the Black-as-author appeared in Latin America during the second half of the twentieth century, one must remember that Black literature existed as early as the eighteenth century. However, as Richard Jackson explains,

> [M]arxist, socialist and nationalist criticism emphasize that revolutionary solidarity and *mestizaje* supercede the Black element… this category, like the universal one, tends to whiten the

black author by playing down his black ethnic identity. (*Afro-Spanish American Authors* xi)

Historically *mestizaje* or racial mixture has been accepted as a means of "erasing the past and improving" the lives of non-whites in all of Latin America (Horacio Lewis 25). Notwithstanding the denial of an African past in the Dominican Republic, all of its literature has played a significant role in the development of an Afro-Dominican expression.

Because it was unpopular to be viewed as *negro,* few Dominican writers wrote on the topic of Blackness as a means of appropriating it as their own identity until after 1961, the year in which the *trujillato* came to an end. It is a misconception to believe that Dominican writers who were openly admitting their African roots did not exist until after the beginning of the Civil Rights movement in the United States. Richard Jackson contends that "[B]lack consciousness has a long history in Latin America but the 1960s provided a special catalyst" ("The Emergence" 4). The Black's efforts to question the concept of his invisibility in all of the Americas, his intention to address the consequences of slavery, and his preoccupation with the image of the Black as portrayed in literature motivated the Black author to write about his own experience.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Blacks were treated as objects in literature and were subjected to exploitative and stereotypical depictions in the early twentieth century. When the Black author began to write, he began the process of literary Blackness. His first expression was in poetry, as opposed to other

genres, probably because "the poem can be fixed in place as expression of the author's experience and intention, and read in terms of personality and presence" (Easthorpe 6). Specifically, the second half of the twentieth century was fertile ground for the production of an Afro-Dominican expression.

Although there have been numerous Afro-Dominican authors, with various approaches to their themes, the aims of their Black expression were remarkably similar. Clearly, Afro-Dominican literature can be divided into more than one category. There exists a *cocolo* literature, a Black expression that could be identified as Dominico-Haitian literature, a black feminist literature, and a literature that would be best identified as Afro-Caribbean. In this chapter, the examples of Afro-Dominican literature will focus on two authors, Aída Cartagena Portalatín (1918-1994) and Blas Jiménez (1950-).

The Afro-Dominican Woman Writer[20]

Though Blas Jiménez is being given a significant amount of credit for the creation of the concept of an Afro-Dominican identity, he shares that distinction with other Afro-Dominican writers. In several interviews, Blas Jiménez has stated that he believes that the responsibility of the creation of Afro-Dominican literature should be placed in the hands of Afro-Dominican women since they, as

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[20] When Clementina Adams advertised in a newspaper in Santo Domingo that she wanted to publish a book that would have a chapter on Afro-Dominican women writers, she had many writers offer their works as examples of Afro-Dominican literature. The Afro-Dominican women writers recognized in her book, *Common Threads: Afro Hispanic Women's Literature*, are Aída Cartagena Portalatín (1918-1994), Sherezade (Chiqui) Vicioso (1948), Aurora Arias (1962), Ida Hernández Caamaño (1949), Angela Hernández Núñez (1954), Jeanette Miller (1944), and Ylonka Nacidit-Perdomo (1960). Little of these women's poetry fits what I identify as an expression of Dominican Blackness and therefore, I do not include them in my dissertation.

the mothers of the nation, need to express pride in their African roots so that their children will then value those very same roots. Dominican writer and ethnographer Aída Cartagena Portalatín has also stressed that the contemporary Dominican woman needs to recognize that her modern-day identity was an invention of the Spanish Creoles who replaced the African grandmother with an Indian in nineteenth-century literature.

The representation of the Afro-Dominican woman in Dominican poetry traditionally falls somewhere between the virgin and submissive white woman on the one hand, and the sensual and sinful *mulata* on the other (Cocco de Filippis "Indias y Trigueñas.." 133). The Afro-Dominican woman writer had to first throw off the "cloak of euphemisms" placed upon her (i.e.; *india* or *trigueña*) and then reject the image of the whiter European model of womanhood and femininity before she could to affirm her African heritage. However, this has been no easy feat considering the long-standing racist stereotypes that have been perpetuated in Dominican literature for several centuries.

In her article about the deconstruction of the sensual image of the Black female in Caribbean literature, Claudette Rosegreen-Williams argues that the Black woman writer's reluctance to express her Blackness is due to having an identity that has been limited to her sexuality (16). The *negroide* poetry of the first category discussed in Chapter Two often describes the *mulata* as a promiscuous being who seduces the unsuspecting white male into a forbidden sexual relationship (i.e.; *Yélida*). There is little wonder why the Black woman

writer would be so reluctant to define herself in terms of Blackness; to do so would have forced her to confront the accepted racist and sexist ideology of her community.

In "Feminism and Afro-Hispanism: The Double Bind," Rosemary Geisdorfer Feal observes that Black female writers often tried to "paint themselves white" in their writing. These writers have been successful in making certain that their literature "accurately reflects the racist, patriarchal structure of the societies out of which these works come," imitating it, and not criticizing it (26). However, in the late twentieth century, some Afro-Dominican women writers chose not to conform to the rules of the patriarchal and largely Eurocentric society in which they lived by daring to challenge the literary *status quo* that interrelates nationality, gender and ethnicity in defining who they are. They have written in protest against the social ills that oppressed them first as women and then as women of color. One of these women is Aída Cartagena Portalatín (1918-1994), who was once called the "most important woman writer of twentieth-century Dominican Republic" (Cocco de Filippis "Aída Cartagena Portalatín" 227). She is by all accounts the Dominican Republic's first feminist *and* Afro-Dominican poet.

Aída Cartagena Portalatín

Aída Cartagena Portalatín's literary career began in the 1940s when she moved from the province of El Cibao to Santo Domingo. She participated in

many intellectual activities other than writing literature; she was an art historian, an ethnographer, a literary critic, and a teacher of social sciences. Her literature covered all genres, writing in both poetry and prose. Her literary career was marked by participation in political and social protest. Her involvement in the literary journal, *La poesía sorprendida,* was a dangerous collaboration during the *trujillato* and ended when the journal was closed by the government's strict censorship in 1947. Daisy Cocco de Filippis cites the end of *La poesía sorprendida* as what motivated Cartagena to travel extensively, which consequently influenced her writing. The prevalent themes in her literature have been the historical and economic conditions particular to the Dominican Republic. In her poetry, commentaries on Dominican society abound, particularly when expressing her concerns about issues of class, gender and race ("Aída Cartagena Portalatín" 230).

