

Introduction

Centering Haiti in Hispanic Caribbean Studies

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En dépit de ces limites-là, en dépit de sa pauvreté, de ses vicissitudes politiques, de son exigüité, Haïti n'est pas une périphérie. Son histoire fait d'elle un centre.

In spite of these limits, in spite of its poverty, of its political vicissitudes, of its narrow existence, Haiti is not a periphery. Its history makes of her a center.

—Yanick Lahens, translated by Myriam J. A. Chancy

In the aftermath of the 2010 earthquake, Haitian writers and intellectuals throughout the hemisphere were forced to once again defend their country in the onslaught of media coverage that emphasized the economic condition of the country and the devastation that the disaster had caused. Countering a predominant narrative that solely emphasizes poverty and suffering, these commentators had to remind an international audience about the humanity of their compatriots. Writer Yanick Lahens's succinct statement challenges

My usage of the adjective “Hispanic” as a modifier of “Caribbean” references the languages of these nations as predominantly Spanish and harkens back to Hispania as the Roman name for the Iberian Peninsula; this stands in contradistinction to “Spanish Caribbean,” which would recall a colonial relationship with Spain.

us to reconsider how we define centers and peripheries; she alludes to a lauded history, one that prompts us to review what we think we know about this nation and its relationship to the countries that surround it. It serves as a challenge, particularly for those of us who have not studied the first independent Caribbean nation: What would it mean to put Haiti at the center of our understanding of this region? For those of us who study the Spanish-speaking countries in this hemisphere, how does studying Haiti, its history, and for the purposes of this study its culture, influence how we conceive of the Americas? And for those of us who study the histories and cultures of the peoples of African descent in Latin America, what role has Haiti historically played in the region and what is the relationship between this Kreyòl-speaking country and its Spanish-speaking brethren now?

Lahens's quote appears in the midst of Myriam J. A. Chancy's stunning introduction to her critically important study *From Sugar to Revolution: Women's Visions of Haiti, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic* (2012). Chancy directly addresses the anti-Blackness that in a great many ways has historically defined the region as well as the discipline of Latin American studies itself within the US academy. In a discussion about the history of the Spanish-speaking Americas, Chancy writes: "it was often necessary for African-descended individuals in the colonies to find a way to negate, obliterate, or have excused their African ancestry in order to be given a pass into political and social society. This process is very much in keeping with models of *blanqueamiento* established throughout the region in colonial times that continue to the present day" (14).¹ The epistemology that justifies whitening is one grounded in white supremacist thought, and is one that underscores that whiteness is better and therefore everything in relation to its Manichean opposite, that is, Blackness, must be worse.² Chancy goes on to highlight how this history of denying Blackness, particularly within Latin America, collides with the foundation upon which an independent Haiti was built: in the country's first constitution, "slavery was abolished; Africans and mulattoes were afforded rights of citizenship; [and] all citizens of the nation were re-categorized as 'Black,' whatever their racial or ethnic antecedents" (22).

At a time when citizenship was categorically being denied peoples of African descent in the rest of the hemisphere, where "African" would come to be conflated with "slave," here, in the land where formerly enslaved men and women successfully defeated not only landowners but also the military of Napoleon Bonaparte to establish Haiti as independent of the French

colonizer, here to be Black was, is, to be a citizen, is to be human. In this second decade of the twenty-first century, when throughout the hemisphere Black people continue to declare their humanity and insist that our lives matter, this legacy of the Haitian Revolution is one that goes unknown for a significant portion of the population. Yet for those who do know, as several essays in this collection attest, Haiti remains a beacon of freedom for Black peoples across the hemisphere, an inspiration particularly against the neocolonialist impulses of its neighbor, the United States.

Racialized Visions: Haiti and the Hispanic Caribbean explores the cultural impact that Haiti and its writers and artists have had on their counterparts in the surrounding Spanish-speaking nations of Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico. This collection challenges the notion that linguistic difference has kept the populations of these countries apart, instead highlighting the exchange that has been ongoing in the region since the Haitian Revolution. *Racialized Visions* also contests the rampant anti-Blackness of the region made perhaps most evident in the problematic representation of Haiti within curricula in the Dominican Republic and its erasure in the curricula of Puerto Rico as well as in the disciplines of Latin American and Caribbean studies in the US academy.³ In the aftermath of the 1804 revolution, Haiti as a nation became conflated with Blackness, and Spanish colonial powers used these racist representations to threaten their holdings in the Atlantic Ocean. Throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, white elites of the three countries utilized Haiti as a symbol of barbarism and savagery, successfully suppressing demands for increased civic participation on the part of populations of African descent in the name of not being like Haiti. This collection refutes this symbolism by highlighting how cultural producers in the region have long resignified Haiti to mean liberation; it also investigates the processes by which such resignification became possible in the first place.

In his 1995 critical study *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot issued a clarion call about the silence that had marked the scholarly treatment of Haiti, most notably in works assessing the great revolutions of the Western world. While the American and French revolutions have come to be considered the manifestation of the writings of Enlightenment intellectuals and philosophes, the Haitian Revolution had been treated as an anomaly. Trouillot argues that the revolution itself was “unthinkable” (72, 82) given that it was fought by a group that had been deemed less than human:

In the early 1700s, the ideological rationalization of Afro-American slavery relied increasingly on explicit formulations of the ontological order inherited from the Renaissance. But in so doing, it also transformed the Renaissance worldview by bringing its purported inequalities much closer to the very practices that confirmed them. Blacks were inferior and therefore enslaved; Black slaves behaved badly and were therefore inferior. In short, the practice of slavery in the Americas secured the Blacks' position at the bottom of the human world. With the place of Blacks now guaranteed at the bottom of the Western nomenclature, anti-Black racism soon became the central element of planter ideology in the Caribbean. (77)

Trouillot's study serves as a meditation on how whole systems of thought and knowledge are produced when we go without questioning what we think we know. As Chancy writes: "In the history books, Haiti's revolution was deemed a violence emanating from the depravity of subaltern bodies and minds, rather than as a *reasoned response* to an unjust and dehumanizing system of enslavement and exploitation" (34–35, italics in the original).

