Imaging the Great Puerto Rican Family

Framing Nation, Race, and Gender during the American Century

By Hilda Lloréns

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Colophon

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List Of Abbreviations

CAP Centro de Arte Puertorriqueño (Center of Puerto Rican Art)

DIVEDCO División de Educación de la Comunidad (Division of Community Education)

ELA Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico (Associated Free State of Puerto Rico, aka Commonwealth of Puerto Rico)

FAP Federal Art Project

FSA Farm Security Administration

ICP Institute of Puerto Rican Culture

OWI Office of War Information

PNP Partido Nuevo Progresista (New Progressive Party)

PPD Partido Popular Democrático (Popular Democratic Party)

PRRA Puerto Rican Reconstruction Administration

PRERA Puerto Rico Emergency Relief Administration

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Acknowledgments

As that wonderful song rightly reminds, *Caminante no hay camino se hace el camino al andar* [Traveler, there is no path, the path is made by walking], the routes I have traveled leading up to this book have been shared with other *caminantes* [travelers] who have done much to inspire my life and work. I have been fortunate to receive the kind support of family members, fictive kin, friends, and colleagues in both Puerto Rico and in the U.S. mainland. As a result, I have incurred many debts throughout the years, some of which I will never repay. Still, here is my humble attempt to acknowledge their generosity.

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Chapter 3: Introduction

Introduction

Visuality is an old word for an old project. It is not a trendy theory word meaning the totality of all visual images and devices, but it is in fact an early-nineteenth-century term meaning the visualization of history. —Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look*

I knew only one of my grandparents, briefly. My family possesses no photographs or paintings depicting the other three. My mother often remarks that I look just like her mother, Virginia Rivera, but without a photograph of her to trace our likeness, I have no alternative but to accept my mother's word. To be compared to a woman I have never *seen* has stirred my curiosity and longing. I have depended almost entirely on my mother's ability to conjure vivid tales about our ancestors' lives to thread together a family history. I am the youngest child of older parents, whose parents were almost all long gone by the time I was born, so my family's visual history begins and ends with my parents.

My father's parents were born in the mid-nineteenth century and lived on a hillside in the Puerto Rican coastal countryside. His mother bore many children and raised them, my father included, in their small *bohío* (thatched roof dwelling). His father eked out a living from a modest baking business. My mother's father was born around the same time as my father, at the beginning of the twentieth century. My mother's biological father worked in the sugar fields of Arroyo, Puerto Rico, his entire life. He built a small house adjacent to the sugar mill, surrounded by the very fields from which he made his living. My mother's mother, Virginia Rivera, was also born amid Arroyo's cane

fields. She birthed four children, but her youngest daughter died from a preventable disease when she was a toddler. A single mother with little economic means, Virginia sent her children to live variously with relatives and strangers. She gave my mother, her youngest, up for adoption to a childless couple who also made their living cultivating sugarcane in their small patch of land. In her early teens, my mother learned that her biological mother, Virginia, had died of tuberculosis. She died a pauper and was not given a proper burial, so her unmarked grave was lost forever.

"To photograph is to confer importance," Susan Sontag wrote (1973, 28). It is to mark a subject, object, or landscape as worthy of representation. Yet cameras and photography were not equally available across social classes at the beginning of the twentieth century. Being photographed, like being rendered in an artistic portrait, was a luxury enjoyed mainly by people of the upper classes—except when lower class people were cast in photos as ethnographic specimens or "types" for museums, postcards, tourist markets, or travelers' lecture series. The people whose photographs were "taken" under these circumstances seldom received a copy of the photograph bearing their image.

I have spent part of my life searching for an image of my mother's mother but it is no wonder that her image was never recorded. She lived a marginal, unsteady life and death besieged her at a relatively young age. This story, however, is not unique to my family. It is common to poor folks around the world. From the vantage point of the twenty-first century, an era in which cameras are ubiquitous, it is unthinkable that a person could live without ever engaging in that most "modern" experience of posing for a camera. The camera's screen now works as a witness to people's very existence.1 The insertion of cameras into mobile communication devices such as phones, laptops, and tablets allows individuals to continuously confer importance to their lives.

I was born in 1974. I grew up in an era in which cameras, images, and television and movie screens were saturating mediums in both the public and private spheres. One of my uncles, a photojournalist, shared stories of his assignments; some involved photographing from helicopters. We children listened in awe to his tales of adventures. I would often peek into his photographic darkroom and stare at his neatly arranged, intimidating camera equipment. By the 1980s, my mother owned various cameras and took many photographs of our family. Still, the camera would appear mainly on special occasions such as birthdays, graduations, births, baptisms, weddings, Christmas parties, and funerals. Now she keeps thick photo albums in her living room. At family gatherings inevitably someone opens one of them and initiates a conversation about the moments and people contained in those printed photographs. Through the *encounters* with these albums, family members and friends recall unique memories, ask questions, or reflect on "time's relentless melt." In those albums we are younger, livelier, more beautiful, and more cohesive as a family. We were still together then.

Growing up, our modest cement house had few decorations beyond a simple but masterfully executed colored pencil sketch by a young neighbor. The image, depicting a horn of plenty, was so remarkable that my mother had it framed. It still hangs prominently in her dining room. Our gifted young neighbor was only fourteen years old when he made this sketch. Years later I found out it had been inspired by the work of Francisco Oller, one of Puerto Rico's most significant painters.

In the Seventh Day Adventist elementary school I attended, I was especially interested in scrutinizing the reproductions of paintings of the life of Jesus in the books we read in bible class. Easter was a particularly interesting time because I was allowed to watch a succession of movies on television depicting Jesus' life and times. I also gazed at religious paintings and sculptures of saints whenever I attended the Catholic Church with my mother. Another source of religious imagery was my mother's constantly changing altar and those in the homes of friends and other family members.2 As a child I often accompanied my mother to "spiritist" ceremonies in various towns throughout Puerto Rico where I saw impressively intricate altars, larger versions of my family's modest one. Aside from candles, objects, and sculptures of Spanish saints and Afro-Caribbean deities, they also contained photographs and paintings. My interest in images and art grew as I tried to make sense of the spiritual threads coexisting in my family's socio-cultural world.

In their representations, images and objects mysteriously channeled communication with our ancestors, with unknown spirits, and with God. It was a sensual world, too, in which smells, sounds, colors, foods, rituals, and even specific words contained important meanings. And there were rules about comportment. Children were supposed to be silent, well behaved, and unseen—essentially to fade into the background of the adults' mystical world. Of course this only made me more curious, but with no other recourse I was confined to the role of observer. To cope, I spent my childhood quietly watching, looking, scrutinizing, and trying to make sense of it all. I constantly searched for the *meanings* attached to the images, rituals, and language associated with these adult spaces.

Reading Representations

Reading Representations

Imaging the Great Puerto Rican Family grew from my enduring interest in Puerto Rican cultural history, an interest first born out of a desire to weave together a history of my family. In the process of trying to *visualize* my ancestors as part of an imagined community, the archives revealed a massive body of anonymous photographed subjects. Alongside the photographic images taken by Americans from the late nineteenth through the twentieth century stands a vast inventory of paintings, posters, and films made by Puerto Rican artists. The visual material depicting Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans is so vast that many more books on the subject will be needed to analyze the historic images, to say nothing of contemporary images created in an era in which representations (and their visual reproductions) travel at such a frantic pace.

In this book I attempt to read and interpret some of the images of Puerto Rico and its people during the American century (1890–1990) as "pictures" in Alberto Manguel's sense of the word, "with the temporal quality of narrative" (2000, 13).3 My focus on framing involves drawing boundaries around things or ideas to attend to in detail, much like looking through a microscope or a camera's lens. Depth reveals breadth. This endeavor mimics artistic framing, the act of choosing what goes inside the frame for further analysis (or for posterity) and what stays outside. My academic training as a cultural anthropologist in the symbolic tradition taught me to "read pictures" critically and to interpret contextually. Representations, externalized in the languages of photography, painting, film, the poster, and so on, offer the analyst fertile terrain for exploring the conceptual maps people share as they orient themselves within their worlds and create contexts for mutually intelligible communication (Hall, 1997). This book aims to mine one such terrain. It is not a book of art history or criticism. The complex and important histories of the various mediums examined here (painting, photography, the poster, and the film) are not my concern. My goal, rather, is to offer an analysis of the power-laden cultural and historic junctures imbricated in the creation of representations of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans by Americans ("outsiders") and Puerto Ricans ("insiders") during an historical epoch marked by the twin concepts of "modernization" and "progress."

My larger project, however, is to excavate the ways in which colonial power and resistance to it have shaped representations of Puerto Rico and its people. Saturating the text is a preoccupation with understanding how nation, race, and gender figure in representation, and how these representations in turn help shape the discourses of nation, race, and gender. It was my interest in the workings of race in Puerto Rico—blackness and whiteness— that first led me to the study of representations. During my doctoral fieldwork on the subject of racial identity in Arroyo, Puerto Rico (1999–2001), I immediately witnessed people's visible discomfort with the topic of race—an experience frequently reported by scholars working on race, racism, and blackness in Latin America (Lancaster 1991; Rahier 1998; Miller 2004; Godreau 2008; among others).

Compelled to move away from what people *said* about race, I *looked* at the things *they created* about race (such as novels, plays, paintings, photographs, and performances). This blew open an entire world of meanings right before my eyes. Undeniably, the representational world is as contradictory and complex as the world of direct interaction. But it soon became apparent that artists offer glimpses into the "cracks between languages" (Hyde 1998, 260). Often they seize upon cultural silences and contradictions, the unspeakable or the barely known, the disruptive and the vulgar, to make their marks.

Artists are "regularly honored as creators of culture" and in re-presenting things that lie just beyond verbal communication, they help "shape" and give meaning to their worlds (Hyde 1998, 8). Analysis of the role of the artist and her artistic *oeuvre* opens windows through which to glimpse the very things "cultures are based on" (Hyde 1998, 9).

In *Trickster Makes this World*, Lewis Hyde proposes that the researcher engage with a "trickster methods" that entail crossing (disciplinary) boundaries to carry out an archeology of the joints, the junctures, the crevices, and the interstices of the social fabric to unearth or even disrupt the foundations of culture (1998, 9). Endeavoring to understand the thickly layered representational world mandates the flexibility of boundary-crossing. Using this method, I seek to delve into the "deep ambiguity and ambivalence, doubleness and duplicity, and contradiction and paradox" constituted in the concepts of nation and national culture, race, and even gender (Hyde 1998, 7).

Citing Wilson Harris' statement that ". . . a philosophy of history may well lie buried in the arts of the imagination," Patricia Mohammed comments on the lack of representational analysis of the interstices "of history and culture that are difficult to capture with cold, hard, logical facts" (2009, 9; cf. Harris 1995, 18). *Imaging the Great Puerto Rican Family* contributes to such an endeavor because it offers an examination of the representational world while contextualizing it culturally and historically.

As a persistent boundary-crosser myself, I aim to "cut knowledge" as Foucault (1984, 88) suggested, thereby re-shaping it and offering it in new forms that are also available for "cutting."4 In other words, my methods and my aims together offer a reading that is both historical and contextual. Undoubtedly my reading is informed by my subject position(s) as a diasporic woman thinking and writing in the twenty-first century. Aside from the authors I have mentioned, there are several other thinkers whose text-based analyses resonate with the work I undertake here. Among these productions are Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá's masterful opus of Puerto Rican cultural commentary and analysis, Arcadio Diaz Quiñones's *El Arte de Bregar*, Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel's *Caribe Two-Ways*, Lanny Thompson's *Imperial Archipelago*, and Patricia Mohammed's *Imaging the Caribbean*. I also draw intellectual inspiration from the work of Frantz Fanon, Roland Barthes, Susan Sontag, Juan Flores, Richard Price and Sally Price, Jorge Duany, and bell hooks, among others. It is apparent from my long-term engagement in the field of Puerto Rican cultural representation that *Imaging the Great Puerto Rican Family* is a necessary contribution to the neglected study of representation during the American century. Methodologically, I hope the book opens up new possibilities for knowing and making sense of the role visual production plays in the dynamic struggles to assert a national/cultural identity.

The American Century In Puerto Rico

The American Century In Puerto Rico

The U.S. occupation of Puerto Rico that began in 1898 submerged the island in a second colonialist wave that put an end to the island's political and economic (colonial) relationship with Spain. But the ties between Spain and its former colony were, from the Puerto Rican perspective, more than

socio-political. They were, and still are, affective. Puerto Ricans have conceived of Spain as the national motherland that "birthed" the Puerto Rican nation through its so-called discovery and the subsequent formation of the island-territory as a modern, socio-political entity. Even though by the mid-nineteenth century a small contingent that sought to end Puerto Rico's colonial relationship with Spain had emerged, the majority of islanders still felt emotionally indebted to Spain. Under Spain, Puerto Rico had been a player in the transatlantic colonial order, both as a slaveholder society and as a society in which an even larger number of freed blacks and people of color thrived (Kinsbruner 1996; Godreau et al., 2013). In fact, connections created by island abolitionists and independence-minded revolutionaries in the nineteenth century first brought the island into hemispheric and transnational engagement with abolitionist and independence movements from Latin America and the Caribbean. For many of the participants, New York City became a meeting place.

By the time the United States pulled Puerto Rico into its colonial orbit, the island's political class and members of the intelligentsia, cosmopolitans in their own right, had become deeply divided about the island's socio- political future. During the first five decades of the new colonial order, the island's political status was controlled almost exclusively by agents of the colonial government. But colonial agents did not always act unilaterally and, as Ayala and Bernabe point out in *Puerto Rico in the American Century*, they became entrenched in a social drama bound not only to local concerns, but also to global affairs. Ayala and Bernabe's (2007) globally-aware sociohistorical approach to understanding and contextualizing twentieth-century Puerto Rico enriches perspectives on the recent past.5 Using their insight as a point of departure, I place Puerto Rican and American (used herein to refer to the United States) representational production within the socio-political, economic, and cultural context of *colonial modernity*, a period characterized by the "*striking explosion* of industrialization, urbanization, migration, transportation, economic rationalization, bureaucratization, military mechanization, mass communication, mass amusement, and mass consumerism" (Singer 2001, 19; emphasis mine).

The American century, led worldwide by U.S. capitalist and democratic machinery, accelerated the process by which an already modern Puerto Rico (and Caribbean more generally) commenced its historical engagement with the United States' main export: techno-scientific interventions. In Puerto Rico, these interventions ranged from the creation of vaccines to the building of infrastructure to massive electrification. Puerto Rico had long been a node in the Atlantic network of transnational colonial mercantile capitalism and trade. The massive fortifications defending Old San Juan against enemy intruders stand as just one symbol of the city's significance within this wider transnational network. In light of this, I follow the lead of several scholars including Tani E. Barlow (1997), Antoinette Burton (1999), Tony Ballantyne (2003, 2005), and Robert Dixon (2012) in their assertion that scholars must transcend privileging of the *nation* as their locus of analysis and instead, as Burton put it, "re-envision the historical-landscape as a set of interdependent sites" (1999, 4).

Imaging the Great Puerto Rican Family begins with the understanding that representational production of and from the national space was (and is) forged within a complex set of national, international, and indeed, global relationships. These relationships both informed and constrained the technologies of representation (such as photography, painting, the poster, and film), the messages they contained, and the possibilities and limits of their circulation. To put it simply, I aim to show how the representational products of American photographers and Puerto Rican artists whose work is at the center of this analysis were (and are) embedded within "bundles of complex relationships" extending well beyond the borders of their respective nation-states. I argue that representational production, a system of transferable knowledge, is part of a circulatory system that is the "very life blood of empire" (Ballantyne 2003, 112–113; Dixon 2012). I suggest that U.S. photographic production of Puerto Rico and its people, as well as Puerto Rican artistic production, offers a glimpse of far-ranging historic and contextual preoccupations that extend beyond the nation and reflect wider global dynamics. In many ways the artists and the imagery examined throughout the book are as reflective of "America" as they are of Puerto Rico. Colonial modernity, the conceptual framework for this analysis, is concerned with (1) evidencing, in Burton's words, "the inseparability of modernity from colonialism and the insight that modernity in all its incompleteness and instability was made through colonialism," and (2) calling attention to the "traffic in personnel,"

technological and “cultural practices,” systems of knowledge, and “intellectual property” circulating within and beyond the imperial and colonial spheres (Burton 1999, 3; Dixon 2012, xxiv; xxix).

A History As It Develops In Images

A History As It Develops In Images

In chapter one, *Puerto Rican Natives, 1890–1920*, I investigate what Puerto Rican and American pictorial representations reveal about the island and its people during the earliest years of colonial transition. I juxtapose the photographic images credited to the Detroit Photographic Company (DPC) and photographer Henry William Jackson with the iconic paintings created by Puerto Rican artists Ramón Frade and Oscar Colón Delgado. In examining the ways in which cultural and racial politics frame the era’s representational production, I focus on the details that made these products iconic. At this time, American photographic discourse constructed the “native” Puerto Rican interchangeably as Indigenous *Taíno* and/or African, but always as an *ethnographic* subject effectively located in and part of the “natural” world and environment. Meanwhile, Puerto Rican artists also constructed national types: the white *jíbaro* was deployed as the essential “man of the land” and the black woman was rendered as worker and servant. The chapter closes as I trace a DPC postcard, “A Typical Puerto Rican Hut,” as it travels through the circuits from its creation in 1903 to my acquisition of it in an online auction in 2012.

Building a “Photographic Case” for the Rehabilitation of the Colony, 1930s, the title of chapter two, is meant to signal how photographs, specifically those taken by Edwin and Louise Rosskam, provided visual evidence to the colonial state that its subjects were in dire need of cultural, economic, and political rehabilitation. The Rosskams were not as interested as earlier American photographers in photographing subjects as part of the landscape. Instead they focused on providing information about general types, categories, and customs. They worked within the tradition of the social documentary. In line with the broader mission of the Farm Security Administration (FSA), a federal entity at work recording the rural lives of Americans including U.S. colonial subjects during this historic period, they believed the camera was a weapon against social injustice and inequality. For the Rosskams and their FSA colleagues, the photograph was a powerful “truth”-telling document, helpful in affecting public opinion and promoting social reform. In this chapter the Ponce Massacre comes into focus and the brutality with which Puerto Rican nationalist and anti-systemic movements were treated during the American century begins to crystalize.

Chapter three, *The Emergence of Black Puerto Ricans in Portraiture, 1930s*, traces key moments in island artists’ portrayals of black Puerto Ricans, a population long excluded from the canvas’s central space, through paintings by Miguel Pou and Oscar Colón Delgado. Although Afro-Puerto Ricans had been depicted in earlier periods, it was not until the late 1930s that artists produced portraits representing black Puerto Ricans exclusively. I contend that in the late 1930s, wider local and transnational developments resulted in the loosening of the *Hispanophile* grip that had prevented artists from centrally and exclusively depicting non-white subjects.

In *Setting the Stage for Mid-Twentieth Century Imagery of Puerto Rico, 1921–1951*, chapter four, I examine some of Jack Delano’s early photographs alongside the photographic and narrative depictions of Puerto Rico in the *National Geographic* during the period. As the American century progressed, representations shifted. American photographers depicted Puerto Ricans as *jíbaros*, “tropical whites,” light-skinned mixed-race people, or a “Technicolor” people. Island artists painted black subjects with increasing regularity. I begin to untangle the cultural politics that led to these representational shifts. Although Delano’s lush photographic production of Puerto Ricans contributed greatly to the depiction of Puerto Ricans as a “rainbow people,” he also offered an

important but small series of color photographs of four black *jíbaros* living and working in the rural coastal countryside. This small series of color photographs, taken near midcentury, evoke an interrogation of how black Puerto Ricans have managed to remain black in spite of a national project that sought their eradication from the national body. These photographs contrast starkly with the *National Geographic's* pictorial and textual constructions of the Puerto Rican as a mix of cosmopolitan white Spanish creoles and a tropicalized caste of degenerated whites known as *jíbaros*.

Chapter five, *The Rise of Cultural Nationalism and Filmic Narratives of Race, 1948–1970*, traces the contours of Luis Muñoz Marín's rise to power. His vision of Puerto Rico's cultural nationalism was invested in promoting cultural pride across social classes. Muñoz Marín's reform-minded programs aimed, with the help of the colonial state, to introduce modernization and progress to Puerto Rico while preserving the island's unique national identity. Through his party's emblem, Muñoz Marín upheld the *jíbaro* as the iconic Puerto Rican. Meanwhile, cultural workers such as anthropologist Ricardo Alegría and artist Rafael Tufiño, key figures in the production of Puerto Rico's brand of cultural nationalism, proposed additional national icons. During this period the governor created several agencies including the Division of Community Education (DIVEDCO) and the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture (ICP). While in the political sphere the *jíbaro* was deployed as emblem of the nation, in the cultural sphere blacks emerged as significant constituents of the same national space. I examine the era's filmic production of blackness and focus in particular on the films *La Fiesta de Santiago* (1949), *Nenén de la Ruta Mora* (1955), *El Resplandor* (1962), and *La Plena* (1966). Rafael Tufiño emerges as the island's pre-eminent black artist and his masterpiece *Goyita* (1953) inscribes the black woman as the national, if hidden, (grand)mother.

Dynamics of the 1970s: National and Racial Transfigurations, chapter six, brings the reader into an era of social unrest and into the movements that challenged the status quo. This chapter underscores how global anti-systemic movements informed island-based challenges to the established racial, gender, class, and colonial systems. Several celebrities and public figures, including Lucecita Benítez, Sylvia del Villard, Carmen Belén Richardson, Isabelo Zenón Cruz, and Antonio Martorell emerged as protagonists in the fight against racial injustice. Rafael Tufiño's artistic work, following the lead of Ricardo Alegría, upheld Loíza as Puerto Rico's black motherland. This historic period witnessed the rise of the annexationist New Progressive Party (PNP). Its leader, Carlos Romero Barceló, tried to dismantle both nationalist activities on the island and agencies perceived as independence-minded. As the 1970s came to a close, the island was embroiled in a deep struggle between those who upheld a unique Puerto Rican culture and those with annexationist ideas of a "universal" high-culture. The island was also besieged by an economic recession and its associated social problems such as high unemployment, crime, and drug addiction.

The eighties began amidst a systemic crisis in which Puerto Rico's "battle over culture" was but a local example of a global phenomenon. Chapter seven, *What the American Century has Wrought: Puerto Rican Images in the Late* Twentieth Century, describes an era in which artists faced cuts in arts funding from government sources. However, this era also witnessed the proliferation of private funding, artistic venues, and the flourishing of arts and artists. In this chapter I analyze the works of American photographer Mel Rosenthal, specifically his co-authored text, *!Villa Sin Miedo Presente!*, and photographer Jack Delano's *Puerto Rico Mío* to gauge how socially conscious and social-justice-minded American photographers looked at Puerto Rico and its people at the end of the American century. Both of these photographers made apparent that the neo-liberal turn had been developing over time. The photographs demonstrate that by the end of the 1980s, Puerto Rico had entered an unprecedented era in which the relentless forces of a global, free-market economic system increasingly surveyed and disciplined citizens, and in which corrosion and corruption of social services and civil society was widespread. This chapter also offers an analysis of Myrna Báez's painterly renderings of women to highlight, on the one hand, how race, and more specifically upper-class whiteness, informs her representations; and on the other, to underscore how her work has influenced a younger generation of artists. Also explored are the works of María Mater de O'Neill and Nick Quijano, artists belonging to the eighties generation, to understand the ways in which their visual production engages with, and challenges representational traditions. Lastly, the

chapter ends with a critical evaluation of the discursive uproar engendered by the 1996 exhibition *Paréntesis: Ocho Artistas Negros Contemporáneos* [Parenthesis: Eight Contemporary Black Artists].

I do not offer a definitive conclusion to *Imaging the Great Puerto Rican Family* because I understand the social world to be a dynamic entity that continues to unfold even as the page attempts to arrest and categorize it. In an epilogue I summarize instead the insights derived from the interpretive methods I employ and the particular imagery on which I focus. This narrative strategy is also meant to suggest that other volumes should trace and analyze the lush visual data produced by the artists not examined here. My juxtaposition of how American photographers *saw* Puerto Rico and how Puerto Rican artists *saw themselves* does not presuppose that there were not other Puerto Rican photographers or American artists producing equally important visual data during the American century. My focus merely opens up possibilities for other scholars who wish to mine other "representational sites" produced in Puerto Rico during the this century. With this book I aim then to offer a specific cultural history and propose a methodological example through which others can continue to excavate the vast, rich, and complex representational worlds used to make sense of human lives.

Notes

Notes

In the digital age the screen (in the camera, telephone, or computer) has largely supplanted the printed photograph. The photograph, as printed object, is becoming a thing of the past.

I think of the home altar as a kind of evolving art installation in which images, candles, and saints are introduced and repositioned as the believer's particular needs or prayers change. Altars are thus dynamic installations.

"When we read pictures—in fact, images of any kind, whether painted, sculpted, photographed, built or performed—we bring to them *the temporal quality of narrative*. We extend that which is limited by a frame to a before and an after, and through the craft of telling stories (whether of love or hate), we lend the immutable picture an infinite and inexhaustible life" (Manguel 2000, 13; emphasis mine).

I explore this issue at length in my article "Dislocated Geographies" (2006).

I find Ayala and Bernabe's Table 1.1 particularly useful. It offers a brief yet astute encapsulation of Puerto Rican history at a glance (2007, 8–9).

Part: Part 1

Part 1

Chapter 4: Raced Geographies And Iconic Puerto Ricans: Imagery From Island Artists

Raced Geographies And Iconic Puerto Ricans: Imagery From Island Artists

Cameras began duplicating the world at that moment when the human landscape started to undergo a vertiginous rate of change: while an untold number of forms of biological and social life are being destroyed in a brief span of time, a device is available to record what is disappearing. —Susan Sontag, *On Photography*

Statistical details of number, sex, nativity, race and literacy. Excess of males. Small proportions of foreign people. Divisions into classes. The “Spaniards” (white Puerto Ricans). The gibaros, or peasantry. The negroes. Former conditions of slavery in Porto Rico. —Robert T. Hill, *Cuba and Porto Rico*

“Puerto Rican Natives, circa 1903.” Sixteen children. Ten boys, four girls. Two boys’ naked bodies and swollen bellies remind viewers of the poverty associated with “third-world” or “under-developed” countries: malnutrition, lack of health, poor hygiene, parasitic bodies. Pity. Two women, each holding an infant; one stands on the threshold of a *bohío* (straw hut), the other stands among a group of children. Unrestrained fertility? Five adults. Two men and three women fully dressed. Twenty-one souls, none wear shoes.

The lush vegetation surrounding the scene, especially the palm trees whose height betrays the camera’s frame, situate the subjects in a coastal hamlet. The large leaves of the banana plant, the towering mango and avocado trees, the thin papaya tree, and the weeds depict the impetuous

“Puerto Rican Natives, circa 1903.” Courtesy of the Library of Congress, call number: LC-D4-16746.

“Puerto Rican Natives, circa 1903.” Courtesy of the Library of Congress, call number: LC-D4-16746. A black and white photograph showing a group of about twenty-one people,

including men, women, and children, standing in front of simple thatched-roof huts in a lush, tropical environment.nature of the tropics. The vegetation, like the people, suggests an “untamed wildness.” Among the people and verdant vegetation, we see the products of their labor: small thatched-roof dwellings made from straw, wooden sticks, and planks. Primitive technology. Puerto Rico, circa 1903.

What do Puerto Rican and American pictorial representations reveal about Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans during the earliest years of colonial transition? To answer this question I juxtapose American-produced photographs credited to the Detroit Photographic Company, and specifically to photographer Henry William Jackson (1843–1942), against iconic paintings by Puerto Rican artists Ramón Frade (1875–1954) and Oscar Colón Delgado (1889–1968). I examine the ways in which cultural and racial politics frame the photographic and artistic representations of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans made during these early years of American occupation. White American and Puerto Rican men produced the works discussed here. Hence, when inquiring about the cultural products from this period, one must mark “whiteness” as central to the inquiry. Otherwise, as Coco Fusco has so rightly observed, one runs the risk of “redoubling its hegemony by naturalizing it” (Wallis 1995, 75 cf. Fusco 1988).

These images are “sites of meaning” representing various and complex relationships (e.g., between insider and outsider, photographer and subjects, imperial metropolis and colonial outpost). Their ways of “seeing” at times co-exist in tension. I analyze these representational products in the context of the wider socio-political era in which they were produced and focus my close-up viewing on the details that make them iconic. These photographs of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans produced by American photographers at the turn of the century illustrate that they are as much a depiction of the American obsession with race and blackness as they are about colonial expansion and Puerto Ricans more generally. Similarly, the paintings produced by Puerto Ricans at this time are as much depictions of the anxiety and trauma of U.S. colonial intervention in Puerto Rico as they are representations of a unique Puerto Rican reality. Finally, I untangle the ways in which Americans and Puerto Ricans *indexed* the Puerto Rico of the beginning of the twentieth century.

Indexicality is particularly relevant to this study because, as Bal and Bryson explain, this notion “. . . suggests that we do not only account for images in terms of their provenance and making, but also of their functioning in relation to the viewer . . .” (1991, 190–191). The images discussed here offer powerful documentary evidence because they *punctuate* Puerto Rican history. Barthes (1981, 51–60) defined the *punctum* as that detail in a photograph that wounds, pricks, and establishes a direct, personal relation between the viewer and that, which is represented. These images are also dynamic icons largely achieving their meaning in the world of discourse (Bal and Bryson 1991, 192–193 cf. Derrida 1978, 93). They have become significant historic documents precisely because they stand as witness to the history of Puerto Rico’s colonial struggle.

“Puerto Rican Natives”: Influences From The U.S.

“Puerto Rican Natives”: Influences From The U.S.

The photo described at the beginning of this chapter, “Puerto Rican Natives,” (Figure 1.1) is credited to the Detroit Photographic Company and is housed at the Library of Congress’ digital archive. The Detroit Photographic Company (which became the Detroit Publishing Company in 1905, DPC hereafter) was in the business of postcard production and sales for the American mass market. While the vast majority of their photos depict the continental U.S., the public’s interest in the Spanish-American War prompted a turn of the DPC camera’s gaze toward the Caribbean—mainly Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the “West Indies.” The portability of the photographic document, as well as its ease of reproduction, allowed it to become a significant instrument ment in the global

legitimization of U.S. colonial expansion into the former Spanish colonies. The extensive photographic and media coverage of the Spanish-American War marks it as “the first truly modern war” (Rice 2011, 1; Thompson 2010; Perivolaris 2007; Evered 2006).

The Detroit Photographic Company gained exclusive rights to the photochrom process in the mid-1890s. This allowed them to mass-produce color postcards long before the advent of color photography. The Library of Congress explains that photochrom prints are “ink-based images produced through ‘the direct photographic transfer of an original negative onto a litho and chromographic printing plates’ and that “The prints look deceptively like color photographs.”1

Presently, the Library of Congress’ American Memory Archive credits 292 photographs of Cuba, 42 of Puerto Rico, and 132 of the West Indies to the Detroit Publishing Company. Coincidentally, in “1898 American publishers were allowed to print and sell cards bearing the inscription ‘Private Mailing Card, Authorized by an Act of Congress on May 19, 1898.’”2 The same year, the U.S. post office released a one-cent stamp for the postcard and in 1902 the Eastman Kodak Company began production and sales of their postcard-sized photographic paper. These events gave rise to the “Golden Age” of the photographic postcard. Rogan estimates that during the years 1895–1915, “between 200 and 300 billion postcards were produced and sold” (2005, 1).

“Puerto Rican Natives” (Figure 1.1) was taken sixty-four years after the advent of photography in 1839 and only five years after the United States acquired Puerto Rico in 1898. Susan Sontag has written that the photograph “furnishes evidence” (1977, 5). Similarly, Walter Benjamin remarked that photos are “evidence in the historical process” (Larsen 1999, 21 cf. Benjamin 1977). As an historic document, “Puerto Rican Natives” offers visual evidence of a people caught betwixt and between primitivism and modernity. The luxuriant tropical landscape matched by the humble dwellings and shoeless denizens (and the two unclothed children), stands as a vestige of the not-so-distant “primitive” past. Yet the clothed adults and children show they are a step above “naked primitives” in their “evolutionary station.” Regarding the political history of the “Puerto Rican Natives,” clothing stands as one signifier of Spain’s failed modernizing mission.

In his 1898 technical report about Puerto Rico, the Texan geologist Robert T. Hill writes that, “The children generally don the garb of civilization at or near the age of ten or twelve” (1898, 168). “Puerto Rican Natives,” however, shows that clothing was a matter of access rather than age.

The adults are clothed and the children are wearing torn rags—a sign of benign neglect on the part of the “motherland.” Yet the fully clothed bodies of adults and female children depict the modesty of a Catholic nation. Clothing also signals that dressed in their best (if too warm) clothes, “the natives” are able to transact with the new colonizer in however unequal the terms. The formality of their clothes signifies self-respect and is one way in which “the natives” controlled this encounter, an encounter that, perhaps unbeknownst to the people depicted here, has become a signifying moment in/of Puerto Rican history.

Allegedly shot by an operator (as photographers were then known) for the DPC, “Puerto Rican Natives” reveals the asymmetrical terms of exchange between the “natives” and colonial interlocutors. Imagine how “the natives” might have experienced this exchange in 1903: a white American man wielding cumbersome camera equipment and traveling with an expeditionary entourage—no doubt consisting of both American and Puerto Rican assistants—scout a location, recruit subjects, and then arrange the shoot. They stage the subjects in relation to the landscape and to each other. After the initial arrangements the operator goes to work shooting the photograph. This alone could take hours.

Did the subjects get an incentive or a reward for appearing in the photo? Who are these women, men, and children? How did they come together for this photograph? Are the women the mothers of these children? Are the men, their fathers? Are they related to one another? Where exactly was this photograph taken? These are questions the image itself does not answer. Instead we are left to wonder, imagine, and interpret what we see. Certainly, there is more to the story of any photographic representation and a photographic image only tells part of a more nuanced story

(What were the maker's intentions? How did he/she assemble the shot? Why must a scene be converted into a photograph in the first place?, and so on.).

"Puerto Rican Natives" is a staged photograph. We encounter the photos' passive subjects standing together in an unnatural arrangement solely for the camera's lens and the photographer's eyes. The group is not engaged in the events of daily life, making the portrayal of a girl uncomfortably balancing a wooden box on her head all the more awkward. The box this young girl holds precariously on her head is a telltale sign that the photographer likened Puerto Rico to the Anglophone Caribbean, where it was far more common for women to transport baskets, but seldom boxes, on their heads. The girl is dressed like a miniature adult, with a younger child standing so close to her it seems they are stuck together; she is like a little mother. This signals the early age at which girls become mothers and are expected to work. Almost completely out of the frame, in the front of the photograph and at a distance from the people, is a dog's head. It is likely that the dog disrupted this otherwise human scene at the last minute, after the photographer had pressed the shutter button. The dog breaks the illusion of what appears otherwise to be a controlled stage-set.

The two adults on the right of the frame look at the ground, pensively averting the camera's gaze. The children betray that there are others in the background because their eyes focus in various directions. The boys sitting on the wooden boxes complete the look of staging. The man standing frontally with an arm on his hip and a woman and child beside him at the threshold of the dwelling, appears as the "man of the house." He seems to be the leader of this group, a man with a certain amount of authority. His clothing suggests that he is perhaps a stevedore or dockworker; this detail might help explain his relative position of authority. He might have also been the link between the photographer and the people represented in the photograph because dockworkers came into daily contact with foreigners emerging from the vessels docking in San Juan.

The photo's title suggests, surely without intending to do so, who exactly constitute so-called Puerto Rican natives. The people depicted in this photograph are natives to the extent that they are inhabitants of the island of Puerto Rico in 1903. José Luis González argued that, "the first Puerto Ricans were in fact *black* Puerto Ricans (1980, 10; emphasis in original). González writes that "it was the blacks, the people bound most closely to the territory which they inhabited (they were after all slaves), who had the greatest difficulty in imagining any other place to live" (10). Following this logic, "Puerto Rican Natives" is a representation of González's version of "the first Puerto Ricans." Certainly, the photo's subjects are "natives" insofar as the photographer and the company's titling professional is concerned. They are natives, though not indigenous to Puerto Rico. Puerto Rican historiography tells us that by this time the indigenous Taínos were culturally extinct. Only traces of their DNA remained in the gene pool of the island's inhabitants. To segregated American consumers, the intended market of these photographs, the people in the picture might appear to be a group of "poor Negroids." Yet to Puerto Rican viewers, the nuances in the skin gradations of each subject might tell another story. Strikingly, the man (dockworker?), the woman, and the child at the center of the photograph are phenotypically distinct from the rest of the group. Do their lighter skin and features explain their central position in the composition?

William Henry Jackson, The Detroit Photographic Company, And The Issue Of Attribution

William Henry Jackson, The Detroit Photographic Company, And The Issue Of Attribution

The photographs in the DPC collection are attributed to William Henry Jackson (1843–1942). Born in New York, Jackson spent his life traveling and taking/making documentary photographs. He

produced an astonishing number of photographs, paintings, and sketches the majority of which represent the era of American geographic expansion into the western United States. Douglas Waitley, author of the biography, *William Henry Jackson: Framing the Frontier* (1999), writes that Jackson "saw himself as 'one of the fortunate,' because he was born in a unique era in American history, when the United States was about to break from its eastern orientation and become a continental nation" (1999, 1). Like many others who saw the West as a vast and available region, Jackson went west seeking fortune. Though he never found gold or other valuable minerals, as a gifted artist he spent the rest of his life creating a remarkable archive of visual documents. Waitley explains that,

He [Jackson] had a feeling for history in transition. He was seeing the railroad replace the Oregon Trail. He was seeing the huge buffalo herds thin, then virtually vanish. He was seeing powerful tribes—like the Sioux who had been a threat when he bullwhacked through their territory—become harassed nomads, then humbled reservation Indians. And he felt he must be there to record those precious moments with his camera . . . before they vanished. (1999, 1)

Along with photographing and sketching the magnificent scenery of the American West, by 1869 Jackson had "secured a commission from the Union Pacific Railroad to take promotional photographs along its line" (Waitley 1999, 1). It was at this time that he developed an interest in photographing Native Americans. Part of his oeuvre, then, can be considered as "proto-ethnographic" because throughout his career he photographed hundreds of individuals who were meant to stand in as representatives of their "vanishing" cultures. As a prolific visual chronicler and observer of the West, Jackson was committed to capturing the "disappearing" Indians in his photographs.

Having distinguished himself as a gifted photographer, in 1870 Jackson was invited by Dr. Ferdinand Hayden, the man in charge of the United States Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories, to join him on his expedition to Wyoming and the adjacent territories. This region had been "Indian domain" but was now "earmarked for white settlement" (Waitley 1999, 97–98). In 1871, Jackson once again joined Hayden, this time with a much larger contingent of men, as they set out to investigate, chart, and document Yellowstone. Jackson's photographs were the first ever taken of what is now known as Yellowstone (Jackson 1940, 196). Dr. Hayden's Yellowstone survey was so successful that Congress unanimously established it as a national park and on March 1, 1872, President Grant signed the law that "set it forever aside for the people" (Jackson 1940, 205). Jackson's well-crafted photographs were some of Dr. Hayden's strongest evidence in his presentation to Congress. Aside from publicizing the "newly" acquired regions, the photographs worked to bolster Dr. Hayden's position as an eminent scientist and to ensure the continued financial support for future expeditions.

William Henry Jackson's proto-ethnographic inclinations crystallized in the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. Dr. Hayden was given a prominent location among the exhibitors and he entrusted Jackson with the task of organizing the exhibit (Waitley 1999, 161). In his autobiography, Jackson remarks that "Today every child learns about the Southwestern Indian villages before finishing the fifth or sixth grade, and I have nothing to add to the textbook descriptions. But in the 70s and 80s that civilization was not familiar to many people. I was therefore anxious to take all the photographs I could of subject matter that was intensely interesting at the time—even if it produces only yawns in 1940" (1940, 239).

By the time of the World's Columbian Exposition (also known as "The World's Fair") in 1893, the main attraction was no longer the "vanishing Indians," a topic now considered *passé* by Expo organizers.3 Ethnology, a proper and legitimate science, had entered the European and American cultural landscapes, and it was deemed respectable to display the "natives" in photographs and in person along with their "objects" in museum-like dioramas (Rydell 1993; Tobing-Rony 1996; Duany 2002). The real marvels of this Expo were Thomas Edison's phonograph, Henry Ford's gasoline powered carriage, the Bell telephone, as well as other futuristic devices such as "electric stoves, hot plates, laundry washers, and carpet cleaners" (Waitley 1999, 184). Technological advances promising that machines would improve life coupled with the notion that the U.S. as an emergent

imperial power should invest in technological progress, took center stage at the World's Fair. The Expo's subtext was not only that technology would transform the life of ordinary American citizens, but also that American entrepreneurs should capitalize on the "untapped markets" made available by colonial expansion.

In 1900–1901, Jackson made his first voyage to the West Indies, "principally to get views of Cuba and Nassau" (1940, 325). Because neither Jackson nor his biographers mention him ever setting foot in Puerto Rico, it is difficult to ascertain whether or not he was the "operator" behind the photographs of Puerto Rico housed in the DCP collection of the American Memory Archive. Certainly, an outline of the "known photographic trips" taken by Jackson does not document a return to the Caribbean after his 1901 trip (History Colorado). Regarding the issue of attribution, Waitley notes that

During his travels Jackson sometimes purchased negatives from local photographers to expand his coverage of a subject or region. This was a common practice at the time, and the pictures were published under the name of the Photochrom Company or its parent, the Detroit Photographic Company. For this reason it is difficult or impossible to determine which pictures were actually Jackson's own. (1999, 192–193)

Moreover in his autobiography, Jackson mentions that the Detroit Publishing Company, of which he was part owner, employed about a dozen commercial travelers. He further writes that, "Our business was the production of color prints . . . in sizes varying from postal cards to the largest pictures suitable for framing. We specialized in photographic views . . . and our annual volume . . . was about 7,000,000 prints" (Jackson 1940, 324).

I contend that it is highly unlikely that William Henry Jackson took the photos of Puerto Rico that have been credited to him and to the Detroit Photographic Company. The fact that Puerto Rico is mentioned neither in his biography nor by his biographers as a place to which Jackson traveled does not alone discount his authorship. What makes his authorship unlikely is the accepted knowledge that operators and publishers actively traded negatives. Given that the Detroit Photographic Company was a prolific clearinghouse of photographs, postcards, paintings, and the like, it is very likely that the company bought a significant number of images from "ghost photographers" traveling throughout the world. In the brief "Jackson Collection History" authored by the History Colorado (formerly known as Colorado Historical Society), Part B, "Issue of Ghost Photographers," offers further evidence to bolster this claim.

Although nothing is ever mentioned in the collection descriptions about Jackson employing other photographers or buying the work of other photographers . . . there is considerable evidence that this was, in fact, the case. A 1974 letter from photo historian Beaumont Newhall found in the files of the photography department states the following: 'I am convinced that the purchase of negatives or the outright pirating of photographs was much more common than we suspect.' (History Colorado)

The Waldrop Photographic Company, a medium-sized photo studio in San Juan, Puerto Rico, began a business partnership with the Detroit Photographic Company in 1903. In the same year a series of postcards of Puerto Rico copyrighted to and published by the DPC entered the market, with the Waldrop oval logo blind embossed on some of the postcards.4 The Metropolitan Postcard Club of New York City details that the Waldrop Photographic Company

. . . continued to publish sets of views and types that were manufactured by a number of different printers as both real photo cards and in printed form. The same images from earlier series were often reproduced later in other techniques. Their cards were oriented toward an American audience as the titles and backs were printed in English.5

In light of this, I hypothesize that most, if not all of the photographs of Puerto Rico attributed to the DPC were actually produced by an "operator" working directly with the Waldrop Photographic Company. The operator could still have been an itinerant photographer, but existing photographic evidence suggests that Waldrop was an important broker in the production of turn of the century

photographs of Puerto Rico, in particular those attributed to the DPC. This still leaves unanswered the question, who was the operator behind the lens?

Yet another question that arises from the systematic analysis of the Detroit Photographic Company's and the Waldrop Photo Company's turn of the century photographs of Puerto Rico is that of location. Were photographers exchanging precise information along with their active exchange of negatives? At least one piece of evidence points out that photographers and publishers might have taken the liberty of misnaming locations. In a brief article entitled "The Role of the Postcard in Inventing Puerto Rico for Domestic Consumption" (2008), Aponte-Parés writes the following:

"Porto Rico: A Bunch of Pickaninnies" was sent from Yonkers, New York, in October 1905. . . . (A)nother card, sent from New Orleans to Ohio in 1940, "Eight Little Pickaninnies in a Row," is a portrait of eight young men kneeling in front of a fallen palm tree. The similarities between both cards are puzzling, and the composition of the photos is almost identical.6

The two postcards to which Aponte-Parés refers ("Porto Rico. A Bunch of Pickaninnies," and "Eight Little Pickaninnies Sitting in a Row") demonstrate that photographers and publishing houses understood these photographs to be flexible products in a very profitable market. As Rogan notes, "The postcard industry became a big business that quickly created finely meshed, worldwide networks. It became a major economic sector . . ." (2005, 6).