Not all of Cartagena's poetry can be identified as Afro-Dominican, however. Her poetry in the 1940s was largely stereotypical for a woman at that time. Her images were subtle and reflect "what was then thought to be a proper domain for a woman writing poetry" (Cocco de Filippis *From Desolation*...19). Her poetry in the 1950s concerned more feminist themes. As fellow Dominican author, Daisy Cocco de Filippis describes it:

> Her poetry of this period, stripped of the vague adjectives and wielding a strong language sets the tone that will prevail in her

> later works. She is determined to strike down the lofty pedestals to which women were relegated in the past. (*From Desolation...* 15)

It was not until the 1960s that her poetry took on a more universal tone, concerning itself with the conditions of all humanity, especially racial identity and justice. She is credited as being the Dominican woman writer who caused the literary phenomenon in the 1990s in the Dominican Republic that critic Bruno Rosario Candelier has identified as the "boom femenino" (cited in Cocco de Filippis "Indias and Trigueñas" 140). The Dominican woman writer, following Cartagena's footsteps, has combated the literary stereotypes and "derives her strength precisely from her mixed heritage" (Cocco de Filippis "Indias and Trigueñas" 140). In effect, Aída Cartagena Portalatín is the first Dominican woman who affirms her racial background without identifying herself specifically as *mulata* or *trigueña.*

In her poem, "Elegía segunda" from *La tierra escrita*, Aída Cartagena Portalatín alludes to her racial mixture while referring to some cities of the United States where racial segregation and discrimination were practiced most extremely:

> MI MADRE FUE UNA DE LAS GRANDES MAMAS DEL MUNDO
> de su vientre nacieron siete hijos
> que serían en Dallas, Memphis o Birmingham un problema racial
> (ni blancos ni negros). (35)

Cartagena Portalatín had realized a sense of unity with Black people throughout the world due to the fact that " [t]he racial struggle, in short, is often interpreted as part of the social revolutionary struggle, not just against the white oppressor but against much of the literature by writers of African descent in Latin America" (Jackson *The Black Image* 130). In "Memorias negras," she attributes the plight of the oppressed man to his race:

> Vertical camino derribado
>
> reducido a esencia original
>
> fatalidad: el hombre
>
> su problema inherente
>
> simplemente la raza. (*La casa del tiempo)*

This long poem, separated into five "tonos," refers to murders that occurred in Sharpeville, South Africa. Because the content of this opening excerpt describes what is true for all Blacks, it establishes a spiritual unity in the poem. The scarcity of words demonstrates that the issue of race is rarely discussed. Just as she has intended to describe the inherent problem of man in one word, *raza*, she has reduced the essence of the black man to *fatalidad.*

The literary production of Aída Cartagena Portalatín underlined the importance of rebellion in the evolution of Dominican Blackness in literature. She never treated Blackness as anything less than an inherent cultural quality of Dominicanness, and therefore did not dwell on the concept of race; yet, she made an exerted effort to change literary traditions that not only excluded the Afro-

Dominican, but also exploited the Afro-Dominican woman. In explaining the history of the development of the short story in the Dominican Republic in his book *El cuento en Santo Domingo,* Socrates Nolasco may have inadvertently justified why Aída Cartagena Portalatín felt the Dominican Republic was long overdue for a plan to devise a new literary tradition. He states "[c]uando la cultura medieval se iluminaba con los albores del Renacimiento, el cuento antiguo embarcó en España y llegó a Santo Domingo, en donde se conservaron sin esenciales alteraciones" (7).

Until the 1960s, much of the literature of the Dominican Republic was simply an imitation of European short story writing techniques that were borrowed by the elite class that had studied in Europe. As part of a new generation whose major concern was the national situation, Cartagena's literature tended to focus on themes of social and political protest. Whereas other Dominican writers of similar interests, such as Juan Bosch, were also writing in exile on similar topics and were publishing their works primarily outside the Dominican Republic, Cartagena Portalatín published her work in the Dominican Republic while maintaining a distance from the literary masters, and even from the type of literature she herself had written two decades earlier. Her literature, therefore, existed in a personal and ideological exile that separated her from the traditional literary canon. This exile is the result of an affirmation of self-identity

that is expressed in four stages: alienation, self-identification, recuperation and repatriation.[21]

Tablero

Her 1978 collection of short stories entitled *Tablero* is an interesting collection of twelve brief stories that deal with the theme of self-identity. The first and last stories, "Antes de..." and "Sus personajes" could very easily be overlooked by the careless reader because neither reaches a page in length and both appear to be examples of poetry rather than prose. Their main function is to frame the other stories and to suggest the emergence of an alternative literary tradition, one that is open to new readings and definitions. These two stories are part of this analysis because they illustrate the power of language even when expressed with very few words. Moreover, they reflect the first two stages of personal exile, those of alienation and self-identification.

During a dialogue between two anonymous characters, the opening of the first story, "Antes de..." lets the reader know that the stories to follow will not be like any form of the accepted literary tradition:

> --¿Sabe usted que existen varios textos sobre el arte de escribir cuentos?
>
> --Este no es uno. (9)

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[21] When Myriam J.A. Chancy identified these four stages, she was referring to her own exile and the exile of many other Afro-Caribbean women whose writing was published abroad, but I use these stages to refer to some of the characteristics that I observe in literature written against the patriarchal and hegemonic text.

This dialogue appears to be an interview with the author. The fact that there are no names written to identify the voices is interesting, but the theme of the art of writing is what leads the reader to the central message of the entire collection—that Aída Cartagena Portalatín rejected the idea of writing like the "others."

The short stories entitled "La llamaban Aurora" and "La fuerza aniquilada" are examples of Cartagena Portalatín's attempt to reach a kind of "personal exile." Although her stories shared similar themes with other writers (all Dominican literature at that time concentrated on exploitation), the technical differences between Cartagena Portalatín's short stories and those by other Dominican writers are demonstrated in several acts of "simultaneous unnaming and naming" apparent in her stories where these empower the characters sometimes, and at other times help to alienate them from others. These acts of naming, re-naming and not-naming are examples of a type of reaffirmation and identity that is apparent in literature written by people of African descent whose history and voices are heard for the first time (Bentson 153).

Of the aforementioned short stories, only "La llamaban Aurora" speaks directly about a Black protagonist. Nevertheless, one can still apply theories that pertain to Black literature to her prose. The protagonist, Colita, whose employer has given her the name "Aurora" (Dawn), suffers the North American invasion twice over. First, her nation is weakened under the watchful eye of the United States, and second, her economic survival depends on her being at the mercy of

the North Americans. Her personal development is delayed when the invading North Americans refuse to accept her with her given name "Colita." Nevertheless, Colita is the only character in the stories studied here who completes all four of the stages of personal exile. The treatment of this character by the author is such that one has to consider the history of the island in the interpretation of this story.

