

REPRESENTING “THE HAITIAN PROBLEM”, OR THE PROBLEM OF REPRESENTING HAITIANNNESS: A READING OF DOMINICAN LITERARY TEXTS FROM THE 2000S

Fernanda Bustamante E.

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona



Abstract || The hegemonic Dominican discourse—founded during the colonization and taken up again in the twentieth century by Trujillo and Balaguer—has legitimized hispanophilia and negrophobia as the foundations of national identity, thus conceiving Dominicanity through the denial of the Other-Haitian. The following cultural and postcolonial study focuses on the presence and development of the Haitian subject in a diverse and recent Dominican corpus, consisting of novels, stories and poems. The purpose is to reflect on the matter of representing these subjectivities that have been excluded from the social imaginary and its relationship with Dominicanity.

Keywords || Dominicanity | Subalternation speech | Deracialized consciousness | Representation

Decir «lo haitiano» en el imaginario dominicano es como ponerse los viejos trajes del prejuicio cuando no del racismo. «Lo haitiano» es el «problema», la necesidad del exorcismo.

Miguel D. Mena, *Jean Gentil viajeros sin mapa*

On September 25th, 2013 the Constitutional Court of the Dominican Republic released Sentence TC/0168/13, which ruled for all children born on Dominican soil to foreigners in transit from 1929 onwards to be divested of their Dominican nationality. The legislation generated strong controversy within the country, and some international organisms demonstrated their rebuke towards such a violation of Human Rights, and of the principles of equality and anti-discrimination, among others. The Dominican government contended that this political measure to regulate illegal immigration is protected by the national Constitution, which states that Dominican nationality can be acquired by “persons born in the national territory, with the exception of the sons and daughters of foreign members of diplomatic and consular delegations, and of foreigners in transit ...”, for whom the principle of *ius soli* does not apply. Nevertheless, the effort to refute this sentence not only arises from the ambiguity and relativism of the category “foreigner in transit”,¹ but also from the retroactivity the sentence mandates—it effectuates an audit to revise the birth records of foreigners from June 21, 1929 up to current day, in order to identify all those who have been registered irregularly in the country’s Civil Register and denationalize them.²

I take this measure, a political issue applied to law, that affects, in large part, more than three generations of people of Haitian descent who will end up without any effective recourse—a measure that according to the Dominican *Junta Central Electoral* (JCE) [Central Electoral Commission]¹ does not contain discriminatory nuance—as an entrance for the present analysis, since this national predicament, both political and social, and all the problems and tensions that come with it, is just one episode in the fitful, violent, and disfigured relationship which throughout history national narratives have configured in terms of Dominicanity and Haitianness, to such a degree that Dominican cultural and national identity has come to define itself through its negation and opposition with the Other-Negro and the Other-Haitian (Valerio Holguín, 2000; San Miguel, 1997; Pérez Cabral, 2007). Hence its persistence justifies, and encourages, the examination of this subject within the Dominican cultural productions of the 2000s.³

In what follows I will present a reading (situated in cultural and postcolonial studies) on the presence and development of the Haitian subject in recent productions of the Dominican literary corpus. This corpus will comprise of: the short story “La Casa Mamey” and the poems “Eyeless” (2009) and “No Excuses” by Juan Dicient (2009); the

NOTES

1 | One might consider that many immigrants enter the country under this condition, but in time their “transit” prolongs to become a permanent residence.

2 | In this context, “irregular registration” is understood to apply to all children of foreigners born in Dominican territory that at the moment of their birth did not have parents with residence permits, instead finding themselves in a state of illegality.

3 | It is worth mentioning that Dominican artist Rita Indiana Hernández protested this resolution on October 9th, 2013 in *El País* column “Magia negra”. Similarly, on November 3, 2013, Mario Vargas Llosa declared his objection in the column “Los parias del Caribe” of the same newspaper. In addition, on November 4th, 2013, the Dominican-American writer Junot Díaz declared in the journal *La lupa sin trabas* that he felt “asqueado” and fearful for the future of the country, and qualified the resolution as an irresponsible, cruel, and cynical act, “y sobre todo, tan racista.” (Díaz 2013).

short story "La sangre de Philippe" (2005) and the novel *Candela* by Rey E. Andújar; the novels *La estrategia de Chochueca* (2003), *Papi* (2005), and *Nombres y animales* (2013) by Rita Indiana Hernández.⁴ To that end, I will follow the postulates of Fredric Jameson, who, in *Documentos de cultura, documentos de barbarie* (1989) emphasizes the importance of context when confronting ourselves with a literary text or a cultural object, reasoning that, as works not isolated from culture, they become carriers of ideologies, by which the act of interpretation requires a detachment from dominant cultural constants of both its moment of production and its reception.

To commence, and understanding that the subaltern-peripheral condition, founded in a colonial past, is identifiable in both the subjects of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, I will take some time to elaborate two ideas concerning Dominican identity, ideas I rely on to carry out this analysis and that closely relate to one another. On the one hand, that understanding "Dominicanicity" as a category inserts it into a fictitious nationality and recognizes its deracialized consciousness, by Silvio Torres-Saillant; and on the other hand, the tendency to configure a primitivist discourse concerning Haitianness, by Fernando Valerio Holguín. What I would like to emphasize from these theorizations is that they explain two possible lines of problematization concerning Haitianness in Dominicanity: the power of subalternization that Dominicanity exerts over Haitianness in order to legitimize itself; and how the artificiality of Dominicanity, legitimized by hegemony, has percolated into the consciousness of its own community, dislocating and, consequently, subalternizing its social body.⁵

Considering the above, I ask myself: Why do these Dominican creators include Haitian characters in their works? How are these subjectivities, which have been excluded from the national imaginary of identity, delineated or represented? Do they reproduce primitivist tropes? What role do these figures perform in relation to the national consciousness and nationality? How is "Dominicanity" inscribed in these aesthetic proposals, and how does it posit itself before the official sphere?