The Waldrop Photo Company published four different versions of its "pickaninny" postcard while the Detroit Photographic Company published three between 1900 and 1909. The Waldrop Photo Company postcards entitled "A Bunch of Pickaninnies, Puerto Rico," "A Row of Piccaninnies," and two versions of "Porto Rico. A Bunch of Pickaninnies," appear to have all been taken in the same coconut grove with many of the same children appearing in the photo seated or standing across the fallen trunk of a palm tree. Except for the postcard titled "A Row of Piccaninnies," all other Waldrop postcards in this series establish that the photo was taken in Puerto Rico.

The Detroit Photographic Company's "pickaninnies" series include "Eight Little Pickaninnies Kneeling in a Row," "Six Little Pickaninnies," and "Pickaninnies" taken between 1890–1903. The latter two photographs are representative of what is known in the U.S. antiquing circuit as "Black Americana." The caption in at least one of these postcards states that it was taken in St. Augustine, Florida. This leaves open the question of the striking similarity between Waldrop's "pickaninny" photographs and Detroit's "Eight Little Pickaninnies Kneeling in a Row." Were these photos, later turned into postcards, taken in the same place, at the same time, portraying the same children—but claiming to represent Puerto Rico as well as the Southern United States?

The Detroit Photographic Company knew the postcard market well and, unlike Waldrop, was positioned as a global leader in the postcard production market. As it specifically relates to "Eight Little Pickaninnies Kneeling in a Row," the DPC did not specify a location for the postcard in its title. I argue that the titling is meant to be generic in order to be sold and used as representative of multiple locations, including Puerto Rico, Florida, and New Orleans.7 The compositional resemblance between Waldrop's "pickaninnies" postcards taken in Puerto Rico and that of Detroit's "Eight Little Pickaninnies in a Row" is striking because they appear to have been taken in the same location then packaged, and sold as representative of various sites (such as Puerto Rico and St. Augustine, FL). This marketing ploy in part explains the use of the foreign word "pickaninnies" to refer to Puerto Rican children—a word not used by Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico—as well as the idea that Afro-Diasporic folks could (at least from a mainstream "white" perspective from the States) interchangeably represent the circum-Atlantic (and specifically the West Indies and the Southern United States).

The "pickaninny" trope is common in the English-speaking world and offers one example in which these postcards represented more than Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans; instead they represent an obsession in the U.S. with race and more specifically with Afro-descendants in the Americas. For if the Puerto Rican Creole elite were also obsessed with race, their obsession fiercely articulated the

nation as “white.” Their depiction did not include images of the 70,000 “negroes” that were counted in the first American census of the island in 1899 (Murillo-Alicea 2003). Writing about Puerto Rico, Loveman states, “Confronted with scientific theories that linked a nation’s prospects for development to the racial make-up of the population, modernizing elites through much of the region sought ways to promote, publicize, the ‘racial improvement’ of their respective populations” (2007, 15). Using the U.S. censuses of Puerto Rico from 1899, 1910, and 1920, Loveman traces the marked increase in the white population of the island and argues that Puerto Rican census enumerators actively contested U.S. racial categories in part by using Puerto Rican racial classifications to “whiten” the population. Like the elite, census enumerators understood the real advantages of becoming “whiter” under U.S. colonial rule (Loveman 2007; Loveman and Muñiz 2007).

“The Peopled Landscape”

“The Peopled Landscape”

At the turn of the twentieth century, cameras were signifiers of power, wealth, and even race. It is not a coincidence, for example, that wealthy Puerto Rican families today tend to have extensive ancestral photographic records while poor families do not. Access to cameras was limited to the elite, which in light of Puerto Rico’s class-race configuration meant white Creole elites (González 2007). Thus purchasing a camera, learning how to operate it, and having a safe place for storing it were all factors limiting camera ownership and photographic production, as was the storing of images for subsequent generations. The camera as the product of modern European technological innovation is a thoroughly racialized object/machine (Sekula 1986; Fusco 2003). Sontag fittingly remarks that “Photographs are perhaps the most mysterious of all the objects that make up, and thicken, the environment we recognize as modern” (1977, 3). Whiteness represented civilization and technological innovation, and was concomitantly the universal symbol of imperial power, modernity, and progress. Lanny Thompson writes that, “White males, who embodied the fittest in the evolutionary struggle, were the agents for social progress” (2010, 45). Furthermore, as Fusco, citing Michael Banton, notes,

[]. . . theories of white superiority were most prevalent between 1890–1920, a period when European colonialism was at its zenith; Jim Crow reigned in the American South, the U.S. government’s genocidal campaign against Native Americans had been completed, and the Spanish-American War brought Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines under U.S. control. (2003, 35 cf. Banton 1987, 76)

From its inception, photography was part of a system of social ranking that in Sekula’s words worked as “a double system: a system of representation capable of functioning both *honorifically* and *repressively*” (1986, 6; emphasis in original). The late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century photographic archive is made up of images that fall into two main categories: the family photograph and the classificatory image. The family photograph establishes lineage, context, and filial stories or histories. Family portraiture establishes personhood as well as rightful belonging in society, a “ceremonial presentation of the bourgeois *self*” (Sekula 1986:6; emphasis in original). In the specific context of the U.S., Mirzoeff notes that, “. . . discourses of race came to rely heavily on photographic representation” (2003:111).

A classificatory image such as “Puerto Rican Natives” is pseudo-scientific in nature and is an example of images produced at the turn of the century by information professionals (e.g., colonial administrators, photographers, and scientists). These classificatory images are now a part of the historical inventory of places, landscapes, peoples, nature, etc. It is no accident that many of the authors of Puerto Rico’s photographic archive are American photographers. At a time when the

United States was in the midst of colonial expansion, photography became an important aid in introducing the new acquisitions (the places, landscapes, flora, fauna, and people) to citizens on the mainland. Robert T. Hill's illustrated book, *Cuba and Porto Rico with the Other Islands of the West Indies: Their Topography, Climate, Flora, Products, Industries, Cities, People, Political Conditions, etc.* (U.S. Geological Survey), first appeared in 1898, with a second edition printed in 1899. It is an example of the descriptive and typological character of the textual/ photographic production of the era.

I consider these photographs, however, to be examples of a "representational colonialism," which Wallis defines as "fundamentally non-reciprocal" (Wallis 1995, 54). The emphasis on the landscape renders the subjects mute, their individual stories forever denied. The "Puerto Rican natives," thus, are "already positioned, known, owned, represented, spoken for, or constructed as silent" (Wallis 1995, 55). Moreover, as historic documents these photo graphs are believed to represent objective reality, and both authorship as well as the process of creation are largely ignored.

A significant theme in the representational products (e.g., photographs, political, and satirical cartoons) of American empire during and immediately after the Spanish-American War is the depiction of the United States as a disciplining, "courageous, civilized, sagely, and charitable adult;" places and people under its purview, such as Puerto Rico, appear "as orphaned children" (Evered 2006, 109). Deploying environmental determinism as scientific fact in political and popular discourse characterized the people of the tropics as unable to govern themselves, as lacking meaningful histories, and as unable to "rise above" a tropical climate that promoted "indolence and inactivity" (Mintz and Price 1976, 34 cf. Nugent 1939; Guerra 1998; Evered 2006; Thompson 2010). For the tropics to benefit from universal progress, the temperate and civilized North must charitably endow them with civilization, technology, hygiene, medicine, and democratic government (Evered 2006; Thompson 2010). The images I examine here were produced against this socio-historical backdrop.

The landscape is a dominant theme in the Detroit Photographic Company's Puerto Rico photographs. This includes depictions of both "the tropics" (e.g., coconut groves, the ocean, the countryside), as well as "the natives" near their dwellings or at work (e.g., bringing bananas to market, doing laundry, cradling infants). I call this representational trope the "peopled landscape." While landscape photography has not traditionally included the depiction of whites or those deemed "*historifiable*," it has included the "*ethnographiable*" (Tobing Rony 1996). The DPC photographs portray the "exteriority of life in the tropics," underscoring the fact that daily-life takes place mainly outdoors and that the inhabitants of the tropics have not successfully subdued neither their internal not external natures.

I define the "peopled landscape" as a system of representation that articulates the *ethnographiable*, the poor, and other "embodiments of the unworthy" (Sekula 1986, 10) at a safe and comfortable distance using the outdoors to effectively locate its subjects as part of the "natural" world and environment. These photographs stand as evidence that these "others" do in fact cohabitate closely and naturally with/in nature, as if they fail to have other identities or participate in exchanges that might occur elsewhere (e.g., in a living room, an office, a store). In her valuable critique of ethnographic film, Fatimah Tobing Rony, citing historian Michèle Dutchet, asserted that Enlightenment thinkers "located the study of non-Western indigenous peoples as a subfield of natural history . . ." (1996, 7–8). Similarly, Michael Dettelbach explains that, "Tropical peoples were condemned to remain mired in nature, while the peoples of Europe contemplated that nature in their glass houses" (Dettelbach 2005, 52–53).

As an iconographic inventory of Puerto Rico, the Detroit Photographic Company's photographs craft a Humboldtian "tropicality," showing seemingly meek and docile subjects dwarfed against the powerfully lush vegetation with which they cohabit. Several master tropes of historical and philosophical significance are implicit in these photographs. First, a brief historical detour: early in the 1800s when Alexander Von Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland presented their American herbaria to the Institut National of France, they presented a palm tree as the emblem of the tropics (Dettelbach 2005, 46). Underscoring Humboldt's importance, Mary Louise Pratt writes in *Imperial Eyes* that

“Humboldt . . . existed and exists . . . as a Man and a Life . . . he did not write or travel as a humble instrument of European-knowledge-making apparatuses, but as their creator” (1992, 115). Pratt further tells us that Humboldt “reinvented South America first and foremost as nature. Not a nature that sits waiting to be known and possessed, but a nature in motion, powered by life forces many of which are invisible to the human eye; a nature that dwarfs humans, commands their being, arouses their passion, defies their powers of perception” (1992, 120).

In the American Memory archive, out of the forty-two photographs of Puerto Rico attributed to the Detroit Photographic Company, seven are representations of the “cocoanut palm.”8 The presence of the palm tree in the collection’s photographs is in part due to do their ubiquitous presence in the island’s vegetation, and in part is a result of the focus of the photographer’s optic. This spelling of “cocoanut,” a variant of the contemporary “coconut,” appears in Arnold Guyot’s *Physical Geography* (1885) in an evocative illustration titled “Aspects of Nature in Different Latitudes.” In Guyot’s rendering the “Cocoanut Palm” stands as the iconic representation of the zero latitude, which he labeled “Singapore.” “Aspects of Nature in Different Latitudes” names iconic cities such as Singapore, Madras, Calcutta, Cairo, New York, Paris, London, Edinburg, St. Petersburg, and Hammerfest as representative of climate and temperature at various latitudes with the resulting flora and fauna. In his work Guyot celebrates the glorious fecundity of tropical vegetation, yet in line with Eurocentric notions of his time, claims that “The human family appears in its highest physical perfection, not within the Tropics, but in the Temperate Zone . . .” (Cosgrove 2005, 210). As Denis Cosgrove writes, “Guyot’s tropical geography is by no means unique. Indeed, as a school text, its significance lies precisely in demonstrating how culturally broad and deep was the convergence of Humboldtian science and colonial ideology in framing ‘tropical space’ at the dawn of the twentieth century” (2005, 210).

By the first century of Spanish colonization of Puerto Rico, the island had been divided along a sort of tropical-temperate axis that mirrored Guyot’s proposition. The Puerto Rican coast, which extends the entire periphery of the island, was the location on which slave plantations were established because it made the transportation of sugar cane to the docks shorter, more efficient, and cost effective. Climatically, the Puerto Rican coast is hotter than the cooler interior-mountainous region.9 And the north-Atlantic coast is cooler than the warmer more arid southern-Caribbean coast. These climatic and geographic divisions have had real and long-standing social implications (González 1980; Scarano 1984; Torres 1998; Findlay Suárez 1999; Figueroa 2005; among others).

As the territory of the plantation, the coast was understood mainly as the place where the enslaved lived. The coast developed unevenly: the mangroves, swamps, and generally less habitable locations were left entirely for the black population to manage and settle. Manageable and/or desirable parts of the coast were set aside for the recreation of the elite, for government, and for commerce. For example, Old San Juan originally settled as a port on the Atlantic coast and was later fortified to defend the island from attacks. It eventually became a cosmopolitan enclave where foreigners, the island intelligentsia, and the governor resided. Elite satellite enclaves such as Miramar, El Condado, and later Isla Verde, which were located away from the depravities of the port but close enough to the social life of the city, began to emerge in the outskirts of the fortified “old” city. In contrast, on the southern-Caribbean coast, the town of Ponce—the nation’s enclave of a strong, white, creole, provincial elite—did not develop along the lines of San Juan. In Ponce, a stronghold of plantation society, the elite settled away from the coast and instead put their resources into developing an architecturally significant *pueblo* or town center from which power radiated from the inside of town out towards the coast/port. As William Mitchell puts it, “Geography is destiny; it constructs representations of crisp and often brutal clarity” (1996, 10).

Elsewhere, I have called this racialized settlement pattern and perceptual practice “geographic blackness.” Geographic blackness refers to common spatial, speech, and behavioral practices that segregate and marginalizes blackness (and black people) from national and territorial conceptions of the Puerto Rican nation. Translated in spatial-geographic terms, I claim that race is used to demarcate physical spaces thereby certain geographiclocations are deployed as simply being “Puerto Rican,” to signify Creole and/or white, while others are marked as exclusively inhabited by blacks (i.e. black spaces such as Loíza, for instance) (Lloréns 2005, 160; Lloréns 2008, 204;

Lloréns and Carrasquillo 2008, 110).

On the one hand, the widely held notion that the skin color of Africans made them better suited than whites to the tropical heat and sun naturalized their position as the enslaved, and later as workers constrained largely to residence on the coast. On the other, the belief that whites were unable to tolerate the heat of the tropical coast created a residence pattern in which they either settled in the temperate interior of the island or, if belonging to the upper class, retreated to their mountain estates during the intensity of the summer months and holidays. In the specific case of Puerto Rico, as elsewhere in the tropics, Eurocentric notions of both climate and race have informed all aspects of life from settlement patterns and public uses of space, to official history, to artistic renderings of icons of the national body.

It is in regard to this last statement that “Puerto Rican Natives” creates “friction” in the national narrative about who constitutes the iconic, essential Puerto Rican (Tsing 2005, 5). The colonial transition from Spain to the United States created ambivalence in the island’s social reality because competing narratives about who and what constituted the Puerto Rican nation emerged. This “frictional” reality—between colonial and local governments as well as between Puerto Ricans themselves—has been an essential part of the Puerto Rican experience throughout the American century.

A significant narrative constructed by Puerto Rico’s elite is the constitution of the *jíbaro* as the icon of the “national soul” (González 1980, 56; Pedreira 1934; Babín 1973). The *jíbaro* archetype is the white-Creole subsistence farmer who draws sustenance from the land and lives in the island’s interior mountains. In her brief book, *La Cultura de Puerto Rico*, Maria Teresa Babín (1973, 61–76) writes that, “It is in the person of the *jíbaro* that the essence of a Puerto Rican nationality is made truly concrete” and “ . . . they are what holds Puerto Rico’s ideological and cultural history together, the soul of our insular *criollismo*. What is a *jíbaro*? . . . he is the white Puerto Rican peasant.” Babin’s eulogy to the *jíbaro* is widespread in Puerto Rico. Many ordinary Puerto Ricans from the island and the diaspora are quick to proclaim their *jíbaro* roots with pride.

Ramón Frade’s *El Pan Nuestro* [Our Daily Bread] 1905, (Figure 1.2), is an oil painting in the *costumbrista* tradition that exemplifies Babin’s description of the *jíbaro*. The *costumbrista* tradition, a nineteenth century Hispanic

Ramón Frade, El Pan Nuestro [Our Daily Bread] (1905). Ramón Frade, c. 1905, oil on canvas, Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña.

Ramón Frade, El Pan Nuestro [Our Daily Bread] (1905). Ramón Frade, c. 1905, oil on canvas, Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña. A black and white painting of a man in a straw hat, holding a bunch of plantains. He is walking on a path in a hilly landscape.artistic-movement, was concerned with offering realist rendering of local everyday life, tradition, and customs.

Ramón Frade’s *El Pan Nuestro*, which he produced only seven years after the American intervention in Puerto Rico, was meant to depict self-reliance and Puerto Rican patriotism. Ramón Frade was a cosmopolitan man. He was born in Cayey, Puerto Rico, a town characterized by its interiority—located in the center of Puerto Rico in the mountains that make up the Central Mountain Range. Adopted by a Spanish man and his Dominican wife in his youth, Frade traveled in Europe and lived in Madrid and Santo Domingo. As an adult he traveled through and painted in Haiti, Cuba, Jamaica, and South America. In 1903 he settled in Cayey, Puerto Rico where he spent the rest of his life (Ramírez 1987; Delgado 1989, 1998a; Torres Martinó 1998a).

Frade’s birthplace is a defining element in his paintings. Ramírez notes that nineteenth-century Puerto Rican literature and art is characterized by a concern with portraying “a realist and naturalist exaltation of local manners and traditions” (1987, 18). Although Frade and his contemporaries were well aware of the art currents in vogue at the time such as symbolism, art nouveau, and fauvism,

they chose to heed Francisco Oller's call for making art that engaged the social, political, and religious reality of its time (Ramírez 1987, 17). For Oller, "the artist must participate in the epoch in which he lives; he must be of his country, of his people, if he wants to be authentic" (Ramírez 1987, 17 cf. Boime 1983, 41–42). Referring to his later piece, *Paisaje Campestre en Cayey* [Country Landscape in Cayey] 1949, Frade writes in a letter to a friend that "Es cosa íntima mía . . . algo de mi corazón puertorriqueño. . . . Y como todo lo puertorriqueño se lo está llevando el viento . . . en mi deseo de perpetuarlo, lo pinto" (It is an intimate thing to me . . . something that comes from my Puerto Rican heart. . . . And since all things Puerto Rican are being blown away by the wind . . . I wish to preserve it, so I paint it" (Torres Martinó 1998a, 76–77).

Representationally, *El Pan Nuestro* is laden with meaning. Like the *jíbaro* (the Puerto Rican-born son of Spanish immigrants who makes a living from the land and brings the nation her daily sustenance), Frade's subject is undoubtedly white. Rather than carrying bread he carries plantains, a quintessentially Caribbean food staple. The plantains he so gently cradles in his arms, as well as the palm tree standing tall in the distance, locate him in the tropics, specifically the Caribbean. An aging farmer wearing the iconic straw hat of Puerto Rico's peasants, his wrinkled face illustrates that time, and perhaps even worry, has weathered his face. He is not a wealthy man, for he wears no shoes; his bare feet suggest that he is rooted in the land.

El Pan Nuestro proposes more than just the *jíbaro* as central to Puerto Rican nationality; it offers the plantain as the nourishment of the nation. These plantains are plump, green, and healthy. The motherland is fertile and generous, and by ingesting her plantains her children simultaneously ingest the nation. The nation then, more than cultural or political, becomes biological. The plantains also point out the regenerative nature of vegetation. The painting underscores the very cycles of life by juxtaposing an aging peasant holding a young *racimo de platanos* [bunch of bananas] in lieu of a baby.

No doubt Frade was also nodding to his artistic predecessor and one of Puerto Rico's foremost painters, Francisco Oller. Oller (1833–1917) is known as the most important painter of his time, whose masterpiece *El Velorio* [The Wake] 1893, is widely considered a landmark in the Caribbean artistic repertoire (Ramírez 1987; Delgado 1998b; Poupeye 1998; Mirzoeff 2011; Cortés 2012). Oller is regarded as the most significant predecessor of Puerto Rico's master *costumbrista* painters. Oller studied art in Madrid and Paris where he befriended Camille Pissarro, Paul Cézanne, and Armand Guillaumin and his art was influenced by French impressionism. By 1884 Oller abandoned Impressionism "to dedicate himself to the creation of an art of Puerto Rico for Puerto Ricans," work that became associated with late nineteenth century nationalism (Ramírez 1987, 53).

Oller places plantains at the center of the canvas in *El Velorio* and in other compositions.10 If Frade uses the plantain to represent the cycle of life, juxtaposing youth and aging, Oller in *El Velorio* uses the plantain—which, as a "national" foodstuff like corn and rice, symbolizes life—to oppose death, the painting's major theme. The food produced by the national territory is a "potent symbol of personal and group identity, forming one of the foundations of both individuality and a sense of common membership in a larger, bounded group" (Wilk 1999, 244).

The photo "Puerto Rican Natives," produced in 1903, and *El Pan Nuestro*, painted only two years later, are each icons of the Puerto Rican nation in the earliest years of American occupation. At stake here is the definition of the national icon. Nations are built by creating the illusion of sameness and hence unity among inevitably diverse peoples. Excluding historically derogated populations (blacks, indigenous people, and other minorities) from the nation's core unifies the remainder under a common, unmarked identity (Roediger 1999, 2002). Under American colonialism, Puerto Ricans who considered themselves the rightful representatives of the nation—the white creole elite—felt a greater need to assert a national identity in the face of the threat of cultural assimilation to the imperial metropolis. As Arlene Torres remarks, "The image of *la gran familia* became further solidified in the early twentieth century as members of the Creole elite sought to establish their Puerto Rican identity in opposition to the new colonial power, the United States" (Torres 1998, 294). According to Torres, *la gran familia* as a national ideology harks back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when the Creole elite conceived of Puerto Rico as

a “great *jíbaro* family, with the *hacendado* as the paternalistic and benevolent head who provided for his children . . . for the good of the nation” (1998, 294).

Nation building requires concise definitions of which persons best represent the nation, of which precise bodies make up the essential body politic. In the early years of the American occupation particularly, white (Hispanic Catholic) Creoles deployed the *jíbaro*—that essential rooted peasant, son of mother Spain, shaped and sustained by the fruits of the tropical Puerto Rican soil—as the iconic representation of the Puerto Rican nation. The 1898 American occupation complicated Hispanophile assertions about who constituted the Puerto Rican nation. As Jorge Duany puts it, “Since 1898, national identity in Puerto Rico has developed under—and often in outright opposition to—U.S. hegemony” (2002, 16). The upper classes were invested in representing the Puerto Rican nation as white, but they claimed that Puerto Ricans inherited their whiteness from the “Iberian race” as opposed to the “Anglo-Saxon race” of the American colonizers (Carrión 1997, 177).

Yet real class and racial fissures pervaded the aforementioned national project. Puerto Rican workers and blacks, the “others” that the Creole elite attempted to subsume under the discourse of “*la gran familia*,” were less concerned about the U.S.’s arrival on the island. In fact, Carrión writes that “Blacks and mulattos had less reason than whites to identify with the Hispanic imaginary of the Puerto Rican nationality, they had suffered slavery and discrimination under Spain” (1997, 177). In a similar vein, Eileen Findlay Suárez remarks that, “Working people also celebrated the U.S. occupation. . . . Overall, they saw the United States as a liberator from Spanish (in which they included local elites) oppression. . . . [A]nd for Puerto Ricans of African descent, the principles of the United States Constitution seemed to hold out a radical promise of social and legal equality for all people” (1999, 116–117).

In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Puerto Rican literature, blacks came into view, if at all, as supporting actors from the confines of the plantations, the kitchen, the cane fields, and the coast, and as drummers and dancers (González 1980; Rodríguez-Juliá 1983; Flores 1993, 2000; Torres 1998; Ramos-Rosado 1999; Godreau 1999, 2008; Lloréns 2005, 2008, among others). In contrast, in Francisco Oller’s master paintings, *La Escuela del Maestro Rafael Cordero* [Rafael Cordero’s School] ca. 1890–1892, *Jibarito Tocando Guiro* [Jibarito playing the gourd] 1892, and *El Velorio* [The Wake] 1893, he depict blacks as part of Puerto Rican society. Delgado explains that “A su vez Oller es valedor del negro y no desperdicia oportunidad de señalar sus virtudes” (At the same time Oller valorizes blacks and he does not waste any opportunity in pointing out their virtues) (1998b, 44). He further notes, “El sentido de integridad racial y de emociones y pensamiento entre los elementos que conforman la puertorriqueñidad lo significa Oller cuando convierte al negro en su *alter ego*” [Oller signifies a sense of racial integrity and emotion and thought that form part of the elements that make-up puertoricanness when he makes the black man his *alter ego*] (1998b, 45). Similarly, Oscar Colón Delgado’s painting *Lavanderas* [Washerwomen] 1916, portrays as its protagonist a black woman. Thus in Puerto Rican artistic production, it is the painters, not the writers, who first and most prominently portray blacks as central to the Puerto Rican nation.

In American photographs at the turn of the century, blacks are often the protagonists. American photographers created a proto-ethnographic archive of the black Puerto Ricans who had long been hidden from view in literary production. The themes of Puerto Rico rendered in this photographic archive, however, shadow very closely the iconic representations deployed on canvas by Puerto Rican painters.

Paintings such as Francisco Oller’s *La Ceiba de Ponce* [Ponce’s Ceiba Tree] 1887–1888, Oscar Colón Delgado’s *Lavanderas* [Washerwomen] 1916, and Miguel Pou’s *Escena del Rio Maragüez* [Scene in Maragüez River] 1948, depict washerwomen at work. Similarly, dozens of postcards printed between 1890–1950 depict women laundering clothes in Puerto Rican rivers. “Puerto Rican Laundry” c. 1903, was issued jointly by the Detroit Publishing Company and Waldrop Photo Company, and is an example of the washerwoman theme.11

The presence of women hard at work in the rivers of Puerto Rico appears to have been so striking that artists—painters and photographers—immortalized them as significant icons of this era. For

example, in Colón Delgado's *Lavanderas* [Washerwomen] 1916, (Figure 1.3), the protagonist is the black woman on the left. Her hands are sunken in water containing the clothes she is laundering as she looks at the painter/viewer with apparent curiosity. Similarly, a photograph sold as a postcard titled "Lavanderas Negras" [Black Washerwomen] published by A. Guilot (date of publication unknown) appears to take its representational cue directly from Delgado's painting. Depictions of women at work break the script of the Caribbean as a paradise in which people spend their time lazily enjoying the sun and surf. They show instead the remarkably difficult tasks in which poor women,

Oscar Colón Delgado, Lavanderas [Washerwomen] (1916). Courtesy of Carmen E. Colón Juarbe.

Oscar Colón Delgado, Lavanderas [Washerwomen] (1916). Courtesy of Carmen E. Colón Juarbe. A painting titled "Lavanderas" by Oscar Colón Delgado, depicting three women washing clothes by a river. One woman in the foreground is looking towards the viewer while two others are seen from the back, focused on their task.and specifically black women, engaged. Still, the "washerwoman" motif reinscribes the black woman as worker and servant.

The "Straw Hut"

The "Straw Hut"

For that we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. —Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value"

"Typical Puerto Rican Hut" c.1903, was first created as a black and white photo on a glass negative (Figure 1.4). This photograph, credited to the Detroit Photographic Company (photographer not specified), names as its subject: "Taino Indians—Structures—Puerto Rico. Huts. Puerto Rico—San Juan." Like the corpus of images in the Detroit Publishing Company under study here from the American Memory Collection, the photograph exemplifies the "peopled landscape" trope, even as the title highlights the native's material culture. The large straw abode at the center of the image frames a woman holding two toddlers on her lap while seated on a palm tree trunk. The image's composition insinuates to viewers that the people in the picture are the dwelling's inhabitants, though we will never know if this is true. A

"Typical Puerto Rican Hut." Courtesy of the Library of Congress, call number: LC-D4-16745.

"Typical Puerto Rican Hut." Courtesy of the Library of Congress, call number: LC-D4-16745. A black and white photograph from the early 20th century showing a large straw hut surrounded by palm trees. A woman sits on a log in front of the hut with three small children. A chicken is visible to the left of the hut.chicken roaming the premises appears on the left side. The "hut" stands in a clearing amid luxuriant tropical vegetation and palms, suggesting the dwelling's proximity to the coast.

There are dozens of postcards depicting varying versions of a "native hut" in locations all over the colonial world. About Puerto Rico alone, the Detroit Photographic Company, the Waldrop Photo

Company, and Raphael Tuck Sons, Ltd. published several versions of the “native hut” or “natives and hut” between the 1890s and 1940s. Permeating this representational trope is a pseudo-ethnographic interest in how the “natives” lived, which works to situate the viewer, collector, or sender of these postcards as irrefutably modern. Postcards representing the “native others” thus trained the cosmopolitan to deploy an “ethnographic gaze” that “constructed modernity by picturing the primitive as its defining other” (Desmond 1999, 463). Hut-themed postcards indexed “native” technology as primitive and “native” people as part of the “natural world.” Another key characteristic of this representation is that the “natives” are always pictured standing or sitting beside their dwellings, co-mingling freely with animals, dirt, and vegetation, and using rudimentary materials such as tree trunks as furniture.

The depictions of Puerto Rican turn of the century dwellings are not unique to American photographs and postcards. In fact, several iconic paintings made by Puerto Rican artists represent the thatched roofed dwellings typical of the era. These include José López de Victoria’s *Las Cuatro Estaciones* [The Four Seasons], date unknown, Francisco Oller’s *Paisaje de la Finca El Guaraguao* [Landscape from Guaraguao Farm] 1884, *Bohío Junto al Mar* [Hut Beside the Sea] c. 1913, *Campesina* [Peasant Woman] 1915, Ramón Frade’s *El Pan Nuestro* [Our Daily Bread] 1905, Oscar Colón Delgado’s *Paisaje con Bohío y Ropa* [Landscape with Hut and Clothing] 1916, and Miguel Pou’s *Paisaje de Montaña* [Mountain Landscape] 1923.

Oscar Colón Delgado’s masterpiece *Paisaje con Bohío y Ropa* [Landscape with Hut and Clothing] 1916, offers a particularly dignified rendition of the same theme that is diametrically opposed in several ways to the “hut” photographs taken by American photographers. Like other *costumbristas*, his paintings confirm his ardent love for Puerto Rico—a nation he felt deserved a sovereign destiny. In *Paisaje con Bohío y Ropa*, Colón Delgado offers the viewer a soft, hazy, and romantic Puerto Rican landscape. This landscape signals interiority—that is, a sense of being away from the island’s coast—and places at the center the large and lush vegetation of Puerto Rico’s *campo* [countryside]. The dwelling—large, clean, orderly, and venerable—is framed by vegetation, including at least two plantain trees. A peasant man dressed in white stands halfway between his door and a line of white clothes drying freely in the breeze. This bucolic scene has a spiritual affect—an affect that has marked the nationalist endeavor—calling for Puerto Ricans to fight to maintain their uniquely Puerto Rican identity and essence in the face of the modernizing customs of the powerful colonial metropolis. As Torres Martinó puts it,

. . . if art is to effectively collaborate in resisting the cultural push from the North it must be able to engage in an aesthetics of communication. Without communication it is very difficult to rally the Puerto Rican nation to fight for its survival. It is proven that art forms an important part of the spiritual reserve that Puerto Ricans need to maintain their cultural identity (1998a:81; author’s translation).12

The man in Colón Delgado’s painting stands confidently without shoes, his arm on his hip. Like the black woman in *Lavanderas*, this *jíbaro* regards the viewer from a distance. It is remarkable that Colón Delgado’s subjects stare back. They meet the viewer’s gaze as if to tell us that regardless of the time that has elapsed, they are the masters of their destinies, they witness their stories as active participants in them, and they, too, have the power of vision. The white clothes, both worn and hanging on the line, signify purity, comfort, and simplicity much like the clean landscape over which this man presides. He is clearly the architect of his domain; the vegetation surrounding this “hut” has been carefully and lovingly pruned. He cohabitates with nature because it is a way of life, an active choice this *jíbaro* has made—not the result of an inability to control it but as the acknowledgement of his supreme love for his land, his nation. Finally, beyond the commanding wooden frame of this dwelling’s front door is a stool, a proper piece of furniture is depicted one that was typically used by poor Puerto Ricans during this time period.

It is noteworthy that unlike many of the master painters of the era, Colón Delgado was from a poor family. Yet, as Torres Martinó notes, his work is esthetically similar to that of his contemporaries and he appears to have identified with the creole elite’s ideology (1998a:76). By the early decades of the twentieth century, Colón Delgado declared his nationalist inclinations and his fervent

admiration for don Pedro Albizu Campos, a venerated leader in Puerto Rico's independence struggle.

From Photograph To Postcard: Whose Culture Is Depicted?

From Photograph To Postcard: Whose Culture Is Depicted?

"A Typical Puerto Rican Hut" (Figure 1.4), copyrighted in 1903 to the Detroit Photographic Company, became color postcard #7417. The DPC marketed their color postcards, upon licensing them, as offering a "truer" rendition of reality. The Library of Congress notes that

At a time when color photography was still rare, demand for these color images was high. The Detroit Photographic Company reportedly produced seven million photochrom prints in some years. As many as ten to thirty thousand different views were offered.13

As a souvenir, the postcard is a "snapshot" meant to encapsulate in abbreviated format some essentially iconic aspect of local reality. When a tourist or a traveler purchases a postcard (once a photographic object) and sends it by post to another, he/she is forwarding an extension of an experience, the representational icons depicting what the traveler's eyes may or may not have seen. For the traveler, the postcard establishes the "having been there" aspect of travel (Desmond 1999). The motifs encapsulated inside the frame of the postcard are believed to be unique representations of a place.

The postcard is emblematic of the modern experience, which is marked by technological progress, the rise of a European and American middle-class, and unprecedented access to both commodities and leisure travel (Rogan 2005; MacCannell 1976). For travelers the postcard is a light and portable medium with which to convey a brief message while engaged in the motion that is travel. It is an object imbued with multiple meanings, including medium of communication, commodity, memento, and gift (Rogan 2005). The postcard is thus a signifier of status, travel, leisure, wealth, and even cosmopolitanism. As transmitters of perceptions of culture, the photographs taken by outsiders, later turned into postcards and offered as commodities, beg the question: whose culture is transmitted? Is it the culture of the colonial agent, or of those whose reality has been apprehended in the image?

"Typical Puerto Rican Hut" (Figure 1.4), intends to offer the viewer a "backstage" glimpse of the lives of Puerto Rican people (Goffman 1959; MacCannell 1976; Larsen 1999). Issues surrounding authenticity permeate studies about tourism and the tourist experience, including the material culture produced and sold under the auspices of tourism. How "authentic" is the image found in a postcard? Are tourists even concerned with authenticity? Some scholars suggest that tourists' notions of what constitutes authenticity during a travel encounter stem from the stereotyped notions they already possess of a place (Wang 1999; Silver 1993; Laxson 1991; Duncan 1978; Bruner 1991; Adams 1984). In effect, when touring the "native other," tourists project a "Western consciousness" when deciding what constitutes authenticity (Wang 1999; Silver 1993; Bruner 1991). Aponte-Parés has deemed postcards of Puerto Rico at the turn of the twentieth century to be significant aids in the "invention of Puerto Rico" (2008).14 Following this lead, I contend that the postcard is as much a product of colonialism as a witness to it.

In the late nineteenth century, postcard collectors the world over began to seek out and trade postcards representing places, people, technology (real or imaginary), landscapes, and architecture. For the middle-class European and American viewer, the postcard depicting the

“ethnic,” “savage,” “native,” and/or “primitive other” showed the “other’s” pre-modern state while affirming the viewer’s own modern, civilized station. As a melancholic object, the postcard pictured the “natives” before their unrecognizable transformation into modern citizens, a direct result of the sweeping changes brought by the various colonial agendas at work throughout the world.

In the summer of 2012, I located an original unsent postcard of “Typical Puerto Rican Hut” for sale on the online auction service, Ebay. The seller, Heather, noted in her description that the postcard was from her grandmother’s collection. I purchased the postcard for about $8.00 and contacted the seller using the Ebay message tool to ask her if she would be interested in speaking with me about her grandmother’s life and postcard collection.

Heather agreed and we proceeded to engage in several telephone and email conversations on topics that ranged from biographical details to what she imagined were Fanny’s (her grandmother’s) reasons for amassing a collection of 30,000 postcards representing a wide range of regions and themes. Coincidentally, Rogan has noted that turn of the century postcard collecting was a fad started by women (2005, 3). What made Fanny become such an avid collector? And how did she acquire “Typical Puerto Rican Hut?”

Heather explained that her grandmother, who was born in 1890, began collecting postcards at a young age and by the early 1910s had a sizable collection. Fanny was born in Astoria, Oregon and lived in Seattle until she moved to Honolulu in 1953. Her early life was characterized by her father’s lengthy absences from family life—he was a sea captain. Every time he traveled his four daughters, including Fanny, looked forward to receiving letters and photos of faraway places. In her youth, Fanny’s father took her and her three sisters, “all of them tomboys,” on a month-long sea voyage to Alaska. This trip made an impression on Fanny and set her on a path of discovery. Heather describes Fanny and her sisters as “very independent women.” Fanny completed two years at the University of Oregon before World War I but dropped out to help at home. At thirty, she married Merv, a local heir to an iron works company, and they spent the rest of their lives together in Honolulu where Fanny died in 1976.

Fanny was a modern woman. She played the piano, wrote poetry, and enjoyed traveling by rail and by ship. Heather recounts that Fanny enjoyed history, travel, and art, and remarks that the postcards “combined all three.” She was a social person and sent “a lot of postcards.” It was her way of keeping in touch with her loved ones, and also a way to trade with other collectors in distant places. Heather believes that her grandmother may have obtained “Typical Puerto Rican Hut” from another collector, perhaps someone on the east coast. Heather noted that postcards of the Caribbean, the Bahamas, and Puerto Rico in Fanny’s collection are rare. The collection is comprised mostly of views of the American West, the Pacific, Black Americana, and other thematic genres like Halloween and Christmas. Fanny also collected plates, spoons, and antique greeting cards. As the heir to these collections, Heather, who is in her sixties and makes her living mainly from her Ebay shop, feels she is doing a service by making the collection available to people who may find special meaning in these antique documents.

When I acquired “Typical Puerto Rican Hut,” I engaged in more than an economic transaction or exchange. I was interested in understanding the biography of this object. I understood this postcard “as a social actor . . . that constructed and influenced the field of social action” (Gosden and Marshall 1999, 174 cf. Gell 1998). In terms of its context (Appadurai 1986), it fulfilled its initial intention of working as a representation of Puerto Rico made for the U.S. mass market. Along with thousands of other such representations spanning the globe, “Typical Puerto Rican Hut” became part of an American woman’s postcard collection. This postcard, which originated in Puerto Rico, made its way to the Pacific Northwest, then to Honolulu, and after this woman died, back to the Pacific Northwest where her granddaughter sold it online. Now it lives with me, a diasporic Puerto Rican woman of Afro descent in the east coast region of the United States. This postcard, as an object, has endured a series of re-contextualizations. Made originally for American spectators/viewers, the postcard makes its way back “home” to the possession of a displaced national who is trying to understand the contradictions, erasures, and exposures of a colonial history. These historic postcards more generally have become nostalgic and evidentiary historic

documents.15 As Gosden and Marshall put it, “objects become invested with meaning through the social interactions they are caught up in. These meanings change and are renegotiated through the life of an object” (1999, 170).

In a Barthian sense (1981), I feel *pricked* by a “Typical Puerto Rican Hut.” A connection between this postcard and myself is conclusively established first by the referent in its title to “Puerto Rican,” that colonial nation to which I ascribe my diasporic identity. The title as referent has effectively hailed me. Now that it has my attention, I examine first the vegetation and conclude that it represents that essentially Caribbean landscape, the one in which my very ancestors—mostly African, who arrived in Puerto Rico variously as enslaved and free people—once settled. My senses are activated. I recall the tropical scent of the sea, the greenery, and the humid air. I recall the gritty feel of sand sticking uncomfortably to my feet. I hear the chicken’s call. The nostalgic longing for this landscape—for my dead relatives, for my youth, for a homeland that ejected us to the North so long ago now—overwhelms me. Who is the woman and children posing in front of this “hut?” Are they my ancestors? I want to recuperate their story, I want to return them from the dead and hear their names, learn their lineage. I want them to cease being the silent representatives, the main actors, in a stereotype. I want to properly inscribe them in the very history that made them into silent images, denying them the word. I am writing them into history.

Notes

Notes

http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/pgz/process.html.

http://www.emotionscards.com/museum/historyofpostcards.htm.

Waitley writes that “Buffalo Bill Cody had tried to get a space at the Expo for his Wild West show but was turned down. . . . Undaunted, Cody leased fifteen acres directly opposite the fair’s entrance, put up a grandstand that held eighteen thousand people, and ran two performances a day. Cody and his partner had made a cool million by the end of the summer, at which time the Indian performers were sent back to their reservations” (1999, 184–185).

www.metropostcard.com/publishersw.html.

http://www.metropostcard.com/publishersw.html.

http://www.plannersnetwork.org/publications/2008_spring/aponte.html.

There is evidence that this specific card was mailed and presumably bought at local shops in at least Puerto Rico, Florida and New Orleans.

The DPC published several other postcards entitled “cocoanut palms” and “cocoanut grove” that are not housed in the American Memory Archive.

There is a range in temperature and while it maybe a balmy 90 degrees on the coast, in the mountain region it maybe a comfortable 80 degrees.

Other works by Oller that feature plantains centrally include *Platanos Amarillos* (Yellow Plantains) ca. 1893 and *Platanos y Bananas* (Plantains and Bananas) 1893.

Library of Congress, call number: LC-D4-16744.

Original: . . . si el arte ha de colaborar efectivamente en la resistencia cultural contra la pujanza de la cultura norteña apenas puede hacerlo desde una estética que limite la comunicabilidad. Sin comunicación resulta difícil congregar la voluntad del pueblo puertorriqueño para la lucha por sobrevivencia. Y está probado que el arte forma parte importante de la reserva espiritual que necesitaban los puertorriqueños para mantener su identidad (1998a, 81).

http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/pgz/process.html.

http://www.plannersnetwork.org/publications/2008_spring/aponte.html.

These photographs and postcards are used routinely in Puerto Rican history classrooms as visual aids (e.g., Trinity College's History 378: "Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans: Colony, Nation, and Diaspora" http://www.trincoll.edu/classes/hist378/archivo/prpics1.htm). Online historic photographic archives also feature and sell these postcards (e.g., http://archivofotograficodepuertorio.com/).

Chapter 5: Building A “Photographic Case” For The Rehabilitation Of The Colony, 1930S

Building A “Photographic Case” For The Rehabilitation Of The Colony, 1930S

Although there is a sense in which the camera does indeed capture reality, not just interpret it, photographs are as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are.

—Susan Sontag, *On Photography*

Edwin and Louise Rosskam disembarked in San Juan, Puerto Rico “on assignment” for *Life* magazine in December 1937. Edwin Rosskam had initially secured the project to interview and photograph Pedro Albizu Campos, the Harvard-trained lawyer and World War I veteran who led Puerto Rico’s fledging pro-independence and nationalist movement. But destiny had other plans. Earlier that year Albizu Campos had been jailed in an Atlanta prison for conspiring to overthrow the U.S. government. So instead, the Rosskams focused their cameras on the trial of the nationalists who had survived the 1937 Palm Sunday Ponce Massacre. Their picture-making mission took them through the island where they witnessed widespread poverty, people suffering from malnutrition and preventable diseases, and rampant political corruption. This Puerto Rican trip, the first for the recently married pair, helped establish their place in the canon of American photo-documentarians.

The photographs they produced between December 1937 and January 1938 are housed in the Library of Congress’s American Memory collection. My goal in examining them is to extract “relevant sociocultural meaning” (Scherer 1992, 32),1 to uncover the multiple and complex significances entailed and situate the work within a broader historical context. I aim to decipher the photographs’ role in “building a case” for a colonial state that “saw” its subjects in need of cultural, economic, and political rehabilitation. This latter concern is not an indictment of the photographers’ intentions. Rather, it indicates an investigative direction that recognizes the embeddedness of representations within the beliefs, values, and classifications of the historical period in which they are produced.

Rehabilitating The Colony

Rehabilitating The Colony

The 1920s–1950s witnessed the earnest beginnings of American development projects on the island. As such, the visual production of this period offers a revealing picture of the rapid, turbulent, and uneven transformations experienced by a people on the edges of modernity while at the epicenter of U.S. imperial power. Indeed the decades preceding the Rosskams’ arrival are chronicled as some of the most difficult under U.S. occupation.