There were several invasions of the Dominican Republic by the United States. The first two were military invasions (in 1916 and again in 1965); then, after a considerable period of peace, there was a third invasion that is more difficult to pinpoint to the exact year. This time, the invasion was commercially motivated. North American companies moved to the Dominican Republic, often with their families, to take advantage of the cheaper cost of living and labor. One can assume that Miss Sarah, Colita García's employer, is part of that foreign hegemony, part of the White invasion, and part of the white minority on the island who controlled a disproportionate amount of the Dominican Republic's wealth and national property.

There is an obvious separation between the city-dwelling white population and the lower-classed peasant of African descent in the story. Colita comes from the countryside looking for opportunities to study in the city, while working for Miss Sarah, who takes charge of the costs of Colita's studies. In societies where the lower class is humbled by its service to and dependency upon the upper class, the lower class can not achieve personal exile without an identification of self

(Bentson 153). This identification of self refers to an autonomy that would not have been possible before. Many times, it develops through a process of removing one name imposed by another, and re-naming oneself to embrace a new and appropriate self-identity. In "La llamaban Aurora," the title suggests the act of re-naming that had been done by someone other than the protagonist. The act of re-naming here was done with the intent of belittling and/or demoralizing Colita, as is apparent in the text: "Mami me decía Colita. Colita García. Pero la señora Sarah me inscribió en la escuela pública con el nombre de Aurora. ¡Nada de Colita!, gritó" (13). From the first few words of the story, there is a concern about names. The importance of names is established because affirmation exists in alienation; Colita's interior power over her self-identity is present in her declaration, "Seguí sintiéndome interiormente Colita" (13).

The historical implications of a name can give the name importance or take importance away from it. When Miss Sarah renames Colita, she illustrates what Michael Cooke explains as a gesture to designate significance to something by taking the power from a name and at the same time defining itself by repudiating the *other* (cited in Bentson 156). When the alienated is "Colita," Miss Sarah recuperates the power. After Miss Sarah gives Colita the name "Aurora," although many Whites make fun of the fact that a Black girl is named Dawn (Cartagena Portalatín, *Tablero* 13). Because Colita is aware that many are making fun of her, she convinces herself that she is hearing the name "Colita" when they call her "Aurora." Thus, Colita can maintain control and power from

within, an example of recuperation. Her decision to stay with Miss Sarah hearing "Aurora" but always *feeling* like "Colita" is an act of return, the last stage of personal exile. The power of naming has always been in the hands of the oppressor, but in order to empower themselves, the colonized name themselves and thereby enjoy a certain amount of power by appropriating their "otherness."

In "La fuerza aniquilada," there are two examples of the attempt of empowerment through use of a name. First, we see success and, then, failure. For the good friend of the narrator in this story, Prebisteria, there is a separation created when she returns from New York with a blond wig, many gifts, and with another name:

> Ese nombre americano de Prebis es una mentecatería de mi comadre Prebisteria Sánchez, lo que tú dices que la pone tan fisquibis, es una manera de creer que le va a dar changüí a todos los de Guaco. (27)

The narrator indicates that her friend Prebis' attempt to empower herself failed in two ways. First, she failed to convince her peers from her hometown of Guaco that she had returned from New York better off than she had been before she left the *pueblo*. Secondly, she failed to improve her life in New York by changing her name from "Prebisteria," a deformation of Presbiteria, to "Prebis." As in "La llamaban Aurora," the importance of the name becomes more apparent as the story goes on. Even the name of Prebisteria's daughter, Calandria (Lark) has meaning. The priest refused to baptize her because of it: "[e]l cura se sintió

ofendido con el nombre: Calandria era nombre de pájaro, no de gente, ni estaba en el almanaque" (29). The threat of not being able to baptize the baby did not make Prebisteria change the name she had selected for the child. Having changed the name would have been tantamount to surrendering to the priest who represents society. Her having rejected the idea of giving into the power was an act of naming that resulted in her alienation. When Prebis admits that she feels some regret for not having given in to the priest, that is the first indication that her personal exile has been a failure.

Although Prebis returns for a visit to the island with many gifts and an exaggerated version of life in New York, it is obvious to the narrator that she is returning to the island completely exhausted from having to work much harder in New York than she ever had to on the island even though she is doing the same work as a laundress. Thus, the act of returning is not one of the stages of personal exile, but instead, an act of humiliation. The narrator closes the story by warning Prebis: "¡Ayayay, tía, *remember* te mandó Prebisteria Sánchez" (31). The reference to the protagonist's given name suggests that the attempt to change her life by changing her name failed. Sometimes the name does not have the same power, although it continues to be important when it creates alienation. In the end, personal exile fails without the power of self-identification, even when there is success in establishing *otherness*.

Blas Jiménez and Dominican Identity

Whereas Cartagena was more interested in being the voice of the Dominican woman, Jiménez's poetry is undoubtedly "an affirmation of all of the constitutive values of a cultural being" (Pérez 94). His poetry and essays have come to epitomize revolutionary literature with the intention of creating an Afro-Dominican identity and nation.

Although he remains virtually unknown as a poet and essayist in his own country, in the United States Blas Jiménez is recognized as one of the most important figures in Afro-Dominican poetry, and for that reason, his poetry and essays will be of principal importance in this chapter. Jiménez has admitted that African American writers and the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s in the United States had some influence on his writing, but his expression of Blackness is also the product of the Harlem Renaissance, the French Caribbean's concept of *negritude* in the 1930s, and several literary models of Blackness in his own country.

It would appear that Jiménez's poetry has been ignored in the Dominican Republic because of his overt efforts to call attention to the Africanness *in* Dominicanness. Indeed, because Dominicans avoid identifying themselves in racial terms, Jiménez's insistence on *lo negro* constitutes a serious challenge to traditional notions of national identity. James J. Davis explains that "la filiación africana ha sido menospreciada y evitada, tanto entre intelectuales como en otros sectores de la sociedad dominicana" ("Ritmo poético" 172). As Marvin Lewis

notes, all of Jiménez's poetry "is written from a Black perspective in a language which is reflective of Caribbean and Dominican experiences—that is, a discourse grounded in racism, discrimination, negation and repression" (316). Having encroached upon the territory of the taboo of *lo afro*, Blas Jiménez has been marginalized and ostracized by the literary community in his own country.

Aquí... otro español

In 1980, Jiménez published his first book of poetry entitled *Aquí... otro español*. The poems in this book directly address problems of racial identity and alienation in the Dominican Republic and evoke the French Caribbean's *négritude* literature of the 1930s that was meant to be an affirmation as much as a cultural call to arms. This book of poetry drew attention to the meaninglessness of the official concept of Dominican identity. Jiménez is aware of the sensitivity of the subject matter, and for that reason, opens his first book of poetry with a sense of irony that invites those who have complaints about the book's content to write to him at his home address. In addition, on that leader page before the table of contents, he states in verse the objective of his poems:

> Publicamos estas líneas
>
> ¿Porqué?
>
> Porque brotaron del alma
>
> ¿Para qué?
>
> Para evitar ser ahogado en una existencia vacía.

