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Reading through the Bloody Borderlands of Hispaniola: Fictionalizing the 1937 Massacre of Haitian Sugarcane Workers in the Dominican Republic

Para impedir, por otro lado, que el país perdiera sus características de pueblo nítidamente hispano, lo que se necesitaba era poner en práctica una política de dominicanización de la frontera y despertar al mismo tiempo en el pueblo el sentimiento de sus grandezas tradicionales.¹

—Joaquín Balaguer, *La Isla al Revés* (1984)

During his thirty-one years in power as dictator, Raphael Leonidas Trujillo embodied the typical characteristics of the Latin American dictator with an added fascist component. From the coup d'état that brought him to power in 1930 to his assassination in 1961, he was responsible for the most rapid economic growth in the history of the Dominican Republic. His economic modernization plan resulted in the building of schools, roads, and other infrastructural necessities that improved the quality of life of most Dominicans. However, this new prosperity was achieved through an iron-fisted and absolutist regime that curtailed civil liberties for most Dominicans. The most atrocious act committed by the Trujillo regime, and the one which most closely links it to international Fascism, concerns the 1937 massacre of approximately 25,000 Haitian sugarcane workers in Dominican villages close to the Haitian border. The newspaper reports, which due to government censorship appeared two full months after the incident, placed the blame on isolated groups of Dominican vigilantes even though it was widely rumored at the time that the murders were orchestrated and master-minded by Trujillo as part of his "Dominicanization program" in border villages.

This paper attempts a reconstruction of the literary representation of

this massacre through a reading of four fictional texts. Jacques Stephen Alexis' *Compère Général Soleil* (1955) is a canonical Haitian novel about a young man's political awakening and his perils as a sugarcane worker in the Dominican Republic. Freddy Prestol Castillo's *El Masacre se Pasa a Pie* (1973) is a Dominican novel set in a Dominican border village narrating the events of the massacre through the voice of a presumed civil servant. Edwidge Danticat's "Nineteen-Thirty Seven" (1991) is one of the short stories in her much acclaimed collection *Krik? Krak!* In this short-story, the U.S.-based Haitian writer emphasizes the particular struggles of Haitian women in the massacre. Lastly, Sergio Reyes II's *Cuentos y Leyendas de la Frontera* (1996) is a collection of reminiscences of the author's childhood in a border Dominican village during the time of the massacre.

A recent book which does not fit entirely within this list of fictional works due to its biographical genre, but which nevertheless works alongside these works of fiction in its analysis of the dictatorial legacy of Trujillo and his ideology, is Miguel Aquino García's *Holocausto en el Caribe: Perfiles de una tiranía sin precedentes: La matanza de haitianos por Trujillo* (1996). *Holocausto en el Caribe* is a biography of Trujillo which gives readers a much more personal glimpse into the dictator's life than a historical or a more traditional journalistic enterprise could. Even though in some ways it does serve as the climax of the narration, the description of the massacre of Haitian *braceros* is minimal, making the title of the book somewhat inappropriate and misleading. Despite its minimal treatment of the massacre of Haitian *braceros*, its "testimonials" of survivors and collaborators in the murders are important because they contribute to the dramatization of the events and link *Holocausto en el Caribe* with Dominican fiction on the massacre such as *El Masacre se Pasa a Pie* and *Cuentos y Leyendas de la Frontera*.

I want to provide a rhetorical map showing the different ways in which these works of fiction addressing the massacre produced in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and the Haitian Diaspora respond to the hegemonic discourses on race and nation generated and authorized by the Trujillo regime. Furthermore, I will present these short stories and novels as constituting a phase within a genealogy of Dominico-Haitian literary discourse that at present appears to be stepping aside to give way to a newer set of fictional works which seek to resolve some of the critical problems inherent in a strictly binary discussion of the international conflict by taking a regional pan-Caribbean outlook on the continuing political problems between the two nations sharing the island of Hispaniola.

Throughout this paper, I will be referring to the body of work that

voices the hegemonic views on race and nation which Trujillo advocated during his thirty-one years in power as Trujillista Discourse. It includes works officially sanctioned by him during his term of office, such as Angel del Rosario Pérez's *La Exterminación Añorada* (1957) and Emilio Rodríguez Demorizi's *Invasiones Haitianas de 1801, 1805, 1822* (1955). It also includes those which, in the same spirit, continued to be produced after his assassination in defense of Trujillo and of his hegemonic views: Joaquín Balaguer's *La Isla al Revés* (1983) and Carlos Cornielle's *Proceso Histórico Dominico-Haitiano* (1980), among others.

The comparatist approach which this work takes to understand multiply situated knowledges and perspectives in the Caribbean is important because it comes at a time in which the field of Comparative Literature in the United States has begun to reflect on its deep Eurocentric tradition. As put forth in Charles Bernheimer's anthology *Comparative Literature in the Age of Multiculturalism* (1994), new critical routes need to be forged in comparatist research if the field is to continue being a vital part of literary studies in the years to come. One such route involves investing and valorizing research which takes as its object of study areas of the world, like the Caribbean, which, due to their complex multi-lingual socio-literary formation, could be better understood and elucidated by the tools afforded by comparatist scholarship.

In addition to the comparatist approach developed in the field of literature which I have brought to this study, I have imported field research methodologies employed in the social sciences. In the summer of 1997, I was awarded fellowships that allowed me to learn Haitian Kreyòl in order to carry out a project dealing with the contribution of the Vodou rite of Rada in contemporary Haitian "Rasin Mizik," or "roots music."² After conducting interviews with musicians in the Port-au-Prince and Les Cayes areas in Haiti, my attention began to shift to enlarging the collection of materials for the study of the 1937 massacre which I had begun earlier that summer by visiting Spanish-language bookstores in New York City. A bus trip from Port-au-Prince to Santo Domingo was particularly helpful in this collection of materials, as I was able to have access to the archives of the Biblioteca Museo Casas Reales and find, in used bookstores, copies of the Dominican novels I am using in this study as well as copies of Trujillista works displaying the official political ideology of the dictatorship concerning race and nationality. Many of the fictional works and the ideological-political works are not found in US libraries, which highlights the necessity of extending field-research outside of its traditional social-science domain to disciplines such as literature.

I came into personal contact with the conflicts of Haitian-Dominican

relations for the first time during my fellowship tenure in Haiti that summer as I was riding on a camionette, the pickup trucks and mini-vans used for public transport over much of Haiti, on my way to the affluent suburb of Petionville located on the hills surrounding Port-au-Prince. Overhearing Spanish, my first language, being spoken behind me, I turned and struck a conversation with a Dominican in Spanish. When I told him that I was originally from Colón, Panamá, he replied that he had once worked not far from there, cleaning US submarines in one of the US military bases of the now former Canal Zone. It seemed to me he had been repeatedly forced to leave the Dominican Republic to find work elsewhere. By then, I was already interested in Haitian sugarcane labor in the Dominican Republic and I was curious to find out from him if an analogous situation occurred in Haiti with Dominican workers.