We learn to celebrate the insurrections that took place in eighteenth-century France and in the thirteen English colonies of North America as justifiable struggles that took place in the name of liberty and emancipation; Haitians are often not accorded the same veneration. Erased is the fact that Haiti became a destination for ships transporting Africans across the Atlantic; revolts happened in the midst of transoceanic journeys, as those men and women on board had heard that they would be free if they got to Haiti.⁴ Erased also was the fact that, as Dixia Ramírez points out, "anxieties about Haiti often applied equally to the entire island, Hispaniola, which in the early nineteenth century encompassed both Haiti and the eastern colony of Santo Domingo" (2).⁵ Within the Spanish-speaking world of the Americas, the Haitian Revolution was instead viewed as a threat and utilized by the white upper classes of the region as such to quell incipient insurrections and discipline peoples of African descent well into the twentieth century.

It is accurate to write that those in power of the Viceroyalty of New Spain, the capital of which was Mexico City, and the Viceroyalty of New Granada, the capital of which was Bogotá, as well as the elites of the Spanish colonies of Santo Domingo, Cuba, and Puerto Rico, were all threatened by the series of revolts that took place in the French colony of Saint-Domingue beginning in 1791.⁶ In 1797, the *audiencia* (the governing body in the

region and high appeals court) that had been established in Santo Domingo in 1526 was transferred to Puerto Príncipe (present-day Camagüey), Cuba, due to the fighting.⁷ In perhaps the most well-known study of the influence of Haiti on the cultural production of the Hispanic Caribbean, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (2004), Sibylle Fischer writes:

In the letters and reports of white settlers, the revolution is not a political and diplomatic issue; it is a matter of body counts, rape, material destruction, and infinite bloodshed. It is barbarism and unspeakable violence, outside the realm of civilization and beyond human language. It is an excessive event, and as such, it remained for the most part confined to the margins of history: to rumors, oral histories, confidential letters, and secret trials. There was a consensus in the region among settlers of European descent that Haiti was not a commendable model of emancipation. In response to the revolution, a cordon sanitaire was drawn around the island to interrupt the flow of information and people. (4)

While the narratives of the American and French revolutions have successfully managed to underplay the role of peoples of African descent in both insurrections (including incipient discussions about abolition and the extension of citizenship to men of African descent), there was simply no way to avoid the realities of the revolts in Saint-Domingue.⁸ Settlers were attacked and killed; plantations were destroyed. Human beings once enslaved claimed their own freedom. All of this was characterized, as Fischer reflects, as “barbarous” and “excessive” by those who were literate and who could compose this history. Myriam Chancy writes: “Haiti’s violation of the codes of structural subalternity—obedient subjugation—was labelled a *violence* not because the revolutionaries took up arms within the militarized colonial context but because their acts undercut the systematic ideology of Enlightenment philosophy which, at that time, simultaneously advocated for an end to slavery while asserting there were differing classes of man, and thus, of humanity (legitimizing the arrested rights of and violence against those deemed inferior by racist thought, namely, enslaved Africans)” (35). These were Black people, who challenged a worldview that held to be true that they were incapable of reason much less the capacity to successfully organize, revolt, and succeed. The maintenance of that worldview, and the material realities of settler colonialism in the Americas, demanded that the

revolution and its successes be overlooked, ignored, or used to signify a nightmare.

The metaphor most often used in relation to Haiti, and more specifically its revolution, within Latin American historiography, particularly that of the Hispanic Caribbean, is that of a spectral presence that haunted the region. Writing about the participation of Afro-Cubans in the fight for Cuban independence at the end of the nineteenth century, a full century after the insurrection in Saint-Domingue began, Aline Helg writes: “On the eve of Cuba’s last war against Spain . . . Afro-Cuban overrepresentation in the liberation forces revived the specter of a Haitian-style Black dictatorship among Autonomists, partisans of Spanish rule, and some Cuban separatists. In particular, certain white separatists used that image to impose their leadership in the war, to the detriment of Black leaders, and to deflect Afro-Cuban demands for equality” (*Rightful* 54). The fear of a rebellion by the enslaved was a real one: women and men of Haiti had aptly demonstrated that revolt was no idle threat. David Geggus notes: “News of the Haitian Revolution spread wide and fast; nothing remotely like it had happened before, and nobody could think about slavery in quite the same way again. Whites in many parts of the Americas began complaining of a new ‘insolence’ on the part of their slaves, which they attributed to awareness of the successful Black revolution” (20). Carrie Gibson notes that in 1795 alone rebellions broke out throughout the Caribbean region:

Rebellions started in Grenada and St. Vincent, while the maroons in Trelawny Parish, Jamaica, once again took up arms against the British. Even in Curaçao, which did not have a large slave population, a revolt began in August after slaves there heard about the Netherlands’ defeat at the hands of French forces and the subsequent establishment of the Batavian Republic that had taken place in January. . . . The Dutch colony of Demerara, in South America, also experienced a revolt by slaves allied with maroons living in the jungle, though this, too, was suppressed. (163)