¿Para quién?

Para los valientes de espíritu que luchan por una nueva Patria.

Jiménez articulates in these poems the need as well as the desire to affirm his existence and to express what he thinks every Dominican has needed to say for years. Nothing can be clearer than when he insists in the first poem of the collection "Yo": "Soy un negro del Caribe que no tiene tierra, patria, ni universo,,," (1). The use of the first person form of the verb "to be" extracts the poet from the realm of non-existence. He declares a racial and cultural identity that includes and transcends the appropriation of a national identity.

The urgency of the material is apparent in his poetry, which at times, seems to consist of diatribes about the search for identity that the speaker is making. The poem "Aquí" begins every other line with the word *aquí* (here). The comparison he is making between the Dominican Republic and other countries is understood because he describes the conditions for the people *aquí*. Later in the poem, Jiménez repeats the word *pueblo*, which is often translated as "nation" as well as "the (common) people." In the following excerpt one reads:

Miro, observo, veo

mi gente

el pueblo que lleva las tradiciones

con-tradición.

Un pueblo hambriento que come tradiciones

un pueblo de romo

pueblo de mujeres

pueblo de cabrones,

un pueblo de hambres

un pueblo de imágenes ficticias

un pueblo negro de indios

un pueblo de indios negros

Un pueblo,

el pueblo

mi pueblo.

Pueblo sin ideas

pueblo sin historia

pueblo sin imágenes

pueblo sin pueblo

el pueblo. (11)

By using three verbs of sight, *miro, observo,* and *veo* (I watch I observe and I see), the poetic voice becomes an eyewitness to the problems of *el pueblo*. In this poem, the term *pueblo* signifies both "the nation" and "the common people." The specific problem he discusses here refers to a nation that has no ideas, no history, and no vision. At the same time, he criticizes the people who lack the desire to change, who "lleva las tradiciones *con-tradición.*" They prefer to cling to the "fictitious" traditions forced upon them that are *contradictions* of their reality as a Black nation. They have ultimately invented a *pueblo* based upon cultural

traditions that are not their own; and for this reason, he calls them "lifeless" and finally, "a nation without a people." The repetition of *pueblo* on the third page of this fourteen-paged poem relieves it of its burden and meaning, as does the use of the negative conjunction *sin* before and after it at the end of the cited excerpt. This directs the poem to the matter at hand—the search for identity. The speaker asks himself:

> ¿Qué soy?
>
> Negro, Mulato, bembón.
>
> guerrero sin guerra,
>
> soldado sin armas
>
> hombre a quien le dicen no tiene esperanzas.
>
> ¿Qué soy?
>
> Dominicano, americano, antillano,
>
> negro africano que siente el bongó
>
> un negro loco en un mundo blanco, mundo español. (15)

He accepts his confusion about the situation later and justifies it:

> Era que estaba solo
>
> pensando en un ayer que no existió;
>
> sonámbulo en un vacío de extraños matices
>
> incoloros los civilizados. (18)

The justification still corroborates the poet's negative perspective. By declaring that he must have been thinking of the "yesterday that never existed,"

and by claiming to be "the sleepwalker in an emptiness of strange, colorless, shades" of civilized people, the poet emphasizes the difference of opinion between himself and the rest of the "colorless" country—the civilized people. Jiménez continues his discussion of the problem of identity in a country that not only denies it is Black, but also identifies itself as a Spanish nation and therefore, a White one. He assumes that he must be crazy since everyone else believes the Dominican Republic to be a colorless society, while he yearns for an African past. Nevertheless, he contends that none of the ideologies that Dominicans have and complacently accept has ever benefited his *pueblo*. Afro-Dominicans continue to suffer today as they did in the past.

Jiménez does not distinguish the problem of a disputed African past as particularly "Dominican"; he refers to the character Caliban of Shakespeare's *Tempest* (1612) when criticizing the twentieth-century Black who adheres to the ideology of a White hegemony that rejects any notion of an African past.

> Es mi negro del Caribe
> familia de Calibán.
> Esclavo en el siglo veinte
> con ideologías en vez de pan. (20)

Caliban, the deformed Black slave of Shakespeare's play was robbed of his home, enslaved, and taught the language of his white master Prospero. Though Shakespeare never mentioned the Caribbean as the venue of his play, the etymology of the name Caliban is directly related to the name of the Caribs, the

natives to the Caribbean islands who were said to be cannibals. "Caliban" is an anagram of the word "cannibal" (Fernández Retamar 15). Although Calibán has symbolized in the past an uncivilized and, perhaps even a passive primitive being guided by the cultured European colonizer, Jiménez, adopts the interpretation articulated by Cuba's Roberto Fernández Retamar who insists that Calibán represents the rebel against colonialism and foreign domination. Therefore, in his poetry, Jiménez decides to bring about the revolution that begins in the minds of *el pueblo*:

> Aquí el negro sigue pensando
> sueña algún día conquistar
> otros mundos, otras leyes
> que lo dejen respirar.
> Este negro se cree un héroe
> ya no deja de pensar
> en esos días que vienen en lo que ha de pasar
> cuando se suelten las sogas
> cuando bajen de las lomas esperados cimarrones
> y digan todos unidos, somos libres somos hombres. (20)

Blas Jiménez has created in his poetry a Black consciousness. His poem "Tengo" describes his "calling" to be a prophet for the Dominican people despite the lack of support and criticism.

> Tengo que sentirme negro

por las tantas veces que fuí blanco

tengo que sentirme negro

por las tantas veces que fuí indio

tengo que sentirme negro

porque soy negro

soy la contradicción de mi historia

soy el llamado a re-escribirla

re-escribir la historia de esta tierra. (31)

One also finds in this poem the repetition of key words to emphasize them and enhance their importance. The concluding verse repeats the verb *vivir* (to live) to imply that he is living only if he allows himself to be the man he knows he *is*.

Tengo que sentirme negro

vivir la negritud

vivir, vivir, vivir

hasta dejar atrás el ser negro

y ser.

This theme of identity in *Aquí... otro español* refers to the denial of racial ancestry. Every poem makes mention of the history that has been hidden while warning readers that a future is not possible for a people who have no past. The speaker is constantly at battle with himself over life or death. Moreover, Jiménez describes a type of orphanhood that is the result of not being in touch with his

African past. In "Africa No. 1," the poet speaks allegorically to *Madre Africa* and declares "soy hijo de tu hijo" (42).