As our conversation progressed, I started to become aware of the mounting tension among the passengers in the vehicle. A middle-aged man next to me stared directly into my eyes with a grave look of consternation. What had been the usual lively and talkative Haitian crowd on public transportation suddenly turned silent, magnifying our Spanish phrases. Noticing my surprise, my new-found conversation partner told me: “A ellos no les gusta que tú hables Español. A ellos les suena como bla, bla, bla.”³

Once more, when I would share my plans of traveling to the Dominican Republic with Haitians I met during my two weeks of research in the country, I often encountered nods of disapproval and discouraging remarks. “Ou prale Sendomeng? Dominiken, yo volè anpil!”⁴ Once on the other side of the border I would hear, “¿Vienes de Haití? Hay que tener cuidado por allá. Los Haitianos roban mucho.”⁵

Thievery sounds like the sort of accusation one makes against someone one wants to get into trouble. The image of the Haitian as a thief can trace its origins in Dominican hegemonic discourse as far back as the 16th century. From the days in which French pirates set up a base on the Ile de la Tortue, the inhabitants of the western side of the island have been portrayed as looters. The contraband that has been carried out in border regions for centuries has only served to associate Haitians with illegal trading. It was precisely the Spanish Crown’s obsession with monopolizing the trade with the colonies that led the way for the French buccaneers to move from the subsidiary Ile de la Tortue to the mainland of Hispaniola. In 1605, Osorio, the Spanish Governor of the colony, forcibly removed the settlements on the northwestern part of the island closest to Isle de la Tortue in order to stop the free trade of meat, grain, and hides. It was the emptying of these areas which prompted the settlement of the abandoned northwestern coast

and subsequently of the entire western third of the island by the French—an act which the racist Trujillista discourse recognizes as “un colosal error”⁶ (Aquino García 2) and as a theft:

Como si no bastara la desdichada conversión de la parte occidental de Santo Domingo en una oscura prolongación del Africa, en detrimento de España y de sus descendientes, no se contuvo el intruso dentro de los límites del usurpado territorio, y desbordándose una y otra vez sobre la inerme parte española de la Isla, convirtióla en perpetua víctima de depredaciones y atrocidades espantables.⁷ (Rodríguez Demorizi 9)

The idea of the Haitian as intruder and usurper is symptomatic of an ethnocentric view of history which sees the Americas, and especially the Caribbean, as essentially a Spanish-speaking zone in which certain minor concessions and exceptions have been made to accommodate other language groups. The fact that these language groups are perceived as late-comers in the history of colonial settlement weakens their claim to the land in contrast to those who claim the Spanish linguistic heritage of the first European settlers of the New World. This is what prompts Angel S. del Rosario Pérez in his Trujillista text *La Exterminación Añorada* to speak of “el extrañismo haitiano dentro de la cultura y de la historia americanas”⁸ (17).

Freddy Prestol Castillo’s important Dominican novel *El Masacre se Pasa a Pie* addresses the historical removal of the populations of the northwest with an interesting awareness of the ideological mechanisms which were used to carry it out at the time. While the narrator arrives at the border town of MonteCristy, he begins to think of its history: “las depoblaciones del siglo 16, ordenadas por don Antonio de Osorio, para frustrar el comercio con los ‘herejes’, que violaba las prohibiciones de la Audiencia de Santo Domingo y los mandatos del Rey”⁹ (21). His use of quotations for “herejes”¹⁰ signals his readers to the use of an expansionist religious ideology in the service of the Spanish Empire which automatically classified violators of Spanish laws as non-Christian (21). This short passage in Freddy Prestol Castillo’s novel exposes the flawed rhetoric that was used by the Crown to maintain its economic control over the northwest coast of Hispaniola. Moreover, the character of Don Francisco, a member of the wealthy landed rural classes, voices a complaint, which even though it is concerned with the luxuries only someone of his position may afford, speaks to a generalized feeling of discontent among all classes over the policing of border commerce:

Ya no se puede traer la seda!...la misma sal criolla es mala, de minas insalubres y con un impuesto y más

impuestos!...Yo, que estaba tan acostumbrado a esas cosas de Haití... y ahora... Maldito Gobierno!... debían tumbarlo!¹¹ (92)

Another Dominican writer, Sergio Reyes II, in his *Cuentos y Leyendas de la Frontera*, also responds to the imputations of border contraband which the colonialist and, later, the Trujillista discourses have used to position the Haitian outside of the sphere of legal commerce. In this work, Reyes elaborates a figure of the *contrabandista* as a folk-hero of border communities. The character of Ercilio Reyes is a Dominican who brings “klerin,” the famous Haitian distilled rum, across the Massacre river into the Dominican Republic. Ercilio can be counted upon at every party to provide the liquor and is described as being a good drinker himself. As he is well liked by everybody, when the news that Ercilio is arrested reaches the town everyone must know the details. Having been released from prison after a short detention period, the townspeople learn about his ordeal from Ercilio himself. A good storyteller, Ercilio narrates how, upon crossing the river with the klerin, he was ambushed by the police, who had been tracking down his activities for some time. Immediately before being captured, he succeeds at smashing the bottles against the rocks on the banks on the river, onto which the precious liquor is spilled. Without evidence, he is released while the policemen are severely reprimanded for their negligence. The transformation of his arrest into an embarrassment for the authorities and his subsequent ridiculing of them amongst the townspeople celebrate the dual, hybrid identity of the border communities of the Haitian-Dominican border against the restrictive, oppressive, and artificial boundaries of the nation. The exaltation of the *contrabandista*, then, becomes a literary tool against the attacks that the colonialist and Trujillista discourses have launched against the free commerce between Haitians and Dominicans along the border. It also challenges the prejudicial portrayal of Haitians as providers and sellers of illegal goods, not necessarily by pointing out that Dominicans participate in the contraband too, but by negatively portraying and ridiculing the police in charge of keeping the border.

Hilarius Hilarion, the hero of the novel *Compère Général Soleil* written by the famous Haitian writer Jacques Stephen Alexis, is another figure who must battle the state repression enforced by the police and whose reasons for border crossing are economical. At the outset of the novel, Hilarius is apprehended by the police for breaking into a house at night in a wealthy suburb of Port-au-Prince, where he steals a wallet. Later on, the reader comes to know that the family from which Hilarius steals had kept him as a child-servant until he ran away in his teens. Released from prison after a severe

beating, Hilarius finds himself again in the streets of Port-au-Prince where he meets Claire-Heureuse, who will become his wife. The domestic life of Claire Heureuse and Hilarius is depicted in a series of chapters in which their marital and economic problems are offset by deep mutual affection and the hope brought about by Claire-Heureuse's pregnancy. Their economic desperation nevertheless forces them to go to the Dominican Republic, where Hilarius works as a sugarcane cutter. There they are involved in a successful strike. Domenica Betances, their communist friend, helps them escape the massacre of Haitians, but Hilarius dies of gunshot wounds as he crosses the Massacre River en route to Haiti.