Conceiving of the postcolonial project, and following the words of Ileana Rodríguez, as a model of thought that:

no es sólo el de documentar la dominancia, sino el de enseñar sus silencios, desplazamientos, intersticios, zonas porosas [...] [así como el] de revelar el poder y agencias del colonizado y sus conocimientos para ajustar, corregir e interpretar las epistemes que le son ajenas además de impuestas por la fuerza e identificadas con la violencia y la violación. (Rodríguez, 2011: 68-69)

I uphold that making space for the Haitian subject allows for the

NOTES

4 | In a future analysis, the song and music video "Da pa' lo do" by Rita Indiana y los Misterios; and the feature film *Jean Gentil* (2010) by Laura Amelia Guzmán and Israel Cárdenas (directors) will be incorporated into the corpus.

5 | In this sense, as it will be next explored, in this analysis hegemonic discourses are those national ideological conceptions inscribed in Trujillo and Balaguer's rhetoric, with a strong connection with national colonial ideas.

dismantling of a bygone nationalism, a gesture realized in these works through a poetry that, beyond subverting the imaginary held over them, beyond reassigning meaning to these subjectivities or constructing an alternate reality, recognize the obsolescence and perversity of the dominant discourse, calling for a new way to inspect the social reality, for a recognition, and with that, espousing the creation of a new identity consciousness. Therefore these works are configured as counter-narratives of Dominican awareness, in which the problem is not about the representation of the Haitian subject, but rather in the very act of representing the Haitian subject, through specific and determined places of enunciation.

1. The problem: in Haitianness or in Dominicanicity?: a brief overview

The history of the Dominican Republic has certain peculiarities when compared to other Antillean and Latin American nations. In addition to the sensation of isolation and exclusion typical to insular territories, it also shares island territory with the Republic of Haiti, and the binationality of the Caribbean territory has generated both military and ideological disputes between annexationists and separatists.

However, I would like to point out what lawyer and political scientist Pedro Andrés Pérez Cabral has called a prolonged predisposition to a colonial condition, or a subaltern condition (2007). The Dominican Republic is the only country in the Americas that, to achieve independence, confronted more than one colonizer, even yielding its obtained autonomy to only later regain it: it has been a Spanish colony, a French colony, a Spanish colony once over, occupied territory for Haiti, and a site for military intervention by the United States. And in the midst of these processes it had a brief period of semi-autonomy—it proclaimed itself Republic only to later solicit a re-annexation by Spain, and finally achieve its independence (even though in current day it is possible to identify it as another case of United States Neocolonialism).⁶

These vicissitudes of Dominican history show us, according to the approach of Shu-Mei Shih, a country that has been victim of a “colonización en serie” (2010: 42), which has generated in its community a “complejo de supeditación” (Pérez Cabral 2007: 163). However, it is important to recognize that this tendency towards subjugation does not submit itself freely to any nation presuming authority, rather only to a metropolis (in this case, Spain), and the tendency is always accompanied by a *blancophilia* that distances Dominicans from the Other-Negro. That is to say, the constructive ideological discourse on which Dominican identity relies—of its

NOTES

6 | I synthesize these historic events in the following chronology: Spanish conquest (1492), Spanish cession of the island to France (end of the eighteenth century); restoration of Spanish domination (1808); declaration of semi-autonomy (1821); Haitian occupation of the Dominican Republic (1822-1844); liberation from Haiti and proclamation of the Dominican Republic (1844); re-annexation to Spain (1861); war for the restoration of national sovereignty (1863-1865); United States military occupation (1916-1924).

mulatto and its mestizo— is an affirmative of “una blanca, más pretendida que real, con raigambre europea” (San Miguel, 1997: 62).

Negrophobia, anti-Haitianism and hispanophilia, as axes of colonial discourse and the “parte medular de la gesta independentista” (Nicasio and Pérez, 2007: 190), were exacerbated during the dictatorship of Leonidas Trujillo (from 1930 to 1961), figuring as fundamental principles of the national discourse. Along this line, it is necessary to mention the genocide of more than 15,000 Haitians on the Masacre River as part of Trujillo’s effort to dominicanize the border in 1937.⁷ After Trujillo’s death, Joaquín Balaguer, during his various governments (1960-62; 1966-78; 1986-96) also took up the “problem of the imperialist Haitian” and further reinforced the politics of preserving national character, so as to avoid “moral disintegration” and “the decline of the race” in Dominican society.⁸ Unfortunately, in recent years this panorama has not been modified, and just as the recent sentence with which I opened this text suggests, these ideas continue to be legitimized and prolonged as time moves forward.

Having concluded this brief review of historical context, I would like to further explore the two theorizations concerning Dominican identity that have served my analysis of the literary productions in question. Silvio Torres-Saillant—basing his theorization in the idea of imagined community of Benedict Anderson (1993)—signals that the presuppositions on which Dominicanity is based constructed a fictitious nation, given that the identity discourse legitimized by the dominant sector of the population, also following certain postulates of modernity, was inclined to defend the homogeneity of its society, ignoring its diversity and complexity, thus constituting a monolithic identity model, mounted on white racial composition, Hispanic culture and tradition, Catholic religion, and heterosexuality:

La dominicanidad se definió a partir de lo que una minoría empedernida soñó con que fuéramos. Al nacer desvinculada de la fisonomía de la población, la idea de dominicanidad que primaba en el discurso cultural oficial contradujo el resto real de la gente que habitaba la geografía nacional. [...] Nació allí una idea de la dominicanidad enemistada con la diferencia y la diversidad. La mentira de que la experiencia nacional cabía en un molde fijo y escueto adquirió vigencia. La verdad de nuestra heterogeneidad perdió autoridad. (Torres-Saillant, 2003: s/n)