For instance, Guerra (1998) states that between 1890 and 1920 the quality of life for rural and working Puerto Ricans declined precipitously. She writes that ". . . the combination of inflated prices for basic necessities, low wages, and the inaccessibility of land created a substantial deterioration in the average Puerto Rican's ability to survive within a rapidly intensifying capitalist system" (1998, 32). By the late 1920s conditions on the island were dire. As if nature had conspired to makes matters worse, in 1928 a devastating hurricane, San Felipe, left at least a half-million people destitute and dealt a terrible blow to the agricultural industry. As Morales-Carrión remarks, "San Felipe marked the end of the era of flattering statistics. The era of dismal statistics then began. . . . Stark socioeconomic realities began to creep into the picture" (1983, 212).

After he toured the island in 1929, then-governor Theodore Roosevelt Jr., who served as Puerto Rico's governor from 1929–1932, published an article titled "The Children of Famine" reporting on the grim reality of life. He remarked that, "farm after farm lean, underfed women and sickly men repeated again and again the same story little food and no opportunity to get more. I have seen mothers carrying babies who were little skeletons. . . . " (Wagenheim and Jiménez de Wagenheim 2008, 168; Santiago-Valles 1994, 149).

The Great Depression increased the appalling hardship experienced by thousands of Puerto Ricans (Rodríguez 2011, 45) and in 1932, another devastating hurricane, San Ciprián, made landfall intensifying the miserable conditions. By the 1930s land had been lost to consolidated American mills, agriculture had become a sugar mono-crop economy, and subsistence farming had declined. These, coupled with the increased dependency on food exports and chronic unemployment and underemployment created the calamitous situation experienced by working and rural Puerto Ricans during the early years of American political rule and capitalist integration (Dietz 1986; Guerra 1998; Rodríguez 2011).

Santiago-Valles (1994) writes that between 1920 until the mid-1940s women and girls comprised the labor force in "nonagricultural manual occupations" (144). Most notably they worked in home needlework, an expansive and grueling industry with inadequate remuneration. In general, children were disproportionately affected by the difficult situation and often worked inside or outside the home to contribute to the maintenance of their families. Rodríguez writes that in the fruit industry, children's wages fluctuated between twenty to twenty-six cents per day. They suffered the highest mortality rates from diseases such as diarrhea, tuberculosis, and malaria (2011, 23). Guerra writes that ". . . the principal promise of Americanization—that the next generation of Puerto Rican children born under U.S. colonial rule would be better off than their parents—was betrayed by the very contradictions of colonial policy: the greater number of schools built after 1898 had to compete with the greater number of sugar plantations in attracting students" (1998, 37). By the 1930s there was an eligible student population of approximately 500,000 but the schools had the capacity to accommodate only 220,000 of them (Rodríguez 2011, 24; Negrón de Montilla 1970).

Puerto Ricans were not passive in the face of these conditions. They resisted the new social, political, and economic order in a myriad of ways. For example the Nationalist Party, founded in 1922, became a potent symbol of resistance to U.S. colonial intervention. Islanders began to utilize American colonial laws to organize labor unions, to advocate for women's rights and public education, and to increase access to medical services and care. On the one hand, intense capitalist penetration contributed to the deterioration of the quality of life in Puerto Rico. On the other hand, newly established colonial systems (such as laws, organizations, and campaigns) allowed working and poor Puerto Ricans a measure of empowerment and solidarity in dealing with social issues such as workers' rights, women's rights, education, and healthcare. The U.S. constitution provided women and workers a space to claim a modicum of rights within the highly contradictory colonial system (Carrión 1997).

Labor strikes were common in the 1920s and islanders showcased their agency in this significant arena. For several months in 1927, for instance, Porto Rico-American Tobacco Company workers went on strike to demand higher wages. To the colonial Secretary of Agriculture and Labor, it was "the most serious strike of recent years" (Santiago-Valles 1994, 152). From 1931 to 1938, labor strikes by sugar, needlework, transportation, and dockyard workers were widespread

(Santiago-Valles 1994, 189; Dietz 1986). Dietz states that workers expressed grievances against their employers and the colonial government for “failing to do anything to alleviate unemployment and suffering” (1986, 163). He estimates that during the 1930s, more than sixty thousand workers participated in labor strikes (Dietz 1986, 164).

In 1930, Pedro Albizu Campos became the Nationalist Party’s vociferous president. He assumed a “militant position against U.S. domination” that included overthrowing the imperial regime, the cessation of English in the classroom, and the “opposition of any attempts to make Puerto Rico a state” (Rodríguez 2011, 27). Albizu Campos assessed that U.S. imperial policies had failed to understand the realities facing Puerto Ricans. He was not alone in this evaluation; in a scathing book entitled *Porto Rico: A Broken Pledge* (1931), Diffie and Whitfield Diffie remark that

Hundreds of American teachers have gone to Puerto Rico to teach English, but they were paid with Porto Rican dollars. None of this came out of the public purse of the United States. Their salaries, along with other expenses attached to English instruction, have been a crushing burden on the slender resources of the island. Why spend millions of dollars to teach English to people who were 80 percent illiterate, in preference to teaching them their own language? Why teach them English when the majority live and die within twenty miles of the ocean and never see it? Why teach them English when they are ragged, hungry, unskilled . . . (Wagenheim and Jiménez de Wagenheim 2008, 163; cf. Diffie and Whitfield Diffie 1931, 199–220)

Diffie and Whitfield Diffie note that the U.S. willfully neglected the island’s social ills, choosing instead to protect its own economic and political interests there.

To alleviate these terrible living conditions, the Puerto Rico Emergency Relief Administration (PRERA), a colonial-initiated but island-based New Deal initiative, was implemented in August 1933. The PRERA was designed to provide “not only work and food relief, but also a comprehensible and feasible plan of development” (Rodríguez 2011, 55). The new agency created the Bureau of Social Service, the Engineering Division, the Division of Agriculture, the Education Division, and other departments in charge of developing programs and initiatives to improve the lives of the people. This plan represented a significant attempt by the colonial state to reinvent its relationship with its subjects. Hence federal and colonial administrators worked to inspire the belief that the PRERA would once and for all help Puerto Ricans become modern by bringing “*el progreso*” [progress] to the island.

In Puerto Rico, the concept of *el progreso* [progress] has been part of an important discursive strategy in colonial administration efforts to promote the “modernization” of the infrastructure and discouraging cultural practices deemed backward. In the 1930s, “progress” in Puerto Rico meant replacing peasants’ straw-huts with hurricane-proof single-family cement houses, for instance. It similarly meant building larger roads and new hospitals repairing bridges, erecting trade and agricultural schools, and installing sewer and sanitation facilities. The PRERA initiated a massive campaign to eradicate malaria and to educate the masses about diseases stemming from stagnant water sources. Additionally, needlework centers were established, food and aid was distributed, and a group of professionals was trained, the improvements in the island’s infrastructure made the impact of the PRERA evident. During these years, material conditions for the average Puerto Rican improved. For the average Puerto Rican these improvements stood as evidence of the benevolence of federal authorities and established the early foundations of a “metropolitan welfare state” (Rodríguez 2011).

Culturally, *el progreso* meant that to achieve the status of “moderns,” islanders also had to restrain their sexuality and the size of their families both important for containing the island’s so-called over-population (Morales Carrión 1983). Briggs (2002) explains that by the 1930s colonial authorities used the notion of over-population to “blame excessive sexuality and fertility for the poverty of the island as a whole” (83). At the core of the overpopulation debate was women’s fertility. Popularizing birth control among poor women became a part of the PRERA’s development and modernization mission. Puerto Rican leftists, professionals, and advocates of modernizing reforms adopted what Briggs calls a “soft eugenics” language in a campaign designed to curtail the

“excessive childbearing of working class women” (2002, 90). Modernizing and reform-minded island professionals, both male and female, promoted birth control and family planning as foundational to *el progreso*. Reducing the number of births would produce a healthier, wealthier, more prosperous *modern* nation.

In 1934, one year after PRERA’s establishment, President Roosevelt appointed Blanton Winship governor of Puerto Rico. During his governorship, the island witnessed shocking and violent clashes between colonial authorities and nationalists. Social and political tremors mark the era, as each group—the colonial state, the island’s elite, and the nationalists—sought to draw and redraw cultural and political boundaries. For instance, when Puerto Rico’s insular police chief Elisha Francis Riggs was killed in 1936 by two young Nationalist Party members, the police apprehended the killers and immediately shot them to death. Strong reactions both in Washington and in Puerto Rico ensued (Wagenhein and Jiménez de Wagenhein 2008, 179). The violent encounters between nationalists and federal authorities, coupled with Albizu Campos’s militant stance, marked him as an enemy of the United States. Federal authorities accused Albizu Campos and other prominent members of the Nationalist Party of participating in the murder of the police chief and conspiring to overthrow the United States. Authorities labeled them a “terroristic minority” that had to be handled with a heavy hand, and sentenced them to ten years in an Atlanta federal prison (Rodríguez 2011, 28; Wagenheim and Jiménez de Wagenheim 2008). They were sentenced in Puerto Rico and transported to Atlanta to serve their prison terms.

In 1937, the violence escalated. The nationalists requested a permit to convene a peaceful march in San Juan on Palm Sunday to commemorate the 1873 abolition of slavery in Puerto Rico. Their application was denied, so they petitioned for a permit in Ponce. The town’s mayor granted permission for the cadets to assemble and to march unarmed but Governor Winship, upon hearing of their plans, ordered the Police Chief to rescind the permit immediately. Nationalist cadets decided to march anyway. Shots were fired, most likely by the heavily armed police; twenty persons were killed and over one hundred fifty were wounded (Wagenheim and Jiménez de Wagenheim 2008; Morales-Carríon 1983, 238). Known as the Ponce Massacre, this event stands as one of the bloodiest confrontations between nationalists and U.S. colonial authorities. When photographs of the event surfaced it became clear that the nationalists were not armed and that the police had fired at the marching nationalist cadets—even killing some of their own in the crossfire (Wagenheim and Jiménez de Wagenheim 2008, 179–182). As Morales-Carrión puts it, “Winship considered it his duty to destroy the Nationalist Party” (1983, 238). Governor Winship was highly criticized both in Puerto Rico and in the United States for his handling of the event. But his term was not to end yet.

Picturing Colonial Adversity

Picturing Colonial Adversity

Being a photographer has been a whole way of life for me. . . . The interesting thing about it is you have to be where the photograph is. You have to immerse yourself in someone else’s life or culture and forget who you are. I never can and never could get enough of it. —Louise Rosskam, *Re-viewing Documentary*

Few people in Puerto Rico during the first half of the twentieth century experienced owning a camera and being photographed. In wealthy families, a father, uncle, or perhaps an older son might own a camera. Otherwise, cameras were the business of mainly male photographers with studios often located in the center of town. In 1940s Guayama for example, Jose Ramón Vargas opened what locals referred to as a *fotogiro* (commercial photo studio) next to the city hall. He set up a small studio space for taking photos and another, adjacent space for developing them. His subjects would pose in front of a curtain and, depending on the type of photo desired, he would choose one

of various movable props to set the scene. His was the only photo studio in the vicinity, and so folks came from nearby towns such as Arroyo, Patillas, and Salinas to be photographed. He offered customers a range of services, from official ID pictures to family portraits.

The *fotogiro's* location in the business district was ideal because Mr. Vargas could develop clients' photos while they ran errands. The location was essential to his business; clients often traveled to the *fotogiro* by public transport, making an entire day out of the excursion. It was often the only place where poor families could dress in their best clothes have their photos taken. Moreover, families could play a role in their own portrayal, though they often deferred to the photographer on matters such as how to pose, where to look, and the placement of hands. Having one's photo taken was an event, an occasion that required careful and advance planning of details from the proper outfits to coordinating additional errands for the outing. Mr. Vargas' relatives remember how the palms of his hands were always blackened from the tints and emulsions he used to develop the photographs. They also wonder whether a lifetime of working with these chemicals played a role in his terminal cancer.

Photographs As Documentary, Ethnography, And Tools For Social Reform

Photographs As Documentary, Ethnography, And Tools For Social Reform

During the early decades of the century, cameras and photographs also fell under the purview of colonial administrators and scientists. Photography was specialized knowledge. Describing its early uses, Edwards writes that "Photography . . . represented technological superiority, harnessed to the delineation and control of the physical world, whether it be boundary surveys, engineering schemes to exploit natural resources, or the description and classification of the population" (Edwards 1992, 6; cf. Birrel 1981;Monti 1987;Falconer 1990). Photography thus became increasingly useful for documenting the progress of the colonial administration's efforts on the island. As evidentiary documents, photos offered a visual narrative of "before" and "after" colonial intervention. The camera was believed to be a scientific instrument for recording and revealing *the truth* and for depicting objective reality during this time period—a mechanism for evidentiary production. But, as Tagg points out, a photograph is never merely evidence, for it is also historical, embedded within the values and prejudices of its epoch (1988, 65).

After taking stock of the political situation, Edwin and Louise Rosskam quickly realized that if they were to document the nationalist cause in Puerto Rico, they must get to know and appease Governor Winship. Certainly as American photographers with connections to influential journalists on the mainland, they had access to the governor and others in positions of power. They documented the first of two trials of the surviving nationalists. Nine of these photographs are in the Library of Congress's American Memory collection. Although *Life* magazine originally commissioned the trip and the photos, they went unpublished. Instead, they were archived in the Farm Security Administration's Office of War Information Photograph Collection. Edwin Rosskam recalls the trip in an interview:

Puerto Rico had just been exploding in 1937 at this point, and they had the Ponce massacre which was really a very grave unpleasantness and the whole nationalistic troubles—so *Life* sent me out there to look into that. I didn't mind that, except that they told me to interview the Nationalist leader, accomplice, and that was from their research department and he had been in jail for two years in Atlanta by then. (laughter) Well, we got out there and we did a couple of month's coverage and *Life* did not like what we produced, oh boy did they not like it! It was a highly critical evaluation of our position in Puerto Rico at that time and among other things it foretold the election of Muñoz which

was already pretty clear to anybody on the inside, and *Life* didn't like that at all, they were backing somebody else. (Doud 1965)

Aside from offering a "critical evaluation" of U.S. imperial domination on the island, these images would jeopardize Governor Winship's2 plans to promote the island as a tourist destination if published.3 Katzman and Brannan explain that Governor Winship sanctioned the lavish *Álbum de Oro de Puerto Rico: Obra de Divulgación Cultural en Pro de la Fraternidad Americana* [Golden Album], ". . . which celebrated the Caribbean island's natural beauty and downplayed its crumbling infrastructure and impoverished people" (2011, 39).

During their stint, the Rosskams also produced several photographs of the Puerto Rican Reconstruction Administration's (PRRA) initiatives.4 The PRRA was established in May 1935 with the main aim of ". . . long-term economic and social reconstruction on the island" (Dietz 1986, 155). The resulting body of work attests to the couple's extensive travels from San Juan and Ponce to Arroyo, Cidra, Cayey, and Comerio. The photos depict people living their everyday lives—at work, at school, in the doctor's office, at meetings, at play, at home, making music, at cockfights, and engaging in religious and funerary rituals. The Rosskams were less interested in the tropical landscapes pictured by earlier photographers. In this regard, their photos are tinged with an ethnographic imperative. They offer viewers information about the general types, categories, and customs of Puerto Ricans as evidenced by these photo captions (emphases added): "*Typical* kitchen of jibaro house. Puerto Rico";5 "Washing clothes in the river. This is *common practice* in all rural areas. Puerto Rico";6 and, "Girl carrying water; the gasoline can is *one of the most valued* utensils, especially in the hills. Puerto Rico."7 These examples illustrate the ethnographic practice of pairing images with legitimizing text, rendering that which is represented as part of a typology.

Even though the Farm Security Administration did not originally commission these photographs, they were nonetheless crafted within its social-documentary style. Roy Stryker, who led the FSA Historical Section (1935–1943), believed the camera was a weapon in the fight against social injustice and inequality and that photographs served as powerful tools in the promotion of social reform. Writing about the FSA, Raeburn explains that "The photographers shared a belief that their work could help foster social renewal. . . . What was stressed was their utility as handmaidens of reform" (2006, 149). Ideologically, Stryker required FSA photographers to frame their images within an understanding of the subjects' economic and cultural contexts. Ansel Adams dubbed the photographers working in the FSA framework as a "bunch of sociologists with cameras" (Huff 1998, 579). Edwin Rosskam believed the FSA file advocated an "inclusive attitude, which makes the photographer, eye, and camera into an instrument of social science" (Vázquez 2002, 294). These photographs were meant to offer visual evidence as *proof* of the plight of poor Americans in a stark but dignified manner. In the case of Puerto Rico, the Rosskams saw these new Americans living in conditions so degrading they exceeded anything they had witnessed on the mainland in the Depression era (Katzman and Brannan 2011, 39).

The Rosskams espoused a "thirties liberalism," including the belief that the documentary photograph was "not only to inform but to move" viewers (Raeburn 2006;Stott 1986, 8). Stott explains that, "The practitioners of the documentary genre in the thirties realized . . . emotion counted more than fact" (1986, 9). Kolodny (1978) defined the realist convention in photography as "concerned with the world of facts," the world as it is—a *true* rep- resentation (Edwards 1992, 8). The documentary impulse goes further and records "the world of action in an inspirational way." It implies a social and/ or political commitment to what is represented within the frame (Edwards 1992, 8–9). As Edwards reminds us, these representational modes often overlap, and ultimately the convention within which a photographer constructs a photograph is tied to their intention and/or ideology.

Katzman and Brannan explain that as the Rosskams discovered Puerto Rico from behind the camera lens, "Their shock, bewilderment, and even confusion emerges in the grittiness of the photographs, many showing people partially in view at the edges of the scenes, suggesting that the photographers snapped fast or anxiously, as if to minimize their own discomfort with what could be perceived as an invasive gaze" (2011, 38). Yet despite their shock and best efforts to respect their

subjects, despite the humanist introspection the photographers surely experienced, how did the resulting images aid in building a case for Puerto Rico as a needy child-nation, dependent on the charity of the benevolent colonial-father?

Witnessing The Colonial Predicament

Witnessing The Colonial Predicament

The Rosskams' photographs became part of the Puerto Rico "archive" and constitute raw data made available for analysis in the metropolitan center. The portability of this visual evidence made it especially important in the design and implementation of various colonial development plans. Because these documents were believed to be statements representing reality on the ground, the images became one tool for bearing witness to the abject conditions of the colonial subjects. As Vázquez aptly states, "The colonial predicament engendered by a variety of power elite and colonizers will always be presented as ignorant of itself, and hence of the producers. In this way the question of intention is neutralized and the focus remains on the constructed beneficiary—the colonized" (2002, 284). To illustrate, a series of fourteen photographs depicting life in "Porta de Tierra" (see Table 2.1),8 dated January 1938 and credited to Edwin Rosskam, offers a pointed visual testimony that aims to promote social policies to better the living conditions and the overall quality of life for the island's poor.

Puerta de Tierra, historically one of the two "workers' quarters" in the San Juan peninsula,9 became even more crowded and sprawling in the late 1930s as a result of the steady stream of arrivals to the slum from the countryside. Dietz notes that such a rural-to-urban demographic shift is "the usual pattern in the process of industrialization" (1986, 226–227). By the mid-1930s, the state had taken notice of the unsightly living conditions of many of its

Urban Life, Puerta de Tierra A table with three columns: Title of Image, Representational Themes, and Social Policy Aims, detailing observations from photographs of Puerta de Tierra and corresponding social policy goals. Title of Image Representational Themes Social Policy Aims 1. Slum dwellings in the workers' quarter of Porta de Tierra. Note: shacks are built on piles driven into swamp. Under the boards is open water. This place is infested with malarial mosquitoes. San Juan, Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34- 012530-E —four barefoot children seemingly without adult supervision —one naked toddler-makeshift dwellings —dangerous for children (children can fall in swamp and drown) —exposure to malaria —life outdoors —poverty —over-crowded housing (houses close together or atop each other, typical of slum communities) —better housing —public health (family planning, education about sources of illness, hygiene) —childcare and education —improved living conditions 2. Shacks built over tidal swamp in the workers' quarter of Porta de Tierra. San Juan, Puerto Rico. (2 photographs) Call #: LC-USF34- 012401-E —four barefoot children and a young woman —household objects appear in disarray —subjects seem to be idling their time away —dangerous conditions —poverty —illness/contamination —life outdoors —better housing —public health —child care and education —improved living conditions 3. Street and open sewer in the workers' quarter of Porta de Tierra. San Juan Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34- 012370-E —children, adults, animals co-mingling in unpaved street —large number of children, mostly barefoot —more women than men; the street appears to be a neighborhood thoroughfare; the quantity of people and gender balance indicate it is perhaps early in the day —groups of people seemingly idling away or "liming" —lack of sanitary facilities —danger to health and quality of life —life outdoors —dirt and garbage —older black woman sitting alone at the edge of sewer, her barefeet digging slightly into the mud —sanitation —infrastructure (better roads, improved public spaces) —public health —child care and education —improved living conditions 4. Water supply in the workers' quarter of Porta de Tierra. San Juan, Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34- 012378-E —public and shared water source —people engaged in activities (collecting water, walking,

standing around, looking at photograph being made, children walking nearby.) —infrastructure (running water, better roads, improved public spaces) —sanitation

(*continued*)

Table 2.1. (continued) Title of Image Representational Themes Social Policy Aims —people appear to be photographed without consent (woman collecting water glares at the camera defiantly, another woman walking through frowns at the camera) —unpaved roads —stagnant water and mud —woman collecting water is barefoot —man, well-dressed in white stands in stark contrast to the rest of scene —public health —improved living conditions 5. Woman suffering from malaria in the workers' quarter of Porta de Tierra. San Juan, Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34- 012384-E —elderly woman laying on bed —wall behind her decorated with various images (God, political figures, a calendar and newspapers clippings). —public health —better living conditions —housing 6. In the workers' quarter of Porta de Tierra. San Juan, Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34- 012527-E —young woman stands holding her naked baby in makeshift shack —swamp water beneath house —tiny balcony and tiny entrance into dwelling —young man, woman holding a child appear at the edge of the frame —better housing —public health —improved living conditions 7. Interior of workers shack. Porta de Tierra, San Juan, Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34- 012372-E —one room and five people: a woman and child standing, one child and two adults laying on beds —two shared beds —crowded conditions —dilapidated room —woman (wife?) looks directly at the camera, her expression tired, resigned, and passive —man (husband?) laying on the bed also staring at the camera, his expression stern —light shines through a small window, falls on the woman's and child's faces suggesting divine intervention —the small space, crowded by people and objects, portrays a family imprisoned by poverty —better housing —public health —education —improved living conditions

FSA Photographs of Puerto de Tierra's El Fanguito, 1941–1942 (continued)

FSA Photographs of Puerto de Tierra's El Fanguito, 1941–1942 (continued) A continuation of the table showing FSA photographs, their representational themes, and social policy aims. Title of Image Representational Themes Social Policy Aims 8. Children in the workers' quarter of Puerto de Tierra. San Juan, Puerto Rico. Call #:LC-USF34- 012580-E —five children (one out of the frame) and an elderly woman in background —toddler is naked, two children are barefoot —children are smiling —elderly woman looks at photographer curiously —outdoor life —education and child care —infrastructure —public health —sanitation —improved living conditions 9. Water supply, Puerto de Tierra. San Juan, Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34- 012543-E —woman bathing toddler in public water source —child appears to be crying; a gash is visible on his leg; his belly looks suspiciously swollen —woman smiles broadly as she stands barefoot on slippery piping and mud —water falls in puddle of open, stagnant water —glimpses of people walking on unpaved road —public health —infrastructure —sanitation —improved living conditions 10. Baby asleep in hammock. The hammock saves space in a shack already overcrowded. Call #: LC-USF33- 005016-M1 —baby asleep in hammock —woman (mother?) tenderly covering/watching baby —female toddler stands beside the hammock and looks up at photographer with a confused face —better housing —public health —improved living conditions 11. Child in workers' quarter of Puerto De Tierra. San Juan, Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34- 012533-E —naked toddler stands on a makeshift boardwalk, belly suspiciously swollen —a tunnel of makeshift shacks surrounds him —toddler looks directly at the camera, another person appears on the very edge of the frame —below the boardwalk is mud and garbage —infrastructure —sanitation —public health —child care and education —better housing —improved living conditions 12. A game of dominos in the workers' quarter of Puerto De Tierra. San Juan, Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34- 012542-E —entertainment —depicts a "male space" —male adults and children are spectators to the game and to the picture-making in progress —child care and education —public health 13. Guitar player above the swamp water. The workers' quarter of Puerto de Tierra. San Juan, Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34- 012589-E —entertainment —well-dressed men playing guitar in squalid living conditions —public health —sanitation —improved living conditionsresidents, especially those in the San Juan metropolitan area. Dinzey-Flores explains that two key initiatives, the Homestead Commission established in 1923,

and the PRRA established in 1935 (2007, 470), were charged with improving living conditions.10

Edwin Rosskam took the photos of Puerta de Tierra in January 1938, two months after the PRRA had broken ground on the construction of that community's "first multiple-dwelling housing development—Tenement Group A" (Dinzey-Flores 2007, 472). Eventually, eighteen three-story buildings were built in the Miranda section of Puerta de Tierra, an effort to provide workers with affordable, "adequate and sanitized" housing (Dinzey-Flores 2007). While at first these multiple-dwelling communities were conceived as temporary stopovers in the resettlement of workers and poor families from slum dwellings into single-family homes, the plan shifted radically as early as 1938. Dinzey-Flores writes that, "With a total of fourteen million dollars allocated to local authorities in 1938, the construction of federal housing developments in Puerto Rico took off in the next decades" (2007, 474). Far from serving as temporary housing, these multi-dwelling communities became the norm and entire neighborhoods sprung up all over the island. Known as *residenciales* (residentials), many families have lived in these neighborhoods for several generations (Dinzey-Flores 2007, 2013).

Eradicating slums (a policy known as "slum clearance"), part and parcel of providing families with improved living conditions, was a significant part of achieving *el progreso*. Ideally each family was to eventually own a detached single-family cement home in which they could settle permanently. However by the mid-1930s, the PRRA decided to build both detached cement houses and multiple-dwelling units. One community of detached cement houses, the "Eleanore Roosevelt," was built in Hato Rey between 1936 and 1938 and was sold to qualifying tenants (Dinzey-Flores 2007). Edwin Rosskam's January 1938 photo, "Prospective resident in the Eleanore Roosevelt housing project undergoing medical examination. San Juan, Puerto Rico,"11 depicts a stern-looking middle-age man baring his chest to a doctor who listens to the man's heart through a stethoscope. The examining doctor looks to be around the same age as his patient, and both patient and doctor seem uncomfortable. The photograph, which frames a medical transaction, also frames the proud, if slightly exposed masculinity of the urban worker who despite being a "provider" still depends on the benevolence of the state to secure "decent" housing.

Similarly, the photo "A Puerto Rican family of 5. A resettler's family in front of their hurricane-proof house on La Plata project. Puerto Rico"12 portrays a family (comprised mainly of women) standing in front of a newly built cement house. In the background the viewer glimpses a wooden dwelling, possibly the unit the cement house sought to replace in the first place.13 This family poses uncomfortably in front of the camera, as if confused about how to pose for the photo. The woman, holding a child, looks straight at the camera, a palpable frown on her face. Another compelling photograph, the January 1938 photo titled "Wife of resettler in her hurricane-proof house, doing needlework (homework for cash income). The furniture was locally built of local materials under P.R.R.A. (Puerto Rico Resettlement Administration) guidance. Outside the window is a tobacco field and tobacco barn. La Plata project. Puerto Rico,"14 stands as witness of *el progreso* bestowed by the PRRA initiative. Note the title identifies the PRRA incorrectly (it should be "Reconstruction," not "Resettlement"). In many ways, this photo represents the PPRA's idealistic goals. It presents a clean, spacious, and tranquil interior scene with a dignified and well-dressed woman ("wife") sitting on a beautifully crafted artisanal loveseat as she engages in productive labor (needlework) from the comfort of her safe, sanitized, and modern home. Behind her, the large open windows reveal a vast and lush tobacco field, a barn, and a hilly countryside. This image falls within Stryker's later wish that FSA photographs "[e]mphasize the idea of abundance—the 'horn of plenty'. . . . " (Delano 1997, 58–59; Carlebach 1988, 23; Vázquez 2002, 287).

Depicting Ethnic/Racial Archetypes

Depicting Ethnic/Racial Archetypes

The Rosskams also archived a series of sixteen photographs dated January 1938 depicting Puerto Rico's *jíbaros* (see Table 2.2). These rural representations stand in stark contrast to those of the urban areas (see Table 2.1). Whereas the people photographed in the urban areas are labeled "workers," the people in the hilly countryside are labeled *jíbaros*. The images promote the sense that *jíbaros* comprise a separate and specific ethnicity within Puerto Rico. The Rosskams simply photographed the existing national archetype, the *jíbaro*, historically representative of Puerto Rico's national soul (see chapter one). But these specific photographs "capture" *jíbaros* during a period in which they faced radical changes that threatened to permanently alter their way of life. In that sense these images can be read as an effort to record a vanishing, dying, or disappearing way of life. In anthropological terms such an effort constitutes salvage ethnography; "The other is lost, in disintegrating time and space, but saved in the text" (Clifford 1986, 112). These "salvaged representations" show the *jíbaro* as threatened but not yet overtaken by the pressures of industrial and urban capitalism.

The Jíbaro Archetype A three-column table titled "The Jíbaro Archetype". The columns are "Title of Image", "Representational Themes", and "Social Policy Aims". It lists seven images with their descriptions and associated policy goals. Title of Image Representational Themes Social Policy Aims 1. Jibaro hut near Cidra. Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34-012435-E —straw hut, "typical" dwelling —"primitive"/non-industrial technology —children, a boy stands near the edge of the frame and another peeks out from a small opening in the house's straw wall —better housing —education —improved living conditions 2. Jibaro tobacco worker with machete. Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34-012512-E —young man holding his primary work tool —sits on bare earth in the entrance to the straw house —barefoot —pants are made burlap —improved conditions/ remuneration for workers 3. Typical kitchen of Jibaro house. Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34-012383-E —"type" —non-industrial technology —woman stands barefoot over wooden planks tending a steaming pot over a small fire pit —sanitation —public health —better housing —improved living conditions 4. Eroded tobacco slope with Jibaro house. Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34-012525-E —landscape photograph —aim is to show that the land is put to productive use yet a shack balances precariously on stilts against the cultivated slope —improved living conditions 5. Jibaros planting tobacco in the hills. Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF-34-012380-E —type of agricultural work —two men and a woman working together in close proximity hunched over against the earth, rain clouds peering over the horizon —gender: planting is men's and women's work —improved conditions/ remuneration for agricultural workers 6. Jibaro woman in tobacco field. Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34-012369-E —a woman stands by herself in the distance looking over the planed field —gender: planting is men's and women's work —improved conditions/ remuneration for agricultural workers 7. Jibaro tobacco worker. Near Cidra, Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34-012564-E —type of work —young man poses with a hoe against straw dwelling —looks straight ahead —improved conditions/ remuneration for agricultural workers

FSA Photographs of Puerto Rico A table detailing FSA photographs of Puerto Rico, with columns for Title of Image, Representational Themes, and Social Policy Aims. Title of Image Representational Themes Social Policy Aims 8. Jibaro hurricane shelter. The rags are freshly washed laundry drying. Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34-012432-E —straw shelter, unsafe —non-industrial technology —improved hurricane shelter —improved living conditions 9. Old Jibaro, patriarch of a clan of twenty-one tobacco hillfarmers. Puerto Rico. (take 1) Call #: LC-USF34-012575-E —"type" of person and identity —elderly man stands holding a homemade hoe against his shoulders —behind him a meticulously cleaned slope, a grove of banana trees on the left hand side —on his face what might be signs of vitiligo —in this trilogy (takes 1–3) the viewer gets the sense that the photographer is awed by the man's fecundity and stamina for agricultural work (in that way these photos stand as a pictorial homage to a dying generation) —public health —family planning —improved conditions/ remuneration for workers 10. Old Jibaro, patriarch of a clan of twenty-one tobacco hillfarmers. Puerto Rico. (take 2) Call #: LC-USF34-012557-E —now closer to the camera, the old man dries the sweat on his face using the hoe as a support —public health —family planning —improved conditions/ remuneration for workers 11. Old Jibaro, patriarch of a clan of twenty-one tobacco hill farmers. Puerto Rico. (take 3) Call #: LC-USF34-012374-E

—closer still, a portrait of the man's face looking directly at the camera and smiling with a happy and content expression. —the aging man is missing several teeth —the photographer positioned himself below the man giving the impression that the man floats above him, marking the image as a pictorial homage, perhaps of the "iconic" jíbaro —viewers glimpse another man standing behind "the patriarch" —improved conditions/ remuneration for workers —public health

(*continued*)

FSA Photographs of Puerto Rican Jíbaros A continuation of the table listing FSA photographs of Puerto Rican Jíbaros, their representational themes, and social policy aims. Title of Image Representational Themes Social Policy Aims 12. Jibaro woman and children preparing tobacco leaves for drying in drying bar. Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34-012548-E —gender: all five subjects are female —a woman, a young woman, and three young children —action shot, separating tobacco leaves —children are barefoot —children sit on the floor, and one little girl stares at the camera —the tobacco barn is filled with drying tobacco leaves —child care and education —public health —improved conditions/ remuneration for workers —family planning 13. Wife and child of Jibaro tobacco worker near Cidra, Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34-012386-E —young woman hold a baby —the woman looks straight at the camera from behind the baby, offering a half-smile —they stand in front of a shack —public health —child care and education —better housing —improved living conditions 14. Musicians (local farmers) at a "Rosario," a semi-religious ceremony used for "cures" among the jibaros. Near Cidra, Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34-012481-E —younger men play musical instruments —taken at night —religious beliefs and practices —documents a folk tradition —hints at traditional medicine and "superstition" —instruments: the guitar and the güiro, associated with traditional jíbaro music —folk beliefs, tradition and practices 15. Jibaro family eating their main meal: rice, beans and a few pieces of codfish. Near Cidra, Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34-012565-E —depicting interior of shack —family of four adults and three children eating what are, despite of being imported, staples in the Puerto Rican diet —shack, non-industrial technology —two children sit barefoot on the floor —child care and education —better housing —improved living conditions —public health 16. Jibaro huts have no windows. When you want to look out you simply part the strands of the leafy wall. Puerto Rico. Call #: LC-USF34-012434-E —a child peeks through an opening in the strawwall of a house —non-industrial technology —child care and education —better housing —improved living conditions

Unlike the urban "workers," the *jíbaros* are depicted as rooted in the land and meaningfully engaged in agricultural work. Meanwhile, mostly women and children stand as representative of urban slum dwellers, often they are pictured idling away time or involved in childcare. While depicting the deplorable living conditions both in the urban and rural areas, the photographers nevertheless depict two different Puerto Ricos. For example, the slums are presented as malaria infested and lacking proper sanitary infrastructure, an over-crowded place where children are largely left unsupervised to fend for themselves. By contrast, although the rural home of the *jíbaros* is also depicted as inadequate, the countryside appears as an unpolluted place where men, women, and children lived placid lives dedicated to the land's cultivation and to upholding tradition.

The Rosskams photographed a third geographic space: the sugar zone. They produced thirty photographs mainly depicting Ponce (n=28) and "its vicinity"—one showing a meeting at the Lafayette Sugar Mill in Arroyo, and another picturing a sugar workers' union meeting in Bayamon. The series portrays the activities of sugar workers (cutting sugar, sharpening knives, drinking water, stacking bags of sugar, loading train carts, unloading sugar). They also depict the equipment used in sugar production (e.g., boilers, mixers, crushers, bulls) and the workers' quarters. There are three aerial photos showing the large quantity of land dedicated to sugar cultivation, as well as the sugar mill's grandness against the flat and cultivated backdrop.

Two particular photographs in the series, both taken in Ponce in January 1938, are striking because they are the only images in the entire collection to use a racial label (*negro*): "Negro sugar workers in front of their homes near Ponce, Puerto Rico" and "Children of Negro sugar workers near Ponce, Puerto Rico."15 The first depicts four men standing together as if listening to a story told by someone outside the frame. The men look strong and healthy and they do not look at the camera,

their faces variously humored and amused. Behind them the viewer glimpses several wooden shacks, presumably their homes, and in the distance the blurred image of another man. Near the photographer in the lower right corner of the frame stands another person, perhaps a child.

The second photograph depicts four children: two boys smiling shyly for the camera and two others, perhaps girls. One child's entire body is visible, revealing that he is barefoot. The children look healthy and happy; the only signs of poverty are the slightly torn edges of their light-colored clothes and the stick they are using as a toy (horse?). An older girl stands behind these four, offering a serious stare. Around her but farther away, several men stand, looking at the picture-making in progress. A dog appears in their midst. Like the *jíbaros* in the previously discussed photos, these *negros* (men and children) somehow appear to live in a compound or a community separate from "other" Puerto Ricans.

As discussed in chapter one, ideas about the geographic divisions locating white *jíbaros* in the interior-mountains and blacks as laborers confined to the island's coast have a long history in Puerto Rico (see Table 2.3). As Vázquez remarks, "from a very early period *jíbaro* narratives were already being produced by various political entities within Puerto Rico as part of a nationalist and cultural discourse among an elite for class distinction, as well as difference from their former colonizer Spain" (2002, 290). Similarly, these same elites constructed narratives about Afro-Puerto Ricans that sought to demarcate clear boundaries between "black others" and Puerto Ricans. For instance, writing about the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Findlay notes that for the island's [white] liberal elite, "Creating a civilized society and bourgeoisie required a disciplined march toward rational, de-Africanized virility" (1999, 57). While at times both *jíbaros* and blacks were portrayed as "backward" and in need of rehabilitation, transformation, and ultimately modernization, the *jíbaro*'s position as the icon of the *true* Puerto Rican character remained at the heart of official discourse.

The images in this collection highlight this dominant perspective of the time: blacks labor on the coast, the *jíbaro* carves a living in the inhospitable mountain terrain of the island's center. These geographical allusions that continue to inform dominant discourses today physically mark the *jíbaro* as central and blackness as peripheral to the construction of Puerto Rican

Conceptions of the Jíbaro and the Negro/a in Puerto Rican Constructions of Identity A two-column table comparing conceptions of the Jíbaro (Male) and the Negro/a (Female) in Puerto Rican identity. The Jíbaro is described as White, Peasant, Pure, Resistant, living in the interior, a hard worker, participating in the economy, close to the earth, essential/central, and Puerto Rican. The Negro/a is described as Black, Enslaved, Tainted, Submissive, living on coastal plantations, lazy, participating in eroticism, close to the sea, marginal/peripheral, and African. Jíbaro (Male) Negro/a (Female) White Black Peasant Enslaved Pure Tainted Resistant Submissive Interior of the island, lives in mountains Coastal plantations, lives near sea Hard worker Lazy Participates in economy Participates in eroticism Close to the earth, the land Close to the sea Essential/central Marginal/peripheral Puerto Rican African

Note: I offer this simple (and simplistic) dichotomy only to demonstrate what is a historically recurring national perception about who the inhabitants of the interior and the coast were/are. Certainly, at this point there has been a great deal of communication across Caribbean history between coastal and inland regions that renders this dichotomy suspect. I thank the anonymous reviewer for suggesting I clarify the point of this table. nationhood. Blackness is inextricably linked to sea, while the *jíbaro* is intimately connected to the land. Blackness is transient, ephemeral, in flux; whiteness grows, rooted in the land. Furthermore, the *jíbaro* is intricately linked to the cultivation of subsistence foodstuff (plantains), which he brings to the market thereby participating in the island's economy. On the other hand, since (white) male desire eroticizes the black woman, her role is confined to her body's innate and primitive sensuality and rhythm (Rosa 2001).

“Close-Up” Viewings

“Close-Up” Viewings

Out of the 185 photos from this trip in the American Memory’s archive, only one is credited to Louise Rosskam.16 That photo, captioned “Black Milk. This baby is getting a mixture of coffee, sugar and water instead of milk, which is too expensive, San Juan, Puerto Rico, December 1937” (Figure 2.1),

Louise Rosskam, “Black Milk.” Courtesy of the American Memory Library of Congress, Prints Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection, call number: LC-USF34-012450-E.

Louise Rosskam, “Black Milk.” Courtesy of the American Memory Library of Congress, Prints Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection, call number: LC-USF34-012450-E. A young Black child feeds a baby from a bottle. They are sitting on a concrete ledge outdoors, with a wooden house and foliage in the background.illustrates the FSA’s iconic use of carefully crafted texts to supplement and explain the visual record. The narrative intervention was meant to heighten the viewer’s awareness of the plight of those photographed. The FSA tradition of employing both image and text to promote advocacy and reform began with Lewis Hine, who then mentored Stryker in the powerful effects of mixing images and text (Huff 1998, 577). Hine felt that “[w]hen a photograph is sympathetically interpreted the result can be a powerful lever for social uplift” (Hine 1909, 356). But the use of text also works to legitimize an image within a documentary, scientific, and ethnographic domain.

The boy looks as if he might be ten years old, but the assured way in which he feeds the baby (possibly his younger sister) a glass bottle of “Black Milk” suggests the patient experience that comes with age. He looks away from the camera, but what is he looking at? Is it his mother, a sibling, a grandmother, a dog, or just the cement wall in the background? Is he averting the camera’s gaze on purpose? Is he shy? Would he rather be doing something else, playing with other boys perhaps? The baby. She is at center of this depiction. How old is she? Eight months, maybe even a year. Her clean feet and soft-looking undeveloped legs suggest that she doesn’t yet walk. Her closed eyes might indicate the reflexive impulse to protect them from the tropical sun beating down on her small face. Or her eyes are closed to indicate the rapture she feels from drinking “black milk.” The mango tree, the cane stalks, and the sour sop tree standing against the wooden house in the background attest to the land’s fertility. The contrast between the cement surface on which the baby is seated and the wooden house surrounded by vegetation in the next lot juxtaposes the uneven process of modernization in Puerto Rico, from which with luck, these children will experience *el progreso*.

“Black Milk” underscores the desperate living conditions of poor Puerto Ricans. Though the children in the photograph do not conform to images of starving, skeletal, and undernourished children associated with extreme poverty, the explanatory caption suggests that near starvation results from the high price of nutritional foodstuff. Certainly, the caption aims to unnerve sensible American viewers. The mixture of coffee and sugar17—both of which offer little nutrition and worse, create addiction—would have been the food of adult workers in need of energy to get through the day—but feeding a baby this shocking mixture signifies neglect or the impossibility of alternatives. Louise Rosskam took this photograph in 1937, four years after the PRERA’s initiation and two years after the establishment of the PRRA, whose mandates were relief and reconstruction respectively. Dietz reports that in the 1930s the price of basic necessities such as milk increased from five to fourteen cents per quart coupled with the increasing cost of living made life difficult for the vast

majority of islanders (1986).18 Development initiatives proved wholly inadequate to deal with the severity of the problem.

In “Black Milk,” Louise Rosskam offers two levels of signification, the visual and the textual. In the visual narrative, the viewer witnesses a baby being fed and cared for by another child. The island is thus signified as a child-entity. The textual narrative suggests that the colonial-parent has failed to make nutritious food affordable to the child-colony. If this is their diet, how, viewers might ask, will these dark-skinned children develop the strong minds and bodies they need to one day govern themselves?

As Tagg has aptly argued, the cultural strategy of the “New Deal State” sought the consolidation of a coherent U.S. national identity through the promotion of social programs while it simultaneously worked to incorporate and regulate the capitalist system (2009, 80–94). This effort resulted in the renewed sense that the democratic state should serve the interests of both the wealthy and “the invisible third of the nation.” These initiatives extended well beyond the boundaries of the continental United States into its colonial possession in the Caribbean and benefitted not only residents of the colony but the metropole as well. For example the island-wide electrification program, one of the few successful long-term projects created by the PRRA, improved living conditions while simultaneously paving the way for industrialization that followed. Electrification grew out of the imperative to create a capitalist industrial society in which citizens could be meaningfully employed (as producers) but also constituted as consumers. The initiative bettered the life of the majority as a positive byproduct. In regards to the PRRA’s long-term impact however, Dietz writes that “many of its programs were experimental and never went beyond that stage. When the PRRA’s money ran out in the late 1930s, these programs simply disappeared, leaving no permanent legacy” (1986, 156).

Undoubtedly one of the most poignant photographs in this collection is “Villa of the owner of a sugar plantation and refinery and sugar workers’ shacks. Ponce, Puerto Rico,”19 dated January 1937 and credited to Edwin Rosskam. Clearly the photograph intends to juxtapose the glaring disparities in wealth. The image offers several inescapable signifiers. The imposing villa painted in bright white and positioned on the hilltop occupies a privileged location because residents can oversee its workers below. Constructed of cement, it resembles an indestructible fortress, while the anemic shacks below it look as if they might crumble at the slightest gust of wind. The villa’s residents can lead private, interior lives in this safe haven, free from the gaze of outsiders. By contrast, the shacks are open to the elements. Their wide windows, meant to let in the Caribbean breezes, open their inhabitants’ lives for all to see, as

Edwin Rosskam, “Villa of the owners of a sugar plantation . . .” Courtesy of the American Memory Library of Congress, Prints Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection, call number: LC-USF34-012392-E.