Jacques Stephen Alexis' Haitian novel challenges the Hispanocentric element of the Trujillista discourse that presents Haiti as an odd intrusion in the Americas. By setting most of his action in Port-au-Prince and by establishing Haiti as the origin and end-point of the narrative, Alexis presents Hilarius and Claire-Heureuse's incursion into the Dominican Republic as a temporary and, more importantly, a secondary place in the geographical setting of his novel. If the Trujillista regime has felt compelled to point out that the French occupation of Saint Domingue did not occur officially until over a century after the first Spanish settlement on the island in order to diminish Haitian claims to the land, Jacques Stephen Alexis' novel can be utilized to present an alternative history in which the Dominican section of the story functions as a disruption and an encrustation into a spatial narrative about Haiti.

The fact that the Trujillista discourse has focused on the French settlement of Saint Domingue as a historical theft on a grand scale has not deterred its speaking of smaller, more recent settlement of Haitians in the Dominican Republic also in terms of theft. Proving that the legacy of the anti-Haitian Trujillista discourse survives years after the dictatorship, in a 1981 speech at the National Library, Carlos Cornielle, a prominent Dominican journalist, diplomat, and university professor spoke of the settlements of Haitians in the Dominican Republic as a serious national problem: "... no basta limitar el número de los picadores de caña, porque la mayoría de ellos se quedan viviendo en tierra dominicana"¹² (Discurso 5). In the same speech, Cornielle blames Haitian migrant labor for the unemployment in the Dominican Republic. He makes the ignoble accusation that Haitians "[le] arrancan el pan a cada dominicano."¹³

In *El Masacre se Pasa a Pie*, Prestol Castillo challenges the notion that Haitians steal Dominican food and work by pointing out how, after the Haitians were driven out and killed by the Trujillo agents during the massacres, "El bosque volvía sobre la tierra que antes había labrado Haití."¹⁴

The brutality that accompanied claims to land is exhibited in a scene in which a Haitian returns to the Dominican Republic only to find his cassava field in the hands of a Dominican. As he states in Kreo-Pañol, “Esta yuca son de nosotros! ... Yo la sembré!”¹⁵ the new owner slaughters him with a machete and puts his head in a sack to be found by the Haitian’s children thinking it to be full of the cassava harvested by their father (128-9).

Another work that challenges the Trujillista portrayal of Haitians as intruders is Reyes’ *Cuentos y Leyendas de la Frontera*. The portrayal of the narrator’s family as part of the large Dominican migration to the border in order to “dominicanize” the region paints an image of border Dominicans as settlers forced to relocate by Trujillo and by the common need for good soil for crops. This migrant condition places Dominicans on the same level as the Haitian immigrants who live and work in the area. In the work of Sergio Reyes, the Dominicans are presented as being as native as the Haitians to the border region. To him, both groups are common victims of Trujillo because his regiments “tenían como misión no sólo vigilar al vecino invasor sino también mantener en sus puestos a los colonos, a las buenas... o las malas”¹⁶ (19).

Repeatedly, Trujillista works present the Haitian as a robber of Dominican goods whose activities need to be controlled by the police. In his book entitled *Proceso Histórico Dominico-Haitiano*, Cornielle quotes a letter from Joaquín Balaguer who, in his role as Minister of the Dominican Republic in Colombia, submitted it to the editor of the Bogotá newspaper “El Tiempo.” In it, Balaguer declares the official Dominican version of the causes of the massacre:

Los incidentes de 1937, contrariamente a lo que afirman los enemigos del gobierno dominicano, fueron provocados por las incursiones armadas que las poblaciones de Haití, radicadas en regiones fronterizas, venían realizando con frecuencia sistemática, sobre las provincias del Norte del país para apoderarse de los frutos y del ganado de nuestros agricultores.¹⁷ (240)

It is important here to notice not only how the Dominican government, through its agents, admits to the fact that the massacres did occur without specifying who in fact carried them out and under whose order. It is also noteworthy that Haitians are blamed for the massacres. It was their fault for having robbed Dominican goods. Again, the murders are legitimated by portraying the Haitian as thief.

Ironically, a work that does so much to repudiate the massacre through

its depiction of its horror affirms and participates in the perpetuation of this negative image of the Haitian. Don Francisco's Haitian servant Samuel steals a cow from the herd. Don Francisco reveals his suspicions of Samuel and, surprisingly, also reveals his expectations for his servants to steal from him, when in an allusion to slavery and an offensive comparison of Samuel to cattle, he says: "Mejor es perder una res que a un esclavo que está siempre a mi servicio"¹⁸ (91).

Samuel's story is only one of many instances in which Prestol Castillo portrays Haitians as cattle-robbers. An entire chapter is devoted to the portrait of Hilarius "El Patú," a Haitian cattle-thief who steals with the magical assistance of his "bocó" Vodou priest. One night, the magic does not work as well as usual, and "El Patú" is shot by a rancher. The scene concludes with a call to kill all Haitians in the region: "A esta gente hay que quemarla como la mala yeiba del conuco!"¹⁹ (78).

Freddy Prestol Castillo certainly participates in the racist hegemonic discourse which legitimated the massacres when he calls Haitians "La langosta negra [que] arrasaba en las noches los plantíos de yuca y de maíz"²⁰ (81). The fact that this racist element coexists with a denunciation of the massacre makes Castillo's novel embody the complexity of a dominant interpretation of the massacre within Dominican popular culture which loudly condemns the massacre and is yet uncomfortable with the need to change the racial prejudices which precipitated the massacre in the first place.

"El zapatazo"²¹ was Trujillo's way of taking the first step in the massacre of Haitians. Several works allude to this event with minor discrepancies, as all true gossip and history do. During a visit to Dajabón, a border community where some of the first murders took place, Trujillo becomes very angry at reports and complaints of Haitians coming across the border to steal cattle and crops. Reyes García, in *Cuentos y Leyendas de la Frontera*, places the description of the incident partially at the Casa Consistorial during a meeting with farmers and cattle-owners and subsequently at a park gazebo. Carlos Cornielle, in *Proceso Histórico Dominico-Haitiano*, locates the scene at the Ayuntamiento, while Aquino García, in his biography of Trujillo *Holocausto en el Caribe*, places the event at a lavish party with dance and food at the Tesorería del Ayuntamiento. Trujillo's precise words have been lost with the passage of time and extensive word-of-mouth communication as a comparison between the following renditions attest:

Yo juro por la patria que esto lo arreglaré.²²
(Cornielle 164)

Esto hay que arreglarlo, se acabó el robar, se acabó el robar...²³

(Aquino García 117)

Arreglaré el asunto...El arreglo debe continuarse²⁴
(Reyes 29)

Exactly where and what Trujillo said can be reconstructed with some degree of accuracy. All of the building structures where the short speech could have occurred are located within the central square of Dajabón and the repetition of certain key words in the accounts of the speech gives us an idea of what Trujillo intended. All three sources remark on the repeated and loud stomping on the wooden floor which accompanied Trujillo's fierce words, a mannerism which becomes an abundant source of amusement in the work of Reyes and Aquino García. Like a child in a fit of anger, throwing a tantrum, Trujillo announces the commencement of one of the most horrendous massacres in Latin American history by "a fuerte patada en el piso que retumbó en el salón de madera"²⁵ (Aquino García 117) "estruendosamente [en el] entarimado de madera del balcón, que cruje fruto del impacto del zapato, llamando a todos la atención"²⁶ (Reyes 28).