However, according to Torres-Saillant, the problem goes beyond this. The exaltation of Hispanicity, which carries with it the underestimation and negation of any black—and by effect, Haitian—components in the national culture, has consolidated an official rhetoric that does not recognize its own xenophobia, marring consciousness of the Dominican *mulatto* and *mestizo*, to whom, be their heritage as much Spanish as African or Taino, a negroid complex was tethered, and a necessity to be “whitened” was imposed, generating a

NOTES

7 | Among the anti-Haitian measures of Trujillo—who ironically is of Haitian descent, as his maternal grandmother, Luisa Encina Chevalier, was the daughter of a military official during the Haitian occupation—the Immigration Law of 1939 is worth mention. However, it was the Massacre River killing, when Trujillo sent army soldiers with machetes to decapitate all Haitians at the border, which has had a greater historic impact. If the —apparent— phenotypical markers were not definitive in differentiating a Haitian from a Dominican, linguistic markers served for differentiation, with the word “perejil” [parsley] as a lasting symbol for this procedure (the Haitians would pronounce it as “pelejil”). This episode has been represented in a diverse range of Dominican literary works, including the novels *El Masacre se pasa a pie* (1973), by Freddy Prestol Castillo; *Juego de dominó* (1973), by Maneul Mora Serrano; *El hombre del acordeón* (2003), by Marcio Veloz Maggiolo, etc.

8 | Throughout history there have been various Dominican intellectuals that supported this xenophobic rhetoric, and standing out among them are Manuel Arturo Peña Batlle, with his text *Ensayos históricos* (1989) and, without a doubt, Joaquín Balaguer, who in his famous work *La isla al revés: Haití y el destino dominicano* (1983), initially published in 1947 under the title *La realidad dominicana. Semblanza de un país un régimen*, denied all African influence on the Dominican Republic, and for as much as his discussion is of a racist strain, it also exposes his distress before the threat of Haitian imperialism. Along this line, among his political measures, it is worth mentioning: the nullification of Dominican nationality to children born to Haitians in

deracialized Dominican identity consciousness as concerns its own mulattoization.⁹

En la comunidad afrodescendiente la historia ha conspirado contra el desarrollo de una conciencia racial que permita la construcción de alianzas étnicas. Al mismo tiempo, su conciencia desracializada impide el desarrollo de un discurso de afirmación negro que serviría para contrarrestar la negrofobia intelectual. (Torres-Saillant, 1998: 136; translation of the author)

In addition to these reflections, there are the ideas of Fernando Valerio Holguín who, in “Nuestros vecinos, los primitivos: identidad cultural dominicana” (2000), illustrates how the defense of Spanish descent—of the “mito del pretendido mestizaje”, as he calls it—, involves forgetting the extermination of the native Taino population in the first years of colonization and omitting the African features contributed by the black-slave population that was imported to repopulate the island, which generates a society with a perversely atrophied historic memory and national consciousness. From that point, he emphasizes how Dominicans, in order to configure their identity, have been served by primitivist tropes when conceiving the Other-Haitian, the Other-Neighbor, which is to say that “el discurso primitivista con respecto a los haitianos ha perfilado la identidad dominicana racial y culturalmente” (2000: s/n), always identifying Haitians as the negative pole of binary oppositions: they are primitive, the savage, and the irrational ones.

2. Visibility and attempts towards enunciation: Haitian characters, in secondary and protagonist roles, in the literary works of Rita Indiana Hernández, Juan Dient, and Rey E. Andújar

The Dominican writers Juan Dient (b. 1969), Rita Indiana Hernández (b. 1977), and Rey E. Andújar (b. 1977), formed during “esos ochentas tan rompies con las adscripciones históricas a lo insular” (Mena, 2013: 13), have geographically, ideologically, and nationally redefined the island (or half an island). Throughout their diverse literary works—novels, poems, short stories—they delineate a heterogeneous social inventory that makes space for Haitian characters, through diverse perspectives, styles, and narrative tones, which point towards an attempt to problematize “Dominicanity”.¹⁰

Throughout all the works in question, their plots wind through urbanity, identifying the Haitian characters of these works, for the most part, with those who have emigrated to the other half of the island due to economic, rather than political, causes, and thus come to represent the percentage that has inserted itself in activities of the

NOTES

the Dominican Republic, as well as declaring the mixing of Haitian and Dominican as a “corrupting” effect on Dominicanity; the dismissal of solicitations for political asylum from Haitians coming from the repression of the Cedrés dictatorship (1991-1994), a situation criticized by UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and Human Rights organizations; and the enactment, in 1991, of Decree 233-91 that ordered for the expulsion of all undocumented Haitians below 16 years and above 60 years of age, which prompted one of the most brutal deportations (Wooding and Moseley-Williams 2004).

9 | Pedro Andrés Pérez Cabral (1910-1981), in his book *La comunidad mulata* (1976), analyzes the features of Dominicanity, delving into the necessity for de-Africanization that brought about blancophilia and servilism, and he identifies Hispanophilia as an “imposición de una conciencia blanca [...] de la conciencia de que somos descendientes de españoles, de que en nosotros predominan lo hispánico, la invencible hispanidad que nos ha salvado de la haitianización” (2007: 103).