Edwin Rosskam, “Villa of the owners of a sugar plantation . . .” Courtesy of the American Memory Library of Congress, Prints Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection, call number: LC-USF34-012392-E. A black and white photograph showing dilapidated wooden shacks on a hillside, with a large, white villa visible in the background on a higher part of the hill.do the holes that inevitably form in wooden structures. While the workers lead public lives, the owners of the enterprise retire behind their fences and fort-like structures.

From a distance, the viewer spots the villa’s manicured landscape but near the photographer, the vegetation is rambling and left to its own devices. The agricultural production provides wealth for the villa’s owners and one imagines all the modern amenities money can buy within its walls. However, the workers are unable to afford even basic necessities. The photo depicts a large empty space, perhaps a “safe distance,” between the workers’ shacks and the villa. Although slavery was abolished in 1873 in Puerto Rico, the photograph reminds of an era when the master’s house stood imperially over the dilapidated “slave” shacks. The villa depicts a Spanish Mediterranean archi

tectural style, but its location and semi-circular construction hints of Jeremy Bentham's model prison, which he called "panopticon." Foucault (1975) proposed the panopticon as a metaphor for modern disciplinary power. "Panopticism" is an effective social complex because it creates a hierarchical structure wherein the powerful act as "unseen" overseers for the masses they surveil. In this instance, the villa's owner can stand on his terrace and look over the vast landscape that includes his land, his workers, and their shacks without the workers necessarily knowing he is looking down on them. The owner's vast gaze covers a wide territory, while the workers' is limited to "looking up" at the owner's mansion. The workers can only imagine what might be inside the imposing structure hovering above their homes. The barefoot child in the photo stands as powerful symbol of Puerto Ricans in poverty in the 1930s, again depicting the island's poor in the body of a child in need of protection and aid.

During their two-month stay in Puerto Rico as "eager but uniformed continentals," the Rosskams received a swift education in navigating the complexities of the colonial condition (Katzman and Brannan 2011, 39). Before leaving the island they met Muñoz Marín, a connection that served them well upon their return in August 1945. In the interim years, Muñoz Marín became Puerto Rico's most respected insular political figure, Albizu Campos remained institutionalized,20 the nationalist fervor was quelled, and living conditions improved only slightly. But the island witnessed a period of political and economic optimism. The PPD's industrialization plan, which included attracting U.S. firms to the island in the hopes of creating jobs, only strengthened colonial dependency and established the accepted wisdom that the "wishes of U.S. private investors were of paramount concern" (Dietz 1986, 208). When the Tydings-Piñero Bill was introduced to the U.S. congress in 1945 with the aim of deciding a political status for Puerto Rico, Muñoz Marín and other insular activists initiated an aggressive campaign to solidify the island's political and economic ties to the United States. Governor Tugwell opposed both independence and statehood, and instead proposed a status that would permit islanders continued U.S. citizenship,21 would facilitate the building and strengthening of existing economic relationships, and significantly would allow the colony greater autonomy in insular governmental affairs (López Rojas 2011, 62). The White House officially backed this position, as did the PPD. It became the foundation for a new era in Puerto Rico.

As a result of their talent and connections to Stryker, Tugwell, Muñoz Marín, and others, the Rosskams were offered jobs as photographers for the Office of Information for Puerto Rico (OIPR). Edwin Rosskam was in charge of establishing a Farm Security Administration-type file that would be part of Governor Tugwell's Office of Information in San Juan (Katzman and Brannan 2011). The Rosskams were tasked with documenting the needs of the people and ongoing government-initiated development projects. They hired photographers Jack Delano and Charles Rotkin as assistants. The Rosskams documented Puerto Rico's new era and followed Muñoz Marín as he campaigned through urban and rural towns in his bid to become the first democratically elected governor of the island in 1948 (Katzman and Brannan 2011). During this time, Louise produced more photos for the OIPR than Edwin did, and rounded out the file by photographing upper- and middleclass families at home and attending events such as galas and debutante balls (Katzman and Brannan 2011).

Regarding their later work in Puerto Rico, Edwin remarked that, "I had a humility, which I probably wouldn't have had in relation to the United States since this is my home. I recognized within myself that I didn't know enough about my subject. Therefore I got a hold of some anthropologists to help me set this thing up. And their advice was invaluable" (Doud 1965). The couple expressed ambivalence about their position as American photographers working for the colonial government, and Muñoz Marín characterized them as *independentistas* [pro-independence supporters]. They believed that to improve living conditions, the island must continue its relationship with the United States. Ultimately, even as they understood and worried about their role within the colonial dynamic, they supported Muñoz Marín and his U.S.-backed plans to industrialize the island (Katzman and Brannan 2011).

Notes

Notes

The couple archived a total of 185 photographs in the American Memory digital collection taken during the December 1937 to January 1938 trip to Puerto Rico. The photographs were first archived in the Office of War Information Overseas Picture Division, then transferred to the Farm Security Administration file, and are now digitally available in the American Memory collection. Vázquez discusses the shifting of these “historic documents” and likens these to the experiences of Puerto Rican people as living in a U.S. dependency. He says, “Just as the peoples were a file source for the U.S. government, similarly the photographs were a resource for individual government agencies. This is not simply a metaphoric reading: many of the same departments were charged with the transfer and displacement of Puerto Ricans and handled the planning and writing of photographic and textual records” (2002, 287).

The collection holds two photographs of Governor Winship credited to Edwin Rosskam dated January 1938. One is titled “Governor Winship on the staircase of the governor’s palace. Puerto Rico” (Call #: LC-USF34-012582-E); a second is titled

“Governor Winship on the ramparts of the governor’s palace. Puerto Rico” (Call #: LC-USF34-012430-E).

A plan endorsed by Governor Winship with the February 1939 privately funded the publication of *Albúm de Oro de Puerto Rico: Obra de Divulgación Cultural en Pro de la Fraternidad Americana* [Golden Album of Puerto Rico: A Work of Intellectual Propaganda for American Fraternity] by Antonio M. Monteagudo and Antonio Escamez (they had also published in 1936 *Album de Oro de la República Dominicana* [Golden Album of the Dominican Republic]. A note following the cover page indicates that the authors spent over a year collecting photographs and writing the contents of the book. They thank the “Puertorican people” and government for making its publication possible. The book opens with a photograph of President Roosevelt, followed by a colorful point-of-view collage depicting a tranquil, but industrious, tropical landscape. The composition renders several interesting layers of meaning. In the hazy distance in the sky, the viewer glimpses the capitol building and the Cristo Chapel, a grayish city, and closer and brighter are images of the sea, a large, modern ship navigating it. Just above it, in the sky, a large airplane makes it way. Across the bay, green hills depict what might be sugar mills with steel steam pipes standing tall against the green hills. To the right of the frame and closer to the viewer stands a sentry box, that iconic image representing San Juan and a reminder of the island’s Spanish past. On the left side, the viewer sees a tangle of vegetation including palm trees, cane stalks, and banana trees, and a pair of bulls. A group of light-skinned, faceless farmers wearing straw hats industriously work, handling sugar cane, bananas, grapefruits, coconuts, and pineapples. Underneath the inscription reads, “Puerto Rico, The Enchanted Island.” This visual introduction is followed by a preface that explains, “Its pages, illustrated with about two thousand photographs . . . just exactly as the camera caught it with its undeniable scientific veracity . . .” On the next page is a photograph of General Winship.

There are a total of forty photographs dated January 1938 depicting various PRRA initiatives: photos labeled “La Plata project” (n=18), photos labeled “P.R.R.A.” (n=13), and photos labeled “needlework” (n=9). However there are some photographs repeated across each category. Interestingly, the majority of the photos are labeled as representing projects funded by the “Puerto Rico Resettlement Administration,” while a few are labeled as representative of the “Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration.” The latter is the correct and official name of said New Deal development plan.

(Call #: LC-USF34- 012383-E).

(Call #: LC-USF34-012408-E). Unlike previous decades when the “washer woman” motif was commonly represented in the photographs taken by “outsiders” (see Chapter One), the Rosskams only offer two such photographs (see Call #: LC-USF34-012408-E and LC-USF34- 012423-E).

(Call #: LC-USF34- 012466-E).

Left out of Table 2.1 are two photos entitled “Demonstration in support of the Spanish loyalists in the workers’ quarter of Porta de Tierra. San Juan, Puerto Rico (Call #: LC-USF34- 012340-E and LC-USF34- 012334-E).

The other “workers’ quarter” is La Perla.

Dinzey-Flores details the four principles demarcating the public housing program’s overall vision:

1. the land belongs to the workers of Puerto Rico; 2. all urban laborers should be owners of an adequate and sanitized home; 3. the proper design to promote home ownership was the single family home; and 4. multiple-dwelling housing could only serve as temporary replacements for slums (DinzeyFlores 2007, 471).

Library of Congress call #: LC-USF34-012364-E

Library of Congress call #: LC-USF34-012577-E.

In rural Puerto Rico, it is a common practice to build two or even more houses on one lot. Often, there is a cement house and one or more wooden houses in which relatives live.

Library of Congress call #: LC-USF34-012365-E.

Library of Congress call #: LC-USF34-012460-E and call #: LC-USF34-012459-E.

“Black Milk” was initially credited to Edwin, but changed in the year 2000 to reflect its original author. In *Re-Viewing Documentary*, Brannan and Katzman offer an insightful discussion the gender dynamics leading to Louise’s background role in the couple’s picture-making ventures. Out of the 185 photos from the couple’s first trip to Puerto Rico, only this photo is credited to Louise Rosskam. Though Mrs. Rosskam shot several hundred photographs when the coupled lived in Puerto Rico in the 1940s. Those photos fall outside of the purview of this chapter.

Though taken in 1937, the photo looks strikingly contemporary and the caption could easily explain that the baby is drinking Coca-Cola instead of milk, which remains prohibitively expensive in Puerto Rico today, costing upwards of $6.00 per gallon compared to $4.00 per gallon on the U.S. mainland. In Puerto Rico, a liter of coke can be purchased for $1.50 on average.

Another photograph dated January 1938 and credited to Edwin Rosskam, entitled “Interior of country store in the hills. Note: Everything on the shelves, with the exception of a little coffee and sugar in the glass jars and the bananas hanging from the ceiling, is imported. Puerto Rico” (Call #: LC-USF34-012385-E), represents the concern that the importation of the foods Puerto Ricans consumed made them more expensive and difficult to attain.

The “villa” pictured is the Spanish Colonial Revival mansion built in the early 1930s for Don Juan Eugenio Serrallés, son of Juan Serrallés, owner of the *Hacienda Mercedita* [Mercedita Sugar Mill]. He was also founder of the Serallés Distillery, which produces Don Q Rum. The *Castillo Serrallés*, as it now known, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. Today it is the *Museo Castillo Serrallés*, a museum devoted to showcasing the history of sugar cane and rum production in Puerto Rico.

He became ill in an Atlanta prison, and was then transferred to Columbus Hospital in New York City in 1943 where he served the remainder of his sentence.

U.S. citizenship was granted to Puerto Ricans though the Jones Act passage in 1917.

Chapter 6: The Emergence Of Black Puerto Ricans In Portraiture, 1930S

The Emergence Of Black Puerto Ricans In Portraiture, 1930S

In *Puerto Rican Painting Between Past and Present*, Mari Carmen Ramírez explained that, “To be a painter in Puerto Rico in the first three decades of this century was to fight against a hostile environment” (1987, 19). Ramírez’s statement summarizes the state of art in Puerto Rico at the beginning of the twentieth century. Renowned artists of the period such as Francisco Oller, Ramón Frade, Miguel Pou, Juan Rosado, and Oscar Colón Delgado continued to paint despite economic hardship and lack of institutional support and exhibition venues. For example Francisco Oller, widely recognized as one of Puerto Rico’s most celebrated and talented painters, earned prestige and prominence during his lifetime but still “died poor and almost completely forgotten by local authorities” (Ramírez 1987, 19).

Artists often held jobs outside the arts (Quero-Chiesa 1945). In 1933 painter Juan Rosado described the economic reality of island artists: “Trying to subsist out of painting alone is to commit suicide” (Ramírez 1987, 19; cf. Benítez 1978, 26). In 1922, to support his family, Rosado opened a commercial sign and lettering shop, that he maintained until his death in 1962. Ramón Frade earned a living from his work as an architect and land surveyor. Similarly, although Miguel Pou studied drawing and painting early in life, he was a teacher in Puerto Rico’s Department of Public Education until 1920. After studying at the New York Art Students League, he returned to Puerto Rico in 1919 and resigned from his teaching post to open his own art school in Ponce, which he named *Academia Pou*. Seeking further training, Pou again traveled abroad in 1935. This time he enrolled at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Upon his return to the island he continued teaching at his art academy.

In 1930 there were no museums where painters could exhibit or donate their works. Art academies were privately run by individual artists (such as *Academia Pou*). Ramírez explains that only the *Ateneo Puertorriqueño* and the University of Puerto Rico promoted art during this period (1987, 19). Needless to say, the glaring absence of women and Afro-Puerto Rican artists marked the period. Furthermore, the works exhibited at the *Ateneo* and the University reflected the Hispanophile and Eurocentric biases of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Puerto Rico, such that Afro-Puerto Rican subjects and themes were largely left out of the canvas and the few exhibitions organized during the period.1

In this chapter, I turn to paintings by Miguel Pou (1880–1968) and Oscar Colón Delgado (1889–1968) to trace key moments in island artists’ portrayals of blacks, a population long excluded from the canvas’s central space. Although Afro-Puerto Ricans had been depicted in earlier periods (see chapter one), it was not until the late 1930s that artists produced portraits representing black Puerto Ricans exclusively.2 I contend that in the late 1930s, the Hispanophile grip that had prevented artists from centrally and exclusively depicting non-white subjects loosened. The two paintings I examine can be described as “naturalistic portraiture” because they depict a likeness which refers to the identity of the living or once-living person portrayed (Woodall 1997, 1). Historically the custom of nobles and the wealthy, the portrait signified stature, wealth, power, beauty, and lineage. It sought to portray the sitter’s special position in society. “Portraiture,” Woodall explains, “also articulated the patriarchal principle of genealogy upon which aristocratic ideology was built. . . . The *raison d’être* of these images was actually to represent sitters as worthy of love, honour, respect and authority” (1997, 3).

Up to this point in Puerto Rican art the portrait had been the conventional representational form for government figures, clergyman, and society ladies and their children. The paintings of eighteenth-century Afro-Puerto Rican artist José Campeche, the son of a formerly enslaved man, illustrate early Puerto Rican portraiture.3 Artists such as Francisco Oller, Ramón Frade, and others certainly painted portraits of themselves, of their friends, and of iconic Puerto Rican types (such as the *jíbaro* and the washerwomen discussed in chapter one). But portraiture was still limited to upper class white Puerto Rican subjects. Here I explore what "opened up" the canvas in the late 1930s to allow island artists the freedom, for the first time, to depict Afro-Puerto Ricans.

In the first half of the twentieth century, three prominent local figures influenced Puerto Rican artists. First, Ramón Frade, who followed Francisco Oller's call for artists to record the customs and traditions of their time, advocated the *costumbrismo* that reverberated in Puerto Rican art well into the century. Second, the writings of Antonio S. Pedreira, a respected intellectual and cultural critic situated in the university, had a lasting and profound impact on Puerto Rican cultural production. And third, Luis Palés Matos's "black poetry" gave full expression to the "folklorization" of blackness and managed to both tantalize and enrage his peers. If Frade's painting *El Pan Nuestro* [Our Daily Bread] (1905) stands as his masterwork, Pedreira's book *Insularismo* (1934) is his *magnum opus,* and Palés Matos's *Tuntún de pasa y grifería* [Tom-tom of black hair and kinky things]4 (1937) offers his *tour de force.* Although differing in their mediums—Oller offers a painting, Pedreira a book of cultural criticism, and Palés Matos a poetic tract—and although they appeared three decades apart, each attempts through their work to disentangle an essential Puerto Rican identity.

Frade and Palés Matos share an interest in centering island traditions, customs, and subjects (Frade's *jíbaro* is discussed in chapter one and the black) as significant parts of Puerto Rico's cultural makeup. Pedreira believed in the inherent inferiority of the indigenous and African "races" and proposed Puerto Rico as a Latin nation, which, like other Latin American nations, owed its cultural makeup to the motherland, (white) Spain (Flores 1979;Guerra 1998;Rosa 2001). Pedreira endorsed a cosmopolitan *progreso* [progress] only achievable through education. For instance the *bohío* [straw hut] for Pedreira was far from romantic. As if taking a direct stab at artists such as Frade, he writes,

The straw hut, so picturesque in the distance as a decorative element in the regional landscape but so miserable up close, it is called to disappear because it does not hold the permanent essence of tradition. Its loss must not be mourned because the hut is no more than an expression of anguish and poverty. If each *jíbaro* could have a safe and comfortable house, made from cement or wood and all the sanitary advances of modern life, it would be convenient and we could archive the straw hut in history, in poetry, and in folklore. (translation mine, 1934: 63–64)5

Despite Pedreira's admonishment throughout the 1930s, prominent island painters remained invested in depictions of tradition. The representations of the *bohío* remained deployed by painters as a romantic portrayal of the dwellings of "authentic" Puerto Ricans. Pedreira called this traditionalist tendency "the *jibarismo* trend of the new century" (Torres Martinó 1998a, 83).

Faced with colonial encroachment, Puerto Rican artists set out during this period to produce "art with a system of symbols accessible to Everyman, meaningful images of Puerto Rican nature through which islanders could relate fully and profoundly with their essence" (Torres Martinó 1998a, 84). For artists, portraying the motherland as different and separate from the imperial metropolis was of the utmost importance in the fight to build and preserve a "true national essence." As Torres Martinó puts it,

in order for art to effectively collaborate with the cultural resistance against the United States culture, it can barely afford to resort to an aesthetics that limits communication. Without communication it is hard to congregate the will of the Puerto Rican people to struggle for its survival. It is proven that art is an important part of the spiritual reserve that we Puerto Ricans need to keep our identities afloat. (1998a, 88)

Although the *jíbaro* became the *de facto* soul of the nation, other representational currents also sought to challenge the "empire of the *jíbaro*" as the only valid representation of the Puerto Rican nation.

In 1926, poet Luis Palés Matos (1898–1959) wrote "Pueblo Negro" [Black Town], hailed as the first significant "black poem" written in Puerto Rico. In *Insularismo* (1934), Pedreira nods to Palés Matos as "*otro capitán de actitudes nuevas . . . figura solitaria en el sendero puertorriqueño de la poesía negra*" [another captain of the new attitudes . . . solitary figure in the Puerto Rican path of black poetry] (77). When Palés Matos published his masterwork *Tuntún de pasa y grifería* (1937), he included "Pueblo Negro." Through *Tuntún*, the poet aimed to (1) uphold, make visible, and celebrate Afro-Puerto Ricans; (2) answer Pedreira's racist charges in *Insularismo* that Africans in Puerto Rico were a docile and inferior race; and (3) propose black Puerto Ricans, specifically the *mulata*, as an alternative cultural icon.6 Even though he was racially identified as white,7 Palés Matos is widely recognized as the "father" of both *poesia negra* [black poetry] in Puerto Rico and *poesia antillana* [Antillean poetry].8 His poems, based on a combination of observation, nostalgia, idealism, and fiction, can be read as folkloric tracts rather than as true representations of black reality. In fact, critics have consistently commented on Palés Matos's use of racist language and persistent stereotypes of the black as primitive, rhythmic, superstitious, instinctual, and overtly sexual (Barrios 1989; Kutzinsky 1993; Marzán 1995;Torres 1998;Ramos Rosado 1999;Rosa 2001;Jiménez 2004;Lloréns 2005;Isfahani-Hammond 2008; among others). Yet others have argued that his poetry should be read as grounded in anti-colonial resistance to the United States' rigid system of racial stratification (Diaz-Quiñones 1982; González Pérez 1987; López-Baralt 1997; West-Durán 2005; Badiane 2010). They contend that the poetry illustrates an "artistic vindication of the Hispanic Caribbean's black heritage, and their utopian vision of Pan-Caribbean unity" (González Pérez 1987, 20).

In her analysis of *Tuntún*, Barrios aptly explains that "*Es más bien el producto de una serie de circunstancias coyunturales que despertaron en Palés el interés fundamentalmente poético, hacia los estereotipos creados por nuestra cultura blanca* [1989:71]." [A series of conjectural circumstances stirred in Palés Matos a fundamental interest in poetry, an interest that led him to the use of the stereotypes created by our white culture.] She further states that "*Es poesía 'blanca' de hombre blanco*" [It is the 'white' poetry of white men] (1989, 67). Seen in this light, his poetry presents Eurocentric (mis)understandings about the lives and life-ways of black Puerto Ricans. Isfahani-Hammond calls white-authored representations of black experience "White Negritude" (2008). She argues that authors such as Freyre in Brazil and Palés Matos in Puerto Rico justified their white-authored black texts through their deployment of a discourse highlighting national "hybridity," "racial democracy," and "race mixing" to legitimize their work. But Palés Matos's alleged racism is less relevant to the current discussion than is an understanding of how his poetry inspired a shift in other white Puerto Rican artists from Hispanocentered depictions to "celebrating blackness."

Significantly, Palés Matos's poem "Pueblo Negro" offers a clue as to why Miguel Pou titled his painting *Una raza de soñadores: Retrato de Ciquí* [A race of dreamers: Portrait of Ciquí] (1938) (see Figure 3.1). In "Pueblo Negro" Palés Matos writes, "*Esta noche me obsede la remota visión de un pueblo negro. . . . Mussumba, Tombuctú, Farafangana—es un pueblo de sueño* . . . " [Tonight I had the remote vision of a black town. . . . Mussumba, Tombuctú, Farafangana—It is a town of dreams . . .] (Palés Matos 2000, 19; translation mine). This poem likely influenced Miguel Pou's choice of title.

Ciquí, Pou's sitter, was baseball player Jose Lanauze, a right fielder with the Escogido Lions team although he appears in the portrait out of uniform (McNeil 2007). Pou's curious titling, like Palés Matos's, is tinged with the racist overtones common of the era. The portrait offers a dignified vision of the sitter: a crisp white shirt reflects soft contours of light on his face, his features are lifelike and his slacks freshly ironed. His eyes present a purposeful, direct, and smart stare. Ciquí appears as a self-possessed man in control of his life and his thoughts. Pou's painting is a pioneering, rare portrayal of a black man dignified and worthy of his central depiction on the canvas. Despite an earlier depiction of a smiling black boy playing a gourd—Oller's 1892 portrait titled *Jibarito tocando*

güiro (Estudio para el velorio) [Peasant boy playing a guiro (Drawing for the Wake)]—the portrait of Ciquí is groundbreaking because the painting confers on him status in the classic sense of a traditional portrait. He is not playing an instrument, washing laundry, teaching children, or performing a job. He sits only to be painted. Sitting exclusively and leisurely for "his portrait" grants him a status of respectability.

According to McNeil, by the 1910s there were many new baseball teams. As players "traveled around the island displaying their talents before rabid fans, they became Puerto Rico's first baseball heroes, with names like Ciquí . . . " (2007, 111). His stature as a respected sports figure helps explain Pou's sensitive depiction.

Miguel Pou, A race of dreamers: Portrait of Ciquí, 1938. Courtesy of José Manuel Cintrón Pou and the Museo de Arte de Ponce.

Miguel Pou, A race of dreamers: Portrait of Ciquí, 1938. Courtesy of José Manuel Cintrón Pou and the Museo de Arte de Ponce. A black and white portrait of a man, Ciquí, sitting in a chair. He is wearing a white shirt and dark pants, looking directly at the viewer.

But why does the painting's title create such representational dissonance? For Poupeye (1998), the title reflects the "benelovent racial stereotyping . . . in a country that has never quite come to terms with the African elements in its heritage" (70). In placing the signifiers *race of* in the title, Pou used Ciquí's body to generalize about Afro-Puerto Ricans. He became a type in a broader generalization. Why dreamers? To say they are not grounded in reality? Or was Pou alluding to something entirely different—dreams of advancement, equality, and upward mobility? What was the "black race" dreaming about in 1938 Puerto Rico?

Black Bodies: The Athlete

Black Bodies: The Athlete

There is one expression that through time has become singularly eroticized: the black athlete.
—Franz Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks

As Palés Matos's poetry illustrates, whites have defined, written about, and represented the terrain of the black female body. She is a "known" entity. In Puerto Rico, the black woman has been a dominated subject historically, inhabiting one of two poles. On one side of the continuum, she is the (older) servant who appears man-like, big, strong, dark, ugly, and sexually unavailable (i.e., the washerwoman, the cook, the cleaner, the matriarch). On the other side she is (young) feminine, sexual, fecund, rhythmic, available (i.e., the erotic mulata, the prostitute). At each end, she exists to fulfill the desires of others. And although she is "known," she remains invisible or hidden from public view (Lloréns 2005, 2008).

In Puerto Rico, the black man has long been an "unknown entity." This is partly due to the historical fact that national writers and chroniclers (such as Palés Matos and Pedreira) have been white men hailing from the island's wealthy and/or educated class. Growing up, these men (and as we will see in chapter seven regarding upper-class white women) were exposed to black women working within their homes, but black men remained outside, working in the yards of these same households. So the black man has been construed as fearsome, dangerous, mysterious, animalistic, overtly sexual, and endowed with a large sexual organ. He is an entertainer who plays drums, dances, and plays baseball. He is also the strongest of workers (cutting cane), primal, and "close to nature."9

Portrait of Ciquí offers a representation of the athlete. This has been an acceptable profession for black men in Puerto Rico (and in the Diaspora), but the experiences of black male athletes remain understudied and under-theorized.10

Although the black athlete tends to enjoy the respect and admiration of both, blacks and whites, his positioning and ability to achieve upward mobility is contingent on “good and proper” behavior. If he fails to behave in expected ways or becomes too proud, he is believed to have given in to his “biological impulses.” As entertainer, the black athlete occupies a role the dominant classes accept, and if he behaves, he might acquire honorary admission into these classes. Blacks’ acceptance into the dominant classes is less challenging to white superiority when those blacks are performing ascribed societal roles (Lloréns 2005). The athlete’s role remains bodily grounded and as such, does not transgress Eurocentric beliefs that blacks are rooted in the body and whites are of the mind (Fanon 1967, 127).

Beliefs of the black athlete’s prowess are embedded in erroneous biological assumptions that purport blacks are stronger than whites and bred for enslavement and toil in the plantations of the New World. These same beliefs locate blacks as primal beings, closer than whites to animals, with strong, sharp reflexes. Using Gilroy’s (1994) notion of “bio-politics,” “the person is defined as the body . . . in which certain exemplary bodies . . . become instantiations of community” (29). In other words, the beauty or talent of certain extraordinary black individuals allows them upward mobility and in turn they become exemplars, having “made it” against the odds of racial oppression. Problematically, the opportunity for uplift lies in the cultivation of the body rather than in the development of a critical consciousness aimed at real transformation of the conditions of oppression faced by Afro-Diasporic citizens in the Black Atlantic (Gilroy 1993;Carrington 2010). The performance of accepted modalities of the black body (i.e., sexual or sporting) thus negates a real transformative politics of freedom (Gilroy 1994;Carrington 2010).

Pan, Tierra, Libertad [Bread, Land, And Liberty]

Pan, Tierra, Libertad [Bread, Land, And Liberty]

In 1939, President Roosevelt removed Governor Winship from office as a result of mounting outrage about alleged civil rights violations under his administration. President Roosevelt appointed William Leahy, who served as governor for a year. During this time Leahy took a hands-off approach to local politics and focused mainly on overseeing the development of military bases across the island. By the 1940s, it became clear in Washington, DC, that the people of Puerto Rico needed to be granted greater control and more autonomy in local politics. New Deal programs offered temporary relief but did little to strengthen the island’s economy. To avoid popular unrest, profound changes in the conditions of the vast majority of the island’s residents had to take place (Dietz 1986).

The Popular Democratic Party (PPD) was created in 1938 with a platform, according to Vázquez, “constructed during a period of intense economic transformation—one that sought to resolve the problems of a failing colonial project shifting from agrarian-based production to industrial commercial labor” (2002, 304). It brought together previously fractioned political quarters such as independence supporters, the working poor, and the island’s intelligentsia and upper classes. The party’s charismatic leader, Luis Muñoz Marín, worked to achieve this unity. Having gained the approval of those in power, he turned to the masses of rural and poor Puerto Ricans for support. When speaking at rallies and meetings Muñoz Marín used colloquial Spanish to even the discursive field between the mainly illiterate workers and the peasants who became his party’s backbone. He wanted to avoid being seen as an upper-class white. Although he was the cosmopolitan son of one of San Juan’s prominent Creole families, his strategy was to listen to the masses and convey that

he understood their plight. His party's official slogan became "Bread, Land, and Liberty."11

The PPD represented itself as the party of the land's workers and adopted the straw-hatted *jíbaro* as its symbol (Vázquez 2002). This move once and for all concretized the party's alliance to "the poor barefoot mountain region *campesino* (peasant) and the coastal cane worker" (Vázquez 2002, 304). The PPD's symbol was inclusive of workers more generally because the *pava* evoked romantic notions of owning and working one's plot of land. It harks back to biological notions about the workers "rootedness" in the land that he cultivates. His sweat, blood, and semen that would constitute his progeny, as well as his decaying body after death, is the essential mixture that nurtures the [national] homeland. Together, workers nurture the *patria* [motherland] that births *la gran familia Puertorriqueña* [the Great Puerto Rican Family]. As a signifier of Caribbeanness, the *pava* effectively hails [male] workers regardless of race or whether he was a small coffee cultivator in Utuado or a cane cutter for a large sugar mill in Salinas. Yet while the party's icon became the *pava* [straw hat] worn by workers for protection from the sun, the *machete*, the workers' main tool, was purposefully disavowed. More than just a work tool, the machete has a long been a symbol that signifies rebellion—and cognizant of this, the architects of the PPD's patriotic but colonial platform erased the machete from its imagery altogether (Vázquez 2002). Furthermore, the PPD's worker was a modern, industrial one: he or she was suited for work in factories, and for handling industrial machinery. The machete became a symbol of pre-industrial times, it was not well-suited to represent the new era of content colonial workers who left their detached-cement homes each morning and drove to the canning factory to work his or her eight hour shift.

In 1940, Muñoz Marín was elected President of the Senate, the highest political office to which an islander could be elected. At this time, the U.S. President still had the power to appoint the island's governor. In 1941, President Roosevelt appointed Rexford Tugwell, an agricultural economist and liberal academic, who served as governor until his term ended in 1946. He was the last U.S.-appointed governor to serve the island. Tugwell's interests in combating poverty had led to his initial appointment in 1935 as Director of the Resettlement Administration in Washington, DC. Significantly, under his leadership the RA formed the Information Division, which founded the Historical Section. Tugwell appointed Roy Striker, a former student of his at Columbia University, to head the Historical Section.

Shortly after assuming the governorship, Tugwell, working closely with Muñoz Marín, passed a series of key legislation items aimed at economic development. Chief among these was the creation of the Food and Supplies Commission, the Development Company, the Development Bank, the Planning, Urbanizing, and Zoning Board, the Budget Bureau, and the Central Statistical Office (Dietz 1986, 187–188; López Rojas 2011, 47). Governor Tugwell found an ideological ally in Muñoz Marín of the PPD, and together they promoted land reform and social justice while maintaining U.S. economic and military interests on the island (Dietz 1986; Vázquez 2002).

The party's main focus thus became strengthening the economy while the island's political status and the goal of decolonization was relegated to the fringes (Dietz 1986; Vázquez 2002; López Rojas 2011). When the United States entered World War II in 1941, thousands of Puerto Rican men and women joined the efforts and served alongside Americans. The war brought a brief period of prosperity to the island. Having lost its traditional sources of hard liquor, the United States turned to Puerto Rico. As compensation, the United States allowed the island to keep 70 percent of the taxes from the sale of rum (Lefebvre 2007, 95). This windfall helped the PPD to make good on a number of promises including significantly, land reform (Lefebvre 2007).

Puerto Rican artists remained astute commentators and critics on the island's sociopolitical life. For example, in 1936, Julio Tomás Martinez painted *El Manicomio* [Insane Asylum], which the artist described as a depiction of the "pandora's box" attitude typical of the island's prominent political figures (Torres Martinó, 1998a: 71). Similarly, in 1941 Oscar Colón Delgado painted a groundbreaking portrait, *Jíbaro Negro* [Black Jíbaro], a radically altered imaging of the historical portrayal of the "authentic" and "white" mountain peasant, son of mother Spain (see Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2. Oscar Colón Delgado, Jíbaro Negro, 1941. Courtesy of Carmen E. Colón Juarbe.

Figure 3.2. Oscar Colón Delgado, Jíbaro Negro, 1941. Courtesy of Carmen E. Colón Juarbe. A black and white painting of a man standing in a field. He is wearing a wide-brimmed hat, a button-up shirt, pants, and boots. He is holding a machete in his right hand. Palm trees are visible in the background.

Torres Martinó explains that although Colón Delgado was born to a humble family in the town of Hatillo, his paintings, like those of his upper-class contemporaries, exhibit an aesthetic preoccupation with Puerto Rican customs and traditions. According to Torres Martinó, Colón Delgado belongs to a small group of important island artists whose work is representative of the *costumbrismo jibarista* dominant during the first half of the twentieth century (1998, 76). Colón Delgado became a fervent nationalist and loyal admirer of don Pedro Albizu Campos. Colón Delgado's depictions of tradition then had the double aim of uplifting the customs of his people while communicating a decidedly anti-colonial stance.

The deployment of the *jíbaro* figure, argues Guerra, became a "refuge of the elite's own invention," a concept in the creation of a "Puertoricanness" distinct from North Americanness (1998, 75). In other words, the *jíbaro* was a site in the struggle to preserve Puerto Rican values against the invading Americanization that threatened to transform the island (TorresRobles 1999). Countless songs and poems were dedicated to the mythical *jíbaro,* and evoking his life-ways was shrouded in nostalgic longing for a disappearing way of life. Muñoz Marín seized upon the sentimentality attached to this national icon and reconfigured him as a docile, kind, and gentle laborer (Vázquez 2002).

Colón Delgado's *Jíbaro Negro* portrays starkly the "other" *jíbaro,* the one that had long been left out of definitions of national identity. This 1941 depiction is a highly charged indictment of the PPD's colonialist agenda, an agenda that had relegated to the fringes what for some was Puerto Rico's most pressing issue: independence. Colón Delgado's *Jíbaro Negro* stands confidently on the land he cultivates. The landscape echoes that in Frades' *El Pan Nuestro* (discussed in chapter one). But in contrast to the earlier painting, in *Jíbaro Negro* a strong *jíbaro* confronts the viewer wearing work boots and fully clothed against the elements. He does not carry plantains—the fruits of the earth and of his labor. Rather he holds his machete and looks directly, sternly back at the viewer. Like Frade's *jíbaro,* the man is aging; he looks patient, wise, and dignified. But he also looks as if he is ready to firmly defend his land against unwanted intruders.

Colón Delgado's painting proposes several bold disruptions of longstanding beliefs about national identity and history. First and most obviously, he offers a black *jíbaro* during an historical period in which no other painter dared to portray a racial variation of the *campesinato* [peasantry] in Puerto Rico. Second, it deploys blackness to signify insurgency, evoking both the revolts carried out by enslaved men and women in the recent past and the black Puerto Ricans who had been active in pro-independence activities. Third, it deploys the machete as a weapon, not just as a work tool. Fourth, the black man stands as a rightful owner of the land, in stark defiance of a virulently racist and segregated United States. Fifth, this *jíbaro negro* is the quintessential representation of the Antilles, starkly situating Puerto Rico as culturally similar to the rest of the Caribbean.

The painting grounds this black *jíbaro* in the island's hilly landscape. Reporting on fieldwork she carried out in Puerto Rico's southeast coast, Torres has explained that "*Jíbaros negros* were located on the coast as well as on the interior of coastal municipalities on the island. The fusion of *jíbaro* and *negro* in Puerto Rico radically alters the ways in which these categories have been essentialized in the Puerto Rican cultural imagination precisely because this union represents a movement toward blackness" (1998, 294).

Like Torres, I conducted fieldwork in the town of Arroyo, located on Puerto Rico's southeastern coast. The Caribbean Sea establishes Arroyo's southern boundary. Tall, dense mountains establish its northern border while the towns of Guayama and Patillas are neighbors to the west and east. Arroyo's *barrio* [neighborhood] Yaurel nestles into the lush mountainside. Its people have historically cultivated the land and produced an array of subsistence crops or *viandas*. Arroyanos identify Yaurel as the place where "black folks live." In this way, it represents the island-wide practice of relegating blacks and blackness to specific geographic regions (i.e., the coast or a specific *barrio* within a town), effectively marking clear and separate boundaries between "regular" Puerto Ricans and Afro-Puerto Ricans.

While the people from Yaurel identify themselves as Afro-Puerto Ricans, they also identify as *jíbaros* (Lloréns 2005). They place great importance on the role of land and agriculture in the community's sustenance and survival and exalt *jíbaro*-ness as a lived identity, one that includes blackness in its definition. As Tito, a man from Yaurel explained to me, "Here in Yaurel we are *jíbaros* but we are also black and proud! Every December we put on a troubadour festival in the park, we roast pigs, make pasteles, and the whole community goes to the park to celebrate. We work the land here, my grandfather and father worked the land, and I am a carpenter by trade but I also have a plot of land that I cultivate" (Lloréns 2005, 152). Clearly the diversity of Puerto Rico's peasantry has not been represented in official history.

Throughout the history of American colonialism on the island, AfroPuerto Ricans have been identified as supporters of pro-statehood parties (Guerra 1998, 245; Findlay 1999). However many were also vocal participants in the fight for independence from Spain (Lloréns 2005). In the mid-nineteenth century many Afro-Puerto Ricans joined Ramón Emeterio Betances in seeking independence and the abolition of slavery. Later they joined island Creoles in the *Partido Autonomista Puertorriqueño* [Puerto Rican Autonomist Party] in boycotting Spanish businesses and in forming secret societies with the ultimate goal of overthrowing Spain and declaring Puerto Rico an independent republic. Several men from Yaurel joined this cause and formed a secret society named *La Torre del Viejo* [The Old Man's Tower] (Lloréns 2005). On October 25, 1895, the newspaper *Boletín Mercantil* reported the following:

Regarding Arroyo More prisoners have been captured, reaching a considerable number. The individuals who belong to a *secret society* are generally *peasants*, but there are serious allegations that those who inspired and directed the society are of another condition. The authorities are working diligently to discover them. All of those who constituted the society were sworn in and it is evident that their goal was *active and armed separatism*. [translation and italics mine]

Oral history reveals that men from Yaurel who were suspected of belonging to the secret society *La Torre del Viejo*, but who were not killed as punishment for their involvement, received higher prison sentences than their white creole counterparts (Lloréns 2005). Oral lore also reveals that when the Americans arrived in Puerto Rico, they freed the surviving blacks who had been jailed for conspiring to overthrow Spain (Lloréns 2005). Don Erasmito, a Yaurel elder, told me

There is the notion that the Americans have done the same as the Spanish did. The ones in charge here are the Americans and in great measure that's the struggle we live with here, our struggle to define the status of Puerto Rico. Most Puerto Ricans believe that we are only "Puertorican," that we are not American. *La Torre del Viejo* had everything to do with the political and economic struggles of being a colony, much like we are today. (Lloréns 2005)

In Colón Delgado's painting, the machete signifies the dream of independence. Writing about the machete, Vázquez explains,

The tool had been adopted as title and symbol in 1924 Mexico by the Syndicate of Workers, Painters, and Sculptors for their magazine *El Machete*, and had played a role in Puerto Rican communist party iconography (often identified as *jíbaros*) in the years immediately following the American occupation of 1898. (2002, 305–306)

Yaurel's black peasants wielded their machetes at the Spanish Civil Guard and similarly, years later, several thousand Puerto Ricans assembled to de- fend the island against the 1898 American invasion (González Cruz 2006). Some of those assembled later merged into the Nationalist Party with Albizu Campos as its ideological leader and with a combatant wing known as "*los macheteros*" [the machete wielders] (Fernandez 1987, 1996).

Jíbaro Negro turns on its head the classic Puerto Rican deployment of the black race. Colón Delgado complicates what until then had been polar renderings of Puerto Rico's national identity with the *jíbaro* on one end and the *mulata* on the opposite end. Significantly, both of these national types were powerless figures in the face of U.S. colonials and island elite. The *jíbaro* way of life became increasingly threatened by the industrialization proposed by the PPD. The *mulata* as an object of male desire was a fantasy, a source of pleasure and exoticism.12 In this discursive construction she was never a selfpossessed woman, but rather the eroticized projection of the same SeignorialHispano man who in earlier periods helped himself freely to the bodies of enslaved women. Rosa remarks that while "the *jíbaro* represents an archaic past and the world of real need, the *mulata* is part of a magical, unreal world of male desire" (2001, 477). Colón Delgado's *Jíbaro Negro* stands as a symbol of both transfiguration of these ideas and nationalistic resilience.

The mid-1940s would hail a new phase for island artists. On December 1, 1945, the artist Luis Quero Chiesa published the first in a series of provocative newspaper essays entitled "Arte Nacional Puertorriqueño" [Puerto Rican National Art].13 In his first article, Quero Chiesa exalts artists to break with the "acute and chronic illness" of representing foreign icons (for example the Battle of Waterloo, apples, and Venetian scenes), and instead embrace "our repressed Puertoricanness." He defines "Puerto Rican national art" as an "*arte autóctono, inspirado en símbolos nuestros y hecho a nuestra manera*" [autochthonous art, inspired in our symbols and made our way]. He denounces art's neglect in the island's historiography, its position as "an accessory" rather than as an important and consequential undertaking. He remarks that although the island's literature has been well documented, it was actually painting, specifically Jose Campeche's master paintings, that inaugurated Puerto Rico's national art. He continues by asserting that even when in Puerto Rico artists work without institutional support, national art is at the forefront of creating a national consciousness. Finally, Quero Chiesa insists that the insular government create institutional support for art and artists to thrive and grow.

Not long after Quero Chiesa's call for governmental support of a national art, Luis Muñoz Marín became the first democratically elected governor of Puerto Rico. With this election in 1948, the insular government received some autonomy over island affairs; hope for a new society was at an all-time high. Albizu Campos had returned to Puerto Rico upon his release from prison in 1947, and had begun to organize with Nationalist Party members with the goal of United Nations recognition of their legitimate voice in the anti-colonial movement. The decade would end in a losing battle for the nationalist and anti-colonial movement. The industrialization plan known as Operation Bootstrap gained momentum with the slogan "the battle of production," which made clear that "the intent of the new policy was no longer social justice" (Dietz 1986, 210). The new goal of the colonial United States for Puerto Rico was progress through industrialization and economic growth—the island was marching steadily towards modernization. This new era, as will be discussed in the next chapter, witnessed the creation of institutions that would support and encourage artists. Artists increasingly depict Afro-Puerto Rican subjects and themes on the canvas. American photographer Jack Delano, who arrived on the island at the behest of his colleague Edwin Rosskam, would become a sentinel in the island's continued transformation.

Notes

Notes

In December 1933, Walt Dehner, an American artist and Director of the Art Department at the University of Puerto Rico, organized an exhibit. Three hundred artworks were presented making it the largest exhibit on the island at the time. The exhibition included works by both island and foreign artists. In 1936, the first "independent exhibition of Puerto Rican artists was organized" in which sixty painters presented their work (Ramírez 1987). Ramírez remarks that at the show's opening lecture, writer "Concha Meléndez observed that the leading thematic and stylistic concerns of the exhibition were still based on the 'empire of the *jíbarismo*'—the depiction of local types and manners" (1987, 20).

Francisco Oller's stunning painting titled *La escuela del maestro Rafael Cordero* ca. 1890–1892 and Oscar Colón Delgado's *Lavanderas* (discussed in chapter one) are early examples of depictions of blacks as central subjects on the canvas. Yet in both instances the subjects are engaged in work and are surrounded by others. Neither qualifies as a portrait in the strict sense. Significantly, the artist Rafael D. Palacios (1902–1993) is a pioneer who depicted Afro-Caribbean subjects and themes in his black and white drawings and paintings. In the early 1930s, Palacios was already immersed in portraying the "black" condition in both Puerto Rico and Haiti offering his works evocative titles such as: "Pena Negra" [Black Sadness], *Papá Ogún, Minongo, Espíritu de Guinea* [Father Ogún, Minongo, Sprit of Guinea], and *Noche de San Ciprían* [San Ciprían's Night] (Delgado Mercado 1998, 26). Palacios' works, which has been largely understudied, must be placed in the canon of great Puerto Rican artists.