Carlos Cornielle does not fail to describe the incident, but in his language there is an implicit understanding and justification for "el zapatazo" and for the events which followed it. Cornielle describes a Trujillo who shares in the frustration of the residents of Dajabón, whose hunger, loss of property and goods are blamed on the Haitian presence in the community. The stomping on the floor is proof that "la paciencia de Trujillo se ha agotado"²⁷ (164). He reasons "el zapatazo" as Trujillo's legitimate demonstration of anger at injustices committed against his compatriots and of the sincere concern he felt for ending it. Meanwhile, the documenting and ridiculing of Trujillo's behavior in the work of Reyes and Aquino García—in which "el zapatazo" is presented as the scandalous infantile tantrum of an explosive man—point to the potential of fiction and biographical literature to topple and dismantle the ideals, structures, and charismatic figures of hegemonic discourse.

Aquino García employs another interesting counter-hegemonic strategy in his *Holocausto en el Caribe*. In this work, Trujillo is more than simply satirized. By blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction, the image of Trujillo at times loses aspects of historical reality and is reduced to that of a mere fictional character. Combining rhetorical elements of history and sensational literature, the genre of the book is, at best, defined as "historical gossip." Along with the chronologies of Trujillo's ascendance into power until his eventual removal through assassination, the reader can find pieces of biographical detail which would not be out of place in a romance or detective novel. For instance, Aquino García narrates how at an early moment in his

career, Trujillo eliminates César Lora, a young man blocking his ascent in the military chain of command, by revealing to another Lieutenant that his wife was having an affair with Lora. The enraged Lieutenant finds them where Trujillo informed him they usually met, shooting them both (22). At another point in the narration, the author explains Trujillo's dismissal of his first wife—a woman of humble origins who was not able to give him a son—through an ecclesiastical annulment from the Pope, an act which would allow him to marry his aristocratic mistress and gain him access to higher social circles. She was to be the mother of his son Ramfis Rafael, a child who at the age of five would be a colonel and at age eleven a general.

The description of the car chase in which Trujillo is assassinated narrates a factual event with all the suspense and thrill of a police novel. Throughout the book, the reader acquainted with Latin American magic realism encounters familiar moments of indecision regarding the veracity of the events. In fact, Aquino García's mention of Trujillo as the baptismal god-father of literally thousands of Dominican children in an effort to build a "legión de 'compadres' repartidos por todo el país"²⁸ (66), is a direct reference to Gabriel García Márquez' *El Otoño del Patriarca*. In other words, *Holocausto en el Caribe* satisfies the popular demand in the Dominican Republic to imagine the Era of Trujillo as a fictional event in which the historical stature of Trujillo's reality is diminished.

The representation of Haitians as thieves discussed earlier is a part of a larger project within Trujillista discourse which demonizes Haitians. One work very clearly within this tradition is *La Isla al Revés: Haití y el Destino Dominicano*, written by Joaquín Balaguer, the president of the Dominican Republic from 1960-1962, 1966-1978, and 1986-1996. Balaguer was reelected as president in 1986 and 1990 in spite of his age and health problems, which speaks to his popularity among the Dominican masses. The eight re-printings which the book has had also speak to the public demand in the Dominican Republic for his ideas, which exhibit a virulent racism.

Following the tradition of writers who distort the reality of Haitians to the extent of imputing the charge of cannibalism to them (Rosario 97), Balaguer employs standard arguments used to construct rhetorical monsters. To Balaguer, Haitians are dirty: "pocos de ellos conocen la higiene"²⁹ (49). The religious practices of Vodou, which he calls "un rito supersticioso"³⁰ contrasted against "el sentimiento católico"³¹ of Dominicans (83). Haitians are backwards: they come from "un país de mentalidad primitiva"³² (37). In spite of the hard labor they endure in Dominican fields:

El inmigrante haitiano... es un generador de pereza. La raza etiópica es por naturaleza indolente y no aplica su

esfuerzo a ningún objeto útil sino cuando tiene necesidad de obtener por esa vía su propia subsistencia.³³ (52)

He describes Haitians as hypersexual, incestuous beings of uncontrollable, unrestrained reproduction (40). Throughout his work, he worries of the threat which “la fecundidad característica del negro,”³⁴ and “el aumento vegetativo de la raza africana”³⁵ (35) present to the Dominican population. According to Balaguer, Haitians’ excessive population growth results in an uncontrollable migration eastward, which presents a threat to the Dominican nation:

La inmensa ola de color que a diario invadía el territorio dominicano, no solamente exponía a Santo Domingo a perder su carácter nacional, sino también a corromper sus costumbres y a rebajar el nivel de su moralidad.³⁶ (74)

Exposure to Haitians is equal to cultural contagion. This contagion acquires a more literal tone in his representation of Haitians as carriers of disease, especially venereal disease. According to Balaguer, the migration of Haitians is responsible for the spread of malaria in the Dominican Republic. Moreover, in a statement which reveals the gendering of Haitian-Dominican relations along familiar hegemonic terms, he blames Haitian women for cases of syphilis among Dominican men (43). In other words, Haitians are a real plague. To leave no doubt as to this firm conviction of his, Balaguer describes the migration of braceros who come to work on Dominican sugar fields as a yearly “nube de langostas”³⁷ (41).

By placing the lives of Haitians at the center of their narratives, Haitian writers such as Jacques Stephen Alexis and Edwidge Danticat rise against the Trujillista discourse which de-humanizes Haitians. The prominent treatment and the development of these Haitian characters in the fiction of these two writers highlight the subjectivity of Haitians that the Trujillista narrative denies. The character of Hilarius in Alexis’ *Compère Général Soleil* is very complex. His economic trials, suffering, and eventual death evoke the image of a martyr. Yet, he defies the monochromatic, standard depiction of one through the illegality of some of his actions. His stealing the wallet at the beginning of the novel is one such action. Instead of perpetuating the image of the Haitian as thief, this event manages to do something much more profound. Hilarius’ hardship justifies and ennobles the act of theft, provoking a re-evaluation of the capitalist economic system of exploitation and the criminal-judicial system which ensures its survival through its incarceration of those who violate and question it. Moreover, Hilarius, and Claire-Heureuse to a lesser extent, experience an “enlightenment” through

their friendship with their communist friends, displaying the characters' ability to grow within the narrative. In general, Alexis' characters exhibit a complexity which invalidates the flat caricature of Haitians as ethnic monsters provided by a writer like Joaquín Balaguer.