10 | It is important to mention the works by Doris Sommer and Marcio Veloz Maggiolo regarding how national tradition and the Haitian figure has crystallized in Dominican literary works, since they present interesting interpretive methods. Sommer, in her book *One Master for Another: Populism as Patriarchal Rhetoric in Dominican Novels* (1983), performs studies on five Dominican novels (*La Mañosa*, 1936, by Juan Bosch; *Over*, 1939, by Ramón Marrero Arísty; *El Masacre se pasa a pie*, 1973, by Freddy Prestol Castillo; *De abril en adelante*, 1975, by Marcio Veloz

service sector or the informal economy.¹¹

In the case of Rita Indiana Hernández, the treatment of Haitianness has been progressively complicated throughout her works: from being mentioned on only one occasion in *La estrategia de Chocueca* (2003), it became a central part of the argument of her latest novel, *Nombres y animales* (2013), which develops the figure of the Haitian laborer, a figure already present in *La estrategia* and in different episodes of *Papi* (2005). On this point, I should emphasize the historic and cultural setting for the author's three works, which is neither innocent nor accidental. These works cover the various governments of Joaquín Balaguer, years in which the construction of a great deal of contemporary infrastructure in the city of Santo Domingo was carried out, executed, for the most part, by the hands of Haitian labor.¹²

los vi construir la mitad de la ciudad con sus brazos.
Enfrente de la casa de la abuela trabajan en una obra del gobierno, se bañaban desnudos detrás de un cordel con varios sacos a modo de cortina. [...] Recuerdo a la abuela que contaba lo que le habían hecho a una sirvienta haitiana durante la matanza. (Hernández, 2004: 19)¹³

Y por donde quiera las esculturas espontáneas de uno que se ahogó al caer en la mezcla, los sesos embarrados de uno al que una carga con todo y sogas y polea le cayó en la cabeza, por todas partes los cuerpos de obreros haitianos empalados en las varillas erectas sobre las que cayeron desde el catorceavo piso de una obra. Se tiran a propósito, dicen en el periódico los arquitectos, se tiran de clavado a propósito a ver si se salvan y les damos dinero. (Hernández, 2005: 96)

Tía Celia, que es arquitecta e ingeniera y tiene haitianos hasta para regalar. (Hernández, 2013a: 40)

yo trato de sacar la cuenta de cómo le alcanzan las horas para todo eso y para bregar con los cuatrocientos haitianos que tiene en cada construcción y no me da. (Hernández, 2013a: 122)

[me dijo:] Hoy mientras yo recibía a Mingo, el que me consigue los haitianos en la frontera, se me prendió un bombillo. (Hernández, 2013a: 124)

In these quotes, which seem to be nothing more than mere observation, the young protagonist narrators are aware of Haitian subjects that occupy different places in the narration, which suggests a certain positing within the texts: the figure of the grandmother, who relates a personal memory about the Massacre of 1937, remits the necessity for historic memory; the architect figures (as a collectivity and the individual, Tía Celia) pave way for a sarcastic and grotesque critique of labor conditions and the illegal recruitment of Haitian workers facilitated by the government; and with the character of Mingo, normalized human trafficking is denounced.¹⁴ The fact that her latest

NOTES

Maggiolo; and *Cuando amaba las tierras comuneras*, 1978, by Pedro Mir), accounting for the historical context in which they were produced, proposing populist rhetoric as an analytical paradigm, as well as the idea that these novels subvert the presupposed classics of the national romance. On the other hand, Veloz Maggiolo, in his article "Tipología del tema haitiano en la literatura dominicana" (1972), establishes a thematic relationship between the Haitian subject and society, and the Haitian subject and landscape, presenting a typology of the modes of treatment that the Haitian subject has received in national literature: literature of the adulated Haitian, literature of the oppressed Haitian, literature of the corrupt Haitian, and literature of the integrated Haitian.

11 | In the 20th century, the principal Haitian migratory movements started in 1915, a result of the United States' first intervention, when they crossed the border to work the harvest of sugar-cane, but due to the crisis of the sugar industry and their persisting residence in the Dominican Republic, they were displaced to other economic activities: in the countryside, the harvest of coffee and cacao, and in the city, construction and the informal economy (as porters, domestic servicemen, street vendors, etc.) (Nicasio and Pérez, 2007: 193).

12 | The narrator of the novel *Candela* by Andújar describes this situation as: "una ciudad vertical construida por mano de obra haitiana" (2008: 109).

13 | This image, the protagonist's direct observation of how Haitians are the builders in and of her own neighborhood, is repeated in the two novels that succeed it:

novel takes place in 1992, the same year that Balaguer celebrated 500 years of the Conquest of America, inaugurating the Faro a Colón monument and the Pre-Columbian Museum as monuments in honor of Hispanic identity, and the presence of the architect Tía Celia, who worked for the Balaguer government,¹⁵ charges both the secondary characters—those who are inconsequential according to national discourse—, as well as the stories themselves, with ideological connotations, denouncing how colonialism and its postulations have been assumed by national discourse.

It is also worth mentioning the form in which these subjects are represented. With the exception of the protagonist narrator of the short story “La sangre de Phillippe” (2005) by Rey E. Andújar, who manages to legalize his residency, none of these characters acquire any grade of political agency that could prompt change in their social condition; all are found in a situation of illegality, they live in precariousness or pure misery. For that matter, these subjects underscore the presence of Haitians in a street setting, like the street vendor in Hernández’s *La estrategia de Chocueca* or the lyrical subject of the panhandler surrounded by street dogs (“*kakis*”)¹⁶ in Juan Dicient’s poem “Eyeless” (2007): “Luego el haitiano en la calle que viene a ofrecerle una estatuica de madera, que mejor comprársela que aguantar esa mirada de niño que odia” (Hernández, 2004: 19); “En cada esquina de esta ciudad / hay una mujer haitiana / con un niño en los brazos / y 2 monedas por ojo” (Dicient, 2007: 13).

