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# Doña Pico's Story and the Long History of the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands

When I asked seventy-year old Irma Mora, known by her friends as Doña Pico<sup>1</sup>, for her life story, she made a revealing mistake, one that calls into question a foundational “rhetorical illusion” in social history – the life narrative.<sup>2</sup> In response to the question “where were you born?,” she first responded with her address: 9 San Francisco de Assisi, where she long resided in front of the central plaza and Catholic church in Bánica, Elias Piña, a small town in the Dominican central frontier, a few yards from the Artibonite River which is the official divisor line between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. This is a portion of the frontier with lax official control where Haitians daily cross the shallow river on foot and

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1 Earlier drafts of this essay were presented at the symposium, “Rendering Dominicans of Haitian Descent Stateless,” Bowdoin College, Brunswick ME, 2016 and at the panel, “Dominican Borderline Poetics: Nation/Border/Oceans,” at the conference: “Global Dominican: Politics, Economics and Cultural Production,” Institute of Latin American Studies, University College London, 2018. It benefitted from comments by Raj Chetty, Greg Beckett, Allen Wells, Rachel Nolan, Samuel Martínez and an anonymous reviewer.

2 Pierre Bourdieu, “The Biographical Illusion,” in Paul du Gay, Jessica Evans and Peter Redman, eds., *Identity: A Reader*, London, SAGE publications, 2000, pp. 297-303, see p. 298.

by canoe and burro to buy and sell foodstuffs; many Haitians also reside there to work in agriculture, animal husbandry or as cleaning help. But then she quickly recanted her response. “Quedó mal!” (I made a mistake), she said. I then followed up, “where were your parents born?,” to which she replied, “Luciano, Haiti.” Like many Haitians from this region, she and her mother resided in a rural section of Thomassique, Cerca-la-Source, in the Haitian central border. The blurring of nationality in the borderlands offers an interesting vantage point to ponder the question of citizenship on Hispaniola, especially in light of *la sentencia*, the 2013 Dominican legislation aimed at rendering stateless Haitians born on Dominican soil.<sup>3</sup>

A classic parapraxis in Freudian terms – a slip of the tongue – Doña Pico’s slip reveals a social rule as well as its breach.<sup>4</sup> Pico is a Dominican citizen, which is why she at first cast her current residence as an official identity marker. After all, residence is the second identity authenticator, after the legal name.<sup>5</sup> Yet lives lived in the border are problematic because many people have resided on both sides, and because, due to a history of weak state presence, for generations births were registered only in church registries while rural births were often left unrecorded. Legal names in Haiti and the Dominican Republic are not clear identity markers because that long composite names are often shortened for *cédula* (official identity card) use, and due to the preponderance of nicknames.<sup>6</sup> Requesting a life narrative interpolated Pico within a social identity in relation to the state, or as Bourdieu would describe it, positioned her within a framework of Dominican nationality which was “the product of the initial rite of

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3 For more on this ruling, see Bridget Wooding, “Haitian Immigrants and Their Descendants Born in the Dominican Republic,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History* <https://oxfordre.com/latinamericanhistory>, Amelia Hintzen, *De la masacre a la sentencia 168-13: Apuntes para la historia de la segregación de los haitianos y sus descendientes en la República Dominicana*, Santo Domingo, Fundación Juan Bosch, 2017 and “The Roots of La Sentencia: An Interview with Rachel Nolan,” *Jacobin*, June 20, 2015 <https://jacobin.com/2015/06/dominican-republic-haiti-immigration-harpers>.

4 See Lectures 1 & 2 in Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, trans. W. J. H. Sprott, London, Hogarth Press, 1949.

5 Bourdieu, “The Biographical Illusion,” *Identity*, p. 300.

6 Beyond the cultural proclivity for nicknaming, they are also used to shield the use of names for witchcraft purposes. See José Labourt, *Sana, sana, culito de rana*, Santo Domingo, Editora Taller, 1982.

institution which marks access to social existence.”<sup>7</sup> Yet Pico clearly retains a strong affiliation to Haiti. She adopted two Haitian *rèstavècs* from Haiti – Edgardo and Bienvenido – one of whom graduated from college since she gave him her deceased son’s *cédula* number. Originally from Las Caobas, Haiti, Bienvenido has also successfully obtained a Dominican *cédula* and is presently working at the Catholic Church.<sup>8</sup> Pico, who long headed the local *cofradia* or religious sisterhood, was also so distressed at the human catastrophe of the 2010 Haitian earthquake that it deeply shook her belief in God, and this became the core of her speech at the patron saint festival for the Virgin of Altagracia when she addressed the association just two weeks after the cataclysmic event.<sup>9</sup>

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7 Bourdieu, “The Biographical Illusion,” *Identity*, p. 300.

8 Bienvenido (welcome) was given this name by Pico when she adopted him. The *rèstavèk* issue is a complex one, and while today they are described in the literature as “child slaves,” there is considerable variability in their treatment. Pico evidenced a great deal of love for hers notwithstanding the fact that other family members have continued to rely on them to run errands even though they are now adults. Samuel Martínez offers a strong critique of how this system of child fosterage is represented in the press and the scholarly literature in his “Antitrafficking’s Post-Truth Politics: The Case of Post-Earthquake Trafficking in Haiti,” in *The Visual Culture of the New Abolitionism: Trafficking in Possibilities*, unpublished manuscript. For a piece that highlights systemic abuse, see J. P. Slavin, “Four Year Old Child Servants,” in Charles Arthur and J. Michael Dash, eds., *A Haiti Anthology: Libète*, Princeton, Markus Wiener Publishers, 1999, 118-120. For a more nuanced view, see Lucia M. Suárez, *The Tears of Hispaniola: Haitian and Dominican Diaspora Memory*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2006, chap. 4; Danielle Hoffman, “Moving Children in Haiti: Some Hypotheses on Kinship, Labor and Personhood in the Haitian Context,” *Journal of Haitian Studies* 18 (1) Spring 2012:102-119; and Nara Milanich, “Degrees of Bondage: Children’s Tutelary Servitude in Modern Latin America,” in Joseph Miller, Gwyn Campbell and Sue Miers, eds., *Child Slaves in the Modern World*, vol. 2, Athens, OH, Ohio University Press, 2010. The adoption of rural Latin American children (typically female) by urban households, where they provide household help in exchange for room, board and schooling is common throughout Latin America. See Elizabeth Hordge-Freeman, *Second Class Daughters: Black Brazilian Women and Informal Adoption in Brazil as Modern Slavery*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2022.