Nevertheless, Alexis' narrative remains primarily a male narrative with Hilarius at the center of the novel's world. On its edges, the reader is able to catch glimpses of the experience of Haitian women during the period in which the massacres took place through the character of Claire-Heureuse. Alexis alerts us to the difficulties of earning income for women in the description of Claire-Heureuse's small and humble, home-based grocery business. Domestic violence is addressed in Hilarius' beating of her. The particular perils of women with small infants fleeing from dangerous situations are certainly a part of Alexis' narration. However, the description is minimal and only assists in the elaboration and description of the social and familial context of Hilarius' life.

The insufficiency in the representation of Haitian women in history is addressed in the work of the Haitian-American writer Edwidge Danticat, who has captured an important amount of critical attention within literary and academic circles in the United States. Aside from her celebrated *Breath, Eyes, Memory* (1994), Danticat has also produced a National Book Award finalist collection of short stories, *Krik? Krak!* (1991), which is the work which first gained her widespread recognition. The second story of *Krik? Krak!*, "Nineteen Thirty-Seven," is a matrilineal narrative in which the experiences of three women who experienced the massacre are given voice. The story is populated exclusively by women, except for a silent guard who infrequently looms over them. Two of these women, a mother and her daughter Josephine, are bound in a particular way by the incidents of the 1937 massacre. Josephine and her mother cross the river to safety in a dramatic leap which Danticat describes full of the magical imagery which characterizes her work:

Then the story came back to me as my mother had often told it. On that day so long ago, in the year nineteen-hundred and thirty-seven, in the Massacre River, my mother did fly. Weighted down by my body inside hers, she leaped from Dominican Soil into the water, and out again on the Haitian side of the river. She glowed red when she came out, blood clinging to her skin, which at that moment looked as though it were in flames. (48)

This description provides an explanation for the red wings, 'those wings of flame' (41), suggested early in the story, which her mother used to cross

the river. Though this final passage explains them as figures of speech and are not intended to signify a real flight of fire, the image loses none of its importance, for Danticat's fantastic description of this event functions as a form of memorializing, even mythologizing, what occurred. Unlike other means of recording events, this magical personal history, Danticat appears to say, is one of the few methods of recording women's experiences and participation in events of political significance.

Josephine's grandmother does not manage the crossing and is killed. From safety on the other side of the river, Josephine's mother "could still see the soldiers chopping up her mother's body and throwing it into the river along with many others" (40). Other women who had also lost their mothers in the massacre join Josephine and her mother in an annual pilgrimage on November first to the site of the crossing in order to memorialize them.

The story is organized around Josephine's visits to her mother in prison, where she is jailed after having been accused of practicing witchcraft and killing a child by it. The grandmother, mother, and daughter trio is expanded by the weeping statue of the Virgin Mary which Josephine brings to her mother on each visit. In a manner similar to the rational explanation of the "wings of fire," the reader learns that the secret of the Virgin's tear is a carefully orchestrated trick of wax and oil. There is no disappointment in this revelation either, for the important magic in the fiction of Danticat, the magic which is used to memorialize, to make the imprint in history, does not reside in the event itself. Rather, it is found in the narration of that event—a narration which may even include a disclosure of the mechanisms of ensuring the inclusion of that event in history.

Through their writing of the Haitian experience during the massacres of 1937, the fictions of Jacques Stephen Alexis and Edwidge Danticat challenge the denial of subjectivity which the Trujillista discourse has projected onto Haitian bodies, both male and female, through the representation of those bodies as negative spaces perpetually stealing to fill their emptiness, as voids of uncleanness, hyper-sexuality, exaggerated reproduction, incest, and disease.

Narratives about the massacre are modulated in interesting ways according to the positionalities of the narrators. The differences in the Haitian representation of the massacre between Danticat and Alexis is more than a matter of gendered perspectives. Danticat's position as a diasporic writer appears to be responsible for the dream-like, magical representation of Haiti found in many of her short-stories. The close proximity with which Alexis observed and experienced the scenes which he represented in *Compère Général Soleil* serves to explain the crude and harsh realism

that characterizes this work of his and contrasts sharply with Danticat's surreal ambiance. Moreover, anticipating a newer trend in Caribbean writing which emphasizes a more regional understanding of political affairs in the region, Alexis carefully inserts into his narrative elements that allow the reader to observe the role of the United States in the massacres. For instance, he mentions the US ownership of many of the sugarcane plantations that recruited Haitian workers. Danticat's "Nineteen Thirty-Seven" presents the conflict in much simpler terms. Danticat's geographical and temporal distancing—she is writing her story thirty-six years after Alexis'—contributes to an extremely Manichean view of the massacres occurring on the border between Haiti and "the Spanish-speaking country that she had never allowed me to name" (33).

If the perspective of Haitian writers appears to be divided by differences of gender, time, and location, the three Dominican authors considered here—Castillo, Aquino García, and Reyes—display a single primary concern in their writing: the exculpation of the Dominican people from the events of the massacre. All three writers emphasize the common oppression lived by Haitians and Dominicans on the border. Sergio Reyes, for instance, explains his family's relocation from the eastern Dominican Republic to the Dajabón area as a form of government control akin to that experienced by the Haitians living there. More importantly, all three Dominican authors stress the role of Dominican citizens in protecting Haitians during the massacre by hiding them and helping them escape. Interestingly, some of these heroic deeds are tinged with a certain amount of complicity in the violence characterizing life in the border area at the time. For instance, Castillo's novel portrays a teacher who hid Haitian children in her classroom as a martyr and as a heroine even as she participates in the project of Dominicanization of the border through her job, which involves the acculturation of Haitians living in the border to Dominican society and its values: "[Ella] tiene esperanzas de llevar alguna luz a aquellas almas de serranos que ahora están aprendiendo a hablar español con claridad, a quienes ella quiere hacer entender qué es la República Dominicana."³⁸ (67)

Nevertheless, for these writers, what is at stake in these narrations is the desire to portray the actions of Trujillo as independent and separate from the will of the Dominican people, even when it is clear from historical sources that at least some consented to the massacres through active participation.

The racism in the Trujillista discourse that legitimates the massacres of 1937 is founded on the Caribbean notion of *blanqueamiento*, a legacy of racialization practices of the early colonial days in which the plantation

system hierarchically categorized the positions within its structure by means of color. Rooted in the Christian ideals which were used to justify plantation slavery, it racializes the idea of sin with blackness and redemption with whiteness. Therefore, “whitening” codes blackness as a trait which “degenerates” its bearer, not unlike the issue of sin does. Nevertheless, those with blackness, have at their disposal a number of practices which will allow them to carry out the imperative task of “regeneration,” a type of salvation. These practices include a range of possible procedures which can include simple acculturation to white European culture or an “upward” marriage to a white partner in order to produce “whiter” offspring. By setting up an ideal foreign to the nature of the subject expected to reach it, this rhetoric of blanqueamiento places upon those marked with blackness the charge of carrying out a duty whose perfect accomplishment is impossible and ensures the continuation of blaming Blacks for not making “progress.”