This is not to say that uprisings had not occurred prior to the events in Saint-Domingue; it is to counter, again, the perception for those who do know about the Haitian Revolution that it was the only insurrection in the region. It was not.⁹

Within Cuba and Puerto Rico, Spanish colonies until 1898, Haiti signified not only insurrection led and won by the enslaved, it also meant

freedom and equality under the eyes of the law for Black populations. This was true throughout the Caribbean, particularly in the port cities and growing urban centers in the region. Julius S. Scott writes how maroons, *cimarrones*, as well as free Black peoples traveled freely to the colonies of all of the European powers. He notes:

If ships and boats sailing among the island colonies of the Caribbean brought the region together commercially, their movement also aided those seeking to escape the rigorous social control of these slave societies. The prospect of attaining a masterless existence at sea or abroad lured every description of mobile fugitive in the region, from runaway slaves to military deserters to deep-sea sailors in the merchant marines of the European empires. . . . For all the colonial powers, the mobility of these unauthorized seaborne travelers presented social dilemmas at home as well as diplomatic problems abroad. (59)

News of the insurrections in Saint-Domingue and the new nation of Haiti spread quickly. For white elites in the area, the threat of the creation of Black nations, in which whites and those who shared the legal privileges of whiteness in the form of freedom, citizenship, the ability to own land, and the vote, would be subservient to those occupying the lowest rungs of society, posed the greatest danger.¹⁰ This apprehension was not confined to the Hispanic Caribbean; indeed, it was shared by Creole revolutionaries in the lands of the Circum-Caribbean, who by the first decade of the nineteenth century were eager to declare their independence from Spain. Perhaps the most eminent of the region is Simón Bolívar; the “Libertador,” he dreamed not only of regional independence but also the unification of these lands. In order to fund his dreams of regional sovereignty, Bolívar went to Haiti in 1816; there he found a president, Alexandre Pétion, who provided funds on the condition that slavery be abolished in Venezuela. Haitian soldiers would, in fact, go on to fight for Venezuelan independence (Geggus 24). Five years later, the first constitution of Gran Colombia was enacted; the emancipation of enslaved peoples of African descent was not included in the document.¹¹ Pétion’s offer to Bolívar was not the first time the Haitian government supported area revolutionaries in their efforts for independence: Carrie Gibson details how Francisco de Miranda of Venezuela (1806), Ignacio López Rayón of Mexico (1813), and later Francisco Xavier Mina of Mexico (1815) all physically visited Haiti or sent representatives to Haiti

so as to receive support from the Republic (Gibson 185–87). These actions gave credence to rumors at the time that Haiti sponsored “revolutionary antislavery,” rather than simply an end to enslavement that could endure under a colonial framework.¹² The concerted efforts on the part of elites in the region, including the United States, to withhold diplomatic recognition of Haiti (in the case of the United States, until 1862) meant that it could not enact economic relations with potential markets in the area. Combined with the indemnity that France enacted in 1825, forcing the government of Jean-Pierre Boyer to pay 150,000,000 francs in reparations for property lost during the revolution in exchange for diplomatic recognition, as well as the indemnities of 225,000 pesos fuertes paid to Spain by President Fabre Geffrard when Spain recolonized Santo Domingo in 1861, it is easier to understand the groundwork for Haiti’s current economic positioning in the hemisphere.¹³

Despite economic and political isolation, Haiti remained an inspiration for peoples of African descent throughout the region for decades following its establishment as an independent nation.¹⁴ In 1812 José Antonio Aponte, a free Black man in Havana, was charged with leading a conspiracy to revolt; found in his possessions was a sketchbook with drawings of the leaders of a free Haiti: Toussaint Louverture, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, and Henri Christophe.¹⁵ While this is the most prominent of the thwarted rebellions to have taken place that year, there were accompanying uprisings in Puerto Rico (the Day of Kings slave rebellion) and Santo Domingo (the *Rebelión de Mendoza y Mojarra* and a slave rebellion in Santiago de los Caballeros).¹⁶ Antonio J. Pinto writes that these insurrections were “echoes of the same wave of uneasiness that shook the Spanish Antilles” in the aftermath of the coronation of Henri Christophe in Northern Haiti and of debates about abolition in the Cortes de Cádiz in Spain (121). Anticolonialism and fights for independence surrounded the islands, as the incipient nations of South America were all in the midst of battling Spain for self-rule.

The ensuing decades did not mean peace in the two remaining Spanish colonies, of Cuba and Puerto Rico, where slavery remained a way of life, or in the greater Caribbean. In 1844, another large-scale conspiracy was discovered in Cuba, that of the Escalera. While ten men were initially held responsible and killed by the state, there were widespread repercussions, as thousands of Afro-Cubans were tortured, killed, or banished from the island.¹⁷ Perhaps the most well-known victims of this repression were Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés, known as Plácido, and Juan Francisco Manzano, the author of, to this point, the sole-extant slave narrative of Latin America.¹⁸

The disparity in the response of Spanish colonial authorities is striking; as Aisha K. Finch notes:

But the two decades leading up to La Escalera also witnessed some of the largest and most organized slave rebellions and conspiracies in the Atlantic world. This resistance, largely inspired by the Haitian Revolution, included the 1822 Denmark Vesey conspiracy in South Carolina, the 1823 rebellion in Demerara (now Guyana), the Antigua slave rebellion of 1831, the Nat Turner rebellion of 1831 in Virginia, the “Christmas rebellions” of 1831–32 in Jamaica, the 1835 Malê rebellion in Brazil, and the 1843 slave rebellions in Venezuela and Colombia, among others. As other scholars have argued, the regional wave of antislavery protest and liberatory struggle that Cuban slaves joined in 1844 helped to usher in such events as general emancipation in the British Caribbean. (226)

While these rebellions may have failed, they reveal Haiti’s scope of influence throughout the hemisphere; we must also take into account that the governments of all of these nations were better prepared militarily to squash revolt in the aftermath of the revolution.