The loss of contact with one's African roots is not limited to Blacks from the Dominican Republic. The phenomenon has affected Blacks of all the former colonies in one fashion or another. The solution to the problem of disillusionment was the creation of the concept of *négritude* emphasized by Haitian writer René Depestre. Jiménez admired Depestre for his participation in the *négritude* movement and aspired to help Dominicans affirm their *afro* identity.

> Mi pueblo necesita la negritud
>
> para ser libre
>
> para ser hombre
>
> para ser René. (97)

Caribe africano en despertar

Blas Jiménez's second book of poetry, *Caribe africano en despertar* (1984) also deals with themes of identity. The one marked difference between the earlier book and this one is that Jiménez encourages a sense of unity in Blackness among all people of the Caribbean as a defense against the culture of discrimination and inequality to which they have been victimized for centuries. It documents the historical presence of Blacks in the Caribbean, while emphasizing the Dominican Republic's history. The poems in this volume are divided into three formal *libros*, and according to Marvin Lewis:

> "Caribe" is a critical assessment of the Caribbean Basin, an area suffering from many of the attendant symptoms of colonialism and dependency. "Africano" is concerned with the problem of Dominican identity, while "en Despertar" probes the possibilities for meaningful changes in the area. As a whole, this volume paints a very negative picture of the situation of people of African descent in the Caribbean in general and the Dominican Republic in particular. (305)

The poems in "Caribe" are directed at the Caribbean people whom Jiménez accuses of suffering in silence as they concentrate more on their national identities than on the greater identity of a Caribbean *pueblo*. In the first poem, "Asustando el tiempo," Jiménez speaks of the Caribbean's history of cultural imperialism (the systematic supplanting of one culture over another culture considered inferior) and its effects on the various stages of life between youth and adulthood.

> Caribe
> muere tu juventud
> por ideales revolucionarios
> en tradiciones importadas
> El hombre
> sentado sobre su historia
> sueña con futuros europeos

al ritmo enloquecer de las esquinas clientes

La mujer

atada abatida por el canto del poeta

se observa divina y se entrega por el oro

El niño

sin mañana y sin historia

Con su llanto

asustando el tiempo. (11)

In this poem, Jiménez repeats his concern about the absence of an appropriate identity. However, the poems of *Caribe africano en despertar* call for a unified Caribbean by means of a revolution that begins in the minds of the people of each Caribbean nation. We observe this call for unity and the adversity that greets it upon reading "En silencio-en silencio":

Hablas de confederaciones

no te comprenden

hablas de un Caribe unido

no te escuchan

hablas de un futuro centroamericano y del Caribe

te llaman soñador

hablas de una nación hispanoamericana

te observan demente

te llaman demente

te hacen de mente.

Porque es mejor estar solo

solo en la lucha nacional

sin identidad

pero con una gran soledad.

Los pasos acelerados

Latidos que estremecen.

Pero tienes tu tarjeta

llevas ese apellido noble

eres don fulano

dentro de tu identidad nacional

te quedas

callado. (25)

The lack of solidarity that he senses between the Caribbean nations is what separates countries that he believes are bound together by similar histories.

The poems of "Africano" address another important form of identity in the Caribbean that is racial identity. Many of these poems are similar to those in Jiménez's first book, Aquí*...otro español.* They discuss the poet's need to know himself and to free himself of cultural oppression by accepting his history. In "Cántame poeta negro," he expresses this desire:

Tengo hambre de conocerme

de ver el verdadero opresor

de conocer la libertad interior. (41)

Without exception, all of the poems in this second *libro* mention race or speak directly of Blackness; but few make direct references to Dominican culture or the Dominican Republic. One poem in particular contrasts Blackness and Dominicanness. In "Discriminación a la Dominicana" (45), Blas Jiménez satirizes the Dominicans' obsession with denying their African past by using such racial terms as *indio, negro blanco* and the folkloric expression "negro detrás la oreja." He asserts these distinctions between Dominican people as he contrasts the pronoun *yo* with an accusatory *tú*. In this way, the *yo* denounces Dominican discrimination and the rejection of any African identity.

In the following excerpt, the speaker rejects the notion of his partner's Blackness by offering reasons why Blackness would be an impossibility. Jiménez allows the speaker to refer to Dominican prejudices that separate them from Blackness.

tú

tú no eres negro

tú tienes educación

tú

tú no eres negro

tú tienes dinero

tú

tú no eres negro

tú eres un negro blanco.

In "Otra vez ... aquí," we observe more satire and the repetition of lines that relate the theme of identity to the Dominican Republic, identified simply as "este pueblo español." Jiménez refers to the modern Dominican rhetoric that considers Dominican culture similar to the culture of their Spanish colonizers. Although this ideology is not new to the Dominican Republic, it was given an opportunity to be reborn during the presidency of Joaquín Balaguer. As mentioned earlier in this dissertation, Balaguer's essay *La isla al revés: Haití y el destino dominicano* (1983) is a reinterpretation of Dominican history that asserts and emphasizes the Spanish ancestry of all Dominicans. There exists in this text an "imagined purity of blood" which consequently is the "basis of the national discourse" for Balaguer (Handelsman "Balaguer, Blas Jiménez..." 88). Balaguer's essay was largely responsible for a second death of the black Dominican, with the first having occurred in the nineteenth century when black Dominicans were not supposed to exist at all. Although this death is the result of the Black's desire to appropriate a European history, Jiménez considers it another blow to the Black's self-esteem and to the campaign for an *afro* identity.

En este pueblo español,

rosas marchitas por el tiempo

las negras son.

En este pueblo español,

muere el negro

como indio, en querer ser blanco.

como gotas de lluvia,

mézclome con mar y tierra

en los mundos de mi pueblo.

En este pueblo español,

suda el negro, muere sin ser.

En este pueblo español,

civilízase el negro

con tonos de varios colores.

En este pueblo español,

lágrimas del viejo negro

por el bebé; "el negrito nació muerto"

En este pueblo español,

escuchando los lamentos

es este azúcar maldito, una lengua que no siento

en este pueblo español,

pueblo de los sufrimiento

se mata al negro por fuera, nace de nuevo por dentro. (55)

The contrasts of death and rebirth are essential in Jiménez's poetry for they symbolize his mission to contribute to the resurrection of the African. This evolution of the Afro-Dominican and the Afro-Caribbean in Jiménez's poetry is most apparent in the third *libro* "En Despertar." "Mi pueblo es un pueblo niño"

(82) is another example of satire that criticizes the character of the Dominican people whom Jiménez likens to the innocence of a child. However, Jiménez predicts that the obedient child will suffer and learn of the injustices that exist in his world as he matures "sin quererlo/ de rencores y hambre/ lentamente madura." The revolution inside awakens him to create after the destruction of the truths of the others, as seen in the conclusion of "Prisionero":

> Para ser, dejar de ser,
> romper los lazos
> desajustar los ladrillos
> matar al carcelero
> ajusticiar a la justicia
> y crear
> crear en cambios, crear. (70)

Exigencias de un cimarrón

In Jiménez's last two books, *Exigencias de un cimarrón (en sueños)* (1987) and *El nativo (versos en cuentos para espantar zombies)* (1996), he continues writing poems intended to awaken Afro-Caribbeans from a kind of cultural slumber which causes them to ignore their African past. In fact, *Exigencias* is divided into six sections appropriately called "sueños" (dreams). The first poem of each section is numbered consecutively and called a dream as

well. The very first poem, "El primer sueño", opens with the author's expressed intent.