What makes blanqueamiento in the Caribbean different and unique from other forms of racism around the world lies in its particular ingenuity in the construction, both rhetorically and in reality, of the nation as White. Rhetorically, blanqueamiento strives towards the construction of an imaginary notion of the nation as White, effectively ignoring and attempting to suppress the other ethnic strains of its composition.

In the specific case of the Dominican Republic, two writers within the Trujillista tradition display the ideas of blanqueamiento³⁹ in their work. Balaguer’s lament that the Dominican Republic “va perdiendo poco a poco su fisonomía española”⁴⁰ (45) and his insistence on the “derecho del pueblo dominicano a subsistir como pueblo español”⁴¹ (74) overlook the fact that the Dominican Republic has never been predominantly populated by White Europeans and that it has always had African and Indigenous groups in its mixture. How are Black Dominicans accounted for in a Trujillista discourse that is so intent in representing the Dominican Republic as White and Haiti as Black? Angel S. Del Rosario Perez explains this by drawing a distinction between “el negro haitiano” and “el moreno dominicano.”⁴² While he is absolutely correct at pointing out the cultural differences between the two groups, he fails to recognize the racism of his developmental model by which whites are the goal for which all Blacks must strive. For Rosario, “el moreno dominicano” is in an advantageous position with respect to “el negro haitiano,” who is farthest removed from the “regenerative” influence of White Europeans.

In practical terms, blanqueamiento relied on selective immigration in order to create a white country. *La Isla al Revés* calls for “la prohibición de la inmigración haitiana”⁴³ (66), while at the same time speaks of

the need to encourage the migration of Europeans (121). The project of “Dominicanization” of border communities by which thousands of Dominican farmers and peasants were relocated to the border with Haiti was another form of whitening by creating a “human shield” against what some perceived as “la pavorosa ola de color”⁴⁴ (63).

Aquino García’s massacre testimonials and the fiction of Jacques Stephen Alexis and Freddy Prestol Castillo expose the falsity of imagining the Dominican Republic as White by documenting the Black Dominican experience and highlighting the instances in which Blacks from both countries are not easily differentiated. Pointing to the impossibility of clearly separating Black Dominicans from Black Haitians during the massacres on the basis of race alone is the well-attested historical fact that the correct Spanish pronunciation of the word “perejil”⁴⁵ was used as a distinguishing factor between Haitians and Dominicans:

... Julio, hijo de haitianos pero nacido y criado en el país se salvo también milagrosamente... Julio me contó que cuando lo sacaron junto a Clemá para matarlos, él les dijo a los guardias que era dominicano y les enseñó su cédula. Los guardias le ordenaron que dijera “Perejil” y Julio lo dijo correctamente. “Véte [sic] y no salgas de tu casa” le dijo el Comandante. “Clemá” trató de hacer lo mismo, pero no pudo decir “Perejil” correctamente y lo mataron.⁴⁶
(Aquino García 130)

The need for this “shibboleth” linguistic marker of difference and the concomitant definition of race via language underscore the fictional nature of ethnic nationalism advocated by the Trujillo regime and the significant amount of racial indistinguishability between Haitians and Dominicans.

The narration of Juan Nazario’s children in Prestol Castillo’s novel provides another opportunity to view the dangers of being Black Dominican during the massacres. It also exposes the use of pejorative language against Haitians in border regions. While he talks with Trujillo agents, Juan Nazario, a Dominican married to a Haitian, explains his “downward” marriage by citing the lack of available women in this remote border area because “aquí ni una puta jalla un hombre”⁴⁷ and because in these lonely conditions “Ilega el hombre a queré hasta una perra de mujer”⁴⁸ (62). Juan Nazario’s character is extremely interesting because it illustrates the explanatory pressures which someone who goes against the idea of *blanqueamiento* must endure. Moreover, his character reveals the acceptance and internalizing of racial prejudices in a very complex manner. He pleads for the life of his children before the Trujillo agents: “Peidone a estos negros!... que son mis hijos!”⁴⁹

(62). In the same breath, however, he urges his children with racial insults: “Cállense, perros sarnosos,” “¡Malditos perro! ... hablen español!”⁵⁰ And when the officials order him to take his family to Haiti and later, because of his status as a Dominican, to return to the Dominican Republic without them, Juan Nazario responds: “Me quedaré allá... porque ya soy otro perro sarnoso!”⁵¹

Aside from the children of Haitians in the Dominican Republic, who “debíamos considerar como dominicanos por haber nacido en nuestro suelo”⁵² (Prestol Castillo 65), Dominican Blacks of longer national ancestries were certainly suspected of being Haitian and therefore also faced danger during the massacres. Alexis’ *Compère Général Soleil* makes mention of dead bodies of uncertain nationality, underscoring the common role of Haitians and Dominicans as victims of the massacre:

Un autre, un rougeaud, qui tenait son ventre ruisselant de sang, s’était mis à crier:

—Pelehil, Pelehil, Pelehil

Était-il haïtien ou dominicain? Le lieutenant s’approcha, le frappa et l’entendit raide mort.

Le silence revint, pesant.

La pluie avait recommencé à tomber ...⁵³ (312)

Unlike the incidents of indeterminate national identity given by Prestol Castillo and Aquino García, Alexis’ description is one that ends with the tragedy of death, but more importantly, it is one in which the family background of the victim is not elaborated upon. It is no coincidence that the two Dominican writers felt compelled to provide family genealogies for their Black Dominican characters who are mistaken for Haitian. Even though the narrations of Prestol Castillo and Aquino García’s work against the idea of blanqueamiento by exposing the existence of Blacks within a country that attempts to erase their representation in it, these writers also participate in the idea of blanqueamiento in an interesting way. Is it mere coincidence that the only Black Dominican characters who are mistaken for Haitians happen to be bi-national? These descriptions lend themselves to the view that the only Blacks in the Dominican republic, aside from Haitians, are the children of mixed marriages between Haitians and Dominicans—positing blackness once more as external to the nation, an act which again reinforces the blanqueamiento Dominican ideal of the white country.

Blanqueamiento relies on denial. The denial of blackness in the representation of the nation is followed by a denial of any racist practices in the history of the nation. Within an entire book whose argument is predicated

on the inferiority of blacks and “el problema de la africanización del país”⁵⁴ (94), Balaguer has the audacity to state that low numbers of Spanish colonial slaves are the reason why “en Santo Domingo no haya existido nunca el racismo”⁵⁵ (197). The denial acquires another rhetorical twist when he minimizes the massacre by his cursory mention of it, which he only uses to denounce as cultural traitors those Dominicans who saw any validity in the Haitian claims for justice (48). Other members of the Trujillista school, like Cornielle, continue minimizing the massacre, which some estimate to have taken the lives of as many as 25,000 people, by speaking of “los acontecimientos del año 1937, que dicho sea de paso, no fueron tan abultados como lo han pintado historiadores y escritores”⁵⁶ (164).