9 This entangled view of the Haitian-Dominican border is shared by Maria Cristina Fumagalli in her study, *On the Edge: Writing the Border Between Haiti and the Dominican Republic*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2015, and Sophie Mariñez, *Spirals in the Caribbean: Representing Violence and Connection in Haiti and the Dominican Republic*, Philadelphia, University of Philadelphia Press, 2014.

This helps explain why *la sentencia* has played out in the central frontier as it has, a region of the country with strong dual national identity allegiance due to a long history of cross border contraband, bi-national residence, and because the townships of this region over time shifted nationalities. I use the term frontier deliberately since there is no official border control in Bánica, and goods and people freely traverse the Artibonite river daily, especially on market days; the closest passport control is at the official crossing point at Comendadore, Elías Piña and Belladère where trucks pass.<sup>10</sup> A history of contraband has long knitted Haitians and Dominicans together against the state in the central frontier region, a sizable area from Hinche in the west to Elias Piña in the east, and bordered in the south by San Juan de la Maguana.<sup>11</sup>

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10 The Treaty of Ryswick established the French colony of Saint Domingue on the western portion of Hispaniola in 1697 and later, in 1795, the area from Hinche to the Artibonite was also ceded to France. Yet the Haitian occupation dissolved the borderline, rendering the central frontier part of Haiti along with the rest of the Dominican Republic, from 1822 to 1844, the Dominican Republic returned to Spanish control; finally, in 1865, it received full independence. During the US occupation, United States authorities became concerned that the lack of a mutually accepted border treaty could bring conflict, and they pressured both nations for a treaty. They finally succeeded in forcing an accord in 1929 over the loud protestations of Haitian nationalists, who bitterly complained that they had lost a sliver of land in the deal that established the current border along the “natural” divisor line of the Artibonite river (which the US guard elongated northwards by forging a road). The accord of 1929 was finalized under the auspices of the Permanent Commission of Washington in 1938. See Arthur de Matteis, *Le massacre de 1937, ou une succession immobilière internationale*, Bibliothèque Nationale d’Haïti, 1987. Haitian objections harken back to the Pujols map of Haiti which contains a different version of the 1795 treaty.

11 Border contraband is treated in Nathalie Bragadir, “Contested Topographies: Border Passing in Colonial Hispaniola,” Ph.D. diss., Dept. of Spanish and Portuguese, New York University, 2014.

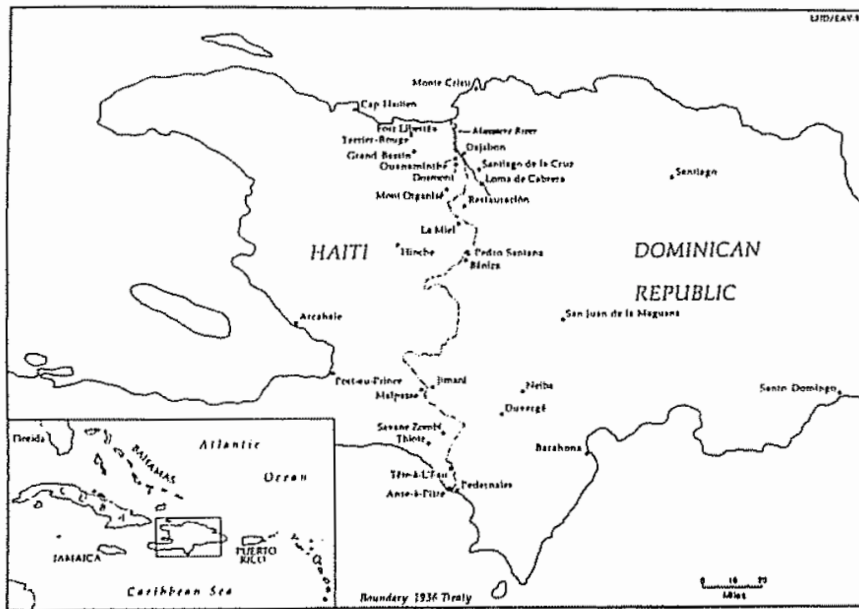


Fig. 3. Map of the Haitian and Dominican borderlands.  
(Emily Vogt, Committee on Geographical Studies, University of Chicago).

Indeed, a road linking Bánica to Las Matas de Farfán and the capital city of Santo Domingo was only built in the 1970s. Before that, all trade flowed towards Haiti – north to Cap Haïtien or laterally across to the Artibonite plantations that emerged in the mid-eighteenth century, and southwest to Mirebalais and Port-au-Prince. The Haitian gourde was the local currency. Historian Michiel Baud has noted that the Dominican border offered the last regional threat to Rafael Trujillo's authority, which is why he had rogue soldier, Desiderio Arias, assassinated in 1934 and publicly displayed his decapitated head in the capital.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Michel Baud and Van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands," *Journal of World History* 8 (2) Fall 1997: 218. Arias was based in Monte Cristi. See also Michiel Baud, "Una frontera - refugio: Dominicanos y haitianos contra el estado (1870-1930)," *Revista Estudios Sociales* 26 (92) 1993: 39-64; Michiel Baud, "Una Frontera Para Cruzar: La Sociedad Rural a Través de La Frontera Dominicana-Haitiana

But the central frontier has had a history of even greater autonomy than the rest of the borderlands and has long held an identity of resistance to state power. It was the northern perimeter of the sixteenth-century Taíno cacicazgo led by Enriquillo. It was composed of African and Indigenous slaves and freedmen who rose up against the Spanish, maintaining their autonomy for a decade and a half. Indeed, San Juan de la Maguana has the largest Indigenous stone monument in the Caribbean and is the site of an immense system of caves adorned with Taíno paintings, in the mountains where Taíno and Africans long sought refuge from authorities.<sup>13</sup> This is also the home terrain of Olivario Mateo, the outlaw prophet who, until his slaughter in 1924, became a figure of resistance to the US occupation's National Guard. The Haitian Caco resistance movement which rose up against the US Marines frequented the area as well.<sup>14</sup> Even today the border identity as a "society against the state" remains palpable.<sup>15</sup> When

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(1870-1930)," *Estudios Sociales* 26 (94) December 1993: 5–28; and Michel Baud, "State Building and Borderlands," *CEDLA Latin American Studies - Centre for Latin American Research and Documentation* 87, Amsterdam, 2000, pp. 41-82. For more on the Trujillo regime, see Richard Lee Turits, *Foundations of Despotism: Peasants, the Trujillo Regime, and Modernity in Dominican History*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003 and Lauren Derby, *The Dictator's Seduction: Politics and the Popular Imagination in the Era of Trujillo*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2009; and Eric Roorda, *The Dictator Next Door: The Good Neighbor Policy and the Trujillo Regime in the Dominican Republic, 1930-1945*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1998.