> Un nuevo amanecer
>
> la gente se despierta al timbre de mi alma
>
> despertando de la farsa
>
> lentamente renaciendo. (17)

As the title of the book suggests, the poetic voice of *Exigencias de un cimarrón* speaks from the perspective of the *cimarrón,* the runaway slave, who demands his rightful place in Dominican history and society. The poem "Exigencias de un cimarrón" (22) is separated in nine sections which tell the history of the island of Hispaniola, its eastern portion called *Quisqueya* by the Indian natives who inhabited it upon the arrival of the Spanish. Each section begins with the question, "¿Recuerdas?" to ask the reader addressed as *Quisqueya* if he/she remembers key figures in the island's history. Each section ends with an accusation that *Quisqueya* has forgotten the *cimarrón.* At the end of the first section the speaker asks:

> ¿Y de mí Quisqueya?
>
> ¿te acuerdas de mí?
>
> recuerda que cuando llegó Ovando
>
> ya yo me multiplicaba
>
> ya había huido
>
> ya me había rebelado

ya era cimarrón.

The angry speaker reminds *Quisqueya* of his contributions to society in the second section. He makes it very clear that he is responsible for the construction of society on the island, yet remains ignored.

¿Re cuerdas Quisqueya?

Te llamaban Hispaniola en aquel tiempo

eras un orgullo

eras española

eras nada y yo te trabajaba

eras nada y te me daba

eras

¡Carajo Quisqueya!

Ni una calle para mí

ni un mármol para mí

ni un recuerdo para mí

Yo que llegué a ti atado

yo que di mi voz

yo que te di mi sudor

yo que te di mi cultura

yo que esculpí tus rocas

yo que labré tus tierras

yo que lavé tus minas

yo que hice tus templos

yo que corté tus cañas

yo que

¿yo qué Quisqueya?

In the third, fourth, and fifth sections of the poem, the reader is reminded of the extermination of the Taínos, the island's indigenous population. The *cimarrón* is the only constant in this poem. The heroes of the *cimarrón* die along with his freedom. He survives the abuse and exploitation he suffered as a slave due to his rebellious nature. However, in the eighth section, the speaker admits that he has fallen asleep and all that has happened since the end of the Haitian ideal of a unified island has been a bad dream. In the most horrifying part of his dream he declares, "me hacía indio."

In the final section of the poem, the *cimarrón* awakens and declares:

Hoy despierto Quisqueya

y veo que soy mayoría

veo que soy tu mayoría

y veo que si quiero

hasta puedo cambiarte el nombre

hasta puedo decirte Haití

puedo decirte lo que me plazca

porque sin mí

sin mí no eres Quisqueya.

Jiménez emphasizes the fact that the population on the Dominican side of the island is and always has been Black. While Jiménez addresses the inconsistencies between Dominican reality and rhetoric in the *Segundo sueño* through the *Quinto sueño* in "Mutación negra" (42), "Creando" (44), "Somos" (60), "Diálogo negro" (65), "Indio claro" (100) and "Porque a veces lloro" (102), he offers a counter discourse to the Dominican Republic's racist rhetoric.

The *Sexto sueño* ends the book with a poem Jiménez dedicates to his grandfather whom he affectionately calls "Viejo Fello." "Entierro con atabales, relámpagos y truenos" (110) was written three days after the death of the grandfather whom Blas credits with giving him the spirit of the *cimarrón.* The poem is thematically different from Jiménez's previous poems. Viejo Fello returns to Africa upon his death and the poet asks that he tell the story of the Black Diaspora in the Americas as he had done during his life in this world. Upon his death, Viejo Fello passes his torch to his grandson who knows how his message will be received.

Aquí se reían de ti

porque eras filosofía sin cubiertas

una realidad abierta

tu vida

es que sólo comprenden las mentiras

no pueden ver lo humano del hombre

y se reirán de mí

como rieron de ti

porque eras más que un hombre.

El nativo

The last of his books, *El nativo*, is organized into two distinct sections of poetry. The first section called "El nativo" is a collection of twenty poems about the Africans brought to the Caribbean. These poems have no traditional titles and are identified only with numbers. They differ from the poems in the second section largely because they are written more like prose than poetry. In fact, each poem reads like a short historical essay about racial identity even though the *nativo* who opens the book bears no racial label. One understands that Jiménez intends for the *nativo* to have a more universal connotation. Odalís Pérez, a Dominican literary critic, says of Jiménez's poetry:

> La militancia de Blas Jiménez no sólo se funda en una ontología del negro sino en una dialéctica de la historia en las manifestaciones culturalmente negras. La visión de su poesía no es determinista, sino que más bien la misma incorpora lo universal a través de lo local. (92)

In "Dos," Jiménez declares himself a native "de las tierras que no se reconocen, de un pueblo/que debe hacer su historia, escribirla, /contarla, vivirla" (11), but it is not until "Seis" (19) that Jiménez identifies the *nativos* as "perdidos, en el papel del negro, con sus complejos de indios, / en tierras españolas." Here, he specifies that his *nativo* is all Dominicans. *El nativo* is another of Jiménez's calls to his fellow Dominicans to awaken from their "cultural slumber." "Trece" (30) details the awakening and describes it as a "despertar negro-mulato" which evokes an African that unites Blacks of various hues of skin color.

The importance of the awakening is equally apparent in the second section of *El nativo* entitled "Versos sueltos." These poems are thematically bound by one key element: the importance of freedom. Jiménez uses Caribbean history as a way of offering Blacks a means of empowerment. He acknowledges the whitened version of history while criticizing it for its omission of the unrecognized history of Blacks in "Los monumentos." Though the poem speaks specifically of street names and monuments built in honor of the whites in the Dominican Republic.

En la patria querida
una isla de tantas heredadas por el negro.
En la patria querida
héroes adornan las avenidas.
En la patria querida
Churchill, Lincoln, Ovando, Bolívar...
Duarte, Kennedy, Betancourt, Tiradentes.