Though Campeche's art falls outside the purview of the current work, an excellent essay is "Jose Campeche, 1751–1809" written by Dr. René Taylor in *Puerto Rico*

Arte e Identidad, edited by Myrna Báez and José A. Torres Martinó (1998), pp. 17–27. Another interesting discussion of the early portraiture of important Afro-Caribbean men (such as Henri Christophe and Toussaint L'Ouverture) is found in Patricia Mohammed's *Imaging the Caribbean: Culture and Visual Translation* (2010), pp. 325–331.

Rosa translates Palés Matos's book title as "Tom-tom of black hair and kinky things" (2001, 473).

Original: El bohío de paja y yagua, tan pintoresco a la distancia como elemento decorativo del paisaje regional pero tan miserable de cerca, está llamado a desaparecer porque no carga con las esencias permanentes de la tradición. No hay que lamentar su ausencia ya que el bohío no es más que expresión de angustia y penuria. Si cada jíbaro pudiera tener casa cómoda y segura, de cemento o de tablas, con techo mineral y con todos los adelantos sanitarios de la vida moderna, es conveniente que así sea y que se hospitalice el bohío en la historia, en la poesía y en el folklore (1934, 63–64).

Palés Matos decidedly proposes the sensual "*Mulatta Antillana*" as the representative of Antillean culture, if not as the icon of the nation. On the one hand, the Puerto Rican national "mother" is the black woman and the "father" is the *jíbaro*. When coupled they continue to produce the hybrid children that characterize the Puerto Rican nation (Barrios 1989;Rosa 2001;Lloréns 2005). Using tourism as his guiding framework, Rosa says the painting *La Rumba* [The Rumba] (1938) by Carmelo Filardi, despite its title, is really a representation of Palés Matos's *mulata*. Rosa explains that the painting "depicts a seminaked black woman dancing in a fantastical landscape with, in the background, a gigantic sun, palm trees, and a few musical notes that mimic the movement of the figure" (2001, 475). Interestingly, Rosa notes that Filardi designed the first cover for Palés Matos's *Tuntún*.

In Puerto Rico, racial classification has little to do with "blood quantum" and is instead derived from a folk taxonomy of phenotypes. Whiteness is fluid, contextually defined in degrees (Godreau 2000; Loveman 2007). Blackness, on the other hand, is less a "matter of degree" or a spectrum than whiteness is, as there are phenotypical combinations that disallow "wiggling" out of blackness towards whiteness (see Lloréns 2005, 2008). The nuances of the "contingent and flexible racial

categorization" framework in Puerto Rico would benefit from further study, as it has been subsumed under the totalizing framework that posits that all people have the choice of racially positioning themselves. I contend however that such an option is simply not available to people who are "black, black" as they are called in Puerto Rico (Lloréns 2008).

Palés Matos came under attack in Puerto Rico for seeming to claim that "blackness" was as an inherent part of the psychological and cultural makeup of all the island's inhabitants, regardless of color. Clearly, this claim was one maneuver by which Palés Matos sought to legitimize his own role in the authorship of socalled black poetry. In the face of such attacks the poet responded, "I did not talk about a black, white, or mulatto poetry: I only talked about an Antillean poetry that reflects our reality as a people in the cultural sense of the world" (Badiane 2010, 109). Palés Matos's statement is an example of what Hammond has called

"atmospheric blackness," defined as a "nongenetic channel through which he absorbs blackness" (2008, 46–47).

For a discussion of black bodies in contemporary Puerto Rican public art see Hilda Lloréns and Rosa Carrasquillo 2008, "Sculpting Blackness." *Visual Anthropology Review*, 24(2):103–116.

With the notable exception of Afro-Puerto Rican baseball player Roberto Clemente, whose life and times has been documented. It is also worth noting that bell hooks has written that, "Professional sports have constituted an alternative work arena for many black men. In that world the black male body once used and abused in a world of labor based on brute force could be transformed; elegance and grace could become the identifying signifier's of one's labor. . . . Playing professional sports was a primary work arena for black men to both assert patriarchal manhood or humanist-based selfhood and make money" (2004, 21).

Vázquez (2002, 304) writes that the PPD's slogan "followed the Mexican revolution's 'land and liberty' and Russia's 'peace and land.'"

Mayra Santos' *Nuestra Señora de la Noche* (2006) is an historical novel about the life of Isabel Luberza, a black woman from Ponce, a famous owner of a brothel, and a keeper of the secrets of the (white) men who frequented her business.

Luis Quero Chiesa published seven newspaper articles entitled "Arte Nacional Puertorriqueño" in *Alma Latina* between December 1, 1945, and January 12, 1946.

Chapter 7: Setting The Stage For Mid-Twentieth-Century Imagery Of Puerto Rico, 1920–1951

Setting The Stage For Mid-Twentieth-Century Imagery Of Puerto Rico, 1920–1951

Entonces pasemos al asunto más espinoso: Jack Delano es puertorriqueño por compromiso y adopción; pero en el 1941 era un Americano empleado como fotógrafo por una agencia colonial—la Farm Security Administration—que coleccionaba nuestra tristeza, pasividad y desesperanza, con la pasión de un anticuario que ve crecer su catálago. 1 —Edgardo Rodríguez Juliá, *Musarañas de Domingo*

On Thanksgiving Day in 1941, Jack Delano boarded the SS *Coamo* in New York City bound for Puerto Rico. He did not know the island would eventually become his home, not during this first trip, but in 1946 he returned to stay with his beloved wife and artistic partner, Irene, equipped with a Guggenheim fellowship and the promise of work from friends Edwin and Louise Rosskam. Indeed, Delano postponed the fellowship to photograph Puerto Rico for the Office of Information, which was directed at the time by Edwin Rosskam (Rivera 1997, 31). Jack and Irene Delano would become the two most influential American artists to live and work in Puerto Rico during the second half of the twentieth century. As Rivera notes, “The Delanos were instrumental in encouraging the creation of art with a clear-cut social purpose aimed at a distinctly Puerto Rican audience. . . . (T)he Delanos . . . helped support the idea, long sustained by Puerto Rican artists, that artists and art have a real and indispensable place in society” (1997, 23–24).

In 1941, however, Delano was arriving in Puerto Rico for the first time. He was on a Farm Security Administration assignment to document living conditions in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, but he first photographed in Puerto Rico for a few days before traveling to St. Thomas and St. Croix where Irene unexpectedly joined him. After finishing the FSA assignment in December 1941, the couple returned to Puerto Rico for three months to photograph the island’s towns. They produced nearly three thousand negatives before heading back to Washington in March 1942 (Delano 1997). Jack Delano’s FSA photographs became a significant part of the FSA file on Puerto Rico. Over one thousand of those photographs are available to the public in the Library of Congress. Although it falls outside of the purview of the decades examined in this chapter, the collection sets the foundation for the Delanos’ subsequent work in Puerto Rico.

The photographs shot by Jack Delano, Edwin Rosskam, and Charles Rotkin comprise the largest visual archive of 1940s Puerto Rico (Delano 1990, 27). Delano’s comprehensive photographic series shot in 1941–1942 include images of “the railroad (no longer in existence), hospitals, schools, folklore, customs, tobacco and coffee production, new industries, and always more people” (Delano 1990, 27). By far the most prominent subject in the collection is the sugar cane zone (with depictions of men at work, resting, eating lunch, worker strikes, equipment, and sugar workers’ families). The theme of poverty also runs through the series. About his first impressions of Puerto Rico, Delano wrote,

I was fascinated and disturbed by much of what I saw: layers of lush blue-green mountains in the distance, barefoot children running along the roadside, vast sugarcane fields bustling with sweat-drenched men swinging machetes, humpbacked zebu oxen hauling cane to sugar mills, thatch-roofed huts of poor famers roasting under the blazing sun, and the horrendous slums

festering in the towns and cities. I had seen plenty of poverty during my travels in the deep South, but never anything like this. (Delano 1997, 72)

Jack Delano’S First Photos Of Puerto Rico

Jack Delano’S First Photos Of Puerto Rico

Jack Delano became an American through the process of immigration when in 1923 his family left Ukraine and settled in Philadelphia. This biographical fact is significant when considering that his early FSA photographs of Puerto Rico reflect an almost anthropological fascination with a people in the process of becoming American, a process he was familiar with. But the Puerto Rican people in his photographs did not undertake a migratory journey to the United States. Instead, “America” reached them at their own doorsteps. Delano photographed with the unflinching precision of a master documentarian. Rather than attempting to document life-ways slowly giv ing way to another era, he offered visual evidence of colonial development programs, poverty, and the inescapable dominance of sugar on the island’s geo-economic landscape.

His photographs represent a longitudinal visual and historic archive spanning five decades, a byproduct of Delano’s life-long engagement in Puerto Rico. Looking at them today, the photographs are embedded in a melancholic veneer. Indeed, as Sontag has remarked, “All photographs are *memento mori*. To take a photograph is to participate in another person’s (or thing’s) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time’s relentless melt” (1977, 15). And as Rodríguez Juliá points out, Delano’s photographic archive of Puerto Rico offers a significant biographical account of the photographer’s life (2004, 144). Delano’s portfolio documents the stark transformations experienced by Puerto Ricans, while the people photographed remain forever frozen as witnesses to the life Delano built on the island.

Delano’s FSA 1940s Puerto Rico photographs are products of the colonial apparatus on the island, yet they have often been viewed uncritically as realist documents. While these photographs witness truths of the colonial condition, these truths are imbricated within the framework of U.S. empire-making. Foucault wrote that each society produces a “regime of truth,” and “the ‘political economy’ of truth is characterized by five historically important traits”:

“truth” is centered on the form of scientific discourse and the institutions which produce it; it is subject to a constant economic and political incitation (the demand for truth, as much for economic production as for political power); it is the object, under diverse forms, of an immense diffusion and consumption (it circulates in apparatuses of education and information whose extent is relatively wide within the social body, notwithstanding certain strict limitations); it is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army, writing, media . . .); lastly, it is the stake of a whole political debate and social confrontation (“ideological” struggles). [1977, 13]

Thus, I suggest that Delano’s photographs of Puerto Rico, like the FSA file more broadly, were part of a specific “‘regime of truth” that sought to uphold the efficacy of American democracy and strengthen American colonialism in Puerto Rico. This is not to say that Jack Delano was uncritical of his role as an FSA photographer and of the problems associated with U.S. colonial intervention in Puerto Rico. In fact, as a liberal progressive, Delano was very much aware of the complexities and contradictions of exporting American democracy overseas. As Arroyo has documented, the FBI in 1942 began investigating both the Delanos and the Rosskams for their involvement with known communists.2 Their involvement was not with communists, however, but with artists sympathetic to the cause of social justice the plight of the poor and the oppressed.

Thus far in this book I have explored how white American photographers and Puerto Rican artists "saw" Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans. Curiously, as the twentieth century progresses, the photographs of Puerto Ricans taken by American photographers such as Delano increasingly depict *jíbaros*—light-skinned, mixed-race or "Technicolor" people. At the same time, island artists begin to paint black or Afro-Puerto Rican subjects and themes with increasing regularity. This chapter aims to untangle the cultural politics that led to these representational shifts. I investigate the representations of what I call a "tropical whiteness" produced by *National Geographic* writers and photographers through the mid-twentieth century.

Picturing Color In Puerto Rico, 1941–1942

Picturing Color In Puerto Rico, 1941–1942

When Irene and I had first arrived on the island, we were pleasantly surprised to find very little evidence of racial prejudice. Later we learned that it was not entirely absent. It did exist, but on a level far, far below that of the southern United States. There was no segregation in buses, trains, trolleys, public housing projects, or schools. When we first came to a school assembly to take photographs, Irene whispered to me, "Look! Technicolor!" It was true. The room was filled with children of all colors. —Jack Delano, Photographic Memories

Delano's experiences in the segregated United States inevitably led to a heightened awareness of race and racial difference, a kind of *racialized sight*. On the one hand, *racialized sight* refers to the act of seeing and identifying "race" on a person's body as a natural part of daily life and interaction. As Omi and Winant explain, "One of the first things we notice about people when we meet them . . . is their race. We utilize race to provide clues about *who* a person is" (1994, 59). On the other hand, I use *racialized sight* to refer to the photographic act of first visualizing, and then of imaging race through the camera's lens. In other words, I am interested in "seeing" how Jack Delano's photographs produced race as a "visualizable fact" of Puerto Rican reality (Fusco 2003, 16).

Unlike Edwin Rosskam (discussed in chapter two), Delano did not use racial (i.e., *negro*) or ethnic (i.e., *jíbaro*) ascriptions to categorize the people in his photographs of Puerto Rico. Yet in his travels through the southern United States he snapped photos not only of "negroes," but also of signage documenting racial segregation. Three photos Delano took in Durham, North Carolina, in May 1940, for example, are evocatively captioned "A street scene near the bus station" (depicting a door that reads "white ladies only"); "At the bus station" (portraying an African-American gentleman standing under a sign that reads "colored waiting room"); and "A cafe near a tobacco market" (portraying two separate coffee shop entrances—above one door the word *white* appears prominently, and above the other, the word *colored*).3 Because the FSA photographs were to directly portray life in the United States, race, and more significantly, racial discrimination was a pervasive theme. With these photographs, Delano intended to depict the discriminatory race-based rules governing public spaces in the United States at the time.

In Puerto Rico, race-based conventions about the use of public spaces were, and still are, nuanced. To a non-black outsider they might be invisible. Indeed these rules work covertly; Puerto Ricans implicitly "know" them and take them for granted. In fact, with the abolition of slavery in 1873, *de jure* racial segregation ended in Puerto Rico. Puerto Ricans have been proud to uphold so-called racial democracy in contrast to the virulent racist laws, and later implicit practices, on the U.S. mainland. Nevertheless, Puerto Rican racial democracy is a national myth, for *de facto* racial segregation is part of life on the island (Kinsbruner 1996;Dufrasne-González 1996;Torres 1998;Duany 1998;Guerra 1998; Findlay 1999; Godreau 1999, 2002a; Lloréns 2005, 2008; Dinzey-Flores 2013; and others). In everyday discourse, class eclipses race. Some Puerto Ricans assume that wealthy blacks can enter the same public and private spaces as whites. This

assumption, however, is another myth operating to assuage any guilt Puerto Ricans might feel over their continued neglect of this painful and real social ill.

As discussed previously, the earliest Spanish colonial settlements in Puerto Rico divided the island geographically in relation to climate and agricultural production. The arid coast proved the perfect environment for the growing and harvesting of sugar cane. The Spanish established plantations and brought enslaved Africans, who were believed to be biologically suited to withstand the tropical heat and sun, to work on coastal plantations. Some of the earliest Spanish immigrants migrated inland, where the cooler mountainous climate was ideal for coffee and tobacco farms. Soon the *jíbaro* or mountain peasants carved out agricultural lives in the island's interior. This national division emerged as the first and foundational pattern of racial segregation in Puerto Rico. The island's artistic and folkloric production, including literature, painting, music, and even dance and theater, has actively upheld and reinforced this segregation pattern in the national imaginary. But these commonly held racial-geographic divisions have not been as tidy as traditional historiographical and artistic accounts would have them.

Torres has aptly documented that the commonly accepted national culture and values are little more than reflections of the beliefs and values of Puerto Rico's paternalistic seignorial class (1998, 292). In this racial configuration, the landowners and professional urban elite allow the romantic but farming-confined *jíbaro* into a nascent Puerto Rican national identity, but dismiss the possibility that blacks could be part of the same nation. This national conception purported that blacks *only* resided on the island's coast, and the white descendants of the Spanish lived in the mountains. SantiagoValles sought to correct this fallacy when he wrote that,

. . . important segments of this mountainous peasantry were mixed of African and Iberian heritage, harking back to the period between the sixteenth and late eighteenth centuries when runaway slaves (of both sexes) settled and intermingled with fugitive galley prisoners and former soldiers of various backgrounds and with remnants of the indigenous population. (1994, 44)

By the time Delano arrived, the island had undergone profound social and geographic shifts. Large segments of Puerto Ricans had migrated in search of work from coastal and interior towns to cities such as Ponce and San Juan. This migration gave rise to an urban proletariat, many of whom dwelled in city slums. Using Marxist terminology, Maldonado-Denis writes, "The urban phenomenon . . . has brought in its wake the formation of a lumpen proletariat. . . . For the inhabitants of the slums of San Juan . . . the vicious circle of poverty, unemployment, a low level of education, drugs, delinquency, etc., has been a daily reality for a long time" (1972, 179). The San Juan slums housed recently-arrived *jíbaros*, as well as *negros* and *blancos* (whites) in tight quarters, with poverty as the common thread linking them. Some slums, such as those in the town of Ponce, were even more segregated, with blacks living in neighborhoods adjacent to the sugar mill and *jíbaros* and *mulatos* living in the city's hilly slums. Still, because white skin confers privilege and more possibilities for upward mobility, poverty and race were inextricably tied and Afro-Puerto Ricans remained visibly poorer than whites. Thus urban poverty created another layer of segregation.

Urban slums were satellites of middle-class and wealthy neighborhoods. Servants, cooks, laundresses, housecleaners, dockworkers, drivers, prostitutes, and all sorts of workers lived there and headed out to jobs each morning with shoes in hand so as to not get them dirty in the unpaved, muddy slum roads. Remembering their first trip to Puerto Rico, Delano says,

One of the places we visited in San Juan, for example, was the famous slum area called *El Fanguito* (the Little Muddy Place). [. . .] When we arrived at the edge of the area in our government Oldsmobile, *our guide*, well dressed in a white suit, *refused to go in with us*, so Irene and I went in on our own. [. . .] When we came back early one morning, the sight that most impressed us was of people, young and old, coming out of the shacks to go to work, the girls in pretty dresses, the men in white suits or shirts. Most smelled of rubbing alcohol and carried their shoes in hands. . . . (1997, 82; emphasis added)

Delano's observation illustrates another aspect of the purportedly "classbased" spatial segregation (a euphemism in Puerto Rico for race-based segregation): the perceived threat of danger to the rest of society posed by the slums and the people who lived in them.4

Jack Delano often pictured Puerto Ricans in close-up and medium-range shots. While his photos stand as social testimony, they have a portrait-like quality. Delano was talented in capturing facial and bodily expressions. He paired that gift with a keen ability to capture the natural light illuminating the scene. His photographs powerfully convey within their flat surfaces both mood and feeling. Although FSA photographers shot mainly in black and white, even during his first photographic tour of Puerto Rico, Delano took some color photographs. Shooting in color was an experimental undertaking and between 1939 and 1944, FSA photographers collectively made approximately 1,600 color photographs depicting life in the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.5 These color photographs were originally filed away and mostly forgotten because they were believed to have very little aesthetic value (Green 1984, 184).

In Delano's first photographic series of Puerto Rico, I am drawn to seven color photographs tentatively labeled "FSA borrowers?" (see Figure 4.1). Although the identities of the subjects depicted in these images elude us, Delano, perhaps knowingly, imaged four black Puerto Ricans at a time when they were not only increasingly left out the photographic frame, they were absent from representations of the nation and largely ignored in political debates about national identity. In cultural and literary circles, Afro-Puerto Ricans were believed to be remnants of a pre-modern past, and ultimately were said to have been quickly vanishing from the island's gene pool all together (Thompson 2010).

By offering these photographs, Delano subversively portrays a counter narrative as if to say, "black Puerto Ricans are part of the nation and here is the photographic proof."6 Perhaps he was startled to "see" these black *jíbaros* as protagonists of their very own pastoral scene. Or else upon encountering the bucolic scene he was moved to follow a long tradition in photography that has rendered blackness as picturesque, in this case as a signifier of a pre-modern state to be captured by modernity's most revered technological device: the camera. In short, this rural blackness signifies an undeveloped state that the white American holding the camera counters as a resolutely modern citizen with power to travel and to see, to confer importance and to record. Here the viewer not only witnesses a clash of eras, but more significantly the power of technology allowing one to "see" this clash in perpetuity upholding ever more the "right to look" so emblematic of the "modern era" (Mirzoeff 2011).

Of the seven photographs on which I focus, one set of three depicts what the viewer might conclude to be a husband and wife standing variously near their house and walking in their field, a large and seemingly airy cabin in the backdrop.7 Two other photographs show a woman in her garden.8 Another depicts a man standing against a cane field9 and another a man with a horse.10 These seven color photographs lack identifying detail. Delano identified some of his other color photographs as having been taken in the vicinity of Rio Piedras, and in his memoir he states: "In the city of Ponce I was taken to what was called the Land and Utility Project, where I took some shots in color" (1997, 72).11 I can only speculate that these seven photos might have been taken in the vicinity of the project in Ponce.

Delano's memoir offers a clue as to their location; he reports having taken color photographs "on land belonging to the owner of a large sugar mill, [where] people could rent a plot of ground—for eighty cents or a dollar a month—on which to build a house, with the aid of funds from the government" (1997, 72). The titles of five of these photos describe the subjects as "Tenant Purchase borrowers" and this, along with Delano's description of his trip to a Land and Utility Project in December 1941 as well as the architectural similarity of the cabins in the photos (constructed with red galvanized zinc roofing), bolsters the claim that the photos in Table 4.1 were taken in the vicinity of Ponce.

These photographs portray two black men and two black women apparently ranging from middle-aged to elderly. Remarkably, children, so popular in turn-of-the-century photographs of

black Puerto Ricans, are altogether absent from the images. The viewer cannot discern the relationships between the individuals (e.g., married, sibling, neighbor, stranger). The

Four Unidentified FSA Borrowers A table with three columns: Title, Subjects (as labeled in archive), and My Representational Descriptions. It lists details of four photographs of FSA borrowers in Puerto Rico. Title Subjects (as labeled in archive) My Representational Descriptions 1. T[enant] P[urchase] borrowers? by their house, Puerto Rico CREATED/PUBLISHED 1941 Dec. [or] 1942 Jan. CALL NUMBER LC-USF35-396 Farmers Farm relief United States— Puerto Rico Slides—Color A man and woman stand close together against a structure made of galvanized zinc. The man stands erect and appears stern, his lips pressed tightly together. On the structure's roof are ears of corn presumably left there to be dried by the sun.a The woman looks down towards the floor, averting her eyes from the camera, she appears shy, tentative, lips pressed together tightly. The man's eyes are shadowed by the brim of his leather hat. The woman wears a tightly wrapped pañuelo (head scarf) on her head. Their (work) clothes are frayed and stained. In the distance, the outlines of hills and sugar cane fields are visible. 2. T[enant] P[urchase] borrowers? in front of their house, Puerto Rico CREATED/PUBLISHED 1941 Dec. [or] 1942 Jan. CALL NUMBER LC-USF35-398 Farmers Farm relief United States— Puerto Rico Slides—Color The image, almost identical to the first, differs in that the man and woman now stand apart. 3. T[enant] P[urchase] borrowers? in their garden, by their house, Puerto Rico CREATED/PUBLISHED 1941 Dec. [or] 1942 Jan. CALL NUMBER LC-USF35-409 Farmers Cabins Sugar plantations Farm relief United States— Puerto Rico Slides—Color Landscape shot. Photographer must have been in an elevated position. The couple is among lush and tall cane stalks, the woman walks ahead of the man. Cane surrounds the property. The white cabin stands in stark contrast to the vegetation. The photo has an airy and bucolic character.

(continued)

A table describing FSA photographs from Puerto Rico, with columns for Title, Subjects, and Representational Descriptions. Title Subjects (as labeled in archive) My Representational Descriptions 4. FSA borrower? in a sugar-cane field, Puerto Rico CREATED/PUBLISHED 1941 Dec. [or] 1942 Jan CALL NUMBER LC-USF35-404 Farmers Sugar plantations Farm relief United States— Puerto Rico Slides—Color The same man from previous photos (with his wife) stands alone against tall stalks of cane. In the background, the cabin. The man's eyes remain concealed by the hat brim's shadow, and from this angle, he appears to be a slight man. The photographer stands slightly above him, giving the effect that the photo was shot "down." 5. FSA borrower? in her garden, Puerto Rico CREATED/PUBLISHED 1942 Jan. [or] 1941 Dec. CALL NUMBER LC-USF35-391 Farmers Gardening Farm relief United States— Puerto Rico Slides—Color A woman bends over a cabbage patch. The garden is expansive and lush. The cane stalks behind her appear medium-sized. She appears to be cutting something with her hands (peeling a piece of cane?). Her clothes are frayed and she wears a pañuelo (headscarf). 6. FSA—T[enant] P[urchase] borrower? in her garden, Puerto Rico CREATED/PUBLISHED 1941 Dec. [or] 1942 Jan. CALL NUMBER LC-USF35-392 Farmers Farm relief United States— Puerto Rico Slides—Color The same woman now stands erect against the backdrop of cane, hills, blue sky, and her garden. Hand on her hip, a slight frown on her forehead, she looks away from the camera.; Her work clothes are stained and frayed. She wears a pañuelo (headscarf). 7. T[enant] P[urchase] borrower? by his field, Puerto Rico CREATED/PUBLISHED 1941 Dec. [or] 1942 Jan. CALL NUMBER LC-USF35-383 Farmers Farm relief United States— Puerto Rico Slides—Color The man faces the camera, but his eyes are shadowed by his leather hat's brim. He offers a tight smile; He gently holds a horse by a rope. He appears seated, the camera in the same plane in front of the subject. His light-colored clothes are frayed. Strikingly he wears at least one hoop earring on his left ear (another on his right ear?). His face bears two scars.

aDried corn is used in Puerto Rico as chicken feed. "Farmers" is listed as a subject under this photo's descriptor, alluding to the fact that the persons pictured owned and cared for animals on their land.

Note: These images are housed in the Library of Congress. series strikingly recalls the photographs taken at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century in Puerto Rico (discussed in chapter two), when American photographers disproportionately pointed their cameras at so-called “native”—that is, black—Puerto Ricans. Aside from offering visual evidence of the “types” of people who dwelled in the tropics, photographs of racialized and/or exotic others comprised a profitable product in a variety of contexts including the postcard, tourist, cultural, and scientific markets (Sheller 2003). Another feature making these photographs comparable to earlier, turn-of-the-century images, concerns their interchangeably as representations of the wider Caribbean region, extending even to the southern United States. In other words, the four Afro-descendants pictured among cane fields can stand as representatives of the African diaspora in the circum-Atlantic.

This series is laden with representational themes. Essentially the viewer sees black Puerto Ricans exercising mastery over nature: both the sugar cane field and the vegetable garden appear orderly, managed, and well-tended. The blue sky, the lush green scenery in the background, and the seemingly healthy and fertile crops add to the photos’ “garden of Eden” and bucolic qualities. Certainly, the earth represented in the images is bountiful and serene. The scenes evoke romantic views harking back to earlier historical periods. As Sheller points out, “Throughout most of the eighteenth century the predominant theme in descriptions of the Caribbean remains the beauty of cultivated areas set within the tropical landscape” (2003, 48). Yet this “beauty” is particular to the appreciative and “free” gaze of the European, especially so for the traveler who could compare, for example, London or Lisbon with Santiago de Cuba or Ponce, Puerto Rico. With mobility comes the ability to compare the beauties of the new world as well as territories, climatic zones, and even the inhabitants of these places.

In this series, Delano positioned himself and his camera slightly above his subjects, a strategy used in photography to widen the field of the image. In this case the photographer aimed to capture the verdant backdrop, setting the scene at once by establishing the images as part of the “peopled landscape” tradition (see chapter two). Writing about historical European depictions of the Caribbean, Sheller recalls two persistent themes in landscape painting and classical allegory: architectural views and a “god-like perspective over every part of the island at once, idyllic groves with quaint workers” (2003, 48). By Delano’s first photo tour, the *bohío* [hut] pervasive in earlier decades had been supplanted by the wooden cabin. The cabin signifies both the evolution of the populace under colonial tutelage and increased wealth. By the early 1940s, *bohíos* were becoming relics of the past, having

Jack Delano, “Tenant Purchase borrower in her garden, Puerto Rico 1941 Dec or 1942 Jan.” Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Call number: LC-USF35-392.

Jack Delano, “Tenant Purchase borrower in her garden, Puerto Rico 1941 Dec or 1942 Jan.” Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Call number: LC-USF35-392. A black woman wearing a headscarf stands in a field.been actively replaced by the government and citizens with wooden cabins that stood on posts with roofs of galvanized zinc. In the 1950s these wooden cabins, common in rural areas, were often replaced with the “modern,” hurricane-proof cement house.

Surely the frayed and stained clothes of these FSA borrowers make it apparent that mastery of the landscape takes work—“getting dirty.” Rural life might seem bucolic on the photographic surface, but the FSA borrowers’ appearance evidences continuous engagement with the cultivated landscape, which will quickly turn into wilderness in the tropics if left to its own devices. The two women depicted in these photographs (see Table 4.1) wear *pañuelos* [head scarfs], a symbol of black womanhood in Puerto Rico, the Caribbean, and the African diaspora.

The *pañuelo* or *turbante* is a prevalent motif in representations of black women in Puerto Rican photographs, painting, and literature. The *pañuelo* keeps hair away from the face, especially by

women engaged in work that requires them to be freed from distractions. Throughout the African diaspora, the *pañuelo* or *turbante* worn by black women has come to be associated with hard labor, such as working in the fields or in the kitchen (where notions of hygiene are highly regulated), as well as with the figure of the mammy. As Owens Patton notes, “Throughout the centuries of slavery scarves became a practicable alternative to covering kinky, unstyled hair or hair that suffered from patchy baldness, breakage, or disease” (2006, 28).

On another level, in the Puerto Rican context where ideas of beauty are derived from European standards, black women’s hair, commonly referred to as *pelo malo* (bad hair), has been deemed unruly, unattractive, and inferior historically (Franco Ortiz 2001; Godreau 2002b). The use of the *pañuelo* by black Puerto Rican women is a strategy to “hide” unruly or unsightly hair while appearing presentable. In other words, to be considered acceptable and decent, kinky hair must be worn appropriately straightened, in a tight bun, or under a headscarf. Black women who dared to show off unprocessed or unstraightened kinky hair were often believed to be indecent, wild, crazy, or a combination of all three.

The use of the *pañuelo* has two other significant associations. The first is its association with “purer” blacks, that is, with women more recently arrived from the African continent who have darker skin tones and kinkier hair than women of mixed-parentage. The second is its association with poverty. The styling of hair requires both time and money, even when styled at home. Women must carve aside time away from children, household chores, and work-related activities to do it. This might have occurred perhaps on special occasions, but most peasant and working women had little time and limited economic resources for styling or straightening their hair. These associations thus bolster negative stereotypes about skin tone, hair texture, and economic standing.

Remaining “African” Or Visibly Black In Puerto Rico

Remaining “African” Or Visibly Black In Puerto Rico

Remarkably, in his study about turn-of-the-century representations in U.S.-ruled territories, Thompson writes that the 1899 U.S. Census of Puerto Rico

. . . told an optimistic story regarding the changing racial composition of the population: a continuous whitening of the population. The report concluded that the population statistics “point to a secular change whereby the pure negro blood has lost ground before the mixed, as the two together have apparently lost ground before the whites.” A full-page graph illustrated this whitening of the population. The illustrated narrative created by the census, then, was optimistic in its ambiguity: the Puerto Ricans were a racially mixed population tending towards whiteness. (2010, 99)12

Moreover, in analyzing *Our Islands and Their People, as Seen with Camera and Pencil*, published in 1899, Thompson writes that, regarding Puerto Rico, Olivares “believed that the ‘African race is declining, and will either eventually disappear or be amalgamated with the white race’” (2010, 100; cf. Bryan, 1899: 287). Yet the seven photos under discussion (see Table 4.1) appear to contradict these assertions made forty-two years earlier.

If, according to turn-of-the-century observers, “colored” Puerto Ricans were destined to become white in a few generations, how did the men and women depicted in this series manage to remain black? Here lies a significant paradox of the workings of race in Puerto Rico, one that scholars of race have left largely unexplored: on the one hand, the ideology known as *blanqueamiento* (the incremental whitening of the population) is widely accepted as both a social fact and as a practice in which Puerto Rican families engage. Many families actively participate in a conscious effort to

mejorar la raza" (improve the race) by expecting marriageable family members to seek and marry only partners whose skin color is the same or lighter than theirs (Lloréns 2013). This strategy heightens the probability that future offspring will inherit the desirable features of an "improved race," mainly light skin, fine hair, and "refined features" (small thin nose, thin lips). By the same token, when a light-skinned person marries a dark-skinned partner, he or she is said to be engaging in *dañar la raza* (damaging the race) because their progeny might inherit so-called undesirable racial traits (dark skin, kinky hair, broad nose, large lips). This common trope about racial practices then assumes that all individuals, white and black, are actively engaged in shedding "blackness" from the national lineage and body.

On the other hand, another perhaps more covert social current is at work in regard to how black Puerto Ricans live and reproduce their blackness. "Geographic blackness," or the practice of relegating blackness to specific "black spaces" (such as "the coast," towns such as Loíza, or neighborhoods such as Yaurel in Arroyo or El Bajo in Patillas), has had a segregating effect but has also nurtured and reproduced black Puerto Rican culture and values. In other words, not all blacks have been eager to marry non-blacks and shed their blackness. Photos such as those discussed in Figure 4.1 illustrate that black Puerto Ricans have used their agency to remain black, to marry within their communities, and to place a high value on their cultural practices and beliefs. They have not always been passive victims of the racist ideologies seeking to expunge blackness from the nation. Writing about 1860s Ponce, Findlay offers several examples of Afro-Puerto Ricans asserting "their right to social recognition and human dignity without denying their blackness" (1999, 39). For example, she recounts that

[]Don Pedro González, the white manager of a small shop, tried to slap María Nicolasa Moreno and called her a "dirty black" when she brought some defective products he had sold her grandson. But María Nicolasa fought back, shouting that he was "nothing but a stingy *jíbaro*" and that she was "just as good as he was." Her daughter-in-law chimed in, retorting that she and María Nicolasa were "better than González's whole family." (1999, 39)

To be sure the reproduction of blackness in Puerto Rico is framed within a complicated and sometimes contradictory web of social practices. Certainly black Puerto Ricans historically have been subjected to suspicion and racism (Cruz 1974; Rodríguez-Juliá 1983; Gonzalez 1980; Torres 1998;Guerra 1998; Ramos-Rosado 1999; Godreau 1999;Duany 2002; Franco-Ortiz, et. al. 2009; Lloréns 2005,Dinzey-Flores 2013, and Silva 2012; Géliga Vargas and Canabal 2013; among others). Yet when they choose blackness and do not acquiesce to societal pressures to "clean their racial stain" through "marrying up," exhibiting respectable and proper behaviors, or through dress and mannerisms, black individuals pay a social price. Societal scripts about the inherently inferior character of black Puerto Ricans run the gamut. For example, as Findlay remarks, "Women of African descent, particularly those unwilling or unable to 'whiten' themselves through dress and behavior, were believed to be inherently disreputable" (1999, 25). Black Puerto Ricans suffer considerable pressures to shed their skin color, cultural beliefs, and values for the good of the nation.

The official national identity discourse asserts that Puerto Ricans represent an amalgam of three distinct cultures—Spanish, indigenous, and African—and together these make up the modern person and culture (Gonzalez 1980; Flores 1993;Dávila 1997; Torres Guerra 1998 1998; Godreau 2002a; Duany 2002). This modern Puerto Rican is "raceless." In other words, she is the same color as all other Puerto Ricans and shares the same national culture, and so the imagined national community is comprised of a single people with a single culture.

Black Puerto Ricans who either chose to assert their blackness or who cannot easily "hide" their blackness are positioned by dominant discourses as outside mainstream Puerto Rican society. Some are thought to transcend blackness by virtue of education and/or class. They are variously identified as *negros orgullosos* (conceited blacks) and *negros finos* (refined blacks).13 Findlay documents how people of African descent drew racial lines around what they perceived as acceptable versus unacceptable blackness. She writes, "Mulatto artisans striving for 'decent' status scorned the *bomba* drumming in the plantation barracks and black sections of town, fearing such

‘African’ culture could destroy their carefully constructed *refinement*” (1999, 38; emphasis added). Another position constructed outside of mainstream Puerto Rican society is the folkloric other who, in a condescendingly benign way, is believed to enact a black identity that is a relic of the primitive African past. Through folklore, black music, dance, performance, or artisanal practices (e.g., mask-making, cooking traditional foods), the said folkloric person engages with “historic” cultural practices believed to have disappeared from Puerto Rico’s contemporary cultural landscape. These folkloric practices are often placed within educational, touristic, or performative events associated with the pre-abolition past, not understood as a part of the dynamic, contemporary, and evolving cultural practices of living black Puerto Ricans (Lloréns 2005). This framework divides culture into high and low. High culture is museum culture (e.g., European or European-inspired art and music), and low culture includes folkloric or artisanal practices such as “black traditions” (e.g., the *bomba* drumming and dancing that takes place on streets, Carnival, the cooking of “black” foods on the island’s coast). At finally, on the opposite end of the continuum, there is a social construction of the ordinary black person (criminal, dangerous, vulgar, low-class) as supposedly lacking morality and posing a lurking threat to modern society.

As I pointed out earlier, it is believed that those with “dark” complexion or *negros negros* are altogether extinct in Puerto Rico. The double and sometimes triple enunciation, as in *negro, negro*, or *negro, negro, negro,* or *bien negro* [very black] or even *violeta* [purple], are used to signify the degrees of pigmentation in a person’s skin color. In Puerto Rico’s racial democracy, where speech practices are used to actively “lighten” skin color, a dark complexioned person has very little room to assert a non-black identity (Godreau 2008; Lloréns 2008). As in the African diaspora generally, Puerto Rican dark black skin is endowed with mythical, mysterious, and rebellious powers (Lloréns 2008, 198).14 Dark skin signifies a closer and purer connection to Africa (less racial mixing), primitivism, strength, animal instincts, and sexuality. Those with dark black skin are also believed to have extra-human powers, particularly in communicating with spirits and ancestors, and in practicing witchcraft (Lloréns 2008).

As Godreau (2002a) has documented, “pure blacks” (individuals who are “visibly” black) are routinely asked if they are from the Dominican Republic or the English Caribbean (97). Godreau explains that “*Dicho discurso propone una construcción de sujeto que se define a sí mismo como mezclado y blanqueado a partir de una diferenciación con un ‘otro’ que se exotiza como puro o casi-puro*” [Said discourse proposes a construction in which the speaking subject defines himself as mixed and whitened in contradistinction with an exotic “other” that is pure or almost pure] (translation mine).

Division Of Cinema And Graphics, 1946–1949: The Popular Democratic Party’S National Identity Cultural And Media Apparatuses

Division Of Cinema And Graphics, 1946–1949: The Popular Democratic Party’S National Identity Cultural And Media Apparatuses

So, when I came back, I came at the request of the governor of Puerto Rico to set up a very small unit to train personnel for the production of educational visual materials for the people of Puerto Rico. That’s when I took Jack and Irene out of where they were and got somebody else for that job and the three of us began in this little basement this enormous job of training personnel in making everything from movies to booklets in a place where nobody had ever done anything like this before. —Edwin Rosskam, Oral History Interview August 3, 1965, Smithsonian Institution

Muñoz was well aware of the experience that the Rosskams and Irene and I had in the visual media. Eager to get the new plans under way as soon as possible, he arranged to have a Division of Cinema and Graphics established in the Commission of Parks and Recreation. . . . I was charged with organizing a documentary-film production unit, Irene with establishing a graphics workshop for producing posters and illustrated booklets, and Ed Rosskam with supervising the entire operation and taking charge of the editorial work. —Jack Delano, *Photographic Memories*

Governor Tugwell offered Edwin Rosskam a job in Puerto Rico to set up an FSA-like file for the island's Office of Information. Edwin worked mainly as the administrator of the file, developing and cataloguing, and he hired Jack Delano and Charles Rotkin who, along with Edwin's wife Louise Rosskam, became the file's photographers. Between 1945 and 1948 they made several thousand photographs documenting life in Puerto Rico. The Rosskams and the Delanos worked in Puerto Rico at an opportune time. They witnessed the rise of the Popular Democratic Party (PPD) and the rise of its leader, Luis Muñoz Marín, to whom they had become advisors in matters regarding visual media. The couples quickly became friends with Muñoz Marín and his wife, Doña Inés.

Luis Muñoz Marín had been a poet in his youth, and while he left poetry for politics, he remained a *bon vivant*, enjoying good food and drink and interesting conversation with friends. In his memoir (1997), Jack Delano recounts having spent many good times with the politician. He also recalls hearing Muñoz Marín and Doña Inés, who had been a schoolteacher, express time and again their profound concerns about Puerto Rico's high illiteracy rates and inadequate educational system. Delano recalls Muñoz Marín saying, "We must invent something new, a new way of teaching" (1997, 114). That "something new" became the *Unidad de Cinema y Gráfica* [Division of Cinema and Graphics] established under the Parks and Recreation Commission in 1946. The *Unidad* was established two years before Muñoz Marín would become Puerto Rico's first elected governor. It is widely known that the initiative was his brainchild in efforts to promote adult education, health, and other important social issues (Thompson 2005).15

Edwin Rosskam administered the Division of Cinema and Graphics and hired Jack and Irene Delano for the immense task of producing and disseminating films, posters, and illustrated booklets as part of the PPD's literacy, development, and modernizing campaigns. Benítez asserts that the visual art produced by the Division of Cinema and Graphics ". . . strived to disseminate social values and attitudes in an effort to help the population adapt to the new industrial order" (1998, 141). In July 1947, Edwin Rosskam documented the status of the new project in his *Report on the Operation of the Division of Motion Pictures and Graphics of the Commission of Parks and Recreation since December, 1946–July, 1947*.

We had to present, we felt, not only what the government is doing, but chiefly why the government is doing it. This in turn meant that we had to educate the people in the true situation in which the island finds itself, and especially the crucial problem of growing population pressure on an increasingly small area of land. (Report on the Operation 1947, 8; cf. Marsh Kennerly 2009, 33)

Rosskam refers to "over-population" pressures as a crucial piece of information to be imparted while educating the masses in the "true situation" facing them. The so-called over-population problem facing the island became a significant obstacle to overcome during this modernizing period. Muñoz Marín believed that one way to deal with the menace of a growing population was to ". . . increase our production more rapidly than our population" (Briggs 2002, 115; cf. Ramírez de Arellano and Seipp 1983, 74).

The *Unidad's* three-member American team trained Puerto Rican men in filmmaking, in graphics production, and in the production of finished visual materials ready for widespread presentation and distribution. Delano remarks that, "At this stage I found myself, out of dire necessity, performing as producer, director, teacher, composer and cameraman, assisted by a group of enthusiastic, hardworking but as yet, untrained assistants" (Delano 1992, 7). In the *Report on the Operation,* Rosskam writes that "Within one year we went from six persons of whom three were skilled, to eighteen of whom nine were totally unskilled in their present specialty when we hired them, and five were partially skilled; now fourteen regularly and with considerable independence at their newly

acquired skills" (Marsh Kennerly 2009, 32).

Jack and Irene Delano's indelible mark in Puerto Rico's cultural production after mid-century is partly due to their commitment as engaged teachers and mentors of young Puerto Ricans and as supportive colleagues. The couple immersed themselves fully in their tasks and in the process helped shape a generation of artists. About their impact on the island's artistic scene, Doña Inés wrote in 1981, "*Lo grande de Irene y Jack era lo otro: la cotidiana devoción al trabajo, la laboriosidad incansable del quehacer día a día, por años, cuando enseñaban a artistas y maestros en la Educación de la Comunidad a aliviar las vidas de hombres empobrecidos . . .*" [The greatest thing about Irene and Jack was their devotion to work, their day to day tireless work, for so many years, when they taught artists and teachers in the Division of Community Education to alleviate the lives of the poverty stricken . . .] (de Muñoz Marín 1988, 8).

Jack Delano's mastery of many aspects of art-making helped establish the couple's place as significant cultural contributors. He was as apt with technology as he was with photography, music composition, and drawing, and he was not afraid to experiment in search of new and interesting ways to communicate. At the time, Puerto Rican art making was a gendered pursuit. Irene was often the only woman among men in San Juan's artistic scene and as an American woman she was exempt from workplace gender rules. Puerto Rican women do not figure prominently, if at all, in the early history of Puerto Rico's visual arts.

At the Division of Cinema and Graphics, Irene Delano and Edwin Rosskam went to work in making *carteles* [posters] aimed at educating the masses. Edwin had been inspired by the social posters made under the auspices of the Federal Art Project (FAP) in the New Deal's Works Progress Administration, which pioneered the use of printmaking techniques such as screen printing and silk screening as acceptable mediums for fine artists (Tió 1998). The Puerto Rican poster tradition begins in 1946 when these two artists introduced the poster as an efficient and affordable medium with which to reach a wide audience. Tió explains the *cartel's* [poster's] function. "For a poster to fulfill its communication purposes, it must be placed on public spaces, where the message can reach a greater number of people. The poster is, then, the most democratic, the most accessible, art form" (1998, 247).