- 13 Olmedo Vásquez Perdomo, *Origen y pueblos suroeste*, Santo Domingo, Grafideas, nd., p. 77; Ida Altman, "The Revolt of Enriquillo and the Historiography of Early Spanish America," *The Americas* 63 (4) April, 2007: 587-614; Charles Yingling and Tyler Parry, "The Maroons of Santo Domingo in the Age of Revolutions: Adaptation and Evasion, 1783-1800," *History Workshop Journal* 79 (79) 2015: 25–51. Bánica was a *nitaino* of the Maguana *cacicazo*.
- 14 Roger Gaillard, *Charlemagne Péralt, le caco : Les Blancs débarquent*, vol. 6, Port-au-Prince, R. Gaillard, 1982; and his *La guérilla de Batrville: 1919-1934 : Les Blancs débarquent*, vol. 7, Port-au-Prince, Imp. Le Natal, 1983.
- 15 Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology*, trans. Robert Hurley and Abe Stein, New York, Zone Books, 1987. The Haitian opposition which ousted Aristide also took refuge in the border, and crossing the border has long served as a means to escape political authorities as did Don Leon Ventura, leader of the millenarian community Palma Sola. Today this unpoliced area seems, as well, to be a site of drug and human trafficking in ways that complicate the boundary between licit and illicit activity since some local PLD officials appear to have been involved in contemporary illicit trade. See Lundius, *The Great Power of God in San Juan Valley: Syncretism and Messianism in the Dominican Republic*, Lund, University of

border trade was shut down in 2010 due to the outbreak of cholera in Haiti, Dominicans in Bánica resisted by setting up a night market in the cemetery where they surreptitiously traded with Haitians.<sup>16</sup> This helps explain the absence of any discernable impact of *la sentencia* in the area. Haitians and Dominicans I spoke with characterized the ruling “as a capital thing,” and all the Haitians I spoke with were able to secure papers enabling them to stay. It was also a region in revolt against the PLD, the former party of Leonel Fernández, which was responsible for the *sentencia*, with many locals running for office under the PRD ticket in recent elections.<sup>17</sup> The case of the central frontier underscores the fact that Haitian-Dominican relations are not inevitably defined by antipathy and violence.

Anti-Haitianism as a nationalist ideology arose not in the nineteenth century as a result of Haitian domination, as is frequently repeated, but in the twentieth century as Haitian contract labor became the largest immigrant stream for US sugar plantations, where Haitians inextricably became linked to a form of infrahuman labor associated with slavery; worse yet,

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Lund, 1995; Jan Lundius and Mats Lundahl, *Peasants and Religion: A Socioeconomic Study of Dios Olivario and the Palma Sola Movement in the Dominican Republic*, London, Routledge, 2000; Van Schendel, “Introduction,” *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things: States, Borders and the Other Side of Globalization*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995, p. 7; Baud and Van Schendel, “Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands;” and Baud, “State Building and Borderlands.”

16 For more on the closure of the border due to cholera, see Kyrstin Mallon Andrews, “Sinks for the Press: Cholera and the State Performance of Power at the Dominican Border,” *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 23 (2) 2018: 338–362.

17 Part of this resistance was a wave of women running in the elections and winning as *alcaldesas* (mayors) in Bánica and San Juan. The political shift in Elias Piña from the PRD to the PLD appears to have been lubricated by massive political patronage that previously may have been monopolized by local authorities such as the widely regarded as corrupt Bánica mayor of the 2010s; but during the last campaign, the party handed out smart phones with web access which finally succeeded in silencing its critics. Leonel Fernández formed a new political party called Fuerza del Pueblo in 2019. I have also heard that the northern border town of Monte Cristi was largely unaffected by the *sentencia*, although I suspect that the formal crossing points where there is a strong police presence –Dajabón and Jimaní– resemble far more closely the situation in the major cities of Santo Domingo and Santiago. Kyrstin Mallon Andrews, personal communication.

it was imposed upon the Dominican Republic by US agribusiness firms.<sup>18</sup> Commencing as the result of a debased ethnic labor segment, after the 1937 massacre of ethnic Haitians, anti-Haitianism was officialized as a form of racialized nationalism, becoming a discourse of state during the regime of Rafael Trujillo (1930-61).<sup>19</sup> It later became political currency during the presidencies of Joaquín Balaguer (1966-78; 1960-62) deployed to crush the wildly popular José Francisco Peña Gómez (a Haitian who was orphaned during the 1937 massacre and adopted by a Dominican family) and his Partido Revolucionario Dominicano (PRD) during the 1994 election. Alexander Weheliye's observation that "race is a set of articulated political relations or assemblages, and not a biological or cultural descriptor," is apt here.<sup>20</sup> Anti-Haitian scapegoating has thus not been a constant in Dominican history; it is a thoroughly modern discourse of state which has become particularly salient in spaces of strong political sovereignty and moments of political contestation. Historian Michiel Baud has demonstrated how 'whiteness' in the Dominican Republic emerged as a byproduct of anti-imperialism and has long been embedded within sentiments of political belonging, to the point where the foreboding comment, "the past is a potent of the future; although today dark clouds hang over Santo Domingo, and the future of our race seems more uncertain there than in any other part of Spanish America," actually referred to the

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18 Lauren Derby and Richard Turits, *Terreurs de Frontière: Le Massacre des Haïtiens en République Dominicaine en 1937*, Watson Denis, éd., Port-au-Prince, Centre Challenges, 2021; Richard Turits and Lauren Derby, "Haitian-Dominican History and the 1937 Haitian Massacre," in Megan Jeanette Myers and Edward Paulino, eds., *The Border of Lights Reader: Bearing Witness to Genocide in the Dominican Republic*, pp. 43–53, Amherst College Press, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3998/mpub.12278109.5>; and Lauren Derby, "Haitians, Magic and Money: Raza and Society in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 36 (3) July 1994: 488-526.

19 For more on the massacre, see Richard Lee Turits, "A World Destroyed, A Nation Imposed: The 1937 Haitian Massacre in the Dominican Republic," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 82 (3) 2002: 589–635; Edward Paulino, *Dividing Hispaniola: The Dominican Republic's Border Campaign against Haiti, 1930-1961*, Pittsburgh, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016; and Sabine Cadeau, *More Than a Massacre: Racial Violence and Citizenship in the Haitian–Dominican Borderlands*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2022.