En la patria querida

olvidaron los cimarrones,

mulatos, negros, blancos, indios quienes…

En la patria querida.

De un Caribe indómito

el grito cimarrón en las sierras.

Escuchando los tambores de Jamaica,

en montañas azules, Candelo en los montes haitianos.

Lemba de líder…

En la patria querida . (45)

Clearly, not all of the heroes of freedom and resistance to tyranny for whom monuments have been erected in the Dominican Republic were Dominican. However, these figures were considered more important to Dominican history than Blacks who staged rebellions in order to free themselves. Jiménez mentions the *cimarrones* in Jamaica, Haiti *and* the Dominican Republic. The absence of monuments built in honor of the *cimarrones* in all of the countries of the Americas whom the poet thinks are equally deserving of recognition for their heroism has prompted Jiménez to call attention to the need to educate all people about the contributions of Afro-Americans.

"El deber de un negro…" (51) also reclaims the rightful place which Afro-American heroes ought to hold in their respective nations' histories. Thus, Jiménez demands: "despertar de la pesadilla/ recordar que hay héroes en nuestras

historias." According to Jiménez, the responsibility of a black man is to remember his past, and part of recovering that memory is achieved by realizing the power he has when he fights along side of his brothers. Although his implied reader may be Dominican, he does not limit his message of the urgency of recognizing one's history to the Afro-Dominican. Again, Jiménez is speaking from the Diaspora.

In "El color me ata en liberación" (57), the poet universalizes the *afro* identity while he holds firm to his national identity.

> Me sentía sólo cuando
>
> decidí cambiarme el nombre.
>
> Desde hoy me llamaré africano.
>
> En Haití, afro-haitiano,
>
> en Santo Domingo, afro-dominicano,
>
> en New York, afro-norteamericano
>
> en Europa, afro-francés, alemán, español, italiano. Sin importar
>
> el apellido, seré siempre africano.

In *El nativo, Jiménez* uses the prefix *afro* for the first time. To be sure, the disdain Jiménez feels for a Dominican identity that has been whitened is apparent in all of his poetry, but he does not propose to erase the European past. Jiménez does not deny his Dominican identity as he reaffirms his African ancestry, and by no means does he advocate the Dominican concept of *mestizaje* that consciously erases its African heritage. His poem "Africa ancestral" (61) defines the loss of

African identity as a result of what he calls "transculturation" that occurred when Blacks were forced to adapt to Dominican culture by adopting European ways.

> Desconocida
>
> abuela.
>
> Recuerdos borrados por la transculturación,
>
> eres, lo que robaron.

Without superimposing the culture of the colonized over the culture of the colonizer, Jiménez proposes to redefine Dominican identity so that it acknowledges openly its diverse and pluralist heritages. As Gonçalves notes:

> Para que se estabeleça tal identidade o poeta se vale de uma série de temas constantes através dos quais constrói uma cosmogonia negra, à medida que afirma a presença histórica do negro na República Dominicana e questiona a "hispanidad", ou seja, a falsa identidade baseada somente no elemento europeu. (136)

In her article "Transculturation and Creolization," Sabine Hoffman cites the Cuban author Miguel Barnet who defines transculturation as the "fusion of elements of quite different origins into a national culture" (80). Whereas Barnet used the term transculturation to describe the process of cultural mixtures that created the Cuban revolutionary society, which included African contributions, Blas Jiménez never gives it such a positive meaning. Jiménez contends that the African past of the Dominican has been "erased" by transculturation as a means of creating a Dominican society devoid of Africans. The first attempts to

"whiten" Dominican society, which were detailed in Chapter One of this dissertation, began as far back as the eighteenth century. According to Jiménez, the obsession of cultural and physical whitening has continued into and throughout the twentieth century.

Therefore, the feeling of cultural, psychological and historical alienation and marginalization that Jiménez describes in his poetry is certainly valid. The fact that the creation of Dominican culture meant the complete annihilation of a valid element in its existence gives legitimacy to Jiménez's argument against the Dominican concept of *mestizaje*. When he proposed to affirm not only his Blackness, but also the Blackness of all Dominicans and all Caribbeans, Jiménez used for the first time the term *afro*. By allowing the term to serve as a prefix to his identity, he was challenging the Dominican concept of nationalism that had remained intact since the nineteenth century. Jiménez's poetry combats the racist national rhetoric that has successfully made enemies of Black Dominicans and Blacks from the rest of the Americas. His poetry calls for unity and universality among African peoples by celebrating their similarities in history and arguing for a common goal of dignity and visibility in their respective nations.

Conclusion

Although Aída Cartagena Portalatín did not emphasize race and ethnicity to the degree that Blas Jiménez does in his literature, she did create an otherness as an expression of ideological exile. In her stories and in her life, Cartagena

Portalatín used alienation in order to create an authentic identity. Thus, both she and Jiménez distinguish their works from those of others by rejecting an entire system of artistic and cultural values imposed upon them throughout Dominican history. Where Cartagena Portalatín was the first to refuse the traditionally accepted image of Dominican identity in her literature, opening up the definition of Dominicanness, Blas Jiménez continued to expand upon her definition of Dominicanness by refusing to differentiate between the Dominican *mulato* and the *negro*.

For both authors, Dominican identity is not limited to either racial or ethnic markers because Blackness is inherent to all Dominicans. However, due primarily to Blas Jiménez and his concept of the Afro-Caribbean identity, literary Blackness in the Dominican Republic cannot be limited to antiquated concepts of nationalism. His literature offers a more pluralistic view of Dominican identity that is cognizant of the cultural richness of its racial mixture on the one hand, and respectful of the struggle of its African ancestry on the other.

Conclusion

While Dominicans themselves render meaningless the term "Afro-Dominican" and the Dominican Republic has maintained a national rhetoric that excludes recognition of African contributions to Dominican culture, Blackness is inherently a part of Dominican literature. Black characters, black "talk," black oppression, and black history abound in the literature despite the nation's efforts to deny any relation to Africa or Africans.

The purpose of this dissertation has been to study the development of an Afro-Dominican expression in literature through the condition of race and to determine why literary Blackness, like Afro-Dominicanness, is still an oxymoron to most Dominicans. While Whiteness may be the cultural and physical standard for the Dominican, Blacks have always been the majority in the Dominican Republic. This demographic and historical reality helps explain why Afro-Dominican literature has evolved, albeit intermittently, despite efforts to erase the African ancestors of the authors from official history.