This state of poverty and vulnerability is exacerbated by the sensation of isolation and desolation, typical of immigration situations, in the short story “La sangre de Philippe”. The work develops the theme of uprooting—of identity “beneath shadow” or “without a place”—announced in the epigraph with Pessoa’s quote on “living with shadows” and developed in the short story through the character Philippe, the Haitian-Nobody who asks for help:

vi un bulto negro a mi lado en la camilla extendiendo una mano [...]. Me dijo que se llamaba Philippe [...]. Lloraba porque no tenía a nadie y se sentía solo [...] me dijo que no le dolían los raspones [...] ya que se había pelado hasta el apellido, le dolía la soledad y la indiferencia de las camillas, debajo de las escaleras de un hospital que no era el suyo, la mitad de isla que le era ajena, lejos de su seca mitad, que estaba peor. (Andújar, 2013: 241)

Andújar in his novel *Candela* (2007) intensely complicates this state of un-belonging that territorial displacement generates through the character of Candela, an orphan, healer, and sex worker in Santo Domingo.¹⁷ The daughter of the Dominican Rotonda de los Santos and “Jean-Marie Pieggot, alias Francisco Ruiz, un poeta inédito y haitiano que cruzó la frontera para construir este país de mierda” (Andújar, 2008: 37), Candela – “la morena”, “la negra culipandea”—

NOTES

“ella y un haitiano de la construcción de enfrente que mami ha traído para que la ayude, me introducen un tubo transparente por donde me alimentan” (Hernández, 2005: 41); “el olor a cemento de la casa y del olor de todos los trabajadores haitianos que un día la levantaron” (Hernández, 2013: 30).

14 | Following this same idea, Dicient’s short story “La casa Mamey” denounces the corruption behind such urban planning: “Las construcciones aparecieron con dinero lavado o sucio o bendito. Los tractores y los haitianos despertaron el ensanche” (2010: 27).

15 | “Las construcciones se las han conseguido a Tía Celia un hermano de su mamá que trabaja en el partido desde los doce años, es por eso quizás que Tía Celia va a todas las reuniones del partido y en su camioneta llega un sticker que dice Balaguer 1986-90 de la campaña pasada” (2013: 121); “Ella y su hermano trabajaron para Balaguer toda la vida, y yo se lo creo porque mi tío hasta llegó a cuidarle los perros al presidente una vez que estuvieron graves, unos collies más feos que el diablo a los que Tío Fin tubo a suero durante una noche entera porque se habían comido por accidente un salchichón envenenado” (2013: 127).

16 | In the Dominican Republic mutt street dogs with khaki-colored fur are typically called “perros *kakis*.”

17 | In *Nombres y animals* there is also a female character who, following contact with a Haitian woman moments before her death, gained healing powers: “A final de cuentas a quienes la gente venía a ver era a ti y por quien hacían fila era por ti. Armenia, la niña faculta. La niña que curaba la tuberculosis con una

comes to represent the *rayano*,¹⁸ a liminal subject who, engendering a dividing line in her very being, lacks any stability as concerns her identity. Her subalternity is thus inscribed, not only for lacking official recognition from either country, but also for being victim of a blood tie that condemns her to blackness, to otherness:

nunca ha podido ir a la escuela, sacar cédula, cobrar un cheque. Nadie, de este lado de la isla, le hizo el favor de ir a un Juzgado de Paz y declararla como hija; no puede reclamar nada a estas horas porque no existe ningún papel que pruebe que ella nació aquí. Para los del lado de acá su identidad es confusa y se sospecha que el padre era oriundo del otro lado, así que siempre se sentirá rechazada.

Desde muy pequeña ya se empezaba a hacer preguntas de por qué los otros muchachitos la relajaban de prieta fea y maldita haitiana. (Andújar, 2008: 79)

Hence, the character of Candela illustrates the precarious legal situations in which the children of Haitian immigrants born in the Dominican Republic find themselves, and as such, she signifies the voided political and social recognition of these subjects. Which is to say Candela is configured as a liminal subject that has been divested of the right to self-determination, by her character provokes a reflection on identity, power, and community.¹⁹ In this manner, the second part of the quote, which recognizes the discrimination that she suffers, allows me to move forward with the characters that reproduce certain tropes regarding the Haitian subject (in accordance with Valerio Holguín), tropes that have served and been served in the dominant discourse.

The lyrical speaker of the poem "No excuses" (2007) by Juan Dicient relates how the suffering of Haitians is a spectacle that the homeless, voyeurs of misery, enjoy, and exemplifies how by the mere fact of coming from Haiti, Haitians are catalogued as delinquents, thus justifying a treatment of domination and subjugation: "[les gusta ver a un] haitiano que le caen atrás por ladrón, / lo agarran, / lo amarran al paloelú de la San Martín con María Montés, / le dan duro con un palo, / le dan duro con una sogá, / y después descubren que el ladrón era otro" (Dicient, 2007: 7).

Faced with this reproduction of official discourse and the popular tendency to seize upon primitivist tropes, the characters of the religious group Coro de las Hermanas from Andújar's novel are worth mention—they deny Candela—"esa haitiana"—any participation in Lubrini's curative treatments, presenting all kinds of excuses that are nothing more than anti-Haitianism founded in prejudice: "que los haitianos son ladrones, que hieden, que hacen brujería, que son maníacos sexuales..." (Andújar, 2008: 70). This attitude repeats in the characters of the neighbors in *Nombres y animales* by Rita Indiana Hernández, who, when faced with the police arrest

NOTES

cuchara. La parte del cuento de tu mamá que más le gusta a la gente es la que relata cómo se te despertaron los poderes esa misma noche al regresar de avisar en el destacamento que una haitiana había fallecido en la vera del río" (Hernández, 2013: 86).

18 | Adjective employed in the Dominican Republic to refer to individuals "on the borderline"—Dominican-Haitian or Haitian-Dominican.