20 Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2014, p. 18.

impending US occupation of the Dominican Republic (1916-24), not Haiti.<sup>21</sup> Drawing upon theorist Giorgio Agamben, one might say that in the twentieth century, the Haitian menace became an emblem of “sovereign power and bare life,” that required defining the border and wiping out the “zone of indistinction...between man and beast, nature and culture,” Haitian and Dominican, and thus the expulsion of border crossers from the political community.<sup>22</sup> If the frontier was at one time a problem for the state, conjuring the threat posed by its illegibility has served to further state control.<sup>23</sup> As anthropologist Shannon Dawdy aptly put it referring to

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21 In Spanish the quote is: “lo pasado es prenda del lo future, aunque hoy se ciernan negras nubes sobre Santo Domingo, y el porvenir de nuestra raza parezca más incierto allí que en ninguna otra parte de la América Española,” Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo in 1911 referring in fact to the forthcoming US military intervention, yet quoted in one of the Trujillista ideologues of anti-Haitianism, Manuel Arturo Peña Battle, *Historia de la cuestión fronteriza dominico-haitiana*, Madrid, J. Costa Archivo Ibero Americano, 1952. The reference to Baud, is “Constitutionally White: The Forging of a National Identity in the Dominican Republic,” *Ethnicity in the Caribbean: Essays in Honor of Harry Hoetink*, London, Macmillan Caribbean, 1996, pp. 121-151. See also Silvio Torres-Saillant, “The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity,” *Latin American Perspectives* 25 (3) May 1998: 126-46; April J. Mayes, *The Mulatto Republic: Class, Race and Dominican National Identity*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2014; and Ginetta Candelario, *Black Behind the Ears: Dominican Identity from Museums to Beauty Shops*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2007. The US-Haiti link is evident in a newspaper comment about a US priest in Elias Piña who received commendation: “Los comunistas-africanistas-haitianistas celebrando uno de los suyos que desean la desaparición de RD! Usando nuestro piso y recursos para habilitar el traspaso de haitianos hacia RD!” <http://elnacional.com.do/senado-reconoce-sacerdote-de-eeuu-por-labor-pastoral-y-educativa-en-la-frontera/>. The link between anti-imperialism and anti-Haitianism has to do with the fact that it was US owned sugar firms that commenced the immigrant labor program that brought West Indian and Haitian labor to the Dominican Republic to cut cane.

22 Giorgio Agamben, “The Ban and the Wolf,” in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans., Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1998, p. 109.

23 Van Schendel, *Illicit Flows and Criminal Things*. For a hostile view of the border that presumes enmity between the two nations, see James J. McLean and T. Pina Chevalier, *Datos Históricos sobre la frontera Dominico-Haitiana*, Santo Domingo, np., 1921; and Manuel Arturo Peña Battle, *La isla de Tortuga: plaza de armas, refugio y seminario de los enemigos de españa en indias*, Madrid, Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1977.

another terrain of ambiguous nationality, “rogues and states were bound together in a volatile interdependency.”<sup>24</sup>

Even if eighteenth-century observers who claimed that slavery existed in name only in Santo Domingo were mistaken – as slavery did indeed exist – still, conditions within the extensive *hato* or cattle ranching economy that became dominant by 1750 throughout Dominican territory, were far less hierarchical than those of sugar since labor needs were minimal. As such, slaves were individuated, and family labor worked alongside slave labor.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, due to the large distances traversed by *hateros* and their extensive herds, slaves had to be well treated or they could easily escape. While small numbers of slaves were present in the extensive *hato* economy, one important index of improved conditions was the preponderance of stable families within this context, a rarity under plantation slavery.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, slaves had a greater chance of manumitting themselves by forming their own herd or by trying their luck at sea. Freedmen could be seen wandering the countryside with their lasso, looking for stray animals to sell to the French.<sup>27</sup> The eighteenth century also saw the apogee of illicit maritime activities of corsairs and highly successful Dominican pirates like the creole Lorenzo Daniel who, described as “the terror of these islands and coasts,” had amassed great fortunes even at the risk of being sold as a slave if caught.<sup>28</sup> Nationalist Dominican historiography has cast colonial Haitian-Dominican relations as resolutely bellicose and hostile, yet within

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24 Although she is not describing Hispaniola. Shannon Dawdy, *Building the Devils Empire: French Colonial New Orleans*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2008, p. 20.

25 Emilio Rodrigo Demorizi, *Viajeros de Francia en Santo Domingo*, Santo Domingo, Editora del Caribe, 1979, p. 116. The classic treatment of the Dominican *hato* economy is Ruben Silié, *Economía, esclavitud y población: ensayo de interpretación histórica del Santo Domingo español en el siglo XVIII*, Santo Domingo, Academia Dominicana de la Historia, 2009.

26 David M. Starck, *Slave Families and the Hato Economy in Puerto Rico*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2015.

27 Manuel Hernández González, *El sur dominicano*, vol. 2, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Idea, 2008, p. 259.

28 Victoria Stapells Johnson, “Corsairs of Santo Domingo: A Socioeconomic Study, 1718-1779,” Master’s thesis, University of Ottawa, 1954, p. 123. Dominican esteem for Lorenzo is apparent in Antonio Sánchez Valverde, *Idea del valor de la isla Española*, Ciudad Trujillo, Editora Montalvo, 1947 [1785].

the world of contraband, transnational alliances were the norm.<sup>29</sup> Martin Hixiart, for example, was French but his *armador* was Spanish and thus received protection from authorities; and Lorenzo Daniel, who was described as the most important corsair of the latter half of the eighteenth century, outfitted his ship with Spanish and French crew and then sailed under both French and Spanish licenses.<sup>30</sup> Spanish authorities gave tacit consent to illicit trade due to scarcities, allowing it to grow to such a point that Santo Domingo became a major contraband hub for the Caribbean. Another feature of corsair activity is that pirates interpenetrated with the local elite, as elites from Santiago and Santo Domingo provided backing for the corsair ships.<sup>31</sup>

If the central frontier has been cast as a forgotten backwater or a “*tierra de nadie*” (no man’s land) from the perspective of the state, in the eighteenth century it became the economic lifeline of the nation. Haiti was the reference point for growth and cosmopolitanism.<sup>32</sup> Interior towns Bánica and Hinche became linked to Las Matas de Farfán, Hinche, Mirebalais and beyond as key destinations for the cattle trade, and Spanish colonists frequently settled and married locally in Saint Domingue.<sup>33</sup> With its central location within the Artibonite valley en route to Gonaives, the central seat of the French plantation economy, Hinche became the principal cattle hub of the border as livestock was swapped for cloth, arms and stirrups based on state lands which were used for collective paddocks (*potreros colectivos*); Hinche and Bánica expanded in size and importance largely through the cattle trade as stop off points for the trip from Au Cap (today Cap Haïtien) to Santo Domingo and Dajabón and emerged as a

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29 See Peña Battle’s works and Joaquín Balaguer, *La isla al revés: Haití y el destino dominicano*, Santo Domingo, Fundación José Antonio Caro, 1983.