This was particularly true in Cuba and Puerto Rico; in Cuba, the years after La Escalera saw increased calls for independence by both white and Black populations in the region. Michele Reid-Vazquez details how the advances that free people of color (*libres de color*) in Cuba had made in prior decades collapsed during the Escalera era, so that everyone was deemed race of color (*raza de color*). No distinction was made between free and enslaved peoples during this repressive time, which fomented subsequent calls for independence. She writes: “These critical developments in resistance, slavery, labor, and colonialism forged the conditions and alliances that would spark the Ten Years’ War and its dual struggle for the abolition of slavery and national independence” (8). Joseph Dorsey specifies how during the decades after the end of the British slave trade in 1807 Spanish slaveholders continued to allow a coastal slave trade between Cuba and Puerto Rico, thereby incentivizing abolitionists from the islands to call for independence as well.

The revolutionary armies that fought in the Ten Years’ War (1868–1878), the Little War (1879–1880), and the Spanish-Cuban-American War (1895–1898) were all racially mixed, as men and women of African and European descent fought together against a collapsing Spanish Empire. Nevertheless,

Spanish officials continued to utilize Haiti as a threat, Ada Ferrer observes. As usual, the references to Haiti became ubiquitous. But they were almost always brief and nebulous—as if merely to speak the name sufficed to call up concrete images of Black supremacy. “The movement’s detractors utilized the same images and arguments again—to even better effect—during the second separatist uprising known as the ‘Little War’ of 1879–80. . . . Race, and its manipulation by colonial authorities, are therefore absolutely central to understanding the limits of multiracial insurgency in the first half of the nationalist period” (Ferrer, *Insurgent* 8).

Ferrer highlights how Spanish authorities maintained their greatest holding in the Caribbean, Cuba, by feeding the fears about Blackness and the creation of a Black state. In Puerto Rico, the call for independence was launched by the uprising known as the Grito de Lares, which occurred September 23, 1868; following this moment, many of the leaders of independence were banished from the island, as were their Cuban compatriots. Puerto Ricans such as Ramón Emeterio Betances and Eugenio María de Hostos met with Cuban leaders José Martí and Rafael Serra, among others, and traveled throughout the hemisphere, soliciting support from amenable leaders. For Betances, Caribbean independence would be complete with the creation of an Antillean Confederation, a political unit that would include Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti.¹⁹

The relationship between the Dominican Republic and Haiti is more complex than those of the other two nations. Fischer notes: “Nowhere in the Greater Caribbean did the Haitian Revolution have a more immediate impact than in Santo Domingo” (*Modernity* 131). If Haiti has been silenced from Western historiography, it must be noted that so too has the history of the Dominican Republic. While specialists both on the island and in the United States are contributing to a field that continues to grow, particularly in the last five decades or so, on the whole the study of the Dominican Republic remains outside the purview of traditional Hispanic Caribbean scholarship. This is to the detriment of those of us who claim to be scholars of the field; Dominican history, literature, and culture provides nuanced and complicated renderings of such themes as independence, citizenship, colonialism, and racial formations that are separate and distinct from those of the other nations of the Greater Antilles. For those of us who are scholars and students of the African diaspora, the study of the Dominican Republic presents us with great opportunities to go beyond facile and yet seemingly pervasive conclusions about Blackness, anti-Blackness, and anti-Haitianism

so that we may instead delve into the particular and specific histories of this culture and its peoples.

The summer 2015 issue of *The Black Scholar* (vol. 45, no. 2) is dedicated to “Dominican Black Studies”; there, building on the work of such scholars as Silvio Torres-Saillant, guest editors Raj Chetty and Amaury Rodríguez write: “By moving beyond the narrow focus on Dominicans’ alleged Black denial, [the essays in the issue] advance the multidisciplinary conversations about Dominican Blackness in relation to identity, to be sure, but also struggles against patriarchy, heteronormativity, and imperialism” (7).²⁰ For some, the notion that there is such a lived subjectivity as Dominican Blackness might be a novel one, and yet it has existed for centuries. The CUNY Dominican Studies Institute at the City College of New York has launched a bilingual website, *First Blacks in the Americas: The African Presence in the Dominican Republic*, that details arrivals of peoples of African descent in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.²¹ Ana-Maurine Lara poses two simple questions regarding the Dominican Republic and its relationship to Haiti: “Why have we naturalized anti-Blackness as an element of the modern nation-state?,” and “What does Blackness look like in the Dominican Republic?” (471) Rather than utilize a metric about Blackness formulated from sources external to Dominican culture—that is, this is what US/Cuban/Brazilian Blackness looks like, does it match—it is incumbent for us as students and scholars of the region to learn from the country itself.