The public health serigraphy made collaboratively by Irene Delano and Francisco Palacios in 1946 entitled "Peligro" (Danger) is among the earliest. It features a large fly and the word "danger" written boldly in red letters across the top, with the following explanatory and directive remarks at the bottom: "*La mosca trae microbios. Entierre la basura. Tape los alimentos.*" [Flies bring germs. Bury your garbage. Cover your food]. Other examples include the 1947 poster made by Irene Delano, *Hacia Mejores Viviendas* [Toward better housing], as well as two other posters made in 1947 by Edwin Rosskam titled, *Inscríbase* [Register to vote] and *El voto es la Herramienta con que hacemos Nuestro Gobierno* [The vote is the tool which with we make our government]. The latter two were meant to instruct Puerto Ricans on the rights of citizens in a democratic nation.

Nearly one year after the *Unidad*'s founding, Rosskam reported that, "*Habían logrado producir tres películas, diez carteles en color en cantidades de 1000 a 12,000 por edición para un total de 64,000 y un librillo de cuatro páginas a color en edición de 200,000*" [They had managed to produce three films, ten posters in color making between 1,000 to 12,000 per edition for a total of 64,000 and 200,000 copies of a four-page leaflet which was printed in color] (Marsh Kennerly 2009, 33; translation mine). Underscoring the significance of these early posters in Puerto Rico's visual landscape, Tió explains that "*Estos carteles de los años cuarenta llegaron a 791 barrios, a 1,200 comunidades rurales y 245,875 familias*" [These posters made in the 1940s reached 791 neighborhoods, 1,200 rural communities, and 245,875 families] (1998, 216; translation mine).

Yet the poster as an educational and reform tool was limited in that its message was available only to those who could read, and in Puerto Rico illiteracy was high. For this reason, film became an even more democratic tool in the promotion of education and social consciousness. Beginning in 1947, Jack Delano and his crew produced several short documentaries with the goal of popularizing the era's development projects.16 Among these early shorts was *Caña* [Sugar cane]

(1948). Thompson explains that its message “was that the social and economic programs promulgated by the Popular Democratic Party, then in the first flowering of its legislative power, had brought new security and opportunity to the Puerto Rican worker” (2005, 104). Another was *Una gota de Agua* [A drop of water] (1949), which advised the masses about the importance of boiling their drinking water to prevent disease.

In 1949 Delano produced a biopic of Jesus T. Piñero, Puerto Rico’s first U.S.-appointed island-born governor. Delano came face to face with Puerto Rico’s brand of anti-black racism when editing this film in the basement of the Parks and Recreation Commission. In *Photographic Memories* (1997), he writes that many of the scenes for the Piñero biography were shot on the land owned by the former governor.

Carolina was a predominantly black community, and naturally the film included many faces of the black people who worked on the farm. As I was editing the film one day on a Moviola, I noticed a young secretary looking over my shoulder at the monitor screen. “Why do you have to have so many *ugly people* in the movie?” she asked. I was shocked. That was not a reaction I would have expected. What did she mean, “*ugly people*?” (1997, 118; emphasis added)

Faced with this criticism he sought the advice of Julio Monagas, the Parks and Recreation Commission’s Director, whom he describes as a highly intelligent, tall, and handsome black man, a former baseball hero and devout PPD member (Delano 1997). Concerned that he was crossing a cultural boundary, Delano asked Monagas several questions, among them, “Should I deemphasize the black presence?” After listening carefully, Monagas answered, “Do what you think is right” (Delano 1997, 119). The reader is left to ponder whether Monagas felt any resentment towards the offending secretary. Upon returning to the office, did Monagas talk to her about the effect her comment had on the American? Did Monagas feel that the comment was inappropriate? Was it grounds for a warning, or for firing her? Or did he dismiss the comment as a typical Puerto Rican cultural assumption, ignoring it altogether? Perhaps it was only the American who was too sensitive to matters of race, matters that on the island were better left alone.

The use of the word *ugly* to describe blackness has a long history. The decolonial critic Frantz Fanon commented on this negative association more than once when he wrote, “Jean Veneuse is ugly. He is black. What more is needed?” (1967, 80) and “The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, *the Negro is ugly*” (Fanon 1967, 113; emphasis added), or “I am white: that is to say that I possess beauty and virtue, which have never been black. I am the color of daylight . . .” (Fanon 1967, 45). Similarly, the cultural critic bell hooks explains her reaction to Sapphire, a character in the sitcom *Amos ‘n’ Andy*: “How could we long to be there when our image, visually constructed, *was so ugly*” (hooks 1992, 120). Later in the same text, when discussing the biological and ancestral ties between Native Americans and African Americans, hooks writes “ . . . (the racial color caste system which became a norm in black communities also was established in many Native communities and darker-skinned groups were seen as inferior, *ugly*, etc.)” (hooks 1992, 185; emphasis added). Writing about Puerto Rico, anthropologist Isar Godreau comments on “the prevalence of dominant interpretations of blackness that construe black people as inferior, *ugly*, or less fortunate” (Godreau 2008, 13; emphasis added). Could the less frequent appearances of black Puerto Ricans in subsequent decades in photos shot by Americans, Delano included, have been at least partially the result of the association of blackness with ugliness?

National Geographic Depicts Puerto Ricans As “Tropical Whites”

National Geographic Depicts Puerto Ricans As “Tropical Whites”

During the years between the Spanish-American War in 1898 and 1951, *National Geographic* published over a dozen articles about Puerto Rico (Schulten 2000). As Schulten explains,

The war between the United States and Spain in particular gave the *Geographic* the exhilarating opportunity to cover international events and defend the nation's goals abroad, while at the same time bringing exotic and potentially enriching reaches of the new American orbit home to its readers. . . . The extensive use of photography, so central to the magazine's twentieth-century success, was also born in the war. (2000, 6)

Although it has been a respected scientific publication exposing lay readers to world geography, culture, and politics, the *National Geographic's* early century reportage was inextricably bound with the United States' national and empire-making concerns (Schulten 2000). The magazine created a distinctively American historical narrative to explain and justify the United States' colonial involvement in the Caribbean to its chiefly mainland audience.

The articles I examine here, written between 1924 and 1951, aimed to disseminate knowledge about the new colonial possession to mainland readers. They creatively construct a singularly American narrative to account for the racial makeup of Puerto Rico. But a narrative that was also in concert with the national emblems appropriated and endorsed by the PPD.

After surveying the photographs that accompanied "Porto Rico: Gates of Riches" (La Gorce 1924), "Puerto Rico: Watchdog of the Caribbean" (Long 1939), and "Growing Pains Beset Puerto Rico (Nicholas 1951), I found that the authors describe the island's racial types as Spaniard and *jíbaro*. Neither black Puerto Ricans nor Africans are mentioned as constituting any part whatsoever of the island's population. Remarkably, the photographic illustrations depict Puerto Ricans as what I term "tropical whites." "Tropical whites" are the descendants of European settler families in tropical lands.

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century scientific literature promoted the notion that these whites were different from European and American whites, if not biological and culturally degenerated, as a result of living in latitudes naturally unsuited for white habitation (Grenfell Price 1935, 5). An article entitled "White Settlement in the Panama Canal Zone" (Grenfell Price 1935) refutes the biological degeneracy of "tropical whites" theory, offering instead this interesting perspective:

The likeliest view is that certain whites may be able to adjust themselves to permanent residence in the low tropics, but the adjustment will necessitate physical alterations, possibly involving some degeneracy. The tropical whites would tend to have smaller and *looser bones*, would be *thinner*,*taller*,*lighter*, and more *anemic*, and would have less hair. This forecast is not unlike Dr. Cilento's description of the new type of *loose-limbed* tropical Australian. The opinion of another leading American doctor is trenchant and vigorous. Certain whites could probably establish themselves permanently in the low tropics, but "the third generation would be pretty weedy." Yet in spite of such dictums it is hard to find any specific evidence of degeneracy, either among Americans of the second generation or among the few children of the third generation who are now beginning to appear. (1935, 7; emphasis added)

As the quote above demonstrates, some held a "scientific" belief in the biological degeneracy of the white body as it suffered from a type of maladaptive acculturation to the tropical climate. But this was distinct from the cultural degeneracy that gave birth to "tropicalized cultural whiteness," a result of living far away from the centers of (pure) white culture for extended periods. White cultural deterioration was the inevitable effect of having to comingle with non-white others in the colonies. Writing in the early 1800s in Jamaica, Lady Nugent, wife of the Governor of Jamaica 1801–1805, also notes this type of cultural "tropicalization" in her journal.

The Creole language is not confined to the negroes. Many of the ladies who have not been educated in England, speak a sort of broken English, with an indolent drawling out of their words, that is very tiresome if not disgusting. I stood next to a lady one night, near a window, and, by way of saying something, remarked that the air was much cooler than usual; to which she answered,

“Yes, ma-am, *him rail-ly too fraish*.” (2002:98, italics in original)

According to La Gorce’s *National Geographic* article (1924), most of Puerto Rico’s tropical whites descended from the Spanish, while the *jíbaros* were mixed descendants of Spanish men and Indian women.

The rural, laboring native is known as “*jíbaro*,” which literally means “*escape from civilization*.” Good-natured, reconciled to a hard lot and a precarious existence, a mixture of Indian and Spaniard, he combines care-free ideals of the Redskin and the *impetuous temperament* of the Spaniard. (1924, 622; emphasis added)

A few pages later he writes that, “Some of the pioneering Spaniards made homes for themselves with native women, by whom they had numerous children. [. . .] Out of diverse types and races has been bred the *jíbaro*” (1924, 627).

The lavishly illustrated article portrays the island not as ideal for settlersociety (as Hawaii was), but as its title, “The Gates of Riches” suggests, a place of great natural wealth and unlimited potential for American industrial development and tourism.

With its balmy winter and its splendid roads, Porto Rico makes an idea spot for a winter vacation, where one may, in the course of his enjoyment of scenic beauties and personal comfort, renew his faith in the prosperity which attends the American form of government and American supervision of commerce, education, and sanitation. (1924, 602)

A photograph illustration in the article titled “Sorting Tobacco in Caguas” (1924, 620) depicts a large factory room with mostly female workers sorting a product. Its caption informs readers that, “there is an opportunity for the development of more industries in Porto Rico. . . . ” (1924, 620). Throughout the article, American colonialism is celebrated as helping to bring the island’s potential into fruition: “In all the age-long stories of colonies and colonization, no nation has written a chapter in colonial service that takes higher rank than that with which the United States has inscribed in the quarter of a century in which it has guided the destinies of Porto Rico” (1924, 609). The only mention of Afro-descendants in the entire article occurs in a section with the heading, “Porto Rico Outruns Other Latin American Lands,” in which the island’s progress is juxtaposed with another Caribbean neighbor.

The Republic of Haiti, three times as large and nearly twice as populous, buys less than one-sixth as much in the markets of the world and sends less than one seventh as much to the consuming centers of the earth—not surprising, in good truth, since this black republic is well-nigh hopeless (1924, 606).

Even though he never mentions race outright, La Gorce is apparently concerned with portraying Puerto Ricans as the “Spanish cousins of the white American.” He deploys this preoccupation in the captions of two of the arti cle’s photographs. The photo titled “A Porto Rican Debutante” bears the description “Her flashing eyes, black hair and olive complexion are indicative of her descent from Castilian forefathers who maintained their *racial purity* in the land of their adoption” (1924, xii; emphasis added). Another, “Beauties of Mayagüez, ‘The San Francisco of Porto Rico,’” he captions, “Many of the leading families of the island are *of pure Spanish descent*. Hundreds of great estates and many industries are owned by Spaniards, who remain on the other side of the Atlantic and manage their affairs through Spanish agents” (1924, 651; emphasis added).

The two photographs depict modern-looking young brunettes wearing fashionable clothes and accessories, sporting wavy short bobs (without exception) and a style suggesting a European flair. The author announces that the Spanish settler families worked to maintain so-called racial purity, also a valued and significant cultural practice in the segregated United States. In doing so, the author underscores the shared belief in white superiority. This rendition of Puerto Rico’s racial hierarchy attributes “racial purity” to those whites of *pure* Spanish descent. The *jíbaros* are marked as tropicalized or degenerated whites, and so are positioned further down on the racial ladder.

Aside from some tanned agricultural workers and children, the majority of the people pictured fall under the “tropical white” category. One notable exception, “A Sheath Gown in Caguas” (1924, 607), features several dirty and shoeless toddlers, one naked and the others wearing torn “sheaths.” The viewer glimpses the exposed rear-end of the only dark-skinned Afro-Puerto Rican female child among this seemingly neglected group of children. In an attempt at humor, its caption explains that due to the island’s warm climate the “family clothing budget can often ignore children.”

La Gorce establishes a foundational, if fictive, narrative formula and a set of representational motifs that are closely imitated in two later articles about Puerto Rico that appears in the magazine during the next twenty-seven years (Long 1939,Nicholas 1951). These motifs include Spanish architectural relics in Old San Juan (El Morro Fortress), monuments (Christopher Columbus), industries (sugar mills, tobacco, and coffee work), schools, town plazas, agricultural workers (cane cutters, coffee and tobacco farmers), men handling oxen, women weaving and embroidering (needlework industry), salt flats, depictions of pineapples, grapefruit, fish, and natural landscapes (El Yunque, Flamboyant trees), pigs roasting on sticks, folks playing musical instruments, and plentiful images of young white Puerto Rican *señoritas*.

John E. Long’s *National Geographic’s* article, “Puerto Rico: Watchdog of the Caribbean” (1939), celebrates the establishment of an air naval base in Puerto Rico. Impressive aerial photographs of the military air fleet and the base illustrate the article’s opening pages. Thereafter Long follows a representational trajectory similar to the one used by La Gorce, though Long’s article is peppered with images of some of the island’s new enterprises. These include the rhesus monkey’s colony brought to Cayo Santiago in 1938 as part of the establishment of a scientific research site, a regatta in the San Juan harbor, and the Puerto Rico Lottery established in 1934. A particularly impressive aerial photograph of La Mercedita Sugar Mill and Distillery (1939, 727) displays a caption informing the reader of the mill’s airport and airplanes that comfortably shuttle its executives from Puerto Rico to Miami. As in La Gorce’s piece, several photographs depict young brunette *señoritas* as well as women and children engaged in weaving and embroidery. Commentary follows about Puerto Rican women’s nimble fingers and their natural industriousness in the needlework sector.

Likewise, Long avoids racial classifications and limits his commentary to Puerto Rico’s *jíbaros*. “In the mountains lives the *jíbaro*, which literally means ‘escape from civilization,’ Puerto Rico’s most distinctive type. They are shy folk, these thin, good natured mountaineers with *pallid complexions* and high cheekbones” (1939, 737; emphasis added). Here, Long quotes but does not cite La Gorce’s earlier statement about the definition of the *jíbaro* as an escapee from civilization. The *jíbaro* is depicted as a mountain renegade in an otherwise modernizing Puerto Rico. Even though the *jíbaro* has been exalted as the quintessential Puerto Rican type, the description has a tinge of biological degeneracy in it. Long’s account of the *jíbaro* resembles nineteenthcentury descriptions of the Barbadian “redlegs.”

In Barbados, poor whites, also known as “redlegs,” were said to have become “societal introverts” living in remote parts of the island eking out a living from odd jobs and agriculture (Keagy 1972, 32). Keagy offers the following description written in 1854 by Dr. John Davy, Inspector General of Army Hospitals, who spent three years in the British West Indies, most notably in Barbados as a typical portrayal of “redlegs.”

Their hue and complexion are not such as might be expected; their color resembles more of the Albino than of the Englishman when exposed to a good deal of sun in a tropical climate; it is common of *sickly white*, or light red . . . in make they bear marks of feebleness; *slender* and rather tall, *loosely jointed*, with little muscular development. In brief their general appearance denotes degeneracy of corporal frame. . . . They are . . . often *intemperate*. (1972:42–43; emphasis added)

In the *National Geographic* article, Long creates another notable fictional account, this time about the genesis of Puerto Rico’s musical traditions. He writes that “Most Puerto Rican tunes are plaintive inheritances from Spanish colonial days when music was the only relief from the tragedy of being poor or being heartsick. Livelier and more typical of Puerto Rico are the native *plenas* of *the*

hills. The theme of a *plena* may touch any phase of life . . .” (1939, 710; emphasis added). This erroneous description of the genesis of the *plena* musical tradition might have been a strategy to downplay Africa’s legacy on the island. Alternatively, it might represent journalistic superficiality and the writer’s inability to decipher differences in musical traditions. In any case, *plena* music is one of Puerto Rico’s most revered black contributions to the island’s cultural heritage.

National Geographic writer William H. Nicholas and photographer Justin Locke took a five-hour flight from Miami to Puerto Rico to gather data and photographs for an article, “Growing Pains Beset Puerto Rico,” which appeared in the April 1951 issue of the magazine. Following the traditional *National Geographic* format, the article’s introduction offers a brief geographic, topographic, and historic description of the island and its people. Early on the author writes that, “When we came down at San Juan airport we had arrived in the heart of a teeming metropolitan area of the United States” (1951, 419). Setting the tone for the piece, Nicholas demonstrates in a way similar to his predecessors that Puerto Rico, although culturally Spanish, is materially modern like the United States.

For four centuries Puerto Rico remained a part of the Spanish Empire, but in 1899 Spain ceded it to the United States as a result of the Spanish-American War. In 1917 Congress declared all Puerto Ricans to be United States Citizens. During World War II 75,000 of them served in the armed forces, and three Puerto Rican regiments distinguished themselves on the battlefields of Europe. Island regiments have also added new laurels fighting in Korea. (1951, 419–420)

In trademark *National Geographic* fashion, the article is richly illustrated with a detailed map of the island along with several black and white and color photographs. The opening pages show two black and white photographs, one an impressive aerial view of El Morro which the author states is “obsolete as a military work, it remains a shrine to every Puerto Rican” (1951, 420). On the opposite page (1951, 421), a photo portrays the *Señor Luis Muñoz Marín* with the caption, “Puerto Rico’s First Elected Governor Works on His Terrace Fortress-Home.” The scene captured on the governor’s terrace shows the suit-clad governor sternly reading a piece of paper while two men, also dressed in business suits, sit across from him. The reader learns that these men are Rafael Picó, chairman of the planning board, and Roberto de Jesús, director of the budget. The men look tense as the governor reads over what appears to be an official document. Behind the trio, the viewer glimpses the governor’s wife and First Lady, locally known as Doña Inés, reading a newspaper while her two daughters hold hands, roller-skating in her vicinity. Even further in the background, the writer explains, are other “callers” waiting for a meeting with the governor. A dark-skinned woman, perhaps a maid dressed in uniform, walks toward the callers. She is not mentioned in the description.

Starkly, out of the fifteen photographs in the article that depict Puerto Rican people, one pictures two light-skinned black-Puerto Rican men among a large group of servicemen learning to frost a cake. Another shows what appear to be two tanned children savoring stalks of sugar cane, and yet another depicts a light-skinned black woman among a group of workers weaving rugs. Included are also several renditions of industrious *jíbaros* (a fisherman, a shopkeeper, someone playing the guitar, someone roasting a pig). The remaining photos depict whites enjoying the luxuries of tropical living (on a pool terrace in the afternoon, at the Caribe Hilton Hotel, drinking coconut water). Notably, men are the main protagonists of the *jíbaro* scenes; only one photo depicts an entire *jíbaro* family roasting a pig for a child’s christening.

This mid-century article does not dwell on racial types, but rather it focuses on Puerto Rico’s effort to modernize, the “problem” of a growing population, and unemployment while it highlights the island’s natural beauty.

“‘The main problem in Puerto Rico,’ an island leader said to me in the spirit of over-simplification, ‘is that there are too many Puerto Ricans. We just don’t have enough jobs to go around. Agriculture, and that means sugar, primarily, can’t solve the problem’” (1951, 424). For the first time in *National Geographic* portrayals, the author observes that to alleviate the island’s overpopulation and high unemployment rates, Puerto Ricans are migrating in greater numbers to the mainland. “From 1941

to 1945 more than 27,000 came to the mainland. [. . .] Most of these settle in New York City. Charter airlines vie for the migrant trade, charging fares varying from about $35 to $70" (1951, 435).

While critical of the growing problems besetting the island, Nicholas also promotes tourism and industrial development in a way that resembles La Gorce's 1924 article. Under a photograph of a smiling fisherman holding a bountiful catch of fish, the author explains, "Commercial fishing is an old thriving industry on Puerto Rico. Nicolas Carreas [a Puerto Rican fisherman] works the southern shore for his catches of *mero* (grouper). Big-game fishing lure sportsmen to Mona Island fifty miles west of Mayagüez, where schools of tuna swim within one hundred yards of shore. Barracuda, bonito, kingfish, mackerel, and shark offer other prizes" (1951, 432). The author equally boasts of the island's readiness for steady leisure and business travel when in the naïve optimism now emblematic of the mid-century, he announces that the new airport will be able to handle "five hundred flights daily" and will be the main funnel "through which air operations will pour between New York and Latin America" (1951, 440). Nicholas announces that new hotels are springing up to lodge visitors, most notably the Caribe Hilton Hotel. The "three hundred-bedroom hostelry is the most modern in the Caribbean area" (1951, 423).

Reminiscent of previous articles, women only appear in the photos depicting either the leisure enjoyed by white Puerto Ricans or as *jíbaras*, successfully turned into industrial workers. The photographs swiftly establish men as agricultural workers and women as adept factory workers. Under a subheading tilted "Girls acquire pottery skills," Nicholas quotes Mr. Earl Crane, "President of the Iroquois China Company of Syracuse," about the incorporation of women into the workforce. The company opened a plant in Puerto Rico to take advantage of Operation Bootstrap's incentives and employed 465 people, "all but seven islanders":

". . . It has been a wonderful experience. Puerto Ricans have a *natural dexterity with their fingers*. . . . They first came to work from their hill-country homes in worn and ragged dresses. After a week or so we could notice a little lipstick here and there, then some new shoes, then some new dresses. Look at them now." And he beamed as he glanced at the rows of neatly dressed, dark-eyes girls, each performing her delicate task of transferring patterns to the pieces of china. Mr. Crane continues, "Not only that, but in many instances their wages represent their families' only income." (1951, 426; emphasis added)

In the photographs representing the luxuries that might be enjoyed by visitors, young blonde women, perhaps to signal "Americanness," replace the Spanish brunette *señoritas* of previous eras. And while discussions of racial purity have disappeared, the images representing various scenes endorse a long established racial hierarchy. Essentially, leisure activities are the purview of the privileged, so these pursuits are represented in the bodies of "pure whites" (images on pages 427, 448, and 449). Men who are visually coded as the descendants of the *jíbaros* and who work outdoors, mainly in agriculture and fishing, represent the world of work. In turn, their wives and daughters immerse themselves in the modern work of mechanized labor. Meanwhile, Afro-Puerto Ricans are left completely out of the textual and photographic illustrations.

Notes

Notes

Let's get to the more prickly topic: Jack Delano, Puerto Rican by compromise and adoption; but in 1941 he was *an American* employed as a photographer by a colonial agency—the Farm Security Administration—that collected our sadness, passivity, and hopelessness like an antiquarian witnessing the growth of his catalog (translation mine).

In Jorge A. Arroyo's interesting unpublished manuscript, "Los Rojos de la DIVEDCO 1949–1951," he explains that the Delanos and the Rosskams came under investigation for "communist activities" during the 1940s and early 1950s.

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Thompson (2010) quotes Karl Stephen Hermann (1900), reporting on Puerto Rico's racial make-up. He writes: "Almost one sixth of the population in this island—the educated class, and chiefly of Spanish blood—can be set down as valuable acquisitions to our citizenship as the peer, if not the superior, of most Americans in chivalry, domesticity, fidelity, and culture. Of the rest, perhaps one-half can be molded by a firm hand into something approaching decency; but the remainder are going to gives us a great deal of trouble. They are ignorant, filthy, untruthful, lazy, treacherous, murderous, and black" (100). Writing about the growth of gated communities in Puerto Rico, Dinzey-Flores (2013) documents how public housing projects are associated with blackness, crime, and danger. Similarly, reporting on his fieldwork in Cartagena, Colombia, Streicker (1997) notes how race (blackness) and class (white) have increasingly come to define lower and upper class spaces throughout the city.

About the FSA/OWI Color Photographs http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/fsac/.

Interestingly, the early photographs taken by Jack Delano and Edwin and Louise Rosskam depict (black) Ponce and its vicinity with regularity, however Loíza does not figure at all in these photographs. In 1981, Jack Delano photographs Loíza.

CALL NUMBERS: LC-USF35-396, LC-USF35-398, LC-USF35-409.

CALL NUMBERS: LC-USF35-391, LC-USF35-392.

CALL NUMBER: LC-USF35-404.

CALL NUMBER: LC-USF35-383.

Several color photographs titled "Land and utility municipal housing project, Ponce, Puerto Rico" are part of the American Memory Collection. Call Numbers: LC-USF35-596, LC-USF35-617, LC-USF35-595, LC-USF35-486, LC-USF35-393, LC-USF35-616.

Thompson cites U.S. War Department, Office Director Census of Porto Rico, Report on the Census of Porto Rico, 1899 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1900) p. 58.

The opposite of the "refined black" is what is commonly known as "*negro ordinario*" [ordinary black]. The latter is believed to lack refinement, at times this means

This association has been widely upheld in popular culture, film, and literature. A few examples include *Roots* (1976), *Ghost* (1990), *Sankofa* (1993), *Tituba, Black Witch of Salem* (1994), and *Nuestra Señora de la Noche* (2006).

In an interview, Louise Rosskam offers a different account when she states, "Edwin had started that whole government photography file there, he and Jack Delano worked together. Jack's wife, Irene, worked with them too. They started this sort of a propaganda outfit, really. It was not supposed to be run by the popular party; it was supposed to be run by the government. They set up an organization which was called Community Education. The idea was, and they sold this idea to Muñoz because he hadn't thought of it yet, to get the people not to be dependent on the government for everything. Jack, Irene, and Edwin thought of this. They wanted the people to be able to organize themselves and get things going for themselves. The problem was, they didn't know enough to do that. There would be people who had never left their little town to go the neighboring town in their lives. So the idea was to show the people a bigger picture of their lives, really . . . not just their tiny, little town or home. They set up little organizations in the little towns all

over the island, and somebody was the, well not the mayor because that would have been too official, but perhaps would be a local teacher. They would produce material for that person to use. They made these little booklets, and they made movies, and they made posters. They would go around with an electric generator, and Jack was the one who made all the movies. Edwin tried to hire local writers, but he never could find any writers so he had to do most of the writing himself. The photography was done by all of us. They would take a generator and go up to a little town. First they would put the posters up that there was a movie coming. Then they distributed these little books, because the kids could read them to their parents. Then the night came when they were going to show the movie, and they came with their generators and screen and everything, and all the people would be coming from all around" (Saretzky 2000; see: http://www.visitmonmouth.com/oralhistory/bios/RosskamLouise.htm).

It is important to point out, as Donald Thompson (2005) does, that the dates of the films are approximations, because different sources date them at different times. The discrepancy might be in part due to scenes that might have been shot one year, under the auspices of the Division of Cinema and Graphics, but then edited/finished another year under the auspices of DIVEDCO. Marsh Kennerly (2009) offers a useful and comprehensive list of the films made by both divisions (see pages 255–257).

Chapter 8: The Rise Of Cultural Nationalism And Filmic Narratives Of Blackness, 1948–1970

The Rise Of Cultural Nationalism And Filmic Narratives Of Blackness, 1948–1970

One day they [the Rosskams] introduced us to Luis Muñoz Marín and his wife Doña Inés. Muñoz was a liberal of the New Deal variety. He had been brought up in the States and educated at Georgetown University in Washington, DC [. . .] Muñoz and Doña Inés were highly intelligent, motivated people, deeply committed to the struggle against poverty in Puerto Rico. In addition, they had a wide range of interests—in people, in politics, in poetry, in philosophy, in history, in music—in everything. —Jack Delano, *Photographic Memories*

The 1948 election of Governor Luis Muñoz Marín propelled the island into a period of social euphoria.1 Muñoz Marín's election made the Puerto Rican people feel, for the first time since the American occupation, as if their views regarding the island's fate and destiny mattered. A few months before the election, however, the *Ley de la Mordaza* [gag or muzzle law] had been approved by the island's legislature. This law, which was in effect for nine years (1948–1957), was motivated by concern in San Juan about increasing nationalist activities throughout the island. The law made it a crime to speak out publicly against the government or to attempt its overthrow. In effect, this law worked as a repressive measure against the Nationalists.

Once installed in office, Muñoz Marín quickly reformed Puerto Rico's language policy; the legislature made Spanish the primary language taught in schools, with English as a second language. The island's previous language policy, under American-appointed governors, had been a point of contention. As Morales Carrión points out, "This was an important gain for self-government in a very sensitive area, involving *cultural values* and *feelings*" (1983, 272; emphasis added). Muñoz Marín's political goals included eradicating extreme poverty, decreasing unemployment, reducing economic dependence on Washington, and gaining greater control in local government. He preached that by working together to overcome the "heritage of adversity," Puerto Ricans would attain "the good life." For him, this meant a system of values of "compassion, solidarity, a sense of collective worth, and a *feeling* of belonging in what he called *la patria-pueblo*" [the people-fatherland] (Morales Carrión 1983, 273; emphasis added).

In 1950, the new governor set his sights on reforming Puerto Rico's status. Incensed that the island was further away politically than ever from becoming an independent republic, Albizu Campos believed that the only option left for the Nationalists was armed revolutionary confrontation. They overtook two mountain towns, Jayuya and Utuado, and unsuccessfully attacked the governor's palace. The National Guard was sent to quell the insurrection, which left thirty-three people dead. Another two Nationalists carried out an attack at Blair House in Washington, DC, President Truman's main residence while the White House was undergoing repairs (Morales Carrión 1983). These events caused the immediate arrest of Albizu Campos and of hundreds of Nationalists in Puerto Rico. Albizu Campos received an eighty-year prison sentence. Governor Muñoz Marín was deeply apologetic to President Truman and the American people and assured them that the Nationalist cause was not popular among the Puerto Rican people.

Meanwhile, the governor continued working on constructing Puerto Rico's new political status. In 1952, after heated debates both in Puerto Rico and in Washington, DC, the Popular Democratic

Party (PPD) inaugurated the *Estado Libre Asociado* (ELA) [Associated Free State], known commonly in English as the Commonwealth (Morales Carrión 1983; Duany 2002). The new status, a neocolonial one, allowed Puerto Ricans to elect their own governor, to make decisions regarding local policies (such as education, language, culture, health, housing, and taxation), and to run their own judicial system. It offered continued U.S. citizenship (first granted in 1917 in the Jones Act) and more local autonomy, but did not give Puerto Ricans the right to vote for the U.S. President—the person with power to veto local initiatives. Puerto Ricans elect their own senators and representatives to the national senate, but these elected officials have neither voting power in Washington.

By the time the ELA was established, Operation Bootstrap, with its motto "the Battle of Production," was at full steam in its efforts to industri alize the island. It attracted U.S. companies with the promise of tax exemptions and workers who would labor for lower wages than those mandated on the mainland. Industrialization's early years brought some economic growth and prosperity to the people of Puerto Rico, shifting the island's image from the "'poorhouse of the Caribbean' to the 'showcase of democracy'" (Dietz 1986, 244). In the early 1950s, everything seemed possible in Puerto Rico and the excitement for building Muñoz Marín's vision of a new society was at an all-time high.

Nowhere was this more apparent than in the realm of arts and culture. With the aid of trusted scholars and artists, Muñoz Marín fiercely articulated from San Juan a "Puertoricanness," a unique set of spiritual beliefs and values distinct from American cultural values. At the same time, he believed that Puerto Ricans should adopt a stricter (read Protestant) work ethic and seek to emulate American economic values.2 At the very core of the Commonwealth political apparatus were contradictory beliefs of preserving a traditional culture while emulating the United States' economic ethos. San Juan's political and cultural intelligentsia, composed mainly of educated, upper-class, white Puerto Rican (Creole) and American cosmopolitans, produced and marketed the Commonwealth's cultural nationalist project that would become the hallmark of Puerto Rican identity.

The Muñocista "regime of truth" was promoted through films, graphic posters, photographs, paintings and other visual arts, music, literature, theater, and dance. It was also reproduced through rallies, historic commemoration, the erection of monuments, and festivals, as well as in classrooms and in the establishment of the Old City of San Juan as the center of (Spanish) historic tradition with a bohemian and internationalist flair. The ruling elite, like earlier generations (see chapter three), believed that arts and literacy were the main vehicles in the promotion of a "spiritual," essential, and Spanish/Latin American cultural nationalism. But unlike earlier generations, the Commonwealth supporters also believed that Puerto Ricans should steadily march toward economic and political Americanization. Muñoz Marín illustrated the distinction in his 1953 speech entitled "*La personalidad Puertorriqueña en el ELA*" [Puerto Rican nationality in the ELA]: "*No se confundan, pues, los problemas de nuestra cultura con el de estatus político*" [Do not confuse our cultural problems with those of the political status] (Hernández 2002, 155). As Duany has so aptly remarked, "Herein lies the crucial paradox of cultural nationalism: the sharp ideological split between statehood and nationality or, to put it otherwise, between citizenship and identity" (2002, 133).

The cultural nationalism promoted by the "colonial elite," to use Maldonado Denis' words, is the island's *de facto* "regime of truth." Its representative symbols hark back to a pre-1898 Hispanic and indigenous past, a past that at once marginalizes the contributions made by Africans and altogether excludes American cultural influences on the island (Duany 2002;Dávila 1997). The vision for this new society was born out of a particular historical junction during which the sons of the ruling class, the majority of whom had obtained post-graduate degrees in U.S. universities, felt that arming Puerto Ricans with cultural pride would make feelings of inferiority disappear. These architects of the new cultural nationalism, unlike their elite predecessors, were invested in promoting cultural pride across classes. In fact, their focus became educating "the people" on morally appropriate ways to be Puerto Rican. As Hutchison remarks, "Cultural nationalism . . . is an educational movement directed at inner or moral reform" (1999, 400).

For Muñoz Marín, Puerto Rico, like other regions in the United States (such as the south or southwest), could have its own regional cultural identity, all the while being a part of the United States. Regional (or in this case, national) cultural habits and political alliance were two different things, and they were not in competition with one another. This dominant stance espoused that becoming modern citizens was not in any way opposed to preserving cultural identity. In fact, it was exactly the other way around. What was essentially new for Puerto Ricans in 1950 was that they were increasingly incorporating themselves into the modern post-WWII order, while for the first time asserting on a global scale a unique cultural heritage, an assertion that would become key in marketing the island to tourists. As Merrill has written,

Commonwealth Puerto Rico, the advertising read, was a postcolonial territory tutored in democratic capitalism by the United States and generously granted autonomy. [. . .] The image juxtaposed the island's tropical allure and its material progress, its rural simplicity and its advanced consumer offerings, its yearning for change and its stability. In short, Puerto Rico shone as a Cold War paradise, an outpost for liberal capitalism in a world seemingly tempted by the promises of communism. (2001, 181)

Duany (2002) has rightly pointed out that in Puerto Rico, cultural nationalism "has acquired a massive following, for reasons that have not been well documented" (124). Certainly the subject requires deeper analysis. I contend that the Commonwealth's version of Puerto Rican national identity has been wildly successful because its symbols have been promoted in the form of media to be consumed—felt, internalized, owned, and displayed. As a spiritual construct to be internalized at a psychic and bodily level, this cultural nationalism was to be consumed emotionally. Furthermore, the affective bonds and deep feelings of "love" for the symbols and cues that are understood as uniquely Puerto Rican (e.g., the flag, the anthem, the Taíno symbol for fertility, and the Coquí among others) are at the core of what makes this brand of cultural nationalism so effective. Rather than trying to understand cultural nationalism from a rational perspective, it might be understood better using emotion as a framework (Crawford 2000).

The Commonwealth deployed a culturally appropriate set of heritage cues to evoke collective emotion and pride. Moreover, in spite of the diversity of cultural nationalisms at work in Puerto Rico, such as nationalist, environmental, and pro-statehood for example, each group is affectively bound (whether by feelings of love or hatred) to the same set of cultural symbols and sites—many of which were first proposed by the PPD. These symbols and sites form the backbone of a large number of the island's cultural representations. Cultural symbols and feelings are widely shared despite varied political alliances and/or preferences.

Yet as Dávila notes, "Tropes of national identity . . . are always vulnerable constructs contingent on power relations and the maintenance or transformations of a given social order" (1997, 15). In spite of the ever-shifting terrain in the island's local politics, the 1950s symbols that comprise national culture remain rooted in the population. I believe this is in part due to the 1950s strategy that popularized folk culture by upholding "the people's" culture and traditions while reinforcing the elite's economic investments in the federal state. Finally, the island's increased participation in an advanced capitalist and consumer global culture makes the cues associated with cultural nationalism ever more romantic. In the face of a homogenizing American (global) consumer culture, Puerto Ricans deploy "authentic" cultural artifacts (e.g., traditional music, t-shirts depicting images of culture heroes, tattoos of Taíno symbols) as badges of cultural and national specificity. In short, Puerto Ricans increasingly turn to the heritage symbols that are unique to them in the global landscape.

Division Of Community Education (Divedco)3

Division Of Community Education (Divedco)3

In May 1949, Law 372 created of the *División de Educación de la Comunidad* [Division of Community Education, known as DIVEDCO], which was placed under the supervision of the *Departamento de Instrucción Publica* [Department of Public Education]. In essence, the new division expanded the earlier Cinema and Graphics Division, giving the founders—Edwin Rosskam, Jack and Irene Delano, and their Puerto Rican assistants—an increased budget and staff, and a larger location with improved equipment and facilities (Delano 1992, 7; 1997, 119). At the Division of Cinema and Graphics, Edwin Rosskam and the Delanos had envisioned training Puerto Rican personnel to take over the agency's mission, and this was still their hope upon DIVEDCO's creation (Marsh-Kennerley 2009). In this section I focus on the representations of blackness produced by artists working for DIVEDCO, since the history of DIVEDCO has been well documented already.4

Pérez (2008) aptly noted that the use of art as a tool to further political and educational aims is not new: "Within the Russian and Italian neorealist movements, the production of propaganda films and posters were a trademark that later influenced the development of political and artistic productions in Mexico, Cuba, and other countries."5 Similarly, Marsh Kennerley notes that although New Deal arts programs helped in shaping DIVEDCO's "cultural-pedagogical" mission, representationally DIVEDCO was coupled with a Latin American intellectual tradition that promoted popular education through the arts—specifically the cultural-intellectual project of José Vasconcelos as well as Mexican Muralism (2009, 25). The merging of these traditions, along with experimentation and the use of Puerto Rican motifs and interests gave birth to a uniquely Puerto Rican aesthetic during this period. The visual representations produced by artists working at DIVEDCO had a profound and lasting impact on Puerto Rican cultural production.

Even though the creation of DIVEDCO was the result of brainstorming between Muñoz Marín, Doña Inés, and the American artists who first piloted the earlier Division of Graphics and Cinema, the newly created DIVEDCO was to work as the nerve center of a modern and modernizing approach to adult education, community self-efficacy, and well-being. As a result, Muñoz Marín felt the agency now needed an institutional head versed in the methods of transformative and popular pedagogy. To lead the newly created agency he recruited American Fred Wale, a Harvard graduate, who had under the New Deal worked in the schools of Boston (Marsh Kennerley 2009, 36).

Fred Wale accepted the job and soon began recruiting others to fill positions within DIVEDCO's four departments: administration, fieldwork and training, analysis, and production. Carmen Isales,6 a social worker, was hired to head the training department. She, Irene Delano, and Isabel Bernal Rosa,7 were the only women employed in positions of prominence within DIVEDCO (Torres Martinó 1998a; Marsh Kennerly 2009;Colón Pizarro 2011). Negrón-Muntaner has remarked that, "This organization trained a whole generation of Puerto Rican filmmakers but did not train a single woman and had no Puerto Rican woman in major creative positions. Thus, the *División* produced a handful of films on women's rights, (from over a hundred films produced by the agency), without the full participation of women as directors, writers, editors or producers" (1993).8 This gender imbalance is noteworthy because part of DIVEDCO's mission involved producing public health campaigns that would curtail preventable illnesses such as dysentery. Women were often charged with the care of the children and the elderly, who composed the vast majority of those affected by preventable diseases. As such it would have been valuable to integrate women as equal partners in the agency's work.

The gender disparity within this government agency points to a pervasive attitude regarding women's roles in Puerto Rican society—that she is the keeper of the private domain, while her husband or father is the face of the public sphere. In Puerto Rico, this gender dynamic extends into the domains of knowledge and artistic production. Few women managed to become part of the nation's cultural renaissance that was in full swing by mid-century. Those who stepped out from behind the private curtain of family and home life into to the public sphere to voice, write, or depict

their ideas came mostly from white Creole upper-class families.9

In his 1953 article, “The Division of Community Education, An Overview,” Fred Wale states that, “As an education program we are concerned with people living together in neighborhoods and communities, not with the personal development of the individual except as it affects his community participation” (1953, 12–13). He adds that democratic growth is “a matter more vital than any action aimed at solving a material problem” and that in effect participants would learn lessons of a lifetime—how to use their own democratic citizenship to solve the community’s problems through community action and self-reliance (1953, 13–14).10 Wale details the work of the “Production Section,” and gives examples of the ways in which audiovisual materials were used and distributed to promote education or to change undesirable or destructive cultural beliefs. By using multiple media, mainly film, booklets, and posters in the coverage of a given topic, a wider audience (including non-readers) could be reached.

He writes, “When we showed a dramatic documentary on the evils of the *curandera*, we distributed a book called *Science versus Superstition*” (1951). In hindsight, this example reveals a bias in depicting Western and expert knowledge as superior while downplaying or disregarding folk knowledge. DIVEDCO’s mission was built on the notion that rational and expert knowledge could be doled out (from the top) to the “masses” (at the bottom) to help them solve their own problems and as a byproduct, the nation’s most pressing problems. As Lauria-Perricelli aptly notes, “This developmentalist utopia was based on the notion that Puerto Rico could ‘modernize’ itself, offset the underdevelopment and poverty inherited from previous colonial conditions, while creating optimum conditions for cultivating the unique Puerto Rican identity” (1991, 94–95).

Regarding the “Field and Training Section,” Wale explains that the Division’s model was to *find a man* from a rural community, offer him training in San Juan, hire him as a “group organizer,” construct a work plan and deploy him in his community to make home visits, pass out booklets, show films, and engage in discussions and study groups with community members (1953, 18–19). Similarly, in their article, “The Field Program,” Carmen Isales and Fred Wale underscore the importance of *finding men* to act as community organizers, men who would be interested in the democratic process, who could build confidence among community members, and who would listen and care for the people in their communities respectfully (1953, 25–26).

Although the authors revealed no gender or age barriers for applicants, Marsh Kennerley recounts that when she asked Carmen Isales in an interview why women had not been community organizers, Isales responded that there had been one, Leda Figueroa, but the main reason for the lack of women was that married women had to stay home to take care of children. Besides, many communities lacked easy access and the organizers had to carry heavy equipment (2009, 39). Wale describes the work of one community organizer named Raúl González of Utuado and the community’s engagement and reactions to the educational events he organized. Wale, perhaps without intending to do so, seems to romanticize the mountain folks. He documents life ways that were quickly and irrevocably being transformed by the very same government policies that subsidized DIVEDCO’s work.

In an interview, Louise Rosskam remarked that once Fred Wale became DIVEDCO’s chief administrator “sooner or later, he took over. And he ousted Jack, Edwin, and Irene. And that was a disaster. I mean it was a disaster for Jack, Edwin, and Irene” (Saretzky 2000). The eventual displacement of the three artistic founders took place over a period of a few years. In the meantime, DIVEDCO was thriving, employing some of the most important writers and artists of that generation.11 For many of the writers and artists whose legacy went on to shape Puerto Rican arts and culture, DIVEDCO enabled their professional and personal development.

Just before their departure from DIVEDCO, in 1951 Edwin Rosskam and Jack Delano made a feature-length film, *Los Peloteros* [The Ballplayers]. Rosskam wrote the script, an adaptation of a story told by Amílcar Tirado, also a filmmaker and colleague at DIVEDCO. Delano directed and edited the film and wrote the musical score, while Benji Doniger worked as the main cameraman. With the exception of the professional actors, Ramón Ortiz del Rivero (who played the coach) and

Miriam Colón (who played his wife), the people in the film were community members from the town of Comerío where the film was made (Rivera 1997). This film enjoyed great success and it is still considered a significant achievement in the history of Puerto Rican cinema.