19 | In this sense, the character of Candela, a feminine subject that is also of Haitian descent, can be related to the notion of Rosi Braidotti's "sujeto nómada," not only in terms of territorial displacement, but also of the displacement of media and objects of representation: "el nómada representa a la diversidad movable; la identidad del nómada es un inventario de huellas" (Braidotti, 2000: 45).

of the undocumented Ramadés—the Haitian laborer who ended up working as a dog groomer in Tío Fin’s veterinary office—, not only deny knowing him but also get wrapped up in a burlesque rhetoric, animalizing him:

Al salir con la Coca-Cola, una Malta Morena y unos palitos de queso, un gorila con uniforme camuflado lo detiene, le pide sus documentos y entonces Rada comienza a temblar, alza la vista y ve un camión lleno de haitianos en la parte trasera, con ojos de vacas pal matadero. Rada no tiene documentos y dice “yo tlabajo en el hospital, allí”. El gorila se ríe y le dice “lo’documento” agarrándolo con el t-shirt de tie-dye y empujándolo hacia el camión. En el colmado, donde han visto a Rada mil veces, donde conocen el nombre de Rada, no dicen nada. Rada dice: ‘pregunta allí, yo tlabajo ahí’, pero un golpe en el estómago le hace soltar la botella [...]. Media hora más tarde yo salgo a buscar a Rada, el colmadero me dice: ‘¿el mono?’ Se lo llevaron pa Haití, ja, ja, ja’. Yo pregunto y pregunto y sólo recibo chistes como respuestas. “Lo devolvieron al zoológico.” El muchacho que hace las entregas del colmado me enseña la Coca-Cola derramada: “le dieron un macanazo, pa que montara en el camión, había como treinta”. (Hernández, 2013a: 196)

However, contrasting with this perspective is the character of the psychiatrist in *Candela*, Dr. Macoserio Tarántula, the only character in the work who represents a discourse articulated in opposition to negrophobia and hatred towards Haiti, distancing himself from Torres-Saillant’s atrophied, deracialized national consciousness. The episode in which he faces *Las Hermanas* as a doctor, which is to say, as a learned man, and they do not understand his arguments:

Aclara que Candela no es haitiana, sino hija de un haitiano y una dominicana, lo que implica una cosa muy diferente, y que ella, según lo que le han contado, nació de este lado de la isla. Pero el Coro de Hermanas refuta con que eso no cambia nada, que lo de haitiano se lleva en la sangre; Macoserio no se queda ahí sino que dispara con todo: «Deberíamos de dejarnos de hablar mierda porque todos tenemos el negro detrás de la oreja». Las Hermanas se agrupan como una bola grande de músculos y pelos. Confiesan que no entienden aquello del negro detrás de la oreja, y corren hacia el espejo a buscar a ese negro para matarlo, para montarlo en un camión a punta de machete y armas largas y rapatriarlo, para que vuelva a su otra mitad porque es mentira que esta isla sea un pájaro de dos alas y mucho menos que forme un territorio único e indivisible. (Andújar, 2008: 70)

The narrator, with a subtle irony, proposes the ridiculousness of these spiritual groups, accentuating their ignorance; at the same time he enunciates the problem of nationality from a civic and legal perspective (regarding *ius solis* and *ius sanguinis*); it also alludes to the ideological and political positioning concerning the island, between separatists and annexationists; and, in the words of Macoserio, which are structured as an inclusive address, he presents a rejection of Hispanophilia and whitening and recognition of the mulatto condition.

With this, it possible to observe how in these literary proposals, the authors utilize certain characters that reproduce the subalternizing primitivist tropes to reveal the lie behind the dominant imaginaries regarding Dominican identity and to denounce how, in order preserve the alterity of Haitianness, a rhetoric of fear is imposed as a strategy to preserve the conception of these subjectivities as the uncivilized ones: they are the delinquents, the witches, the monkeys...

However, and as a final point, it is worth mentioning that if in these works Haitian characters perform, for the most part, a secondary roles in the plot, mentioned in isolated incidents, and that they tend to be figures that through their anonymity represent a collectivity, there are three occasions in which they assume a greater participation and, under different conditions, become an axis of the narrative: Candela the landless, of both familiar and national orphanhood; Radamés the undocumented laborer to be deported; and the protagonist of the short story “La sangre de Philippe”, the young, party boy, already a legalized resident of the Dominican Republic, who sees the disgrace and the true situation in the Other-Haitian.

Candela not only gives Andújar’s novel its name, but also, on a structural level, she is the communicative vessel between the different stories; even, on a meta-literary level, her life is fictionalized in Lubrini’s story which relates the origin of the divide on the island at their birth, as if a children’s story or origin myth. Hers is a subjectivity that has a past (let us recall the episode that speaks of her parents and how she was raised by her aunt La Muda, until finally ending up an orphan), and that has a function within the argument that surges after being the subject desired by all.

As for the character of Radamés, from *Nombres y animales*, if it is also possible to believe certain information about his background (like when he declines the bananas because they remind him when he crossed the border), the development of his subjectivity is different. Not only does insert himself into an everyday family dynamic and establish a himself as peer and eventual friend with the young protagonist—who starts off by calling him Rada, showing greater kinship and trust— but he also is presented through the protagonist, and not through a “neutral” omniscient narrator, like in *Candela*, by which the narrative discourse captures personal appreciations, as a constant subject (the girl protagonist narrator) assigns him a role in the story.

In addition, there is the narrator in Andújar’s short story, in whom the psychological development is greater, since his story and characterization are given by his own voice, as a narrator-protagonist. In this way, he realizes a greater agency and social integration, as much through obtaining legal immigration documents as positioning

himself differently through his enunciation, as his reflections are recorded in first-person. In this sense, it is significant that he reveals his Haitianness at the end of the story (in the first pages he alludes to his condition as a foreigner), when he encounters Philippe, the other Haitian that allowed him to understand his own condition of Otherness: “Me fui con la cabeza gacha y dejé a Philippe atrás, como dejé a todos mis seres queridos. Los dejé llorando” (Andújar, 2013: 241).