30 Johnson, “Corsairs,” pp. 44, 70. She also mentions that Ventura de Messendern, a lieutenant from Saint Domingue, also sailed with a Spanish crew. See also Hernández González, *El sur dominicano*, vol. 2, p. 254.

31 Hernández González, *El sur dominicano*, vol. 2, pp. 254-6.

32 As in Azlor’s testimony in which he compares the bahia of Samaná to the plains of Au Cap; Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, ed., *Viajeros de Francia en Santo Domingo*, Santo Domingo, República Dominicana, Editora del Caribe, 1979, p.13.

33 Stewart R. King, *Blue Coat or Powered Wig: Free People of Color in Pre-Revolutionary Saint Domingue*, Athens, University of Georgia Press, 2001, p. 39.

transit point between Santo Domingo – Santiago – Au Cap.<sup>34</sup> Dajabón was said to be a virtual by-product of Saint Domingue. Built by French slaves, it was primarily composed of Haitians since livestock decline had encouraged Spanish inhabitants to leave. In 1797 it was an outpost with only 15 infantry, while the Haitian town of Ouanaminthe had 200, twice as many as Santiago.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, due to the flourishing cattle trade, Bánica, amazingly, was far larger in population in 1784 than even San Juan de la Maguana, which is today the third city of the country after Santiago. And in 1743 Hinche ranked only behind Santiago in cattle sales.<sup>36</sup> Most of the cattle sales involved 40-50, although in the 1780s sales could reach 200-300 heads, enabling the purchase of slaves.<sup>37</sup>

Not surprisingly, cross-border trade also formed the basis of alliances as well as political projects, and the “center island” frontier was a bulwark for Haitian unification in the mid nineteenth century.<sup>38</sup> As French traveler, Vincent reported on the perspective from the capital in 1797, “ranchers were known to favor a unified island, looking to emigrate and sell their fortune at a cheap price... [and] the Audiencia of Santo Domingo has recognized the enormous problem of the hatos.”<sup>39</sup> The state had good reason to abhor frontier contraband. Even at the peak of cattle revenue at the end of the eighteenth century, tax revenues were abysmally low.<sup>40</sup> Yet at the turn of the nineteenth century, warfare engulfed the central frontier. Between interventions by Haitian leaders Toussaint Louverture in 1801 and Faustin Soulouque in the years from 1849 to 1855, which commenced

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34 Demorizi, *Viajeros de Francia*, p. 158; Sorrett also followed this route, with a stop in Port-au-Prince (pp. 168, 170, 173, 177, 178). Hernández González, *Colonización de la frontera dominicana 1680-1795*, Santo Domingo, Archivo General de la Nación, 2006, pp. 137, 143, 157, 159. For more on travel to Cap Haïtien, see Anne Eller, “Dominican Passport Petitions, 1862-1863,” in April J. Mayes and Kiran C. Jayaram, eds., *Transnational Hispaniola: New Directions in Haitian and Dominican Studies*, Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2018, pp. 67-77.

35 Rodríguez Demorizi, *Viajeros de Francia*, pp. 98-99, 109.

36 Hernández González, *Colonización de la frontera dominicana 1680-1795*, p. 153.

37 Hernández González, *Colonización de la frontera dominicana 1680-1795*, p. 144.

38 Anne Eller uses the term center-island in *We Dream Together: Dominican Independence, Haiti, and the Fight for Caribbean Freedom*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2016.

39 Vincent excerpted in Demorizi, *Viajeros de Francia*, pp. 125, 127.

40 Rodríguez Demorizi, *Viajeros de Francia*, pp. 125.

in Hinche, Haitian and Spanish troop movements caused many to flee the border region, and the decline of the sugar economy of Saint Domingue caused a precipitous decrease in ranching.<sup>41</sup> By the late nineteenth century as trade resumed, many Dominican hato clans relocated to Haitian towns such as Thomassique and Belladere where they built sugar ingenios and most of all, rebuilt their herds, likely to avoid taxation. Part of the Alcántara clan from Bánica moved there and their family continues to straddle the border. Interestingly, many sources note Haitian communities that over time seeped onto Dominican terrain, yet the presence of Dominicans in Haiti is conspicuously absent from the literature.<sup>42</sup>

It should not surprise then that united by a common enemy during the US occupations, Haitians and Dominicans found common cause especially since the first steps towards take over occurred in the frontier where the US sought to collect revenue from border trade through road- blocks and tariff assessment. No wonder that, when US authorities sought to take over customs houses in 1907, they were met with fierce resistance as a whopping 18 border agents were killed in gun fights.<sup>43</sup> Frustration and alienation landed prominent San Juan *hatero* Victor Garrido in jail due to his fierce resistance to the 1907 Convention which turned over local customs revenues to US banks to collect on the debt created during the regime of Ulises Heureaux (1882-1884; 1887-1889). Heureaux, who

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41 Welnel Dario Félix, *Historia del pueblo de Cabral*, Santo Domingo, np., 2003, pp. 53-54. For more on the symbiosis between sugar and cattle economies in the Caribbean more broadly, see Juan Guisti-Cordero, "Beyond Sugar Revolutions: Rethinking the Spanish Caribbean in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in George Baca, Aisha Khan and Stephan Palmié eds., *Empirical Futures: Anthropologists and Historians Engage the work of Sidney Mintz*, University of North Carolina Press, 2009, pp. 58-83; and his "Sugar and Livestock: Contraband Networks in Hispaniola and the Continental Caribbean in the Eighteenth Century," *Revista Brasileira do Caribe*, 2015: 13-41.

42 Which implies the stereotype of Haitians as itinerant and rootless, like Jews. See Sander Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race and Madness*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1985, p. 33. The absence in the literature of the presence of Dominicans in Haiti, I might add, continues even in some of the most rigorously researched work, such as Lundius and Lundahl, *Peasants and Religion*.

43 Marlin D. Clausner, *Rural Santo Domingo: Settled, Unsettled, and Resettled*, Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1973, p. 142, and Lundius and Lundahl, *Peasants and Religion*, p. 81.

incidentally, was born in Cap-Haïtien. Dominicans also participated in the Caco uprising against US marines. Led by Charlemagne Peralte of Hinche, whose family was actually Dominican – hence Peralta – US authorities were forced to pursue them on both sides of the border. During the Dominican civil war of 1912, Carmito Ramírez sought refuge with the Haitian generals, the Zamor brothers; later Ramírez supported Zamor during a Haitian conflagration that catapulted Orestes Zamor to power.<sup>44</sup> Peralte had affiliations on both sides of the border; he had affinal ties to the Zamor brothers, and his mistress lived in Bánica.