Nations, products of the human imagination, define themselves in contradistinction to each other. The anti-Haitian sentiment that is today a feature of Dominican conservative voices did not always exist; on the contrary, even elites of the Spanish colony at one time viewed Haiti as a harbinger of progress. Edward Paulino notes: “Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries authorities in Santo Domingo considered their neighbor Saint Domingue’s reliance on slavery as a model for progress and economic development, even espousing the importation of African slaves” (19). In 1801, Toussaint Louverture, leading forces against French troops who had retreated to the eastern part of the island, ended slavery in Santo Domingo; among those who signed the document declaring this abolition were four Dominicans (Eller 4). Fischer writes: “Slavery was reintroduced the following year, when Napoleon seized the eastern part of the island of Hispaniola in his attempt to recapture the former French colony in the West. In 1805 the slaves were freed again when Dessalines invaded, but slavery was eventually reintroduced once more and continued first under

French and then, after 1809, under Spanish rule” (*Modernity* 131). Andrew J. Walker notes that in the capital of the neighboring Spanish colony of Santo Domingo, the enslaved were buoyed by news of emancipation. While students of history may be more comfortable with the notion that an event as substantial as one marking the end of the sale of human beings be accomplished in one fell swoop, students of slavery in the Atlantic world know that this back and forth negotiation is more in keeping with how the emancipation of enslaved Africans and their descendants occurred in the Americas. The Haitian Revolution was the exception to the standing order, not the rule.

In the introduction to *We Dream Together*, Anne Eller writes that after 1809, “for more than a decade, as Spanish authorities practically ignored the territory, colonial sovereignty eroded. Dominican conspirators regularly appealed to Haitian rulers for arms and support for the many revolts and conspiracies that ensued, and pro-unification plans emerged. Dominican residents of center-island towns held ceremonies that celebrated Haitian independence” (5). Eller makes the important distinction between those who were in power in the capital of Santo Domingo and those who lived away from this urban center. Particularly notable is her highlighting of those who lived near the center of the island, near the tenuous border dividing the two nations that would, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries be politicized and militarized, interrupting the flow of peoples that have characterized life on that island.

On December 1, 1821, José Núñez de Cáceres, the colonial governor for the previous twelve years, declared Santo Domingo to be the “Estado independiente de la parte Española de Haití.”²² Núñez de Cáceres was a Spanish criollo whose plan was to have his country be a part, ironically enough, of Bolívar’s Haitian-funded Gran Colombia. This incarnation of an independent Dominican Republic, under the title of “Spanish Haiti,” lasted for a few months, until Jean-Pierre Boyer unified the island in 1822. Eugenio Matibag notes that Dominicans of the Cibao (the northern part of the country) rejected Núñez de Cáceres’s plan; they instead “raised the Haitian flag above the cities of Montecristi and Santiago de los Caballeros” (95), which eased Boyer’s arrival. In her book *The Dominican Racial Imaginary*, Milagros Ricourt makes the point that, despite its later characterization as an invasion, this move was supported by many on the eastern side: whereas the elite had desired being a part of Gran Colombia, “the Black and mulatto masses, however, inspired by the Haitian Revolution, favored unification with Haiti” (28–29). Again we see the distinction drawn by class and race,

calling our attention to the narrators of history. Paulino notes that this period is known by different names across the island: 1822–1844 marks the “unification” for Haitians, “invasion” for Dominicans” (8).²³

The year 1844 marks the date from which Dominicans currently celebrate their independence; two decades later, from 1861 to 1865, the Dominican Republic was annexed once again to Spain, an effort that was led by elites but that was almost immediately rejected by the people of the nation, who fought the War of Restoration from 1863 to 1865. Dominicans, therefore, can rightly speak of three dates of independence: 1821, 1844, and 1865. April Mayes notes that from the perspective of recent Dominican historiography, a national sensibility emerged “after 1865, not in the wake of separation from Haiti in 1844 and certainly not during the colonial period” (4). For each of these dates, the country’s neighbor to the west remained as an important, to use Eugenio Matibag’s terminology, counterpoint for the Dominican Republic. As Diógenes Abréu states quite clearly in the title of his 2014 prize-winning study: “Sin haitianidad no hay dominicanidad.”

In the first decades of the twentieth century, Haitian migrant laborers would move to, work, and live in all three of the countries of the Hispanic Caribbean, providing inexpensive labor for US-owned sugar plantations.²⁴ In the midst of a racial climate throughout the Western hemisphere steeped in scientific racism and social Darwinism, elites of Latin America countries, as well as those in North America, found themselves having to reconcile their histories of indigenous and African enslavement and their resulting racially mixed populations. Each of the nations of the Hispanic Caribbean were engaged in efforts to whiten their populations, and so with Haitian immigration came the recycled tropes about the “specter” of the Revolution and the threat posed by supposed “Africanization” (Andrews 117–51). At the same time, after decades of considering whether to annex the Dominican Republic or not, the United States invaded the island, beginning an occupation that would last eight years in the Dominican Republic, from 1916 to 1924, and nineteen years in Haiti, from 1915 to 1934.²⁵ Concomitantly, these years saw the flourishing of the embrace of African heritage on the part of writers and artists in the *negrismo* movement in both Puerto Rico and Cuba, as well as the *indigenismo* movement in Haiti itself. In the Dominican Republic Rafael Trujillo rose in the ranks of a Dominican military trained by those invading US forces, becoming the dictator of the nation until his assassination in 1961. In addition to the propagation of anti-Haitian rhetoric, the whitening campaigns of the previous decades

culminated in the massacre of Haitian migrant workers in 1937, a tragedy that is commemorated in Jacques Stephen Alexis's *Compère Général Soleil* (1955), Freddy Prestol Castillo's *El Masacre se pasa a pie* (1973), and Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of the Bones* (1998). This slaughter had largely gone unnoticed by the world arguably until Danticat's novel, published in English in the United States. Literature and, more broadly, culture itself can therefore be a site of remembrance and commemoration, as that which has escaped the notice of historians can make its way into the hands of artists such as novelists, dramatists, poets, dancers, filmmakers—all who remind us to access and who themselves create alternative archives from which we can draw understanding of our identities, be it on the level of the individual, the national, or a region itself.