We thus see that one of the proposals of these Dominican literary works is to place the situation of “Haitianness” in tension, not only transforming it into an object of representation, but also, through changes in perspective and narrative style, emphasizing the modes of representation, allowing us to discern that, beyond assuming any representation in these voices, there is indeed a gesture of recognition performed when considering the very exclusion of Haitianness as evidence.

3. Conclusions: representations in displacement, contrary to silence and erasures

To conclude this reading it is necessary to consider the approaches of Doris Sommer and Néstor E. Rodríguez concerning Dominican literary works, which are not only elucidating but also pertinent to the analysis in question. Sommer indicates in the oft-cited study, *One Master for Another: Populism as Patriarchal Rhetoric in Dominican Novels* (1983), that the so-called peripheral nations are inclined towards experiences that disarticulate and tend to resist traditional societies and their values (1983); while Néstor E. Rodríguez, in his work *Escritura de desencuentro en la República Dominicana* (2007), mentions how contemporary Dominican texts undermine the dominant discourse as concerns what qualifies as Dominican when they present subjectivities ignored by the social imaginary (2007: 143-144). Setting out from the idea that these two premises are applicable to the Dominican literary productions of the new millennium, I return to the interrogatives of this text’s introduction, about how these aesthetic proposals are inscribed in “Dominicanicity” and in what way the Haitian figure determines an ideological positing.

Throughout this analysis we have been able to observe how these works present an alternative social panorama marked by the emblem of diversity (Rodríguez, N., 2003: 241) in which the Haitian component is constant. If in all these works there is no modification to the power relations invested in the subalternized condition of the Haitian figure in the Dominican Republic, there is indeed a gesture of social integration by incorporating them into the everyday lives of

characters and their stories, by giving them a protagonist role, and by making them speakers in their own right. In certain occasions, the Haitian subject is simply mentioned and, in others, he or she acquires a greater historical and psychological development; since there very well exists a certain historical notion when being inscribed in a determined sociopolitical context. However, what I aim to emphasize from these works is not the object of representation, which is to say, how they present the Haitian figure, whether or not they validate or justify the Haitian figure in some way, but rather the very act of representing the Haitian figure, and how this paves the way for a reflection on identity as it concerns Dominicanity.

Addressing the idea that “los estudios subalternos permiten el desplazamiento de las teorías de la representación a las del reconocimiento” (Rodríguez, I., 2011: 44) and that in order to confront the oppressing discourse it is necessary to recognize its condition, we see how these works distance themselves from a deracialized attitude and, without sounding the alarm for blackness, they account for a racial and social consciousness that confers value and recognition to the mulatto condition as well as the Other-Haitian. The presence of these characters and their treatment of them, constitute the works as narratives contrary to exclusionary nationalisms that show how “decir lo dominicano es incluir a Haití como una de sus variables fundamentales” (Mena, 2005). But these works, beyond attempting to give solutions for dissociating from an identity founded in the negation of the Other, beyond being proposals for liberation, allude to the collective consciousness, which is to say, they constitute inquisitive spaces of enunciation that place both the primitivist tropes concerning the Haitian figure and the Dominican identity discourse rooted in a monolithic society, in Hispanophilia, negrophobia, and heteronormativity in tension.

Following these ideas, it is possible to identify these cultural productions with what Homi Bhabha calls “narrativas del desplazamiento” (1994: 290), in that they contain manifested efforts to break into modern discourses through their questioning and placing of tension, distancing themselves from any attitude of resignation, indifference, or conformity. Therefore, we can see how the value of these literary proposals is found in the fact that these Dominican writers position themselves from a critical discursivity unaffiliated with the official sphere and they do not attempt to be an accomplice of its discourses. Making space for Haitian characters is thus not only an ideological gesture, but also a discursive strategy to discuss Dominicanity and the possibility of accepting an Other-Dominicanity. In this way, and following Spivak (2009:70), the notion that in order to achieve recognition for these elided subaltern subjectivities, it is necessary not to abstain from their representation. But the authors go further than this, since it is possible to discern in their works the idea that

they conceive their own place of enunciation—their works— as a space for intervention and breakthrough that resists perpetuating the hegemonic sociopolitical structures and narratives, so that they are disposed to generate dislocations in the dominant discourse, problematizing, from within, Dominicanity, which is to say, being conscious of the ideologies that configure their schemes of representation.

The literary productions that have been the object of this study—and that account for how the problem of representation of the Other-Haitian is displaced by the problem for representation of themselves and their relation to the Other—, is thus framed in an aesthetic with a strong ideological and cultural commitment, which seeks to nullify these fictions of identity, and (without transforming these works into a battlefield), be reactionary to these prolonged and legitimizing proposals, inherited from colonial rhetoric, that persist in current day.