This flourishing Dominican border cattle trade came to an abrupt halt in the nineteenth century with the decline in the Haitian sugar plantation economy, and the central frontier became the primary theater of the independence wars. Starting in 1844, Dominican and Spanish troops routed Haitian forces through San Juan, followed by General Santana's face off with Haitian leader Soulouque in 1849, which passed through Las Matas de Farfán. In 1845 troops traversed Bánica and Hinche, and in 1855-1856 through the northern periphery of San Juan – all central passageways for the cattle trade. Given this history, during the independence wars it should come as no surprise that the central frontier became a refuge of pro-Haitian unification. In 1846 the Haitian flag was raised in Bánica, Las Matas and San Juan by loyalists supporting Haitian-Dominican unification; they were cowed only by "brute force."<sup>45</sup> This, combined with the decline in the plantation economy in the west after Haitian independence, rerouted the cattle trade and rendered it a national affair. In the eyes of the state, the central frontier then became a "*tierra de nadie*."<sup>46</sup> As Anne Eller convincingly demonstrates, however, many Haitians and Dominicans were united during the late nineteenth century as the island had become a refuge in a sea of slavery, as with slaves from Jamaica, Cuba and Puerto Rico migrating there to secure their freedom.<sup>47</sup>

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44 Lundius and Lundahl, *Peasants and Religion*, p. 105.

45 Eller, *We Dream Together*, p. 52.

46 Orlando Inoa, *Historia dominicana*, Santo Domingo, Editorial Letra Gráfica, 2013, p. 331. Thanks to Anne Eller for providing me with this citation.

47 Anne Eller, "Rumors of Slavery: Defending Emancipation in a Hostile Caribbean," *The American Historical Review* 122 (3) 2017: 653–679.

## Race and Identity

Dominicans have been cast as uniformly “negrophobic,” but evidence from the border reveals a more complex picture. It also indicates that antiblack racism may have a longer and more complex prehistory than sometimes portrayed. After the Treaty of Ryswick which established the French colony in 1697, Spanish authorities encouraged Canary Island migration to populate the frontier and stave off French incursions. In the late seventeenth century, Santo Domingo began importing 100 *isleño* families a year; by 1704 towns such as Hinche and Bánica were founded by Canary Islanders, whose population by the 1740's was significant. Indeed, Canary Island migration was so significant that it formatively influenced even the Dominican Spanish accent.<sup>48</sup> Canary farmers encouraged by large landowners who wished to use them to establish usufruct and thereby expand their holdings, also contributed to the development of San Carlos, a township on the outskirts of Santo Domingo. Yet Canary Islanders were perceived by Spain as racially suspect due to their proximity to North Africans. Since they were brought as indentured laborers in state-sponsored colonization schemes, Canary emigration has been described as “white slavery.” As poor whites, they also found themselves in an anomalous position as most whites were of the elite. When these *isleños* arrived in Santo Domingo, where by the eighteenth century there existed a preponderance of freed persons and slaves, they sought to found their own municipality – in part to set them apart from the nonwhite masses notwithstanding the fact that they were themselves mostly illiterate.<sup>49</sup> In fact, when they founded the church of San Carlos in 1725, the mayor could not sign his name.<sup>50</sup> Yet, in the diaspora, these Canary Islanders sought to showcase their racial superiority as “white people, of good birth, without any *mala raza*” (bad blood) through highlighting their Christianity. To

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48 Irene Pérez Guerra, “Lengua e historia: La presencia canaria en Santo Domingo,” *Ágora*, July 2002/June 2003: 16-25.

49 In a move reminiscent of the Royal Slaves of El Cobre, a group of privileged royal slaves in eastern Cuba who used a miraculous virgin apparition as a means to secure municipal autonomy and other privileges that would mark them as superior to other slaves. See María Elena Díaz, *The Virgin, The King and the Royal Slaves of El Cobre*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2000.

50 Hernández González, *El sur dominicano*, vol. 2, p. 90.

this end they proceeded to found a church and procure an image of a rosy-cheeked white Virgin of Candelaria, despite the fact that the original icon in Spain was dark skinned.<sup>51</sup> This anecdote might indicate that Dominican “race trouble,” in part, may have been handed down from the Canary Islanders.<sup>52</sup>

One common misconception about anti-Haitianism is that it is structurally embedded within Dominican society and is seen as having agentive power. It is also frequently objectified, flattened into a form of antiblack racism. What is often left out of the conversation is the question of context. On market day, Haitian women sell raw products, tuber crops like yucca and ñame and beans along with live guinea fowl, while Dominican men sell higher status “white” manufactured goods such as shampoo, cooking pots, locks, shoes or meat. Certainly, many Haitians in the central frontier are in the lower tier of Dominican society and work as day laborers and field hands, but in this context they are embedded within Dominican society.<sup>53</sup> The caricature of anti-Haitian stereotyping is blurred in this “social ecology” of deep mutual entanglement via trade, debt, daily contact, and kinship.<sup>54</sup> Haitians tend to hypercorrect and express deference to Dominicans when they are in the presence of status superiors, but in the border, status equals often engage in casual banter characteristic of joking relations, a key marker of familiarity.<sup>55</sup> This social intimacy is the result of interpersonal contact. Dominicans and Haitians cross the border not only to buy and sell but also to attend cockfighting tournaments and attend patron saint festivals as well as *palos* or *vodú*

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51 Hernández González, *El sur dominicano*, vol. 2, pp. 58, 70.

52 K. Durrheim, R. Greener and K. A. Whitehead, “Race Trouble: Attending to Race and Racism in Online Interaction.” *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 54 (1) 2015: 84–99. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12070>

53 On “white” commodities, see Mary J. Weismantel, *Cholas and Pishtacos: Stories of Race and Sex in the Andes*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2001.

54 Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2009, p. 237; Marcy Norton and Ralph Bauer, “Introduction. Entangled Trajectories: Indigenous and European Histories,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 26 (1) 2017: 18–38.

55 A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, “On Joking Relationships,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 13 (3) 1940: 195–210. It is important to note, however, that poor Dominicans also hypercorrect in the presence of status superiors, liberally sprinkling r’s after every word.

ritual drumming events. Haitians are familiarized through adoption and informal unions.<sup>56</sup> Anti-Haitian discourse evinces a strong split between the figure of the Haitian in the abstract, which is a stock figure of racial disdain, but it is tempered in the frontier by the figure of the intimate Haitian who is a known quantity.<sup>57</sup> This is not to say that there is not also ambivalence in the border, however, but it manifests itself in a minor key, such as through whispers about the invisible threat potential of Haitian sorcery. Yet Haitian magic is also revered. Narratives of Dominican sorcerers who received their powers of clairvoyance in Haiti, or who “work” (enter the spirit realm) through Haitian rum provide ample evidence.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, if *la sentencia* disallows birthright citizenship, the border has its own “genealogical fiction” in which Haitians are “familiarized” and absorbed into Dominican society via their adoption as kin.<sup>59</sup>

We have now strayed away from the topic of anti-Haitianism and moved towards one of “racial assemblage.” However, the latter is not unique to Dominicans. It is a local variant of a colonial racial order disseminated throughout Latin America, one that forged a certain “racialist revulsion and spiritual awe of latent and nascent power,” with the presumption that the darker the skin the blacker the magic.<sup>60</sup> It is also a composite, or what linguist Michael Silverstein would call a “text-artifact,” with sev-

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56 Michiel Baud, in *Peasants and Tobacco in the Dominican Republic 1870- 1930*, Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press, 1995, has argued that informal unions have been a motor of race mixture in the Dominican Republic; and in the border, offspring born of Haitian concubines are frequently absorbed into Dominican families.