There are few books on the market that examine the representation of Haiti in the cultural production of its Spanish-speaking neighbors. Published jointly in San Juan by Puerto Rican publisher Isla Negra and in Santo Domingo by Dominican publisher La Trinitaria, Pedro L. San Miguel's *La isla imaginada: historia, identidad y utopía en La Española* appears in 1997; consisting of four essays in total and interested primarily in the narratives of Dominican nationhood, San Miguel focuses on the relationship between the Dominican Republic and Haiti in two essays, "Discurso racial e identidad nacional: Haití en el imaginario dominicano" and "La isla de senderos que se bifurcan: Jean Price-Mars y la historia de La Española." Perhaps the most widely recognized in English is Sibylle Fischer's *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (2004). Taking literally Trouillot's charge about the silence surrounding the revolution, Fischer examines the literary, print, and visual cultures of the nineteenth century, focusing on Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti. Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo's *Black Cosmopolitanism: Racial Consciousness and Transnational Identity in the Nineteenth Century Americas* (2005) examines the construction of identity within populations of African descent in the United States, Cuba, and the British West Indies in the aftermath of the Haitian Revolution. Lucía M. Suárez's *The Tears of Hispaniola: Haitian and Dominican Diaspora Memory* (2006) analyzes the works of Jean-Robert Cadet, Junot Díaz, Loida Maritza Pérez, and Edwidge Danticat; she highlights how these writers, all of whom reside outside of the island of their birth, incorporate the island's histories of violence, trauma, and silenced memories in their art. Two that have been published outside the US academic market are Elzbieta Sklodowska's *Espectros y espejismos: Haití en el imaginario cubano* (2009) in Madrid by Iberoamericana-Vervuert and Emilio Jorge Rodríguez's bilingual collection

of essays, *Haiti and Trans-Caribbean Literary Identity / Haïti y la transcari-beñidad literaria* (2011), published in Saint Martin by House of Nehesi. As made explicit in their titles, both works solely analyze the literature of the region, without taking into account other modes of cultural production.

In the years following the publication of Myriam Chancy's study (2012), we see the emergence of Maria C. Fumagalli's impressive *On the Edge: Writing the Border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic* (2015) focusing on the representation of the border on the island of Hispaniola through analysis of both fictional and nonfictional texts, as well as other cultural artifacts such as songs, films, paintings, sculptures, photographs, and visual performance. We also see the release of Sara Johnson's *The Fear of French Negroes: Transcolonial Collaboration in the Revolutionary Americas* (2012), Philip Kaisary's *The Haitian Revolution in the Literary Imagination: Radical Horizons, Conservative Constraints* (2014), Marlene L. Daut's *Tropics of Haiti: Race and the Literary History of the Haitian Revolution in the Atlantic World, 1789–1965* (2015), Víctor Figueroa's *Prophetic Visions of the Past: Pan-Caribbean Representations of the Haitian Revolution* (2015), Marlene L. Daut's *Baron de Vastey and the Origins of Black Atlantic Humanism* (2019), and Grégory Pierrot's *The Black Avenger in Atlantic Culture* (2019). These do not focus solely on the relationship between artists of Haiti and the Hispanic Caribbean; rather, the majority of these studies emphasize representations of Haiti within the artistic productions of writers and artists from the Anglophone Caribbean. Both Daut's and Pierrot's studies examine literary histories and cultures that arose in Europe, the United States, and Haiti itself during the continuous insurrections by enslaved peoples in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

Of all of these studies, none incorporate works from Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic in one text: *Racialized Visions: Haiti and the Hispanic Caribbean* is, to my knowledge, the first to include the work of Puerto Rican writers and thinkers in conversation with not only Haitian artists and intellectuals but also their Cuban and Dominican peers. There are twelve essays in this collection, with a foreword, introduction, and conclusion; of the essays, three center on Cuba, two on Puerto Rico, and six on the Dominican Republic. While this editor would have liked to have seen more essays about Cuba and Puerto Rico, this range accurately reflects the work submitted in response to the call for abstracts. It also unintentionally reflects the populations of Haitian descent within these three nations.

The volume begins with Claudy Delné's analysis of the representation of crossing the border in Haitian and Haitian American fiction in his essay,

“The Border of Hispaniola in Historical and Fictional Imaginations since 1791: Redemption and Betrayals.” He argues that while the border has been tenuous since the eighteenth century, the crossing of that territorial marker to the Dominican Republic by Haitian migrants has been represented by Haitian writers Jacques Stephen Alexis, René Philoctète, and Edwidge Danticat as both an act of deliverance and disloyalty. In “‘The Road of Social Progress’: Revolutions and Resistance in the 1936 Lectures of Dantès Bellegarde,” Vanessa K. Valdés examines the four lectures that the former Haitian ambassador to Washington delivered at the University of Puerto Rico in April of 1936. Bellegarde’s visit to the US colony took place two years after the end of the US occupation of Haiti and only two months after police opened fire and killed members of the Puerto Rican Nationalist Party on the university campus, in what is known as the Río Piedras Massacre. Billed as an event meant to “inaugurate cultural relationships between Haiti and Puerto Rico,” Bellegarde’s visit provides a striking though implicit critique of the US imperialist enterprise.