By documenting the massacre and portraying it in all its grimness, the writing of fiction responds loudly to claims which trivialize and deny the importance of the massacre. At the core of Aquino García’s *Holocausto en el Caribe* are a series of testimonials reflecting the personal experiences of those who lived through the massacre. The testimonials are fewer than ten, but well chosen. They speak from a wide variety of perspectives: the Haitian victim who escaped and lived to tell, the Dominican peasant forced to kill Haitians, the priests who hid Haitian children, and the point of view of conflicting citizenships from the children of Dominican and Haitian parents as well as the perspective of Dominican-born children of Haitians. The testimonials’ accounts of the massacre corroborate each other to an amazing degree. The use of the first person narrative of the testimonial makes history personal and serves as an important form of supplemental and alternative history that enriches and challenges the traditional notions of objective history which are emblemized most commonly through the use of the rhetorical persona of the omniscient narrator.

As his work is committed to presenting the magnitude of the massacres against claims which deny their importance, Aquino García’s work spares no gruesome details. Because Trujillo wanted the massacre to appear to have been an independent peasant-initiated movement, he ordered his agents not to kill with firearms, which would have made the armed forces suspect, but with knives and clubs and machetes. Pits were dug by tractors and the Trujillo forces brought Haitians to the edge of those pits, where they asked them to kneel, then beheaded them and threw them in with thousands of dead bodies. Those who, instead of being beheaded, were clubbed or stabbed on the side of their chest were sometimes thrown into the pits still alive and in a state of consciousness. The testimony of a Haitian man who managed to survive the clubbing and then leave the pit, recalls making his way out through hundreds of moving limbs begging for help: “Ese haitiano que pudo salir del hoyo, recordó luego que cuando se movía para salir sentía

que lo agarraban por todas partes, agarrado por los que agonizaban, pero no tenían fuerzas para salir”⁵⁷ (129).

Alexis’ description of the murder of Hilarion is equally vivid but perhaps not as representative of the harsh realism of his work as is the description of the death of Hilarion and Claire-Heureuse’s baby, Désiré. Her death occurs as the family battles a pack of police dogs sent to chase them on their escape to Haiti:

L’une sauta à la gorge de Claire-Hereuse. D’un coup de bâton, Hilarion lui cassa les reins et se retourna aussitôt. L’autre chien était maintenant sur Désiré. Hilarion hésitait à frapper de peur de faire du mal au bébé. Alors, il la larda de coups de poignard.

Ils se précipitent sur l’enfant. Il geignait doucement, les vêtements déchirés, la bête l’avait mordu au bras, aux jambes et au visage. Claire-Heureuse le prit dans ses bras et le palpa. Ses doigts s’humectèrent d’un sirop poisseux: le sang coulait du cou.⁵⁸ (339)

Up until now, literature dealing with Haitian-Dominican relations has focused on the massacre as the pivotal point of the history of their bi-national relations and has opted to make the incident the central point of their narrations. The new Spanish-language literary movement of Pan-Caribbeanismo, with close affinities to the Martinican based *Créolité* school in its advocacy of a Caribbean confederacy, provides a way out from the exhausted discussion resulting from the framing of the issue in binary terms. Pan-Caribbeanista writers such as Mayra Montero and Ana Lydia Vega have moved away from using the massacre of 1937 as a point of departure for the elucidation of the complex political dynamics in La Hispaniola.

In “Encancaranublado,” Ana Lydia Vega shifts the site of contestation of the problems of the island from the border to a raft sailing from Haiti to Florida. The Haitian’s lonely travel on the raft is upset by the regular addition of newcomers who crowd the already insufficient space and consume his dwindling supplies. The story follows a standard joke formula in Spanish in which, in caricaturesque fashion, different nationalities act according to their predictable and laughable stereotypes. The first addition to the raft’s crew is a Dominican. At this significant moment, outside of their usual element, in a situation of desperation, on a miniature, moving replica of Hispaniola, a certain solidarity and cooperation begin to develop between the two. This bond, emblemized through their overcoming of the Kreyol/Spanish language barrier, quickly breaks down with the arrival of the Cuban

aboard. Allegiances are rearranged, leaving the Haitian outside of the decision-making sphere on the voyage he himself started. All of a sudden, their trip to Miami starts sounding a lot like the history of independence in the Caribbean which was spear-headed by the now economically-isolated Haiti. Now that this connection between their trip and history is established, the US arrival on the scene comes as no surprise. As all three on the raft are Black, the image of the Black Puerto-Rican interpreter for the White American captain is more than a matter of political hierarchies in the Caribbean according to political access to the US. His image also functions as a complex rearticulation of the important negritude theme of ethnic solidarity.

The relevance of the diasporic setting and the variety of national characters in the story allow for an aerial contextualization of the Haitian-Dominican conflict which has been missing in much of the work which responds to the Trujillista discourse. In particular, “Encancaranublado” is important because it intervenes in the bi-national rhetoric of “blaming the neighbor” between the Dominican Republic and Haiti through a reassessment of the role of the United States as a power in the Caribbean. Though the US occupation of Haiti and the Dominican Republic early in the century is not touched upon by the short story, “Encancaranublado” suggests the need to investigate the role of the United States as a third player in the ambition for control of the entire island of Hispaniola under a single political entity during the simultaneous US occupation of both countries prior to the massacres. The fomenting of nationalisms during this period of direct foreign control also demands to be studied as one of the causes for the massacre. Moreover, the role of the US in the Dominican-Haitian conflict needs to be addressed both in terms of its open support for the Trujillo regime and through its economic favoritism of the Dominican Republic over Haiti as one of the factors which created the inequalities fostering the conditions for the tensions to arise.

Mayra Montero in her novel *Del Rojo de su Sombra* presents Afro-Caribbean spirituality as an important force in the forging of a Caribbean unity which transcends colonial boundaries and short stretches of ocean. Montero is herself the embodiment of the Pan-Caribbean identity she puts forth: born in Cuba, living in Puerto Rico, writing about Haitians in the Dominican Republic. The main theme of her current work, and one which perhaps we may be able to translate as an attempt at integrating the scattered places of her upbringing, is Vodou. The Vodou rite explored in this book is Gagá, a particular Dominican version of Vodou that “is an interesting example of nontraditional Caribbean syncretism: instead of a hybridity between the European and the colonized, Gagá exemplifies a secondary type

of syncretism, one between ex-colonized peoples” (Fernández Olmos 273). Syncretic religion, then, becomes a way to explore one space of cultural and ideological formation of a composite Dominican-Haitian identity of important consequence for the formation of a Caribbean Federation. The highlighting of a phenomenon such as Gagá also has the potential to bring some resolution to international conflicts between the two countries by providing information on a cultural point of common ground.