57 On stereotyping, see Gilman, *Difference and Pathology*,

58 This was the pattern in ten *curandero* interviews which Katherine Smith and I conducted in Elias Piña in 2010 which all shared the same core narrative that they had fallen ill as a child and were saved by a spell in Arcahaie, Haiti. Importantly, neither Haitian nor Dominican vodou is characterized by the Manichean moral binarism found in Christianity since they are pantheistic.

59 For a stimulating discussion of adoption albeit in an earlier period, see Marcy Norton, “The Chicken or the *Iegue*: Human-Animal Relationships and the Columbian Exchange,” *American Historical Review* 120 (1) 2015: 28-60. The term “genealogical fiction” is from María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion and Gender in Colonial Mexico*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2008. Disavowal is theorized in Sibylle Fisher, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2004.

60 “Racial Assemblage” is from Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*. See also Norman Whitten and Arlene Torres, “Introduction,” *Blackness in Latin America and the Caribbean: Social*

eral implicit threads within it. Rather than essentialize it, it behooves us to uncover the various dialogical threads that are contained within this assemblage.<sup>61</sup> Colonial diabolism imposed a racial order within which African-derived practices were seen as a stealthy threat redolent of Satan, and in the Caribbean Haiti came to substitute for Dahomey, the source of many slaves, as well as the target of an immense European rumor mill about purported African cannibalism and witchcraft.<sup>62</sup> As anthropologist Laura Lewis has explained in her study of the Mexican Inquisition, witchcraft hierarchy was closely correlated with caste, hence race, in which greater social distance in the sanctioned realm was seen to be correlated with greater invisible powers.<sup>63</sup> Tales Dominicans tell about Haitians who can walk on burning coals and transform into packs of ferocious dogs that stream over the border, stories of “fantastic credibility,” conjure up images of Haitian wildness and its attendant marvels.<sup>64</sup> Anthropologist Mary Weismantel has written that the Andean pishtaco that sucks the fat of Indians and accumulates wealth is actually a figure of whiteness that serves as a visual metaphor for a long history of colonial predation and accumulation.<sup>65</sup> Similarly the *baka*, which is a person who has been turned into an animal – a pig, dog or cow – requires the conjuring skills of a very powerful priest, usually, in the view of Dominicans, a Haitian since Dominican magic is insufficiently potent.<sup>66</sup> Like the pishtaco, the *baka* is not only raced by its color but through its association with wildness. Like

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*Dynamics and Cultural Transformations*, vol. 1, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1998, p. 13.

- 61 Michael Silverstein, “The Secret Lives of Texts,” in Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban, eds., *Natural Histories of Discourse*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, pp. 81-82.
- 62 Richard Francis Burton, *A Mission to Gelele, King of Dahomey*, New York, Praeger, 1966.
- 63 Laura A. Lewis, *Hall of Mirrors: Power, Witchcraft, and Caste in Colonial Mexico*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2003, chap. 5.
- 64 As do the Huitoto indigenous peoples of Colombia. See Michael T. Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1987, p. 133.
- 65 Weismantel, *Cholas and Pishtacos*, chap. 5 (notwithstanding the fact that they are frequently described as black, see p. 182).
- 66 This point is elaborated in my book *Bêtes Noires: Sorcery as History in the Haitian Dominican Borderlands*, Duke University Press, forthcoming.

a newly arrived African slave or *bozal*, it is seen as feral and impossible to entirely control. It is important to note, however, that this aspect of Haitian identity is an “open secret” that is not easily articulated.<sup>67</sup> It hovers in the shadows, in fugitive speech forms such as gossip and rumor, and in stories that do not necessarily name Haiti but invoke, as Alfred Métraux has written, an unspoken colonial heritage of “the witchcraft of remote and mysterious Africa which troubled the sleep of the people in ‘the big house.’”<sup>68</sup> Indeed, in spite of pervasive cultural entanglement – or perhaps because of it – the borderline between Haitians and Dominicans becomes visible through stories in which Haiti is cast as a locus of demons. As literary critic James Arnold has put it, “the monster occupies a necessary, liminal position at the edges of any culture’s conceptual field.”<sup>69</sup>

Lest we blame Dominicans alone for these rumors, it should be noted that Haitians themselves have long burnished rumors of their enhanced sorcery skills. Many Haitians themselves fear the notorious Shampwel and Bizango, secret societies whose members boast they can shapeshift. As Taussig reminds us, this malevolent and mystical inquisitorial vision of power has been incorporated into the sorcery practices of Haitians like Ernst Nelson, who plies his trade as a *bòkò* (vodou priest) today in Carrefour Feuilles, Port-au-Prince, and who specializes in taking care of major problems of money and the heart by sending *zonbis* or the spirits of deceased *houngan* on *expedisyon* where they enact mystical errands.<sup>70</sup> Indeed, the presence of bones and particularly skulls in Haitian altars fueled rumors of Haitian cannibalism during the US occupation that were spread by marines who failed to inquire about the particular function of

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67 Michael Taussig, *Defacement: The Public Secret and the Labor of the Negative*, Stanford, CA Stanford University Press, 1999.

68 Alfred Métraux quoted in Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, p. 217. I have also heard Americans say that the dogs in Bánica are racist and bark at Haitians. For more on the utility of fugitive speech forms for historical research, see my essay “Beyond Fugitive Speech: Rumor and Affect in Caribbean History,” *Small Axe* 18 (2) 2014: 123-140.

69 A. James Arnold, “Introduction,” *Monsters, Tricksters and Sacred Cows: Animal Tales and American Identities*, Charlottesville, University of Virginia Press, 1996, p. 9.