Next, Carrie Gibson offers a reflection of the composition of historical texts in “The Dictator’s Scapegoat: Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi’s *Invasiones haitianas de 1801, 1805 y 1822*.” She analyzes this canonical text of Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi, a prolific Dominican historian whose works, produced during the Trujillo dictatorship, continue to influence conservative Dominican historiography. In “Mucho Woulo: Black Freedom and *The Kingdom of This World*,” Natalie Marie Léger takes on the most famous representation of the revolt in Latin American letters, Alejo Carpentier’s *El reino de este mundo* (1949). Much has been made about Carpentier’s prologue to this novel in which he establishes the tenets of *lo real maravilloso* (the marvelous real), later interpreted to be a precursor of magical realism. Carpentier writes about how a visit to Haiti in 1943 inspired him: “Después de sentir el nada mentido sortilegio de las tierras de Haití, de haber hallado advertencias mágicas en los caminos rojos de la Meseta Central, de haber oído los tambores del Petro y del Rada, me vi llevado a acercar la maravillosa realidad recién vivida a la agotante pretensión de suscitar lo maravilloso que caracterizó ciertas literaturas europeas de estos últimos treinta años” (5). Léger reminds us that Carpentier composes his novel following the decades in which tens of thousands of Haitian migrants arrived in Cuba to work on US-owned sugar plantations. She posits the Haitian revolutionaries of the novel as well as their Cuban descendants as *cimarrones*, maroons still in search of their own space.

With “The Haitian Revolution and Tomás Gutiérrez Alea’s *La última cena* (*The Last Supper*, 1976), Philip Kaisary examines this cinematic repre-

sentation of slavery in nineteenth-century Cuba. With numerous allusions to the Haitian Revolution, Kaisary argues that the film, made seventeen years after the Cuban Revolution of 1959, is a call for the necessity of revolution to destroy social hierarchies of race and class.

In “Haiti: Jesús Cos Causse’s Prelude to the Caribbean,” Erika V. Serrato analyzes the Haitian references in the work of contemporary Afro-Cuban poet Jesús Cos Causse. For the poet, Haiti is not only a metaphor of liberation but also a homeland, as it is the land of his grandfather’s birth. Juxtaposing his words with those of one of Haiti’s greatest writers and poets, Jacques Roumain (1907–1944), Serrato reveals how Haiti is both “encapsulation and crossroads of Caribbean history.”

Almost fifty years after Dantès Bellegarde’s lectures in Río Piedras, Ana Lydia Vega publishes her short story “Encancaranublado” (translated in English as “Three Men and a Boat”). A tale of three migrant workers in a raft, a Haitian, a Dominican, and a Cuban, this is one of Vega’s most famous works from her collection *Encancaranublado y otros cuentos de naufragio* (1982); in her essay “But the Captain Is Haitian: Issues of Recognition within Ana Lydia Vega’s ‘Encancaranublado,’” Mariana Past argues that Vega’s work reinforces the perception of Haiti as emblematic of disaster, and she examines the seeming intransigence of nationalist paradigms within Latin American and Caribbean studies.

The execution of Haitian and Afro-Dominican women and men is the subject of Edwidge Danticat’s second novel; in her essay “Haitian and Dominican Resistance: A Study of the Symptom in Edwidge Danticat’s *The Farming of Bones*,” Ángela Castro utilizes Slavoj Žižek’s theory of the symptom through which to analyze representations of trauma and violence on the island of Hispaniola.

Ramón Antonio Victoriano-Martínez analyzes the continued discursive aggression against Haitians in his essay “‘The Black Plague from the West’: Haiti in Roberto Marcallé Abreu’s *Dystopia*.” Winner of the 2015 Premio Nacional de Literatura for decades-long contributions to Dominican letters, Marcallé Abreu is a journalist and prolific writer. He is the author of a trilogy of novels published between 2006 and 2012 that contribute to lingering anti-Haitian sentiment by perpetuating stereotypes of the past; Victoriano-Martínez demonstrates how these works reflect a conservative political agenda that continues to construct a Dominican nationalism in contradistinction to the nation to its west.

This theme of brutality continues in the essay that follows, Mohwanah Fetus’s “‘And Then the Canes Shrieked’: Haitianism and Memory in Junot Díaz’s *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*.” There, she argues that the cane

fields of Díaz's novel are a spectral space, one that serves as an archive that links slavery, colonialism, and dictatorship. For her, the text suggests that these lands are animated by the violations of the past committed against Black women, men, and children.

Finally, understanding the tangled histories of Haiti and the Dominican Republic is the subject of Cécile Accilien's "Haiti and the Dominican Republic: Teaching about the Un/Friendly Neighbors of Hispaniola." Accilien provides for scholars a full syllabus along with pedagogical suggestions regarding the teaching of this subject matter; for her, an examination of the tensions of these two nations is particularly critical in the aftermath of the 2013 Constitutional Court decision that denationalized hundreds of thousands of Dominicans of Haitian descent.

The collection's conclusion is a meditation by the editor on the ways in which we learn, unlearn, and produce new ways of thinking as students and scholars alike. It is followed by a timeline that offers a model of learning about events in the region in a more integrated fashion. In the case of Haiti in relation to the rest of the Caribbean and indeed to the Americas as a whole, for those of us in the position to do so, who have access to means of production—to newspapers, academic presses, podcasts, and the like—it is incumbent upon us to follow Gina Ulysse's 2015 exhortation: Haiti needs new narratives, ones that challenge the well-worn adage focusing on its material conditions. We must create the spaces and the opportunities for these new modes of thinking to flourish.

Notes

1. *Blanqueamiento*, or whitening, would become the official policy of countries throughout Latin America in the aftermath of their independence from Spain and Brazil in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For an introduction to this history, see Andrews, particularly his fourth chapter, "'A Transfusion of Blood': Whitening, 1880–1930."

2. A complete historical rendering of this worldview is outside of the scope of this study; however, Nell Painter has provided this history in her 2010 study, *The History of White People*. For a recent history that examines these ideas in the United States, see Kendi.