Works cited

- ANDÚJAR, R. E. (2013 [2005]): «La sangre de Philippe», en Mena, Miguel D. (ed.), *Cuentos dominicanos. Siglos xx y xxi (antología)*. EEUU: Ediciones Cielo Naranja, 237-242.
- ANDÚJAR, R. E. (2008 [2007]): *Candela*. Santo Domingo, Alfaguara.
- BÁEZ, F. (2007): «Ahora es nunca» en *Págale tú a los psicoanalistas*, República Dominicana: Ediciones Ferilibro, 37-56.
- BÁEZ, F. (2010): «Haití» *Blog de Frank Báez*, <<http://www.frankbaez.com/2010/01/haiti.html>>, [diciembre 2013].
- BALAGUER, J. (1995 [1983]): *La isla al revés. Haití y el destino dominicano*, Santo Domingo: Editora Corripio.
- BHABHA, H. (1994): *El lugar de la cultura*, Aira, C. (trad.), Buenos Aires: Manantial.
- BRAIDOTTI, R. (2000 [1994]): *Sujetos nómades*, Buenos Aires: Paidós.
- DÍAZ, J. (2013): «Junot Díaz afirma sentencia TC 168 es irresponsable, racista, cruel y cínica», Acento, <<http://www.acento.com.do/index.php/news/134417/56/Junot-Diaz-afirma-sentencia-TC-168-es-irresponsable-racista-cruel-y-cinica.html>>, [noviembre 2013].
- DICENT, J. (2007): «Eyeless» y «No excuses» en *Poeta en Animal Planet*, Argentina: Ediciones Vox, 7 y 13.
- HERNÁNDEZ, R. I. (2004 [2003]): *La estrategia de Chochueca*, San Juan: Isla negra editores.
- HERNÁNDEZ, R. I. (2005): *Papi*, San Juan: Ediciones Vértigo.
- HERNÁNDEZ, R. I. (2013a): *Nombres y animales*, Cáceres: Periférica.
- HERNÁNDEZ, R. I. (2013b): «Magia Negra», *El País*, 9 de octubre, <http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2013/10/09/actualidad/1381345925_372245.html>, [octubre 2013].
- JAMESON, F. (1986): «Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism» en *Social Text*, n.º 15 (otoño), Duke University Press Stable, pp. 65-88, <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/466493>>, [noviembre 2008].
- JAMESON, F. (1989): *Documentos de cultura, documentos de barbarie. La narrativa como acto socialmente simbólico*, Madrid: Visor.
- MENA, M. D. (2005): «Notas para un pensamiento crítico de las relaciones interinsulares (República Dominicana-Haití)» en *Cielo naranja*, <www.cielonaranja.com/menahaiti.html>, [marzo 2010].
- MENA, M. D. (2010): «Jean Gentil viajeros sin mapas», *Notas de prensa Jean Gentil*, <www.jeangentil.com/p/press.html>, [septiembre 2013].
- MENA, M. D. (ed.) (2013): «Introducción», en *Cuentos dominicanos, siglos XX y XXI [Antología]*, Estados Unidos: Ediciones Cielo naranja.
- NICASIO, I. y PÉREZ, O. (2007): *Migraciones, identidades y cultura en República Dominicana*, República Dominicana: Hostos Community College y Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo.
- PÉREZ CABRAL, P. A. (2007 [1976]): *La comunidad mulata*, Santo Domingo: Ediciones Cielo naranja.
- RODRÍGUEZ, I. (2011): *Debates culturales y agendas de campo. Estudios Culturales, Postcoloniales, Subalternos, Transatlánticos, Transoceánicos*, Santiago de Chile: Cuarto Propio.
- RODRÍGUEZ, N. E. (2007): *Escritura de desencuentro en la República Dominicana*, República Dominicana: Editora Nacional.
- SAN MIGUEL, P. L. (1997): *La isla imaginada: historia, identidad y utopía en La Española*, San Juan: Isla Negra.
- SHIH, S-M. (2010): «Traduciendo el feminismo: Taiwán, Spivak, A-Wu» en *Lectora*, n.º 16, 35-57.
- SOMMER, D. (1983): *One Master for Another: Populism As Patriarchal Rhetoric in Dominican Novels*, EEUU: University Press of America.
- SPIVAK, G. CH. (1999): *Crítica de la razón postcolonial. Hacia una historia del presente evanescente*, Madrid: Akal.
- SPIVAK, G. CH. (2009): *¿Pueden hablar los subalternos?*, Manuel Asensi (trad. y ed.), Barcelona: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona.

- TORRES-SAILLANT, S. (1998): «The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity», *Latin American Perspectives: «Race and National Identity in the Americas»*, vol. 25, n.º 3, mayo, 126-146.
- TORRES-SAILLANT, S. (2003): «La nacionalidad ficticia» en *Revista Cielo Naranja*, <http://www.cielonaranja.com/torres_saillant.html> [marzo 2010].
- TORRES-SAILLANT, S. (2013): «Denationalizing Dominicans of Haitian Ancestry? Santo Domingo's Anti-Dominican Authorities», The National Institute for Latino Policy, <<http://www.coha.org/denationalizing-dominicans-of-haitian-ancestry-santo-domingos-anti-dominican-authorities/>>, [noviembre 2013].
- VALERIO-HOLGUÍN, F. (2000): «Nuestros vecinos, los primitivos: identidad cultural dominicana», presentado en el Congreso Latin American Studies Association, Washington D.C., septiembre. Sin publicar.
- VARGAS LLOSA, M. (2013): «Los parias del Caribe», *El País*, 3 de noviembre, < http://elpais.com/elpais/2013/10/31/opinion/1383233998_965346.html>, [noviembre 2013].
- VELOZ MAGGIOLO, M. (1977 [1972]): «Tipología del tema haitiano en la literatura dominicana», *Sobre cultura dominicana y otras culturas*, Santo Domingo: Editorial Alfa y Omega, 93-121.
- WOODING, B. y MOSELEY-WILLIAMS, R. (2004): *Inmigrantes haitianos y dominicanos de ascendencia haitiana en la República Dominicana*, Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo (CID) y el Servicio Jesuita a refugiados y Migrantes (SJR), Santo Domingo, <www.acnur.org/biblioteca/pdf/4548.pdf>, [junio 2010].
- VVAA (2013): *Carta abierta a Junot Díaz*. Publicada el 27 de noviembre de 2013 por diferentes medios informativos de República Dominicana <www.7dias.com.do/file.php?id=152926> [noviembre 2013].