70 As in Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, p. 219.

bones as spiritual circuitry in Haitian altars.<sup>71</sup> As a bundle of stigmatized attributes, the idea of the Haitian ‘Other’ most frequently appears in the border through stories of Haitian spiritual potency, a view that is in accord with a long history of racialization dating from colonialism, slavery and the Haitian revolution, of “the power of blackness...that is to be feared and controlled.”<sup>72</sup>

Michael Omi and Howard Winant have proposed that racial formations are determined by macrostructures such as state discourse, as well as microstructures such as patterns of interaction and exchange.<sup>73</sup> Anti-Haitian discourse takes on a life of its own in contexts where there is no social contact between Haitians and Dominicans, which is patently not the case in the border. Bourdieu argued that social space is a structure of possibilities drawing people together or apart in forms of affinity that and aversion, and that it is at the opposite ends of the distributions where differences are the clearest.<sup>74</sup> His argument, however, does not preclude the existence of an ethnic divide in the borderlands. Indeed, ethnic Haitians are overrepresented in lower status occupations such as agricultural labor, but they do not constitute a distinct, or separate ethnic tier, per se, since they work with and alongside Dominicans, and *plaçage* (sexual) relations and adoption are commonplace. Tellingly, given the social value long placed on livestock in this region, which Haitians help to care for working alongside cattle and oxen, they are conspicuously absent from the national Dominican livestock market in San Juan de la Maguana, where cattle, horses, goats and sheep are sold and slaughtered. And yet, Haitians and Dominicans share a relative equality of poverty in the border and are mutually codependent through trade and kinship relations that knit them together in ways that do not happen in urban contexts. There is also far

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71 For example, William Seabrook, *The Magic Island*, New York, Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929. As well as during anti-superstitious campaigns such as the nineteenth-century Bizoton affair. See Kate Ramsey, *The Spirits and the Law: Vodou and Power in Haiti*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2011.

72 Whitten and Torres, “Introduction,” *Blackness in Latin America and the Caribbean*, vol. 1, p. 12.

73 Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, New York, Routledge, 2015.

74 Pierre Bourdieu, “What Makes a Social Class? On the Theoretical and Practical Existence of Groups,” *Berkeley Journal of Sociology* 32, 1987: 12.

less social distance due to everyday contact. Moreover, Dominicans who live or lived in Thomassique or Hinche, or who visit family there, hold another set of images of Haiti. It is one that is more in keeping with the pre-1937 generation who recall a time when Dominican development had not yet surpassed that of Haiti. Haiti was still seen as more cosmopolitan with grander cities, more imported goods, a wealthier elite with superior education. Or, as one of my interlocutors put it: "Haitians in Hinche are very, very, very rich." If Marcel Mauss was correct that the social order is formed through exchange, it is no wonder that Haitians and Dominicans relate to one another so differently in the border, since the products they swap on a daily basis are never completely severed from the people who exchange them; and enduring indebtedness, of course, is a byproduct of sociality.<sup>75</sup>

In *La isla al revés*, Joaquín Balaguer characterized the Haitian "problem" as a "pacific invasion," a Malthusian menace, a seeping black bacillus of Haitian pestilence creeping across the border onto Dominican soil. This visual imagery was foundational to the Trujillista construction of the "latent hostility" at the root of the border "problem," as in the charge that Haitian cattle rustlers were the cause of the 1937 massacre of ethnic Haitians – a narrative that never had much purchase in the borderlands.<sup>76</sup> A powerful metaphor, this image has a history, one that was a function of slavery wherein a black majority forged through massive slave imports had created fears of engulfment, something which Balaguer then filtered through the twentieth-century idea of eugenics. As influential French

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<sup>75</sup> Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, New York, Norton, 1967, p. 31; Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture and Colonialism in the Pacific*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1991, p. xiii.

<sup>76</sup> James J. McClean and T. Pina Chevalier, *Datos históricos sobre la frontera dominico-haitiana*, Santo Domingo, np., 1921, p. 9. The regime of Rafael Trujillo officialized anti-Haitian thought which had previously been restricted to the small group of elites after the 1937 massacre of ethnic Haitians. Chevalier was Trujillo's uncle. Interestingly, Balaguer characterizes the border problem as one of ethnic *mélange*, however the idea of race mixture in the border via the category *catizo* from the colonial caste term *castizo* is not one I have ever heard used in the border. When ethnic identity and nationality are discussed, it is cast as definitively binary with no mixing allowed notwithstanding practices which entangle Haitians and Dominicans together.

crowd theorist Gustave Le Bon wrote in 1896, the barbarous crowd is only capable of wanton destruction and embodies the “violence, ferocity, and also the enthusiasm and heroism of primitive beings.”<sup>77</sup> In Balaguer’s view, Haiti was a Malthusian incubus, an ever-expanding population time bomb that conveyed a host of turn of the century psychic afflictions from claustrophobia to *psychopathia sexualis* since, as he disturbingly put it, Haitians breed like rabbits. It was an image that particularly vilifies Haitian women and their purportedly exorbitant fertility.<sup>78</sup> This analogy, however, disavows a far more complex picture of border bi-nationality in which Haitian freeholders came to occupy frontier communities that, by the twentieth century, had become Dominican.<sup>79</sup> But also, a parallel Dominican diaspora over time developed deep historic roots in towns such as Hinche and Thomassique which were, for centuries past after all, in Spanish territory.

One particularly prominent case of bi-nationality, though, is a poignant reminder that the question of nationality, and by extension citizenship, on the island is ultimately a matter of politics. The case involves a trader working as an engagé for the British government. His name is Jean-Baptiste Point du Sable, and he is credited with being the founder of Chicago. Born in the northern border town of Dajabón to a French sea captain and a slave

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77 Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, Dunwoody, GA, N. S. Berg, 1968 [1895], p. 12. On the history of eugenics, see also Alex Minna Stern, *Eugenic Nation: Faults and Frontiers of Better Breeding in Modern America*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2015.

78 Balaguer, *La isla al revés*. For the history of this imagery, see Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder 1848-1914*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1989. Of course, Haitian women are the bridge between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, since it is usually Haitian women who are Dominican mistresses and who mother the children that become adoptees. Thus they lack the racial “stickiness” of men since they can move across the ethnic border in ways that men cannot. See Elizabeth Kuznesof, “Ethnic and Gender Influences on ‘Spanish’ Creole Society in Colonial Spanish America,” *Colonial Latin American Review* 4 (1) 1995: p. 156.

79 Mats Lundahl, *The Haitian Economy: Man, Land and Markets*, London: Croom Helm, 1983; Johnhenry Gonzalez, *Maroon Nation: A History of Revolutionary Haiti*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2019; and Marit Brendbekken, *Hablando con la mata: estudio antropológico de la interdependencia entre “la vida social de las plantas” y la construcción de la identidad campesina en el área fronteriza de la República Dominicana*, Santo Domingo, Instituto de Medicina Dominicana, 1998.