3. In their study *Unmastering the Script: Education, Critical Race Theory, and the Struggle to Reconcile the Haitian Other in Dominican Identity* (2019), Sheridan Wigginton and Richard T. Middleton IV highlight how textbook authors are slowly

recovering a Dominican Black identity and yet continue to struggle to disassociate that position from an entrenched discursive conflation of Blackness with Haiti.

4. Gerald Horne records one such incident: “For as Christmas was about to be celebrated in Cap-Haïtien in 1825, France’s delegate reported to Paris a typical event: a ship had run aground on Haitian soil with scores of enslaved Africans aboard—fresh from the ‘Ivory Coast’—presumably destined for Cuba, then experiencing a customary spate of imports of human cargo” (22).

5. In *An Islandwide Struggle for Freedom: Revolution, Emancipation, and Reenslavement in Hispaniola* (2016), Graham T. Nessler writes up the “forgotten Dominican chapters of the Haitian Revolution” (4), a striking intervention in the historiography about this pivotal event that underscores that the fighting “did not simply ‘spill over’ from French Saint-Domingue into Spanish Santo Domingo by virtue of geographical proximity” (3). Anne Eller provides an indispensable revision of our understanding of the period of unification of the two nations from 1822 to 1844 and the subsequent Dominican War of Restoration of 1865 in her study, *We Dream Together: Dominican Independence, Haiti, and the Fight for Caribbean Freedom* (2016). She too emphasizes that the island as a whole signified freedom of peoples of African descent in the face of continued threats of imperialistic encroachment by the slaveholding powers that were Spain, France, and the United States.

6. The Viceroyalty of New Spain in 1791 included the US states of Florida and the coastline of the Gulf coast states of Mississippi and Alabama, as well as the continental states west of the Mississippi River: Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, North and South Dakota, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, Idaho, California, Oregon, and Washington. It also included present-day Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. The Viceroyalty of New Granada included what is known today as Panama, Colombia, Ecuador, and Venezuela; by 1791, both Cuba and Venezuela had gained more autonomy as both were formally recognized as captaincy generals, that is, districts within the viceroyalties. For an introduction in English to the history and politics of colonial Latin America, see Burkholder and Johnson.

7. About this C. H. Cunningham writes: “The unqualified success of the Audiencia of Santo Domingo, both as a tribunal of justice and as an administrative organ, led to the general establishment of the institution throughout the Spanish colonial empire” (16).

8. For an introduction to the critical role that men and women of African descent played in both revolutions, see *The Abolition of the Slave Trade*, a permanent virtual exhibit by the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture of the New York Public Library, abolition.nypl.org/essays/african_resistance/7/.

9. Dominican historian Frank Moya Pons makes the point that the first insurrection by enslaved Africans to occur in this hemisphere happened on the island

of La Española: “Muy poca gente sabe que el primer grupo de esclavos africanos que llegó a la isla de Santo Domingo en 1503 no aceptó su condición servil y escape hacia los montes tan pronto tuvo la oportunidad desapareciendo para siempre del contacto con los españoles” (65). Insurrection is therefore foundational in the fabric of the two nations that remain on that island.

10. It is not insignificant that the greatest number of settlers from Saint-Domingue fled to Cuba; Gibson writes: “Some 15,000 to 20,000 refugees landed there [in Cuba], while around 1,000 made their way through Santo Domingo and on to Mayaguez and San Juan in Puerto Rico” (163). Whereas Saint-Domingue had been the richest colony in the Caribbean prior to the revolt, these settlers helped to transform Cuban society into the wealthiest of the region. Ada Ferrer examines this history in her most recent book-length study, *Freedom’s Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (2014). In his 1986 dissertation, “The Hispaniola Diaspora, 1791–1850: Puerto Rico, Cuba, Louisiana, and Other Host Societies,” José Morales details this migration, highlighting not only the territories already mentioned but also Jamaica and Venezuela. It is important to note that the majority of these lands, including Louisiana, were Spanish colonies at the beginning of the insurrection in 1791; Jamaica was the sole English possession, having been ceded to England from Spain in 1670.

11. For more on Simón Bolívar’s concerns about uprisings led by peoples of African descent in Gran Colombia, see Helg, *Liberty*, and Fischer, “Bolívar.”

12. For more on how these efforts were in conflict with the constitution of 1807 under Henri Christophe and the 1816 constitution of Pétion, see Fischer, *Modernity* 238–39.

13. Eller writes how the Spanish government, then newly reestablished in Santo Domingo, faced Haitian opposition to its recolonization; Spain remained a slaveholding imperial power at the time, with its remaining colonies of Puerto Rico and Cuba on either side of the island, and therefore a real threat to descendants of those who had fought for and won emancipation decades before. She details how Spanish warships arrived in the waters outside Port-au-Prince in the summer of 1861: after first declaring martial law, Geffard quickly succumbed to Spanish demands so as to prevent an invasion (122). For more on this moment, see chapter 4, “The Haitians or the Whites? Colonization and Resistance, 1861–1863,” of *We Dream Together*. The Haitian government finished paying this indemnity to France in 1947; by then it had mortgaged its own future by taking out loans from other governments, including the United States. In the twenty-first century, Jean-Bertrand Aristide campaigned for France to return the money that Haiti had paid for its own freedom. For more on the history of the role of multinational banks in ensuring Haiti’s debt, see Hudson.

14. For more on the relationship between peoples of African descent throughout the hemisphere and Haiti, see Nwankwo; Polyné; Johnson; Fanning; Gaffield; and Mills.