In 1952, Jack and Irene Delano resigned from their positions at DIVEDCO because, as Jack remarked, “We felt that our departments were in good Puerto Rican hands and that our services were no longer required” (Delano 1992, 8). Readers might detect Delano’s sensitivity to the contentious issue of Americans working as administrators of Puerto Rican agencies. Similarly, in 1952, Edwin and Louise Rosskam decided to relocate with their Puerto Rico-born daughters to New Jersey, where they spent the rest of their lives. Louise Rosskam recalls that they decided to leave the island after “Edwin was accused of being a communist. . . . Edwin was really working for Muñoz. Muñoz was running for Governor on the third or fourth term. . . . We thought we were really standing in his way. We were very, very, very close friends. Edwin decided we better think of going” (Saretzky 2000). In that interview, Mrs. Rosskam recounts that leaving the island caused Edwin to go into a “real decline,” but one from which he eventually recovered.12

Centro De Arte Puertorriqueño (Cap), 1950–1952

Centro De Arte Puertorriqueño (Cap), 1950–1952

In December 1950, several Puerto Rican artists inaugurated the *Centro de Arte Puertorriqueño* (CAP), an independent artists collective, with the goals of developing, exhibiting, and reaffirming national Puerto Rican art (Benítez 1998).13 CAP’s logo, designed by Torres Martinó, was an image of a *vejigante* in the Ponce tradition.14 These artists were loyal to the nationalist vision of an independent Puerto Rico. CAP’s use of the *vejigante*, Puerto Rico’s quintessential representation of the African heritage, recalls Colón Delgado’s *Jíbaro Negro* (1941) (see chapter three). CAP artists established a lineage for nationalist artists that linked them to earlier generations who believed that the cause of (rebellious) black Puerto Ricans fighting for the end of enslavement equaled the cause of fighting for the island’s independence. Citing José Luis González, Torres Martinó called the CAP artists, “*los hijos rebeldes del ELA*” [ELA’s rebellious sons] (1985, 21).

Torres Martinó explains that even though these artists were aware of vanguard artistic currents, CAP members felt that their Puerto Rican art must follow the social realism suggested by the Mexican arts movements of the first half the twentieth century. He also asserts that they were following the master’s call for “depictions of traditions” (see chapters two and three). Yet, the traditions that the CAP artists represented were far from romantic. Instead they depicted an increasingly urban Puerto Rico with its slums and workers; they also portrayed Puerto Rico’s revolutionary heroes, such as Ramón Emeterio Betances and Pedro Albizu Campos. And this generation of artists began an earnest portrayal of Afro-Puerto Ricans, of cane cutters, and of the hardships of *jíbaro* life.

Hailed by Francisco Oller’s call to produce socially engaged art, they collectively attempted to produce art that promoted national identity and art that served as a weapon against colonialism. Their work was not meant for the walls of the houses of the elite. Rather they intended it to reach the masses to promote social justice and to exalt modern Puerto Rican scenes, values, and traditions. They were vehemently against the social inequalities in Puerto Rican society, which they believed were the result of the island’s colonial status and the importation of U.S. capitalism (Benítez 1998). Torres Martinó explains that “*A nuestro juicio, Puerto Rico, según lo había detectado Oller casi medio siglo antes, todavía tenía necesidad en nuestro tiempo de un arte ‘que sirviera para algo*’” [To our understanding, Puerto Rico, as Oller noticed half a century earlier, still had the need in our time for an art that would “serve a purpose”] (translation mine; 1985, 23).15 The purpose of the art CAP members produced, then, was to promote a critical consciousness about

the social and political conditions that made up their everyday lives. Following in the tradition of the *Taller de Gráfica Popular de México*, they felt that it was an artist's responsibility to denounce injustice and advance the fight against it, to use art to promote a just and equitable society (Benítez 1998).16

In 1951, CAP produced its first graphic portfolio, *La Estampa Puertorriqueña* [Puertorrican Scenes].17 Designed by Irene Delano, this portfolio included pieces by eight of the collective's artists: Lorenzo Homar, Rafael Tufiño, Carlos Marichal, Rubén Rivera Aponte, Félix Rodríguez Báez, Samuel Sánchez, José A. Torres Martinó, and Carlos Raquel Rivera.18 The collection demonstrates CAP artists' commitments to depicting unique Puerto Rican themes and social realities such as the slums, popular traditions and customs, and the world of work (Benítez 1998). Torres Martinó asserts that with the publication of this and subsequent graphic portfolios that grew from the collective spirit nurtured at CAP, Puerto Rican artists served as pioneers of a new exhibition medium (1985, 25). Visual analysis reveals that in this pioneering portfolio, CAP artists created a retrospective visual reflection of the images and themes produced by artists of earlier generations.

This observation is particularly evident with regard to the photos taken by American photographers, especially Edwin Rosskam's and Jack Delano's from the 1940s. Rafael Tufiño's evocative *Cortador de Caña* [Cane Cutter] illustrates this claim as it is reminiscent of Edwin Rosskam's photo, "Cutting cane on a sugar plantation near Ponce, Puerto Rico" (1938),19 and Jack Delano's "Guanica, Puerto Rico (vicinity). Harvesting sugar cane in a burned field" (1942).20 American photographers were the first to popularize images of Puerto Rico's sugar zone as a significant part of the island's natural, social, visual, and economic landscape. In fact, aside from earlier depictions by Francisco Oller like *Hacienda la Fortuna* (1885) and Julio Tomás Martínez's *El Genio del Ingenio* (1910), Tufiño's *Cortador de Caña* (1951) stands as an early example of a cane worker/cutter depiction by a Puerto Rican artist.21 Certainly the romantic ideals that led Puerto Rico's *costumbrista* painters to recreate, time and again, the *jíbaro's* mountainous and hilly landscape, eclipsed the desire to render as equally beautiful the rambling sugar fields on which sweaty and dirty workers dressed in torn rags toiled under the hot sun on the island's coasts.

Irene Delano designed a second graphic portfolio of CAP artists, *Estampas de San Juan* [San Juan scenes] (1953) that included a prologue by writer René Marqués. Artists Juan Díaz, José Manuel Figueroa, Manuel Hernández Acevedo, Luis Muñoz Lee, Francisco Palacios, and Eduardo Vera Cortés contributed pieces for the first time, and Lorenzo Homar, Carlos Raquel Rivera, and Rafael Tufiño, for the second time. The works depict scenes of daily life and of the slums (Benítez 1998). This was the last portfolio produced strictly under the independent auspices of CAP. Faced with financial pressures and the availability of paid jobs at DIVEDCO, artists slowly joined DIVEDCO's ranks. Lorenzo Homar began working for the agency in 1951. A year later Rafael Tufiño joined him and in 1956 Carlos Raquel Rivera began working for the agency. Torres Martinó explains that DIVEDCO had yet another pull: "*las metas de alcance social que dieron vida a la DIVEDCO no eran incompatibles con la ideología de los artistas*" [the socially engaged goals that gave life to DIVEDCO were not incompatible with the ideology of these artists] (1985, 26).

Instituto De Cultura Puertorriqueña (Icp/Institute Of Puerto Rican Culture), 1955

Instituto De Cultura Puertorriqueña (Icp/Institute Of Puerto Rican Culture), 1955

No es por nada que los espíritus más avizores del PPD se inventan a mediados de la década (1955) el muro de contención del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña. 22

—Jose A. Torres Martinó, *El Centro de Arte Puertorriqueño*

The Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, created by Law 89, sought to "conserve, promote, enrich and disseminate the cultural values of the *pueblo* of Puerto Rico and bring about their broadest and most profound knowledge and appreciation" (Dávila 1997, 39; cf. Harvey 1988, 34). The designation of the island-community as a *pueblo* (town) in lieu of the word "nation"— a politically charged word associated with the nationalist agenda—is apocryphal because the ICP was established as a state entity in charge of promoting Puerto Rican national culture. The establishment of the ICP unleashed what Dávila has called a "culture war" among the island's political parties (1997).

In the end, the ICP emerged as a pro-independence and nationalist *cultural* space, but one *politically* aligned with the PPD. In other words, while ICP administrators and artists worked to uphold and promote autochthonous Puerto Rican culture and most of them supported the island's independence, as a state agency they promoted the PPD's vision of the *patria pueblo*.

After obtaining a doctorate in anthropology from Harvard University in 1954, Ricardo Alegría, who would later become ICP's first director, returned to Puerto Rico to continue his career as was common among creole whites from San Juan's educated and moneyed families. In 1947 Alegría had already established *El Centro de Investigaciones Arqueologicas* [Center for Archeological Research] at the University of Puerto Rico and was regarded well by Puerto Rico's educated and political intelligentsia for his extensive archeological and ethnographic work. He has been dubbed the "father of Puerto Rican archeology" for his research into pre-Columbian, specifically Taíno, culture. His study of the festival in honor of St. James the Apostle in Loíza offered a pioneering and rich ethnographic analysis of Puerto Rico's African heritage. By 1955, when he became ICP's executive director, he had published extensively about the Taínos of Puerto Rico and the African heritage in Loíza, and had organized archeological exhibitions (Hernández 2002).

In November 1955, with a $35,000 annual budget, Alegría became the ICP's first executive director, a post he would occupy until 1979. He was charged with enacting and overseeing Muñoz Marín's "Operation Serenity." In a oft-cited speech the governor gave at Harvard University in 1955 upon the occasion of receiving an honorary doctorate, the governor explained that Operation Serenity

. . . will use the growing economic strength to widen freedom, knowledge, and imagination, rather than to promote the acquisition of products arising from the uncontrolled desire to attain material things. (Hernández 2002, 154; translation mine)23

Alegría proposed that ICP concentrate on researching, exhibiting, and nurturing growth in six cultural areas of interests: anthropology and folklore, history, art, literature, music, and theater (Hernández 2002).

I visualized the Institute as an institution that would do what had not yet been done in Puerto Rico: the study of the fundamental aspects of our culture, our nationality, to disseminate them, and *end our inferiority complex*. (Hernández 2002, 167; translation mine, emphasis added)24

Alegría commissioned Lorenzo Homar to create the institute's logo, and together they agreed on a circle inside which stand three male representatives of Puerto Rico's foundational "races:" the Taíno Indian, the Spaniard, and the African. Standing side by side, each figure showcases "cultural" items as symbols that represent their unique contributions to twentieth century Puerto Rico. Corn and manioc plants flank the indigenous man as he stands to one side of the Spaniard, holding tightly a *cemí* [Taíno stone god] against his chest. This positioning proximate to the icon's chest posits the Taíno man as the heart of the nation. The Spaniard stands in the middle with three crosses symbolizing Catholicism behind him near his head. He holds a large book representing Spanish grammar. These elements symbolically present him as the mind of the nation. On the other

side of the Spaniard stands the African with cane stalks behind him, and near his feet a *vejigante* mask lies. In one arm he holds a drum and a machete. In this representation, the African man is forever tied to the world of hard labor. He is also portrayed as the father of the nation's rhythm and the keeper of the island's carnival tradition. About the ICP's seal, Alegría remarked,

Our nationality is the product of five centuries of *mestizaje* between the Indian, the white Spanish, and the black. Each one contributes. . . . The three are integrated harmoniously. Nationality has been established. Regardless of skin color, we all have the same culture. (Hernández 2002, 171; translation mine, emphasis added)25

Alegría deployed the idea of racial harmony repeatedly, and in the process created the hegemonic narrative about racial mixing that underpins Puerto Rico's national identity. As Godreau and colleagues have noted, this "sanitizing" national discourse "attempts to evade and contain the troublesome topic of race," racism, and slavery, "while never managing it to suppress it completely" (2008, 117).

In 1957, Lorenzo Homar left DIVEDCO to head ICP's newly established graphics workshop, the precursor to the *Escuela de Artes Plasticas* [School of Plastic Arts] established in 1966. The ICP's graphics workshop was different from DIVEDCO's in that it aimed to produce posters that would

. . . servir como recordatorio de gestas heroicas y hombres ilustres de nuestra historia nacional, así como anuncio de eventos culturales como exhibiciones, conciertos, funciones teatrales, festivals artísticos. . . .

[. . . to work in the production of mementos of important events and heroic figures in our national history, and to also make announcements of cultural events like exhibits, concerts, theater functions, artistic festivals . . .] (Hernández, 2001, 189). Approached with the opportunity to create Puerto Rico's first college-level art school, Alegría was thrilled for he envisioned training not only artists, but also art teachers who would teach in Puerto Rican schools. He believed the latter would seek out the island's young talent, the same talent that would later come to study art in San Juan's *Escuela de Artes Plasticas.*

Increasingly those in government circles believed Alegría was too wedded to the nationalist cause, and although the ICP's art, culture, and folklore initiatives continued to thrive for a time, by 1965 funding had declined markedly. Alegría remained close to Luis Muñoz Marín and his wife Doña Inés, but he had never formally joined the commonwealth party. In fact, upon the death of nationalist don Pedro Albizu Campos in 1965, in an act of public defiance Alegría paid his respects by attending the funeral (Hernández 2002).

In 1968, after twenty-eight years in power, Muñoz Marín's Popular Democratic Party lost the elections to Luis A. Ferré, the candidate from the recently formed *Partido Nuevo Progresista* [New Progressive Party or PNP]. A conservative party, the PNP's main goal was to make Puerto Rico a U.S. state. The new party's pro-statehood politics were at complete odds with Alegría's "culture centered nationalism." In an act of rebellion, Alegría did not attend Ferré's inauguration. By January 1969, Alegría turned in his resignation, but ICP's board members denied the request. For a time, Alegría was able to collaborate closely with the new governor. However, inevitably as the PNP's conservative politics became clear, Alegría's days as the architect of Puerto Rico's cultural nationalism were numbered.

Representations Of Blackness, 1950 To 1970: Ricardo Alegría Establishes A Master Narrative

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As previously mentioned, Puerto Rican artists, writers, and anthropologists began to produce earnest representations of black Puerto Ricans during this era. The short film made by anthropologist Ricardo Alegría, *La Fiesta de Santiago: Loíza Aldea* [Santiago's Festival: Loíza Village] (1949), stands as the earliest visual ethnography of Puerto Rico's Afro-descendants, and illustrates lustrates the new, more vigorous interest in excavating and presenting their history. Ricardo Alegría also published his ethnographic findings about Loíza's festival in a 1954 book titled, *La Fiesta de Santiago Apóstol en Loíza Aldea*, published again in shorter form in 1956 with the same title in the *Journal of American Folklore*.

Through this scholarly trifecta, Alegría succeeded in building a foundational master narrative about Loíza and Afro-Puerto Ricans. His interpretations, backed by his scholarly authority, have influenced all manner of cultural and scholarly production about Loíza to this day.26 In his 1956 article, Alegría asserts that Loíza is ". . . a rather isolated Negro community," and this in turn allowed its inhabitants to conserve and articulate ". . . old Hispanic-Catholic practices as well as the persistence of African beliefs and customs, which have already disappeared from other communities of the island" (1956, 124). Alegría establishes Loíza as a black town, creating the discursive boundaries that define it as Puerto Rico's prominent black geographic territory, in effect casting Loíza and its inhabitants under an orientalist gaze (Said 1979). At once, he promotes his lasting idea that Puerto Rican culture is the product of the "harmonious" integration of Hispanic, aboriginal, and African cultures (1956, 123). Yet he states that ". . . the process of acculturation was not uniform; in some regions Negro influence was slight while in others, *especially in the coastal area*, African culture got a strong grip" (1956, 123; emphasis added).

Again, he effectively circumscribes black culture and blacks to the coastal regions, home to the island's sugar industry. Several contradictions are apparent in this grand narrative. Blackness is cast as a part of the "harmonious" mix of Puerto Rican culture (especially when it comes to music and folklore), but black people are said to live in isolated coastal communities. In this equation, African cultural traditions are incorporated into a mythical Puerto Rican culture while real, living black people are externalized to the (isolated) coast. The question remains, why were *Loiceños* isolated in 1950? Did *Loiceños* make a conscious decision to stay in their hometown rather than face prejudices in other parts of the island?

Alegría's scientific incursion into Loíza offers, in an orientalist fashion, an explanatory model of the inhabitant's most prominent festival celebration, rendering the town and its subjects "ethnographiable." His model simultaneously dismisses the history of racial subjugation that enslaved and freed blacks experienced in Puerto Rico. At the same time, members of this community have lived in "relative isolation," which casts them as remnants of some pre-modern past within a rapidly modernizing Puerto Rico. In carrying out ethnographic research first about the purportedly extinct Taínos and later about African traditions, Alegría investigates the "living primitive" or "the primitive within."

Alegría's well-intentioned and pioneering research succeeded in casting *Loiceños* [blacks] as bound to tradition, and non-black Puerto Ricans as participants and makers of the modern world, thereby reinforcing existing narratives of linear evolution and reproducing the alterity of blacks vis-àvis the (non-black) Puerto Rican. Yet Alegría's assertions about Loíza, as Harris noted (2001), have been widely upheld and disseminated by subsequent scholars, filmmakers, and significantly, by Loiceños themselves. An economic imperative drives this "living museum" picture of Loíza as a place where visitors can witness Africa in Puerto Rico. In fact, the ICP dubbed Loíza as the "Capital of Tradition," marking the town to receive funds to develop its arts in tandem with tourism. In other words, the town has been marked as a tourist destination where visitors can witness Puerto Rico's African arts and culture. Regarding the ICP's relationship with the municipalities on the island's eastern seaboard, Dávila has noted that ". . . while African Caribbean cultural elements are

predominant throughout the eastern area, *especially the coastal rim*, it is only in Loíza that they are officially recognized (through the folklorization of the patron-saint festival, which has become a carnival-like tourist attraction for Puerto Rico)" (1997, 93, emphasis added).

During an interview I asked a Loíza *vejigante* mask carver what he thought about his town's designation as the "Capital of Tradition." Before answering he looked at me as if confused by such a silly question, and then said effusively, "well, I am proud! It is an honor. . . . I think it is a good thing. . . . *We are* the capital of tradition!" Before leaving his home, I bought a masterful *vejigante* mask for $250.00 that he had named "the yin and yang" because half of its face was painted black and the other half white.27 Ricardo Alegría's "excavation" of Loíza from isolation, a pioneering undertaking to be sure, granted the town a privileged place in the culture market. Its citizens have been marked as primitives living in the modern world, allowing them to market their town as a place where visitors can witness and purchase "real" culture. Hernández Hiraldo points out a perverse side effect of its categorization as a cultural site. "[. . .]Loíza suffered from a kind of governmental discrimination: it was easier for them to receive money for cultural purposes than for basic services such as a medical building" (2006, 75).

Nenén De La Ruta Mora (1955)

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Island artists working from DIVEDCO, charged with the government's initiative of articulating Puerto Rico's cultural identity, produced a number of important works depicting Afro-Puerto Ricans. According to Marsh Kennerley, this period of creative effervescence, also known as DIVEDCO's "golden age," lasted until about 1957 (2009, 145). DIVEDCO artists continued the tradition started by Delano and Rosskam and made several films, most depicting cultural storylines set in the citizenry's own landscapes to promote a popular education (Marsh Kennerley 2009, 145–146; 255–257). The films, however problematically, informed the masses about Puerto Rico's natural, economic, and racial diversity. Well-intentioned but ultimately weak and misguided, they attempted to promote racial equality by fostering the idea that all Puerto Ricans, in spite of skin color, shared one harmonious cultural heritage. Racism as a real problem in Puerto Rico was never addressed.

Nenén de la Ruta Mora [Nenen from the Moor's route] (1955), written and directed by Oscar Torres, portrays the St. James the Apostle's Festival in Loíza through the fantastic fictional story of a young boy named Nenén and a *vejigante* named Cumbé. As if following from Ricardo Alegría's 1949 film, *Nenén* (filmed in color) begins with a panoramic shot of the Río Grande de Loíza, Puerto Rico's longest river, which drains into the Atlantic Ocean. Both bodies of water are of significance for the town's cultural and economic landscapes. The river, for example, became a revered location in Puerto Rico's national imaginary after poet Julia de Burgos wrote a poetic ode entitled *El Rio Grande de Loíza* (1935).28

Alegría's film, like the later *Nenén,* starts with a narrated voice-over as the *bomba* drums that accompany the film's introductory credits die down. In Alegría's *Fiestas de Santiago* (1949), the narrator then describes the *aldea* [village] using an academic tone and "proper" Spanish:

In a distant location in Puerto Rico's northeast coast just beside the mouth of the river that bears its name, rises the picturesque village named Loíza. Even though it was one of the first settlements established by the Spanish conquistadors, today Loíza is a forgotten town, distant from the equalizing processes of industrial civilization. Isolated from central channels of communication it leads a tranquil and quiet life maintaining its ancient beliefs and customs and ignoring the passing of the centuries. (translation mine)29

This narration underscores the town's isolation, exoticizing its inhabitants as pre-moderns whose life ways have disregarded the passing of time. Alegría notes that the town's isolation is in part due to the lack of central roads from which to access the "modern" world. Because the Loíza River separates the town from the coastal route that leads to the San Juan metropolitan area, residents and visitors crossed the river in an *ancón* [raft] until a bridge was built in 1985 allowing commuters to move freely between the town and the adjacent metropolitan area.

In contrast, the narrator in the fictional *Nenén* (1955) uses a colloquial tone and speech. Depicting the river, ocean, sugar cane fields, and palm trees as backdrops, the narrator introduces the viewer to the town.

Here is Loíza's village in this distant location of Puerto Rico's north coast. We all have some of the river's soul and we like to let life flow in just the same way as the vegetation and algae flowing in the current. Maybe that's why we continue to believe the tales told by the river and his conspirator the sugar cane, the coconut groves, and gossipy cattle, and the kids continue to give credit to the *cuco* and the evil eye, the *comadre* to the bewitching of the *palmazola*, and the men to the *yaco* and to bad witchcraft. We are humble people, good people from Puerto Rico mixed with two races: Spain gave us religion and our patron St. James Apostle. Africa gave us the *bomba*, the *baquiné*, the *vejigantes* and taught us how to put our soul on the drums. We are proud to be Puerto Rican and it does not matter where we live, or the festivals that are celebrated, we are generous, we offer hospitality, we are courteous and we know how to tell tales. (translation mine)30

Notwithstanding the similarities in their introductions, *Nenén de la Ruta Mora* lacks the ethnographic imperative found in *Fiestas de Santiago*. But in line with DIVEDCO's mission to educate citizens about the world around them, the film describes in definite terms the characteristics that define the Puerto Rican: "he is generous, offers hospitality, is courteous, and knows how to tell tales." With this characterization, DIVEDCO's message appears to be readying the citizenry for work in the expanding tourist market.

Nenén, the film's protagonist, is described as a *negrito* [small black] who everyone loves because he is sassy and mischievous.31 Nenén's story takes place on *Santiago de los Niños*, the day honoring the Santiago Saint of the children (known as *Santiaguito*). The film begins in Nenén's grandmother's courtyard. His grandmother is busy painting several *vejigante* masks with the help of neighbors, which she plans to gift to neighborhood youth in honor of *Santiaguito*. Nenén's grandmother asks him to fetch some wood but before he leaves, his grandmother directs him to put on a shirt, and then a neighbor chimes in saying "*y aplasta bien esa pasita que la tiene bastante alborotada*" [pat your kinky hair down because it is quite messy]. One of the neighbors, an old man, warns Nenén as he is about to leave the courtyard: "*uyele al cuco, que te esta velando y cojele miedo porque esta trepao' alla arriba en las palmas velandote*" [run way from the boogie monster, he is watching you and you should be afraid because he is up there in the palm trees watching you]. Nenén stops for a second and looks back at the group of neighbors, frightened at the old man's warning, and then the group erupts into wild laughter. This scene depicting the group's wild laughter is intercut with the image of a *vejigante* mask. The viewer then watches Nenén run away past several *bohíos* [huts], the wild and maniacal-sounding laughter in the background.

Nenén runs through a coconut grove leading to the sea's edge while the narrator recites a poetic verse. He picks up a couple of sticks and begins to strike the two together. In playing the sticks, Nenén unleashes the sounds of *bomba* as images of the ocean and the coconut groves are intercut in the scene. Suddenly, the *bomba* stops and Nenén becomes paranoid. He hears the old man's warning coming from the vegetation: "*. . . ten cuidao' uyele al cuco que te esta velando*," [. . . be careful of the boogie monster because he is watching you] and again hears the group's wild laughter. Nenén runs away and stops to rest against a large fishing net. Behind the net and above the child's head the viewer sees a figure stalking him, a *vejigante*. He bumps into the *vejigante* who is holding a bladder on a stick. Startled, the child falls to the floor and the *vejigante* says to him: "*a los negritos, a los negritos malcriaos' yo me los llevo . . . a to' los negritos malcriaos' . . . pero hoy es Santiago, Santiago el de los nenes* . . ." [black children, I take away mischievous black children, I take away all the mischievous black children . . . but today is Santiago, the children's Santiago]. The

boy remains unsmiling and somewhat frightened until the *vejigante* announces that he is "*Cumbé el de los cocales*" [Cumbé from the coconut groves]. He tells the child "*hoy es tu día . . . y yo mismo te voy a llevar a ver la fiesta*" [today is your day and I am going to take you to the festival]. The *vejigante* makes the child laugh by behaving first as a *coquí* frog and later, by barking like a dog. Together they walk and run along the beach to the rhythm of a *bomba*. At the river's mouth Nenén and the *vejigante* meet a group of children. They run together until they reach the town's edge, where the children stay as the *vejigante* and Nenén arrive together at the festival.

The narrator begins again: "*ya el pueblo entero estaba tirao' a la calle para la mas grande de todas las fiesta, la que hace perder los cesos a blancos, negros y mulatos, albinos, grifos y jabaos' para la fiesta de Santiago*." [the entire town was already on the streets for the greatest of all parties, Santiago's party makes whites, blacks, *mulatos*, albinos, *grifos*, and *jabaos* lose their minds]. Santiago Apóstol and the other costumed characters (*vejigante*,*caballeros* [gentlemen], *viejos* [old men] and *locas* [crazies]) are described as an important part of the festival, while masked revelers are shown parading and dancing on the streets and near the town's Catholic church. A procession scene follows, depicting a group of women carrying the saint with a solemn band playing behind them as the entire town seems to take part in honoring *Santiaguito*.

Artist Carlos Raquel Rivera created the film's masterful poster, which features colorful *vejigante* masks and a small boy whose head is turned towards them. The *vejigante*, a central figure in Puerto Rico's carnival traditions, represents the devil-trickster. Within African carnival traditions in the Caribbean and circum-Atlantic, the devil-trickster—a variously sensual, rude, noisy, or naughty figure who teases and insults—performs along the streets to arouse laughter and playfulness among attendees (Fiet 2007, 110). Unlike the mainly secular carnivals celebrated in other parts of Puerto Rico such as the one in Ponce (where the *vejigantes* sport fanciful masks made out of papier-mâché), Loíza's festival in honor of Santiago Apóstol is meaningfully imbricated with Catholic traditions.

Vejigante masks in Loíza are locally made from coconut shells. Loíza's *vejigante* appears on this important celebration day to play the rowdy counterpart to the peaceful Apostle. The *vejigante*, with his colorful horned mask and costume, carries a bladder (balloon) on a stick that he uses to tease bystanders. He is a liminal character that can change his attitude from scary to playful to his heart's desire.

The gender component has largely been neglected in discussions of carnivals in Puerto Rico (Lloréns 2005). Invariably, it is men who dress up in *vejigante* costumes (the mask's devilish horns have the double meaning as symbols of phallic "pricking"), and notably the main characters on parade during island carnivals are also men. The *caballero* [gentleman], another important carnival figure, is representative of men from the colonial era. The *viejos* [old men] are meant to stand in for the town elders [men]. And *las locas* [the crazies] are men who cross-dress as women, performing an exaggerated and slightly eccentric rendition of femininity. In line with its Catholic heritage, in which women are framed dualistically either as saintly Madonnas (merciful, quiet, and ornamental) or whores (wild women), in Puerto Rico the *carnivalesque* space, as public space, is the territory of men.

In short, women's participation in the Puerto Rican carnival has been historically limited to handlers or performers of Catholic traditions, or to passive bystanders. These gender roles crystallize Fiet's assertion that carnival masks are *". . . un rito de buscar pareja y de fertilidad"* [a rite of partner-seeking and fertility] (Fiet 2007, 114). As men parade down the carnival streets, they perform for the gaze of women, and as bystanders women remain in a submissive role that poses no threat to the status of men as public figures. Yet as onlookers, women also exchange and return the male gaze. By passively lining up along the streets to watch the parade, women quietly judge the parading men, as the men also appraise the women.

In Puerto Rico, the *vejigante* remains the most recognized signifier of Afro-Puerto Rican cultural traditions. His folkloric traits are not associated with suffering and enslavement, but rather with joy, dancing, playfulness, sexuality, and trickery. Far from representing a sorrowful rendition of the

African in Puerto Rico, the *vejigante* is exactly the opposite: colorful, whimsical, and moody. As in the Bakhtinian *carnivalesque*, the *vejigante* comes to life in collective dialogue with other carnival characters, revelers, and bystanders as together they subvert, even if for a short time, the established social order and conventions (Bakhtin 1984;Lloréns 2005;Fiet 2007).

El Resplandor (1962)

El Resplandor (1962)

El Resplandor, literally translated as *The Glare*, was directed by Luis Maysonet and written by Pedro Juan Soto.32 The film depicts the intolerable lives of enslaved men and women under the despotic rule of a Spanish plantation owner and his ruthless creole overseer. The film's introductory scenes, depicting maritime images of men and woman being transported in vessels across the sea and maps of Africa and the trade triangle, establish the historic narrative. Solemn music frames the introduction as the narrator explains in an intense and serious tone,

It took more than three centuries, three centuries of infamy that started far away like a journey without layovers, without destination, without hope. The black route was begun by white vessels from all the white nations, white vessels with white sails and white hatred driven by greed. Over there on the coasts of Africa they found their tragic chattel, cheap black meat. Black meat that could be bought and sold, rented and mortgaged, fecund and sweet muscles capable of edifying fortunes and buttressing empires. Their destinies the prodigal lands of that new world called America, so pregnant with despair and so prematurely inhabited by tragedy. (translation mine)33

The narration and images place enslavement within a historical context. Later the narrator sets the film in the time leading up to the abolition of slavery on the island: "*. . . Puerto Rico, tras la frustrada rebelión de Lares se devatía entre la insurreccion y el miedo, pero ya habia nacido una esperazana y la esperanza exigia realidades y demandaba hechos*" [After the frustrated insurrection in Lares, Puerto Rico moved between fear and rebellion, but hope had been born and hope demands actions] (translation mine). The narration leads into the urgent and intense music that frames the first filmic images.

The opening images portray an enslaved man roped to a horse walking painfully, at times stumbling, as an overseer drags him. The overseer and his helpers approach the plantation under the strong morning sun, and several other enslaved men and women emerge to witness the arrival of the now semi-conscious captured fugitive. The overseer takes a gulp of water, spitting some and throwing the rest on the nearly unconscious man, whom he kicks and orders to get up. The plantation owner makes a swift appearance at the door, and the overseer explains that the escapees only reached about three hours distance. He was forced to kill one man, another escaped, and this one he had managed to capture and return to the plantation. In a thick Spanish accent, the master angrily reprimands the overseer.

Directing his attention to the captured man, the master asks him how many days he was gone this time. The camera intercuts to the faces of the enslaved men and women witnessing this spontaneous public trial, and the enslaved man answers five days. The master then asks him how long he was away during his previous escape attempt, the man answers three days. Throughout the examination scene, the camera cuts to the overseer's angry and almost ravenous face. The master then asks the captured man, "what have you gained from trying to escape?" Breaking the script of the "docile body," the man looks the master in the eye and answers: "the taste of freedom."

The master then sentences the captured fugitive to twenty lashes. At this news the overseer smiles with anticipation. Again, the rebellious man speaks back to the master: "the only thing I need from

you is my freedom." Angrily the master shouts back at the man, who we learn is called Pastor (preacher), "what do you want your freedom for, to die from starvation?!" In the next scene, a group of men and women prepare a field, and two assistant overseers chat amongst themselves. One overseer says, "*el gusto que se esta dando Tulio con ese negro, le va a sacar el pellejo*" [Tulio must be really enjoying whipping that negro, he is going to take off his skin] (translation mine).

Soon, Pastor is shown tied to a pole and being lashed mercilessly while the overseer exclaims, "this one is because you think you are funny, this one is because you dared to respond when spoken to, this one is for being stubborn, and this one is for being a subversive, and this one because you are an ingrate." As the violent whipping continues, the overseer, drenched in sweat from his exertion, smiles. Pastor is clearly enduring a great deal of suffering as his body goes limp. The torturer now turns to the only other man in the room, a witness to the lashing, who the viewer learns is a mentally disabled, enslaved man named Quirico. "Quirico, how many has it been?" the overseer asks, and the clearly frightened man replies, "I don't know. I counted up to fifty a little while ago. What comes after fifty?" To this the overseer replies, "After fifty comes twenty, memorize that, twenty. I gave Pastor twenty lashes for being a subversive."

As the overseer pulls Pastor's head back, a flash of remorse appears on his face and he begins to untie the man's body. He orders Quirico to call Cambucha, a light-skinned house servant, who like all the other enslaved women in the film wears a *pañuelo* [headscarf]. Cambucha walks towards the whipping cell under a torrential rain. She rushes to the limp body and holds him while an assistant to the overseer holds his legs. Before they carry him away, the overseer says to Cambucha, "He has only fainted, so apply salt and vinegar on his lashes so that tetanus doesn't kill him." Then, turning to the assistant overseer he instructs, "As soon as he can stand up, return him to his barrack. I want his mates to see the cuts from the lashes just in case any of them still want their freedom." The scene ends as they carry away the unresponsive man.

Later, men are shown carrying the coffin up a small hill; the camera zooms out, showing the procession to the burial site. The wind sets a stormy mood. At the graveyard, the master gives an eulogy: "My sons, here we have, despite it all, someone who was a good man." The camera circles the sullen faces of the enslaved men and women as the master continues his eulogy. "But Pastor, who was a good man, could have been a great man but he refused to respect that most significant quality within ourselves. . . . That quality is loyalty." The camera circles again as the faces of the enslaved appear even angrier. They exchange conspiratorial glances at each other. The overseer looks on with disdain, and the priest shuts his eyes with seeming dismay. The master continues in an impassioned tone, "Pastor was never loyal to me. He always conspired against me; and through me, he conspired against the island's government; and through the island's government against the motherland's government; and through the motherland's government, he conspired against God." After the damning eulogy, the master asks the priest to recite a prayer in the name of Pastor's "errant soul." The priest recites a prayer in Latin. Solemn music plays in the background as the coffin is lowered into the ground and Quirico throws in a lone flower as dirt begins to cover the coffin.

Soon after, as they work side by side in the field under the overseer's menacing glare, an enslaved man named Domingo begins to devise a plan to properly honor Pastor's death. He tells the others, "Let's sing a *rosario* [prayer] for Pastor tonight as soon as the candlelight burns out." Another man replies, "We can't, it's against the law. The law says we cannot gather or hold a wake or sing rosaries." Domingo continues, "We will not gather, we will each sing individually from our barrack without any fuss." In the background the overseer's horse becomes agitated, and the workers peer over their shoulders. They agree to sing a rosary for Pastor as soon as their candles burn out.

Inside the master's house, the priest, the master's wife, and the master leisurely gather in the living room, smoking a cigar. The lady of the house reports to the priest that one of her girl servants disrespected her. To teach her a lesson, she made the girl undress in front of her and asked her, who gave her the dress she was wearing, and what would happen to people like her if the masters did not take good care of them? The master, agitated, blames the increasingly disrespectful behavior on the current political climate. The priests intercedes: "My friend Porfirio, I am afraid that

the enslaved's freedom will be proclaimed any minute. Why have bad blood when history must march on?" The master replies that he doesn't believe abolition will come because it would create great chaos and would ruin Spain's treasury. The priest continues: now they must work to appease the enslaved and guard the lives of the overseers, especially the lives of those overseers who have unleashed great wrath and ruthless torture upon the enslaved.

The master questions the priest's assertion. The priest replies that he cannot go into details but he has heard that some overseers are unusually cruel. The priest then asks the master not to confer the overseer with so much power, and in a serious tone tells him that Pastor's body was horribly torn apart. The master lowers his face suddenly, showing signs of regret and guilt at this news. In the tone of a wise man, the priest says, ". . . it is possible that this land will one day be the property of the freed ex-enslaved, or of their children, or of the children of their children." The camera zooms into the contemplative face of the master's wife—"and we too will have to live here, because the same love or perhaps a greater love than theirs, binds us to these fields. The question is, will we be able to live together peacefully?"

As energetic singing frames the scene, the master's wife reads a news report about the pending abolition of enslavement in Puerto Rico. Two overseers interrupt to ask the master if they should remove the enslaved from their barracks and make them sleep standing up. To this the master replies, "No, let them be, and free the men from the holding cell." He walks back to his wife and sits down with a posture of defeat as the sounds of *bomba* in the background mark the end of the institution. The film intercuts to the drawings of the maritime scenes depicted at the very beginning and the narrator explains, "The sad journey that began on the coasts of Africa finally ran its course. After three centuries of infamy the end arrived, the journey ended. On the twenty-third day of March, 1873, the negro was bestowed with his freedom and humanity when the Spanish Assembly granted the immediate and definitive abolition of slavery on the island of Puerto Rico."

Artist Eduardo Vera Cortés created the film's poster for DIVEDCO. It depicts a black man holding his shackled hands high in the air, his head (and face) covered by his upper arm. The image of a shackled man's brown body with a naked torso and white shorts contrast nicely with four white doves flying near him. The poster's simplicity, in line with *DIVEDCO*'s unique aesthetic, is striking, as is the long chain that shackles the man. Interestingly, although the film highlights the long journey from enslavement to freedom, the poster's representation does not depict the triumph of abolition. Instead, the man is in a suffering stance, chains still intact.

In this way, the poster is representative of Puerto Rico's popular and totalizing narrative about slavery, a narrative that emphasizes an attitude of suffering and resignation as opposed to the agency and resistance in which the enslaved actively engaged.34 Godreau and colleagues (2008, 2013) have noted two persistent myths about slavery on the island. One, that "the slave was a passive victim of slavery," the other, that "all black men and women in Puerto Rico were slaves prior to the abolition of slavery" (2010, 29; 2013, 58). Both assertions are incorrect and they illustrate a national disregard for the factual history of enslavement, as well as of that of the free people of color in Puerto Rico.

These inaccuracies make *DIVEDCO*'s film, *El Resplandor*, even more remarkable as a government-sponsored attempt to create a visual narrative of the history of enslavement for its popular education program. And while the film depicts the unbearable suffering of the enslaved at the hands of their brutal masters and overseers, it also shows, in Scott's words, the "weapons of the weak" that the enslaved deployed on a daily basis (1985). For instance, Pastor had attempted to escape more than once, and one of his mates succeeded in the attempt. Additionally, aside from "planting the seed of rebellion" among the others, he spoke back to the master and demanded his freedom, even when it cost him his life. Similarly, the hushed gossiping and planning among the slaves, the furtive glances exchanged during the public hearings and the burial, the decision to honor their dead by singing the rosary, all of these are instances of the collective actions that foresaw the eventual toppling of the institution of slavery in the Americas. As Scott explains,

The practices, which rarely if ever called into question the system of slavery *as such*, nevertheless achieved far more in their unannounced, limited, and truculent way than the few heroic and brief armed uprisings about which much so much has been written. The slaves themselves appeared to have realized that in most circumstances their resistance could succeed only to the extent that it hid behind the mask of public compliance. (1985, 34; *emphasis in original*)

The popularly held notion that all blacks in Puerto Rico were slaves prior to the abolition of slavery is incorrect. The enslaved never surpassed 12 percent of the total population (Mintz 1989;Figueroa 2005; Godreau et al. 2008, 2013). In contrast, Kinsbruner documents that the population of free people of color in Puerto Rico, often classified as black, *pardo,* or *mulato* in official documents, at times constituted the majority of the population (1996, 32). Another byproduct of this erroneous belief is that it has allowed the equation of Black=African=Slave (Godreau et al. 2008, 2013). In other words, it is widely accepted that all blacks and/or Africans—used interchangeably for Afro-descendants—were enslaved prior to abolition.

DIVEDCO's films were made for popular audiences as part of its popular education campaign. The fact that this film was made at all is noteworthy given that it depicts a largely ignored history. As Godreau and colleagues argue,

The history of slavery not only brings to the fore the cracks and tensions of contemporary racist societies but can also grant historical legitimacy that runs counter to the discourses of racial harmony and democracy. In this way, the history of slavery troubles nation-building discourses in the Hispanic Caribbean and elsewhere in Afro-Latin America. (2008, 130)

Clearly *El Resplandor* stands as an uncharacteristic but nationally endorsed representation of the history of enslavement in Puerto Rico. This daring official version offers a "crack" in the narrative of racial harmony. As a piece of educational propaganda the film was destined to be viewed by audiences throughout the island, but as Colón Pizarro has pointed out, DIVEDCO fieldworkers decided themselves which films were appropriate to show in their communities (2011, 200). Regarding *El Resplandor*, Colón Pizarro found that, "Jerónimo Ávila refused to show the film in the communities he was working for because of the potential objections the combined presence of obvious political symbols and questionable racial representations could generate among viewers" (2011, 201). She also reports that another fieldworker, Mr. Antonio Pizarro, felt no anxiety about the film and showed it frequently in the communities under his purview (2011, 201). DIVEDCO's fieldworkers exercised a great deal of power in either showing or censoring films, decisions they based on their own political, moral, religious, and even racial anxieties (Colón Pizarro 2011). Nonetheless, I argue that DIVEDCO's filmmaking enterprise had multiple educational roles, for the very act of making a film such as *El Resplandor* was itself an educational intervention for the filmmakers, actors, and bystanders involved in its creation.

La Plena (1966)

La Plena (1966)

This educational film was collaboratively produced by DIVEDCO and the ICP. The sound of *coquí* frogs introduce the film, soon replaced by the sounds of *plena* overlapped with the image of a black man's hand vigorously playing a *pandero* [hand drum]. The credits reveal that Amílcar Tirado wrote, edited, and directed the film, the history was provided by Ricardo Alegría, and José A. Torres Martinó was the film's narrator. The opening scene brings the viewer to a beach and the sound of waves lapping against the shore. As the camera pans across the beach, the narrator begins sternly, "The island was peacefully located between what became the Caribbean Sea and that foggy sea known as the Atlantic Ocean." Nostalgic sounding guitars, waves lapping, and the ocean breeze

mix together to compose the sound as the camera continues to pan the Caribbean landscape. “And the explorers and colonizers from the Western world arrived, and in that place that had only heard the ceremonial rhythm of the Taino’s *areyto* o el sonido guerrero del fotuto en tiempos de guasabara, sono por vez primera la *copla* en el idioma de Castilla.” [“ . . . or the sound of the warrior’s horn during uprisings, for the first time the sounds of the *copla* music in the Castilian language were heard.”] Scenes of Puerto Rico’s (interior) mountains are accompanied by a *jíbaro* song (sounding much like Flamenco), backed by the sounds of the guitar and tropical birds. The camera traces the mountain’s verdant vegetation and a flowing waterfall, drawing attention to a river and then a white child sitting on a rock on the river’s edge, working on a musical instrument.

The narrator continues, “In the mountains where the white population settled, Spain’s music was adapted to the new setting, to the new geography, and to the new man who would be called *Puertorriqueño,* and this man created his own musical expression and his own cord instruments.” A *jíbaro* troubadour sings over the sounds of a *cuatro* 35 [a stringed instrument], as images of *jíbaro* men and women picking coffee appear. The camera pans the mountains and then focuses on the workshop of a *cuatro* artisan. The background singer describes the *cuatro* as Puerto Rico’s “Creole instrument” par excellence. Recently fabricated *cuatros* hang from the workshop’s ceilings. The craftsman sits and plays one of his *cuatros* and suddenly the viewer is transported to panned images of the mountain range.

Drum sounds signal a change of scenery; the viewer is brought to a sugar cane plantation. The cane stalks appear to dance to the wind’s rhythm, adding movement to the scene. As the camera crosses the field, the viewer sees men swiftly cutting down cane with their machetes, displaying their steady rhythmic technique. In the next scene, a man works on a large fishing net by the sea while a group of shirtless men push a *yola* [locally made wooden fishing boat] into the water. An action scene now shows the men rowing and dropping the net in the sea to the primal sounds of drums in the background. The same shirtless, muscular men later pull the net back to the shore.

More images of the coast and the ocean then accompany this narration: “The blacks imported from Africa brought with their culture another type of musical expression and, in the coastal plantations, percussion instruments gave our music another rhythm.” Images of a coastal plantation appear as the narrator continues: “And on the south coast, as well as in Loíza Aldea, there still thrives one of our most authentic black expressions, the *bomba*: an African rhythm, but its dignified and elegant dance would be the envy of many of the Spanish plantation owners who used the blacks as slaves.” Primarily older men and women are shown dancing a *bomba* dance.