When attempts to eradicate Blackness by *mestizaje* failed, the white Dominican hegemony exorcised Blackness by redefining the term *negro*. White Dominicans, who controlled all facets of Dominican society, began a campaign to erase Africans from the population by way of literature. Dominican literature romanticized the already extinct native population and never made any mention of the descendants of African slaves who fought along side the creoles for

Dominican freedom. The result of such a racist campaign initiated in the nineteenth century has been the basis for the racialized Dominican culture of today which separates its citizens into groups of *blancos* and *indios*, leaving Blacks out of Dominican society completely.

The anti-Haitian/anti-Black sentiment that pervaded Dominican literature of the nineteenth century was a result of the movement to escape being ruled by a Black nation. The Dominican Black and Mulatto had to deny any physical, historic, and cultural similarities shared with their Black Haitian neighbor to fit the accepted definition of Dominicanness. Manuel de Jesús Galván's novel *Enriquillo* (1882) is the most significant example of Dominican literature that forged the definition of Dominicanness that is still accepted today. Galván's only novel established the native Indian woman as the mother of Dominican identity and gave to darker Dominicans a new racial background to replace their African, and therefore, "inferior" past. Consequently, contemporary Dominican culture and history reflect the literary campaign of denial that was launched during the period of independence.

The twentieth century opened with a European fascination with all things Black. Anthropological studies directed by Maurice Delafosse (1870-1926) and Blaise Cenrars (1887-1961) of France, and Leo Frobenius (1873-1934) of Germany stimulated interest in Africa and Africans. Frobenius, in particular, investigated African literary culture and was the first to publish literature of the African oral tradition in *Der schwarze Dekameron* (1910). The first works of the

literary trend identified as "Black-as-subject" in Europe and the Americas were inspired by the ethnological and literary studies of these men.

Literature with the Black used as the subject expressed an interest in Black culture as folkloric. It was exploitative and racist, reducing the complexity of an entire Diaspora to the confines of a few simplistic and stereotypical symbols. Other Caribbean writers were the first to profit from it, but Dominicans also enjoyed participating in this literary trend of the 1930s. *Poesía negroide* evolved in three stages that ranged from the most superficial and exploitative representations of Black culture (i.e.; Haitian), to a protest against the oppression of the Black, and ultimately, came to an idealization of the mulatto woman or *trigueña* as being representative of Dominican culture. The evolution of *poesía negroide* is most apparent in the poetry of Manuel del Cabral (1907), but other *negroide* poets include Domingo Moreno Jimenes (1894–1966) Tomás Hernández Franco (1904-1952), Pedro Mir (1913-2000), and Rubén Suro (1916).

Although *poesía negroide* is sometimes mistakenly understood to be Afro-Dominican literature, the Dominican *negrista* poets did not consider themselves to be Afro-Dominicans nor did they ever think in terms of Afro-Dominican literature. Literary Blackness originally was the result of efforts by Afro-Dominican authors to empower themselves through their African past and by freeing themselves of the label of "foreigner." Third generation Dominicans of West Indian, Haitian and African American descent such as Juan Sánchez Lamouth (1929-1969), Antonio Viau Renaud (1942-1965), and Norberto James

Rawlings (1945) sought to demonstrate their Blackness within their Dominicanness, and inadvertently laid the groundwork for the cultural "*cimarronaje*" that occurred when other Afro-Dominican writers refused to label themselves *trigueña* or *indio*. The universality of Blackness would confirm their existence in a country that consistently identified Blacks as foreigners.

Trujillo's thirty-one year dictatorship created a strong national identity based upon a profound paranoia of foreign military intervention and foreign invasion. Because the Black was an inherent enemy to all Dominicans, Dominicanness was defined as the opposite of all things Black. That racist legacy helps explain in part why Dominican scholars deny that an Afro-Dominican literature exists. Nonetheless, Black literature has long been a literary undercurrent in the Dominican Republic.

The 1960s saw the appearance of black authors who were doubly oppressed as undesirables in the Dominican Republic. First and foremost, they were Blacks, descendants of *cocolos*, Haitians, and African Americans; secondly, they did not share the same language, religion, and European culture of the Dominicans. Although many of their families had called the Dominican Republic home since the nineteenth century, they were not accepted within the definition of Dominicanness. Descendants of foreign Blacks and poets like Juan Sánchez Lamouth (1929-1969), of West Indian descent, and Antonio Viau Renaud (1942-1965), of Haitian decent, wrote passionate poems to describe the difficulties of the black immigrant in the 1960s. Norberto James Rawlings (1945), of African

American and West Indian descent, reminds Dominicans of the history of immigration and the contributions made by the country's black immigrants.

Unlike Sánchez Lamouth and Viau Renaud, Norberto James Rawlings has lived to see published his poetry that celebrated his origins. He proposed to recognize another facet of Dominicanness with his first major work *Sobre la marcha* (1969), and consequently, gave other third generation Dominicans like himself the motivation to remove the obstacle of being "foreign" from their path towards Dominican nationality.

Because Dominicanness traditionally was considered the opposite of Blackness, Afro-Dominicans who were not of *cocolo,* Haitian, or African American descent chose to hide behind the whitened racial identity of *indio, mulato,* or *trigueña* in order to separate themselves from the marginalized Blacks. However, upon the death of Trujillo in 1961, traditional notions of racial and national identity began to be questioned. As the first to write feminist literature in the Dominican Republic, Aída Cartagena Portalatín rejected the image of the *trigueña* or *mulata* and refused to depict her in literature. Cartagena Portalatín identified herself as the "other" and formed a personal exile for herself as a rejection of previously conceived literary stereotypes. The short stories in *Tablero* (1978) all emphasize her dedication to the "other." Her protagonists are always women who use personal exile to achieve freedom through an act of re-naming that allows women to establish a new identity, free of antiquated notions.

Dominicanness encapsulates other images for Blas Jiménez who was the first to qualify Dominican nationalism with the term "afro" in his literature. Jiménez deconstructs the Dominican identity to expose its African base and calls for all Dominicans to embrace their roots. His call for cultural *cimarronaje* includes black Dominicans joining forces with other Afro-Caribbeans in order to learn about and to appreciate all facets of their history. His four books of poetry, *Aquí.. otro español* (1980), *Caribe africano en despertar* (1984), *Exigencias de un cimarrón* (1987), and *El nativo* (1996) champion the creation and nurturing of an Afro-Dominican identity.

Literary expression is as varied as the ethnicity of its authors, and Dominican literature written by people of African descent is an integral part of traditional Dominican literature characterized by a common language and the common goal of defining Dominican identity. Unfortunately, literature that appropriates Blackness remains on the margins of canonical literature because its themes challenge an official history of distortion that continues to be the basis of Dominicanness. This dissertation argues, however, that all traditional expressions of a Dominican discourse of national identity reveal an inherent tension. National affirmation is in fact predicated upon denial, and consequently, literary Blackness serves as a constant reminder that Dominicans have a rich cultural heritage that has yet to be fully embraced.

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