The massacre of Haitian workers in 1937 was a momentous event that gave a clear indication of the force it would have on Dominican and Haitian culture in the decades to follow. A critical look at the incident was delayed by Trujillo’s heavy censorship of the means of disseminating information and by the fear which he inspired in those who dared to present dissenting views. With the end of his thirty-one years in office with his assassination in 1961, historical and literary material taking a critical look at the massacre slowly began to surface. This material needed to create its own space within the Trujillo-sanctioned machinery and, in order to break new ground, undertook a very direct engagement with this Trujillista discourse. In discursive combat, as in military war, it is important to keep in mind that the development of allies deserves as much attention as taking on the enemy. The Pan-Caribbeanism of Ana Lydia Vega and Mayra Montero establishes the ground for a closer awareness of the Caribbean condition as it paves the way for the establishment of allegiances among Caribbean people-groups. Despite Trujillo’s death and the more general disappearance of the Latin American political figure of the Dictator, this new movement provides a context in which new novels about Haitian-Dominican relations can effectively challenge the racist Trujillista discourse that is still being generated today.

Notes

¹ In order to prevent, on the other hand, that the country would lose its characteristics as a clearly Hispanic community, what was needed was to put into practice a plan of Dominicanization of the border and to awaken at the same time amongst the people pride in their traditional greatness. (All translations are my own.)

² I would like to express my gratitude to the Center for Iberian and Latin American Studies at the University of California, San Diego, the UCSD International Center, and the U.S. Department of Education for their fellowship support. Without them, I would not have had the resources to carry out this current study.

³ They don’t like you to speak Spanish. To them it sounds like bla, bla, bla.

⁴ Are you going to the Dominican Republic? Dominicans, they steal a lot!

- ⁵ Are you coming from Haiti? One has to be careful over there. Haitians steal a lot.
- ⁶ a colossal error
- ⁷ Not sufficing the unfortunate transformation of the western part of Santo Domingo into a dark extension of Africa, in detriment of Spain and its descendants, the intruder did not contain himself within the limits of the usurped territory, and overflowing time and again over into the defenseless Spanish side of the island, turned it into a perennial victim of horrific assaults and atrocities.
- ⁸ the Haitian strangeness in the culture and history of the Americas.
- ⁹ the depopulations of the 16th century, ordered by don Antonio de Osorio, in order to frustrate commerce with the “heretics,” who violated the prohibitions of the Audiencia de Santo Domingo and the orders of the King.
- ¹⁰ heretics
- ¹¹ It is impossible to bring silk over!... the native salt is bad, from unhealthy mines and laden with taxes and more taxes!... I was used to those things from Haiti... and now... Damned Government!... it should be overthrown.
- ¹² It is not sufficient to limit the number of cane cutters, because most of them end up staying in the Dominican Republic to live.
- ¹³ snatch the bread away from every single Dominican.
- ¹⁴ The forest returned over the land which, before, had been tilled by Haiti.
- ¹⁵ This manioc belongs to us!... I planted it!
- ¹⁶ they had as duty not only watching the invading neighbor but also keeping the settlers in their places, voluntarily or by force.
- ¹⁷ The incidents of 1937, despite the affirmations made by the enemies of the Dominican government, were provoked by the armed incursions which the Haitian populations living on the border were carrying out with systematic frequency into the Northern provinces of the country to steal the vegetable goods and cattle of our farmers.
- ¹⁸ It is better to lose one head of cattle than a slave who is always at my service.
- ¹⁹ These people need to be burned like weeds.
- ²⁰ The black locust destroying the fields of manioc and corn at night.
- ²¹ the stomping
- ²² By the country I swear that I will fix this.
- ²³ This has to be fixed, stealing must stop, stealing must stop.
- ²⁴ I will fix the issue... it must continue to be fixed.
- ²⁵ A loud stomping on the floor which shook the wooden room.
- ²⁶ loudly on the balcony's wooden railing which, crushing under the impact of the shoe, drew everyone's attention.
- ²⁷ Trujillo's patience was exhausted
- ²⁸ legion of “compadres” scattered throughout the country.
- ²⁹ few of them know hygiene

- ³⁰ a superstitious rite
- ³¹ the catholic sentiment
- ³² a country of primitive mentality
- ³³ The Haitian immigrant... is a generator of laziness. The ethiopic race is indolent by nature and does not apply effort to any useful end except when driven to earn its own subsistence.
- ³⁴ The fecundity characteristic of blacks
- ³⁵ The plant-like population increase of the African race
- ³⁶ The huge wave of color which daily invaded Dominican territory, not only exposed Santo Domingo to the possibility of losing its national character, but also to the possibility of corrupting its traditions and to lower its degree of morality.
- ³⁷ locust cloud
- ³⁸ She has the hope of bringing some light to those souls living in the hills who are now learning to speak Spanish properly and with clarity, to whom she is teaching what the Dominican Republic is.
- ³⁹ whitening
- ⁴⁰ its losing little by little its Spanish physiognomy
- ⁴¹ the right of the Dominican people to survive as a Spanish people
- ⁴² Moreno is used in the Dominican Republic as an euphemism for Black. While the word negro refers to the color black, moreno means dark and often brown.
- ⁴³ the prohibition of Haitian immigration
- ⁴⁴ the frightening wave of color
- ⁴⁵ "perejil" means "parsley." Haitian Creole does not possess an equivalent for the Spanish /r/ trill and for the glottal fricative /h/ sound of the letter "j."
- ⁴⁶ Julio, child of Haitians yet born and reared in the country was saved miraculously... Julio told me that when they took him out together with Clemá to kill them, he told the guards that he was Dominican and showed them his I.D. The guards ordered him to say "perejil" and Julio said it correctly. "Leave and don't come out of your house" the Commander told him. "Clemá" tried to do the same, but was not able to say "perejil" correctly and they killed him.
- ⁴⁷ Here, not even a whore finds a man.
- ⁴⁸ men get to the point of even loving a bitch-of-a-woman. (The comparison with the animal is stronger in the original Spanish)
- ⁴⁹ Forgive these blacks! ... because they're my children.
- ⁵⁰ Shut up, mange-ridden dogs. Damned dogs! ...speak Spanish!
- ⁵¹ I will stay there... because I am now another mange-ridden dog."
- ⁵² we should consider as Dominicans for having been born on our soil.
- ⁵³ Another one, red-faced, who had his belly streaming in blood, began to yell: Pelehil, Pelehil, Pelehil./ Was he Haitian or Dominican? The lieutenant nears him, strikes him and stretches him stiff dead/ The silence returns, heavily/ The rain begins to fall again...

- ⁵⁴ the problem of the Africanization of the country
- ⁵⁵ there has never existed racism in Santo Domingo.
- ⁵⁶ the events of the year 1937, it should be said, were not as exaggerated as they have been painted by historians and writers.
- ⁵⁷ That Haitian who was able to escape from the hole remembered later that when he moved in order to get out he felt that he was being grabbed on all sides by those who were agonizing but who did not have enough strength to crawl out.
- ⁵⁸ One jumped to Claire-Hereuse's throat. With a stick, Hilarion beat the dog and turned around immediately. The other dog was on Désiré. Hilarion hesitated to strike out of fear of hurting the baby. Then, he hit it with his fists./ They ran to the child. It moaned softly, the clothes torn, the beast had bitten the arm, the legs, and the face. Clarie-Hereuse took her into her arms and felt her. Her fingers were wet from a sticky syrup: The blood ran from the neck.

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