The film cuts to images of city life in Ponce, first in the distance, then zooming closer. The narrator remarks, “And it was in Ponce, *seignorial* Ponce, a city that jealously guards its Spanish roots, where our most well-known Afro-Antillean tradition was born, the *plena*,*Puertorrican Plena*.” Against images of people going about their everyday lives in Ponce, the narrator explains *plena* music as “satirical, playful, and ironic in its content,” a music that turns present circumstances into song. The next scene presents a *plena* gathering (apparently staged) intercut by scenes of a young boy passing out a newspaper, and then just as swiftly, images of a fast-paced, almost frenetic train as it makes its way across the sugar fields.

In the next scene, an older black man composes a song among a group of men. He says, “*Tintorera del mar, que se ha comido un Americano ya tenia su espina dorsal que parecia un barquito andando*” [The tiger shark has eaten an American and his spine resembled a small boat in transit]. As he finishes penning the song, he signals the others to sing the just-composed *plena*. The men begin to play their instruments (*plena* hand drums, an accordion, and a *cuatro*) and they sing, following the older man’s lead. The older man seems to be a master *plena* composer, singer, and player. While focusing on an AfroPuerto Rican music tradition, the scene also depicts Creole contributions to the *plena*: the men, including the *jíbaro* accordion and *cuatro* players, clearly engage in the jam session.

Images of Puerto Rico’s mountain range reappear, taking the viewer to Old San Juan. Now in La Perla, Old San Juan’s poverty-stricken neighborhood, the narrator explains that the *plena* is also

played and sung here, an authentic expression of the populace. Then the viewer sees a man painting a mural as the narrator explains that *plena* music has also influenced other cultural expressions, such as painting, ". . . as in this mural by the Puerto Rican painter Rafael Tufiño, whose theme is our most beloved *plenas*." The camera then zooms into parts of the masterful mural, as the respective matching *plenas* are heard in the background.

The film's poster, also titled *La Plena* (1967), was created by Rafael Tufiño and depicts one of the mastersingers from the film. He beats a *pandero*, his mouth open as if singing, his red shirt standing out against a yellow background. In the background, Tufiño has inserted small images from the *plena* mural depicted in the film. As is common with Tufiño's portrayals of iconic black Puerto Ricans such as his mother Goyita, he paints this man's shirt red to signify power and strength, and to evoke protection. By using the color red, Tufiño establishes a lineage between *Goyita* and the *plenero* in *La Plena* with *Chango*, the Orisha who is associated with the drum as an embodiment of the spirit of thunder. He is also a symbol of resistance against enslavement.36

Díaz observes that the genesis of Puerto Rico's *plena* music dates to the early 1900s, having emerged in the "poor urban and rural *barrios* [neighborhoods] of Ponce." It is considered to be "the foremost synthetic folk and popular style of Puerto Rico."37 Although the *plena*, also known as the "sung newspaper," was marginalized, it was more accepted as an Afro-Puerto Rican musical tradition than the *bomba*. In his play *Vejigantes*, Arriví illustrates this assertion during an intense exchange between the play's black protagonist, Mama Toña, and her (mixed-race) daughter, Marta.

Marta: That music, if it can be called such, is intolerable. Mamá Toña: Your father was a Spaniard and he did not mind dancing the *bomba*. Marta: We live in the *condado* . . . The neighbors detest that music. They associate it with . . . Mamá Toña: . . . people of color. Marta: I am telling you again it does not fit in this place. It is an indignantly loud source of embarrassment. (Arriví 1970, 34–35; translation mine)38

Ethnomusicologist Dufrasne-González attributes such attitudes to "Afrophobia," referring to the national practice of upholding the *cuatro* as the foremost representative of Puerto Rican musical identity while disregarding the importance of the *plena's pandero* or the *bomba's* drum (Cartagena 2004, 20; cf. Dufrasne-González 1996). Dufrasne-González argues that because the drum recalls memories of Puerto Rico's black ancestors, it is considered offensive and repugnant (Cartagena 2004, 20; cf. Dufrasne-González 1996). I argue the drum does more than recall the memory of the island's African heritage. The drums remind Puerto Ricans that even in the midst of intolerable repression when the odds were stacked against them the enslaved, as well as the island's free people of color, were agents of both rebellion and creation. They created, passed down, and maintained a thriving musical tradition that rivals any other that has been created since Spanish conquest of Puerto Rico. Like the enslaved and free (but constrained) people of color, the *plena* and the *bomba* embody adaption and survival.

The Oller Of The Twentieth Century Depicts Blackness

The Oller Of The Twentieth Century Depicts Blackness

Rafael Tufiño's artistic renditions of blackness are unparalleled in Puerto Rico. Although he figures among Puerto Rico's most prolific artists of the twentieth century, this examination is limited to his mid-century portrayals of themes related to Afro-Puerto Rican identity. Born in 1922 in Brooklyn, New York, to Gregoria "Goyita" Figueroa and Agustín Tufiño, he spent his early life moving between Brooklyn and Puerto Rico. At age ten he went to live with his grandmother in Puerta de Tierra, one of San Juan's oldest worker's quarters.39 This is where, as a teenager, he met and worked with artist Juan Rosado at his sign shop. His artistic prowess quickly established him as an

up-and-coming talent, and in 1942 he had his first solo exhibition at the prestigious *Ateneo Puertorriqueño*. In 1943 he joined the military and traveled to Panama. He was discharged from military service in 1946, at which time he returned to New York City. Not long after, Tufiño used the GI Bill's benefits to study art in Mexico. While there he became enthralled with the Mexican graphic school's social content (Tió 2001).

In 1950, Tufiño returned to Puerto Rico where he once again incorporated himself into the San Juan art scene. He was already one of Puerto Rico's foremost artists. There, along with several other important artist friends, he founded the *Centro de Arte Puertorriqueño* (CAP). Around this time, Irene Delano invited him to make book illustrations for DIVEDCO, and soon Edwin Rosskam offered him a job. Unfortunately, the job offer came after he had, once again, joined the military during the Korean War. However, he was not deployed and instead became Fort Buchannan's resident artist. In 1951, he began working for DIVEDCO where he remained employed until 1963 (Tió 2001).

He began painting the epic mural, *La Plena*, in 1952 in collaboration with filmmaker Amílcar Tirado. It was featured in the DIVEDCO film by the same title (discussed previously). The mural depicts in graphic detail the storyline of six of Puerto Rico's most famous *plena* songs.40 Tió points out that in 1950s Puerto Rico, some sectors believed that the *plena* lacked artistic merit because it was Afro-Puerto Rican music. Artists who belonged to the "fifties generation," such as Tufiño, worked to elevate popular and folk traditions in the belief that these were essential to Puerto Rico's national identity (2001, 39). Between 1953 and 1955, Tufiño and Lorenzo Homar set out to produce a joint portfolio also titled *Plenas*.

In 1953, Tufiño made *Goyita y su nieto* [Goyita and her grandson], an endearing portrait of his mother holding her grandson while sitting on the threshold of a humble dwelling. This was not his first, nor his last, portrait of his mother. In 1949 he had rendered her wearing a blue jacket with a stern and direct expression on her face, her eyebrows reminiscent of Frida Khalo's, and her graying hair parted in the middle, neatly brushed back. In 1953, he once again painted her portrait titled simply *Goyita*; it is widely regarded as a masterpiece (see Figure 5.1).

Photograph of a poster taped to a town wall featuring Tufiño's Goyita to announce the Fiesta Negra [Black Festival], Arroyo, PR, 2009. Photo by H. Lloréns.

Photograph of a poster taped to a town wall featuring Tufiño's Goyita to announce the Fiesta Negra [Black Festival], Arroyo, PR, 2009. Photo by H. Lloréns. A black and white photograph of a poster. The poster features a portrait of an elderly woman with a headscarf. Text on the poster reads 'Fiesta Negra' and gives dates and location details. The poster is taped to a wall.

Tufiño's *Goyita* (1953) garnered him the honor of being called "the Oller of the twentieth century" (Tió 2002, 52). *Goyita* is a portrait of an aging black woman wearing a red *pañuelo* [headscarf]. This image has become a national icon. As a symbol of power, the red color of *Goyita's* headscarf also invokes protection for the wearer. Her wide, watery eyes stare contemplatively but directly ahead, her gaze transcending the present. Her deep-set wrinkles signal the experience of a full life. Tufiño's *Goyita* evokes Delano's "Tenant Purchase Borrower? in her garden," but this black woman, flanked by the working class neighborhood San José is, like Tufiño himself, resolutely urban.

In 1954, at the behest of Ricardo Alegría, Tufiño applied for and later received a Guggenheim scholarship. Using the funds and time afforded by the scholarship, Tufiño produced the first ever-solo portfolio produced by a Puerto Rican artist, *El café*. In 1957, Alegría commissioned illustrations from Tufiño for the ICP's third *Cuadernos de Poesía* [Poetry Booklet]. This booklet featured the poetry of Palés Matos, the father of Puerto Rico's black poetry. Tufiño was thrilled to illustrate Palés Matos words, and the choice equally delighted the poet. Tió explains,

In *A Festive Song to be Wept*, the images move beyond mere illustrations to metaphorical essences of the racial and cultural realities of the Antilles. The *mulata*, that essence of syncretism, the lesser Antilles dancing like the classic *Gracias*, the masks and the caudillos, the rumba and the alienated tourism, the black dance, the voodoo, and all its magic realities. Tufiño graphically defines Palés' Antilles. (translation mine; Tió 2001, 60)41

Among the iconic images to emerge from this undertaking is Tufiño's *Majestad Negra* (titled after Palés Matos' poem). Tufiño depicted the "black majesty" walking regally, black faces appearing on the edges of the frame as they witness her strut. A year later, Tufiño painted the black majesty's figure again and gifted the painting to the poet. As in the first illustration, she appears with her back facing the viewer, her erect and curvaceous body walking away from the edge of the frame. He used carefully blended black, gray, blue, tan, and brown tones to depict her body, the color of her skin merging with her clothes. Her thin torso and elongated arms contrast with her round behind and athletic legs. She wears blue-gray high heels. Her head, which is turned slightly upward and to the side, offers the viewer a glimpse of her fine features. Her thin nose is pointed upward her full lips are demarcated against the lighter tones of the painting's background. She wears an elegantly positioned orange headscarf, hoop earrings, a necklace, and bracelets. This representation offers a self-possessed black woman, in control of her body and sexuality. In the distance, against a building, Tufiño has painted a group of men. Some are drumming and others just stand. On the second floor, another two male figures appear. All the men seem to be watching this majestic figure as she walks down the street.

Tufiño's *Majestad Negra* (1958) is an iconic rendition of Palés Matos's *Mulata Antillana*, celebrated by male artists and writers during this period. This mixed-race woman, a creation of the male imagination, is exalted as the symbol of national sensuality. In Tufiño's painting, she appears coquettishly walking along the street, her erect and elongated body exuding an air of importance, her round (African) behind announcing her sensuality and sexuality as she walks under, or for, the male gaze. The *mulata's* social place is between the homebound and saintly white woman and the toiling, kitchen-centered black woman. The *mulata* belongs in the public sphere, where endowed with attributes of both white (her fine features) and black (her round behind, her animal sensuality), her presence satisfies male fantasies and desires.

Coincidentally, in 1958 writer and playwright Francisco Arriví, an active figure in San Juan's art scene during this period, debuted his play *Vejigantes*. This play portrays Puerto Rico's racial universe, which notably also includes the American presence. Arriví follows in Palés Matos's footsteps and writes a story of three women who, in this instance, are each immersed in the tabooed but tantalizing world of inter-racial desire. The play also depicts racial self-hatred and offers a commentary on Puerto Rico's taken-for-granted national project of *blanqueamiento* (Lloréns 2005). The world of women, specifically black women, continued to be invented and rendered by male artists as they had done in previous eras.

In 1958, Tufiño painted *Baile de Bomba,* a close-up scene of a woman holding her skirt with each hand as is traditional of the *bomba* dance. She is flanked by a man, and behind them are other dancing figures. The man directly behind the female protagonist is a white man, his race symbolized by his mustache, angular straight nose, and the shape of his hat. I contend that *Baile de Bomba* is a painterly depiction of the opening scene of Arriví's plays *Vejigantes*, which as I already noted, debuted that same year. As in the painting, the play's opening scene portrays a *gallego* [Spaniard] dancing the *bomba* in Loíza—intruding on a black space—wearing a *vejigante* mask. He later removes the mask as he takes off in agitated pursuit of Toña (1970, 14). The national project of *blanqueaminto* is epitomized in the play when black Loiceño men, witnessing the *gallego's* [Spaniard's] lusty pursuit of Toña (a black woman), remark that, "*Estos españoles siempre nos llevan las prietas mas guapas*" [These Spanish always take our most beautiful black women]. Another man replies, "*Ya sabemos que las mulatas se desvelan por* los blancos" [We already know that *mulata* women lose sleep over white men]. In this way, Arriví deploys *blanquamiento* almost as a hormonal, if not biological, imperative. During this period, artists and writers collaborated with each other closely, a fact that worked to cement as social fact specific masculinist ideas—such as the *mulata* [mixed-raced woman] as universal object of sexual desire.

In 1963 Tufiño resigned from his post at DIVEDCO to work at the ICP's Graphics Workshop, where he worked for the next four years (Tió 2001, 77). DIVEDCO and ICP artists continued their close collaboration. Tufiño created *La Ceiba Centenaria* (1963), which depicted Loíza's *ceiba* tree and a man on horseback with a *vejigante* figure in the distance. Puerto Rico's original inhabitants, the *Taínos,* endowed the *ceiba* tree with sacred meanings. This, coupled with its massive sculptural roots, have worked to make the *ceiba* a revered part of the landscape.

The creation of collectible Christmas cards has a long tradition among Puerto Rican artists. For his 1965 card series, Tufiño created *Loíza Aldea*, a painting of a joyful *vejigante* flanked by the image of a *caballero* [gentleman] against a red backdrop. In 1967, when Tufiño resigned from the ICP, Fred Wale offered him a job at DIVEDCO, which he accepted. In 1969 he painted *Baile de Bomba*, this time zooming out to view the entire scene. A man plays the *bomba* drum and several women, flanked by male dancers, use their skirts to mark the drumbeats. For Tufiño, himself an urban man of Afro-Puerto Rican descent, Loíza as Puerto Rico's ancestral black territory retained a special place in his artistic imaginary. In his renditions, Loíza represents a location where Puerto Rico's black roots not only dwell, but thrive.

Notes

Notes

Morales Carrión (1983) explains that when Tugwell announced his decision to resign from his position as Puerto Rico's governor in 1945, the Truman Administration appointed Jesus T. Piñero, who was Puerto Rico's resident commissioner in Washington and Muñoz's close ally. In 1946 he became the first *appointed* native Puerto Rican governor of the island (emphasis mine; 263–264).

In Jack Delano's *Photographic Memories* (1997), he depicts a silkscreen poster designed by Irene for DIVEDCO in 1949, the outer periphery showing the months of the year, each with its corresponding zodiac symbol. In the middle is an image of agricultural workers tending a pineapple field and the words "*Trabajo todo el año*" [work all year] inscribed on the bottom (1997, 129). This is a good example of the promotion of an American-like work ethic.

DIVEDCO was established in 1949 and dismantled in 1991. However, in this chapter, I limit the discussion to the years up to 1970.

Various aspects about DIVEDCO's history and cultural politics have been discussed by Garcia 1990; Lauria-Perricelli 1990–1991; Álvarez-Curbelo 1997;Rivera 1997;Dávila 1997;Torres Martinó 1998;Perez 2008;Marsh Kennerly 2003, 2009; Thompson 2005;Cabrera Collazo 2006;Colón Pizarro 2011; Arroyo N.D.; Goldstein 2012; among others.

Exhibit Guide, for Posters from the Division of Community Education, in a section titled "A Poster is a Poster is a Poster."

Carmen Isales and Fred Wale married after the two met at DIVEDCO.

Bernal Rosa has often been left off lists of artists working for DIVEDCO. She was hired in the late 1950s, and produced many illustrations. She remained employed until the agency was dismantled. At DIVEDCO, she met artist Domingo García Davila and they married in the late 1950s. (See: http://biograficas.org/2013/02/isabel-bernal-rosa/).

http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC38folder/PRicanWomen.html.

Such is the case of Margot Arce, Concha Meléndez, and Nilita Vientós Gastón, who were members of the lettered *Generación del Treinta* (see Roy-Féquiére 2004). Julia de Burgos, also an important voice during this period, came from a working class background and lead her life mostly in New York City.

In a personal communication, anthropologist Kate Wigele commented that DIVEDCO's philosophy sounds remarkably similar to that of the Peace Corps, an American organization created in 1961, although after learning from earlier development failures PC eventually added a piece about sensitivity to local cultures.

See Marsh Kennerley (2009, 39–40), who provides a list of writers and artists working for DIVEDCO. The list is not exhaustive but it names many of the most significant artists employed at one time or another by the agency. For names of artists who worked at DIVEDCO, see also Torres Martinó (1998, 150).

http://www.visitmonmouth.com/oralhistory/bios/RosskamLouise.htm.

José A. Torres Martinó wrote a brilliant essay titled *El Centro de Arte Puertorriqueño* (1985), detailing the history of the studio's creation.

There are two main traditions of *Vejigante* mask making: the masks carved from coconut shells in Loíza and the masks made in Ponce out of papier-mâché.

Torres Martinó acknowledges that Americans Jack and Irene Delano, and Helen and John Hawes; and the Spanish artist Carlos Marichal, were all an important part of CAP. He is especially grateful to Irene and Marichal for their artistic support (1985, 23).

CAP's founding members Rafael Tufiño and Antonio Maldonado studied art in Mexico.

Tió (2001, 29–30) defines the graphic portfolio as a "*conjunto de estampas o grabados originales que por lo general están relacionados temáticamente y que han sido creados por uno o más artistas*" [a group of original scenes or graphics that are for the most part thematically related and which have been created by one or more artists].

Although his work is not a focus in this chapter, it is worth mentioning that Carlos Raquel Rivera's aesthetic and denunciatory and critically sharp themes echo

Library of Congress, American Memory Call #: LC-USF34- 012511-E. Rosskam offers multiple photographs of the sugar zone.

Library of Congress, American Memory Call #: LC-USF34- 047598-D. Delano offers multiple photographs of the sugar zone.

The painter Myrna Báez, discussed in chapter seven, painted *Central San Vicente* in 1961. She renders the sugar mill's landscape at a great distance as if to signal her own distance from such a cultural milieu, an epochal distance from Oller's earlier painting, whose tradition she pays homage to, and finally, it signals the sugar industry's wane in the island's economic landscape.

There is a reason why the PPD's most perceptive souls created at mid-century (1955) that retaining wall called the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture (1985, 20).

Original: . . . usará de su fuerza económica crecientemente para la ampliación de la libertad, el conocimiento y la imaginación comprensiva, más bien que para la vertiginosa multiplicación de productos, en defrenada persecución de una aún más vertiginosa multiplicación de deseos (Hernández 2002, 154).

Original: Yo visualizaba el Instituto como una institución que iba a hacer lo que no se había hecho en Puerto Rico: estudiar los fundamentos de nuestra cultura, de nuestra nacionalidad, divulgarlos, acabar con nuestro complejo de inferioridad (Hernández 2002, 167).

Original: . . . Nuestra nacionalidad es producto de un mestizaje de cinco siglos entre el indio, el español blanco y el negro. Cada uno contribuye. . . . *Los tres se integran armoniosamente* . . . . Ya se ha establecido la nacionalidad. *Todos tenemos la misma cultura, no importa el color de la piel* (Hernández 2002, 171).

Max Harris (2001) wrote a provocative and convincing article in which he challenges Alegría's (1956) interpretations about the origins and meanings of Loíza's St. James the Apostle Festival. Harris notes that "Alegría's brief but invaluable documentary film (1949), his substantial book on the *fiestas* (1954), and his summary article in the *Journal of American Folklore* (1956) have long been the unchallenged sources of interpretation" (2001, 358).

This was a greatly reduced price because I was a friend and bought it directly from his home. But this mask, if sold in the open tourist market, could have fetched upwards of $600.00.

Although she wrote it in 1935, she published it in her 1938 collection *Poema en Veinte Surcos* [Poem in twenty furrows].

Original: En un apartado rincón de la costa noreste de Puerto Rico y junto a la desenbocadora del río que lleva su nombre, se levanta la pintoresca aldea de Loíza. A pesar de haber sido uno de los primeros poblados establecidos por los conquistadores Españoles, es hoy Loíza un pueblo olvidado y alejado de los progresos igualizadores de la civilización mecanizada. Aislada por las vias centrales de comunicación vive su vida apacible y tranquila mantentiendo sus antiguas creencias y costumbres e ignorando el paso de los siglos.

Original:

Aqui en Loíza aldea en este rincón de la costa norte de Puerto Rico todos tenemos un poco de la alma masa del rio y nos gusta dejar correr la vida asi lo mismito que los llervajos y las algas de las corriente. Ser por eso que seguimos creyendo por ahi los cuentos que nos hace el rio y sus asecuaces la caña, los cocales, y los bueyes chismosos y asi los nenes siguen dando credito al cuco y maldeojo, la comadre al embrujo de la palmazola, y los hombres a yaco y brujeria mala. Somos gente sencilla, gente buena de Puerto Rico que tiene la mezcla de las dos razas: España nos dio su religión y con ella nuestro patron Santiago Apóstol. Africa nos dio la bomba, el baquine, los vejigantes y nos enseño a poner el alma en los cuero de los tambores. A orgullo tenemos ser Puertorriqueños que no importa donde se viva, ni la fiestas que se celebren, quiere decir generosos, ser hospitalarios, ser corteses y saber hacer cuentos.

In Spanish he is referred to as a *titere* and a *sandunguero*.

Although beyond the scope of this project, it is important to mention that writers were a significant part of DIVEDCO's artistic and policy teams. Several of Puerto Rico's most important writers who worked for or collaborated with DIVEDCO include René Marqués, Pedro Juan Soto, Emilio Díaz Valcárcel, José Luis Vivas Maldonado (see Marsh Kennerley, 2009).

Original:

Fueron mas de tres siglos, tres siglos de infamia, comenzo de muy lejos como un viaje sin escala ni rumbo ni esperanza cierta. Barcos blancos de todas las naciones blancas, barcos blancos de velas blancas y maldad blanca impulsados por la codicia iniciaron la ruta negra. Alla en las costas de Africa allaron su tragica mercancia, carne prieta y barata. Carne negra que se podia vender y comprar, arrendar e hipotecar, musculo y sudor fecundos capacez de edificar fortunas y sostener imperios. Su destino las tierras prodigas de ese nuevo mundo llamado America, tan preñado de esperanza y tan prematuramente poblado de tragedia.

Lloréns and Carrasquillo (2008) found that public images (sculptures) of blacks in Puerto Rico depict them as either “happy” workers or as entertainers, “refusing altogether images of resistance” (107). For a brief account of resistance to slavery in Puerto Rico, see G. A. Baralt’s *Esclavos Rebeldes: Conspiraciones y sublevaciones de esclavos en Puerto Rico, 1795–1973* (1982) and Luis A. Figueroa’s *Sugar, Slavery and Freedom in Nineteenth-Century Puerto Rico* (2005).

The *cuatro* is a guitar-like string musical instrument that was created by Spanish settlers in various new world colonies. Puerto Rico’s *cuatro* is shaped like a violin, and despite its name (which means four), it has ten strings. In Puerto Rico, the drum is associated with blackness while the *cuatro* is associated with *jibaro-ness*.

http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Shango.html.

http://centropr.hunter.cuny.edu/voices/musica/plena.

Original:

Marta: . . . Es una música, si puede llamarse tal, insoportable. Mamá Toña: . . . Tu padre era español y no tenía remilgos en bailar la bomba. Marta: . . . Vivimos en el condado . . . Los vecinos aborrecen esta música. La asocian con . . .

[]Mamá Toña: . . . gende de color. Marta: Te repito que no cuadra en este lugar. Es un alboro indigno. (Arriví 1970, 34–35).

Terea Tió’s “Breve Cronología,” in *Rafael Tufiño: Pintor del Pueblo*, (2001, 175–188) was helpful in constructing this biographical sketch.

These songs are: *Tintorera del Mar*,*Cortaron a Elena*,*Santa María*,*Cuando las mujeres*,*Temporal*, and *Fuego, Fuego, Fuego* (Tió 2001, 37).

Original: En *Canción Festiva para ser llorada*, los grabados pasan de ser ilustración a esencia metafórica de la realidad racial y cultural antillana. La mulata, esencia de sincretismo, las antillas menores que bailan como las Gracias clásicas, las máscaras y los caudillos, la rumba y el turismo enajenado, la danza negra, el vodú, con todas estas realidades mágicas. Tufiño define gráficamente la antilla palesiana (Tió 2001, 60).

Chapter 9: Dynamics Of The 1970S

Dynamics Of The 1970S

El estudio detenido de las artes puertorriqueñas revelaría tanto la inmensa aportación del negro—del negro hablamos, no de lo africano—como la terrible discriminación que en ellas sufre.

—Isabelo Zenon Cruz, *Narciso Descubre su Trasero* 1

Slavery was abolished in Puerto Rico on March 22, 1873. The rapid transformations in Puerto Rican society in the hundred years since that momentous date were far more radical than any the island had already experienced. The American presence was greater as yet another group of Puerto Ricans (mainly young men) fought in Vietnam on behalf of the United States. A calamitous economic recession was sending greater numbers of migrants to the mainland in the context of an increasing disillusionment and dissatisfaction with the island's political situation. The waves of revolutionary and anti-imperial struggles in Algeria, Cuba, and South Africa, the deaths of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr., and the ethnic and cross-ethnic solidarity alliances in American cities (for example, the Black Panther, the Young Lords) offered stimulating examples of political activism to folks on the island. These events helped fuel interests in protests calling for the end of the island's colonial status on the part of some left-leaning island-based political leaders, artists, intellectuals, students, and a modest number of concerned citizens (Rivero 2005, 68). Some were successful. For example the 1971 protests by residents of the island municipality of Culebra against the U.S. Navy's operations on their land were (ultimately) victorious when, in 1975, operations ceased for good.2

Nonetheless, in Puerto Rico, the struggle to end the island's colonial status has had the pernicious effect of overshadowing other equally important social causes such as the fight to eradicate racism.3 Rivero has rightly remarked that "Notwithstanding the anticolonial political rhetoric of the Puerto Rican-based left, the inequalities experienced by Afro-Puerto Ricans on the island were rarely the concern of pro-independence groups" (2005, 68). By and large, the island's pro-independence leadership has not included black Puerto Ricans in its ranks nor have its contemporary goals struck a chord in Puerto Rican towns and communities with a majority of black residents. Despite this tendency at the level of politics, a group of intellectuals, artists, and students, influenced by their personal experiences with racism and by international currents, engendered a modest, if difficult, opening in public discussions about race, blackness, and racism on the island.

There are several key undertakings that contributed to this "breach" in the island's homogenizing discourse of "*la gran familia puertorriqueña*" [the great Puerto Rican family]. This discourse purports that although the Puerto Rican majority is of mixed heritage (*mestizos*), the island's populace is culturally Spanish and they are rapidly whitening themselves. A consequence of this encompassing national discourse is that it effectively erases, silences, ignores, and leaves out black people as constitutive of the nation (Cruz 1974; González 1980;Torres 1998;Guerra 1998;Godreau 1999;Rivero 2005;Lloréns 2005; Silva 2012; and others). A few examples of the many large and small acts that helped shape a nascent public conversation about racial prejudice on the island follow.

Ramos Rosado documents that in 1969, Dr. Isabelo Zenón Cruz, who at the time was considered the island's most radical and combative black intellectual, began teaching a course, *El negro en la literatura puertorriqueña* [The black person in Puerto Rican literature], at the University of Puerto Rico (1999, 72). Rivero explains that in 1970, the celebrated singer Lucecita Benítez scandalized television viewers when she dared to style her hair in an Afro for her scheduled appearance on the

popular *El Show de las 12* [The midday show] (2005, 72). Up to that point the singer either straightened her hair or donned straight hair wigs, both of which are culturally accepted and pervasive practices for women whose hair texture does not meet the expected standards of feminine and respectable beauty (Godreau 2002; Rivero 2005; Lloréns 2013). “By wearing an Afro, Lucecita disrupted the televisual containment and locations of blackness, thus instigating a televisual crisis,” explains Rivero (2005, 73). In 1972, the writer and cultural critic Luis Rafael Sánchez published, “*La gente de color: cariños y prejuicios*” [People of color: affection and prejudices] in the pro-independence newspaper *Claridad*. He directly noted the scarcity of critical and literary works dealing with the problem of contemporary racial prejudice on the island, declaring it as *definitivamente tabú* [definitely taboo] topic in Puerto Rico (Sánchez 1972, 22).4

In 1973, the same year as the centennial of the abolition of slavery, Lucecita Benítez released an album titled *Raza Pura* [Pure Race] in which she powerfully sings left-leaning songs that simultaneously reaffirm her position as a sympathizer of the Cuban revolution and of black pride (Rivero 2005, 77). The album’s cover image, created by renowned artist Antonio Martorell, one of the era’s most outspoken pro-independence and social justice activists, offers a provocative and left-oriented iconography in depicting Lucecita’s red torso, her face framed by a black Afro and her hand up in the air. A deep expression settles across her face while the image’s blue background contrasts with her red body. The cover’s iconography evokes multiple layers of meaning. The singer’s red body proposes her as a sympathizer of international communist causes. Moreover, her Afro hairstyle and raised hand, though not quite formed into a fist, reminds one of Angela Davis’s fist-pumping affirmations of black power, pride, and womanhood. The image establishes Lucecita as a “Caribbean sister,” part of an international global complex of activists who believed in and stood for social justice and equality.

Additionally, as Rivero has noted, the red and blue also signal the Puerto Rican flag, but the black that colors her Afro substitutes for the white of the flag’s lone star (Rivero 2005, 79). Thus Martorell’s album image works on several levels of meaning, suggesting internationalism coupled with womanly power while successfully positioning “. . . blackness as a central element in Puerto Rico’s culture, identity, and society” (Rivero 2005, 79). But Lucecita’s daring persona and music went beyond merely centering blackness; she also destabilized the expected roles and “look” for women of her era, using her beautiful and difficult-to-ignore songs to center the voices of Puerto Rico’s radical women in public discourse. It should be clear by now that in Puerto Rico, men almost exclusively inhabit the public world of political and representational discourse.

Around this time, as Rivero explains, Lucecita began to experiment with expected gender norms by donning men’s clothes and referring to herself as “he” (Rivero 2005, 80). In doing so, she *broke* culturally accepted norms (that is, woman as private housebound entities, as silent, pious, Catholic, and virginal, and as white beauty) which have in Puerto Rico historically constituted women as docile bodies to be “acted upon.”

Lucecita radically acted out what her male counterparts, by virtue of their gender, could never do (and might not been interested in doing)—she asserted the agency of the black Puerto Rican woman, arguably the most silenced group in Puerto Rican society.

Public Afro-Puerto Rican Figures Confront Racism

Public Afro-Puerto Rican Figures Confront Racism

The black Puerto Rican performers/actresses Sylvia del Villard and Carmen Belén Richardson emerged during this decade as important critical voices on the racism experienced by black artists in Puerto Rico’s media. For instance Rivero writes that in 1971, when del Villard was president of

La Asociación Panamericana, she issued a press release ". . . criticizing racist casting practices in television, the limited opportunities for black actors and actresses, and the ongoing use of blackface" in local television (Rivero 2005, 85). Television executives refuted her statement, claiming that in Puerto Rico racism did not exist (Rivero 2005, 85). Generally, anyone who dared to criticize racial prejudice was labeled delusional, ridiculous, difficult, mentally unstable, as suffering from a *complejo* [complex], and/or similarly accused of importing irrelevant American notions of race (where the black/white racial binary prevails) to Puerto Rico (where a complex and contradictory racial continuum prevails) (Godreau 1999, 2008; Rivero 2005;Lloréns 2005). As white Puerto Rican actors continued to don blackface in local television shows, both del Villard and Belén Richardson continued to point out its discriminatory character, particularly so in light of the scarcity of roles for black actors on the island. Rivero notes that del Villard and Belén Richardson ". . . became the voice of the marginalized black actors and actresses in Puerto Rico" (2005, 95).

In 1974, Isabelo Zenón Cruz published *Narciso descubre su trasero: El negro en la cultura Puertorriqueña,* undoubtedly the decade's most provocative work of cultural criticism. Cruz introduces the study:

This research is born out of the urgent need in our island milieu to organize important preoccupations about a tabooed subject: the black Puerto Rican. We can hardly find serious studies in Puerto Rico that investigate this topic rigorously, amply, and above all with the respect it deserves. […] The research herein aims to fill, even if restrictedly, that enormous void. (1974, 17; translation mine)

Cruz offers an uncompromising examination of the racism experienced by blacks in Puerto Rico over the course of Puerto Rican history. Throughout the text he insists frequently that blacks in Puerto Rico must fight to assert their ". . . Puertorricanness as essential and not as the result of a simple ac cident" (1974, 24; translation mine). In his encompassing analysis, Cruz considers the portrayal of blacks culturally, in language, and in poetry, history, politics, religion, sports, the arts, and education. For him, the study's urgent imperative is to witness ". . . the constant, systematic, avalanche-like and repugnant alienation that the black Puerto Rican person experiences" (1974, 24; translation mine).

A year later Wilnelia Merced, a light-skinned black Puerto Rican woman, was selected as Miss World Puerto Rico and later, when she competed internationally, was crowned as Miss World 1975. She was the first black Puerto Rican woman ever selected to represent the island in an international beauty competition (Rivero 2005, 105). Winning a pageant internationally did not preclude the veiled prejudice Merced experienced at the local level. Rather than simply celebrating her beauty—her light skin, her long, flowing, straightened hair, and her "fine" facial features did not, after all, deviate greatly from the standard—local media repeatedly described her as possessing a sensual or exotic beauty (Rivero 2005 cf. Badillo 1975;Brignoni 1975;Vásquez 1975). In 1976, a local pageant named *Miss Piel Canela* [Miss Cinnamon Skin] emerged in Puerto Rico, with the aim of giving black and mixed-raced women a platform in the beauty pageant industry (Rivero 2005, 110). This local pageant does not garner much attention from the media, who instead focus on pageants that lead to international competition such as Miss World and Miss Universe (Rivero 2005).

Yet, the seventies also inaugurated another political order in Puerto Rico. The *Partido Nuevo Progresista*'s [New Progressive Party's or PNP's] conservative and annexationist agenda became, as the election of Luis A. Ferré in 1968 demonstrated, a viable option for island citizens.5 In this new "pro-statehood" era, Ricardo Alegría and the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture (ICP) were increasingly perceived as Puerto Rico's guardians of folkloric art, customs, and traditions. In spite of their contrasting political differences, Governor Ferré and the independence-inclined Dr. Alegría worked together on the continued restoration of Old San Juan and Ponce's historic core (Ferré's hometown). In 1970, Alegría reported that, "Ferré has agreed to all our requests for funds and, like the two previous governors has permitted us to work with full autonomy" (Hernández 2002, 291). But the PNP's inaugural term was short lived. Governor Ferré lost his bid for reelection in 1972 to the young Popular Democratic Party (PPD) incumbent, Rafael Hernández Colón.

In November 1973, after eighteen years as ICP's executive director, Ricardo Alegría presented his resignation. The newly elected Governor Hernández Colón responded by creating *La Oficina de Asuntos Culturales* [The Office of Cultural Affairs] and appointed Alegría as its director. Clearly as Puerto Rico's foremost cultural worker, Alegría's viewpoint and experience were crucial to San Juan's cultural and political scenes. His seemingly infallible position irritated politicians and civil functionaries of all stripes who held him in both awe and contempt. Carlos Romero Barceló, San Juan's PNP mayor and future governor, illustrated this when he said, "*meterse con Ricardo Alegría es como meterse con la Virgen Santísima*" [to meddle with Ricardo Alegría is like meddling with the Blessed Virgin] (Hernández 2002, 321).

Alegría's new position as Coordinator of Cultural Affairs represented a promotion to the level of cabinet member reporting directly to the Governor's office. The new agency's mission was to coordinate the efforts of all existing agencies charged with organizing and overseeing cultural and artistic activities (Hernández 2002, 325). However, Alegría quickly encountered opposition from agency directors and other government and private industry functionaries whose plans to develop Puerto Rican culture, arts, and tourism diverged. In the 1970s, the various cultural-political agendas permeating the San Juan political universe turned on each other in a full-scale culture war. Implicated were the New Progressive Party's (PNP's) annexationist ambitions and their promotion of a "universal" culture, the Popular Democratic Party's (PPD) promotion of an autochthonous creole culture, and the Puerto Rican Independence Party's (PIP) call for independence and a nationalistic culture (Dávila 1997). Dávila underscores that partisan manipulations of national culture have always been politically charged in Puerto Rico, a consequence of the colonial context, and the 1970s are a prime example. Culture politics are a high-stakes field especially because ". . . culture remains the most important basis for defining Puerto Rico's national identity" (Dávila 1997, 46).

During this decade, an economic recession in which ". . . unemployment was at levels seen in the United States only during the depths of the Great Depression" (Dietz 1986, 275) was coupled with the culture war over the island's national and political identity. Even the increasing number of Puerto Ricans leaving in search of opportunities on the mainland—well over a half million between 1950 and 1970—did not improve the island's dire economic situation (Dietz 1986). This decade also witnessed the maturation of established Puerto Rican diasporic communities in the United States, especially in New York City, Chicago, Boston, and Hartford. The existence of these stateside communities and the *vaivén* 6 that characterized them increasingly questioned, blurred, and expanded island-based conceptions of the borders of a Puerto Rican cultural identity.

Puerto Rican Transfigurations, 1970S

Puerto Rican Transfigurations, 1970S

Although Rafael Tufiño was initially ambivalent about his move back to New York City, once there he made important contributions to the Puerto Rican community. With friend and artists Carlos Osorio he founded the *Taller Boricua*, a space devoted to the promotion of Puerto Rican art. Also in New York he painted *Psicoanálisis del vejigante* [Psychoanalysis of the vejigante] (1971), which Tió called "his most important painting" of the decade and "probably one of the most meaningful works of [Puerto Rican] national art in the twentieth century" (2001, 100). The painting depicts the transfiguration of a blue-faced *vejigante*, his inert body (a stiff hand across his chest signals rigor mortis) in the process of decomposition. He is lying beside an ornate couch that doubles symbolically as a closed coffin with four white flowers placed on top. The poignancy of the painting centers on the traditional role of the *vejigante* as a type of "national cheerleader," a figure whose lust for life is contagious. Here Tufiño depicts the physical and spiritual death of the *vejigante*.

In some ways it is ironic that upon moving back to “the city,”7 New York-born Tufiño presents a *vejigante’s* spiritual, mental, and physical death. This portrayal of the death of one of Puerto Rico’s most significant national symbols and the island’s iconic emblem of Afro-Caribbeanness, vitality, dynamism, and playful trickery can be read as a commentary on the state of the Puerto Rican diaspora in the mainland. Tufiño is among the most important Puerto Rican artists of the twentieth century partly because he arouses a visceral response in the viewer through his insightful use of color to convey mood and create the appearance of animation. His frosty blues, whites, and tan tones in *Psicoanálisis del vejigante* express coldness as the scene’s defining quality. The colors signify the temperature of the dead body, yet are even more suggestive of the cold climes of the north—a stark contrast to the balmy Caribbean and a major source of discomfort and anguish for Caribbean migrants. The chilliness of the north is more than a physical experience for migrants, though; it is also a cultural one (Wagenheim and Jiménez de Wagenheim 2008, 241–242).

Tió reads the painting as “(e)manating the now centenary anxiety of our people, provoked by the clash of two cultures. The imposition of customs, ideas, mores, and above all, the aggression against language, this maximum expression of identity, has left in the collective unconscious the agonizing knowledge that we might cease being” (2001, 100; translation mine). But as an active participant in the decade’s exciting and dynamic cultural affirmations and in the creation of institutions (such as the *Taller Boricua*), Tufiño

Rafael Tufiño, Psicoanálisis del vejigante, 1971. Courtesy of The Estate of Rafael Tufiño.

Rafael Tufiño, Psicoanálisis del vejigante, 1971. Courtesy of The Estate of Rafael Tufiño. A painting depicting a vejigante figure lying on a dark chaise lounge. The figure appears lifeless, with white flowers placed on its chest. The background is a muted, abstract blend of colors.knew that Puerto Ricans on the mainland were not, in fact, disintegrating in the face of migration. Puerto Ricans were actually building new, hybrid forms of culture, language, and selfhood. He was aware that by this time, stateside Puerto Ricans were actively forging strong connections to mainland communities despite great odds. In light of this, what other possible interpretations might *Psicoanálisis del vejigante* offer?

I suggest that analyzing Tufiño’s *Psicoanálisis del vejigante* (1971) alongside Francisco Rodón’s *Luis Muñoz Marín* (1975) and Carlos Irizarry’s *La transculturación del Puertorriqueño* [The Puerto Rican’s transculturation] (1975) offers the possibility for additional insights. Significantly, each painting presents an essential Puerto Rican icon. Tufiño depicts the *vejigante*, Rodón renders Puerto Rico’s most beloved (political) patriarch, and Irizarry offers Frade’s *jíbaro* (discussed in chapter one). Each painting proposes its icon undergoing a metamorphosis: the *vejigante* dies, Muñoz Marín ages, and the *jíbaro* becomes a cyborg. These evocative paintings signal a rupture with the past and a loss of innocence. They depict the Puerto Rican (nation) as experiencing an irrevocable process of transformation. Rodón portrays a rumpled national patriarch with a look of profound anguish on his face. As a neo-colony in a post-colonial world, the thriving “associated territory” the aging patriarch envisioned has been proven a relic of the past, an untenable situation destined to perish. Reflecting on Rodón’s portrait of Muñoz Marin, Rodríguez Juliá has written,

The tragic gaze unavoidably invites us to penetrate Luis Muñoz Marin’s soul: the eyes wander, withdraw from what Fray Luis called *worldly noise*, turn away from the trappings of power and authority. [. . .] The Don Luis of *Operation Serenity* interrogates the Muñoz of *Operation Bootstrap*. The Vate,8 tormented by the hunger of his fellow countrymen, argues with the statesman who, facing the facts of immigration, drug addiction, social violence, and family disintegration, coldly avers that all progress has a price. . . . [Y]es, he attempted the impossible, he tried to square the circle, to subdue and at the same time promote the contradictions of *the American way of life and death.* (Rodríguez Juliá 1983, 34; translation mine, emphasis in original)

As Rodríguez Juliá indicates here, one of the great consequences of the American occupation of Puerto Rico is the sizable Puerto Rican migration to the mainland. Early migrants might not have foreseen that migration would entail, among other things, vast cultural transformations. Assaulted by the psychic wound brought on by migration, Tufiño's *vejigante* collapses. For Tufiño, as the title of the piece reveals, the psychic reinvention necessary to birth a new cultural self would mean paying too great a price. Therefore meeting death wearing his costume allows this *vejigante* a dignified departure. His is the death of an undivided cultural self, an uncompromised (and uncompromising) entity. In other words, Tufiño proposes cultural unity, not fracture or hybridity, in the face of migration. In refusing to take off his mask and colorful costume, Tufiño's *vejigante* signifies that he would rather perish than lose his essential Caribbean identity to the process of acculturation. He proposes that the *vejigante's* ecosystem is a resolutely Caribbean one, and his removal from the warmth of the tropics guarantees his obliteration. In this regard, Tufiño offers a variant of the familiar tale of the *coquí* frog (*Eleutherodactylus coqui*)9 that dies when it is removed from its island habitat, Puerto Rico.

Irizarry's *Transculturation*, as its title clearly expresses, depicts culture change. Benítez explains that in this piece, "Irizarry explores the subject of Puerto Rican cultural identity . . . he appropriates *Our Daily Bread*" and juxtaposes it with a "spectral figure that stands for the ravages of transculturation, the loss of a pristine cultural identity symbolized by the *jíbaro* [peasant]." His depiction, she further notes, dramatizes "a dilemma central to Puerto Rico—the emasculation of the ancestral agricultural society by progress and technology" (1998:77). In Irizarry's morbid representation, the process of transculturation through which Frade's plantain-carrying *jíbaro* has passed renders him unrecognizable. He is no longer a man, nor even a human. Visually, the painting proposes a second level of signification because the two figures appear walking side by side, actually held together by a thread. I suggest that the figures coexist in the same temporal frame, in other words, the two—the *jíbaro* turned cyborg—are one and the same entity. In this way, the Puerto Rican is forever the divided inhabitant of a borderland. One self is defined by an ancestral heritage that binds him to a (contested) tropical territory and its bounty; the other self has embraced the coldness of machines and is made from the same material technology from which the cityscape is constructed (steel). The figures also stand as representations of the island's indeterminate political status—the national territory embodies within its borders the incongruous reality of being at once a heritage site and a modern place.

Tufiño'S Loíza Aldea

Tufiño'S Loíza Aldea

In 1972, Tufiño accepted a commission to create a graphic portfolio about the town of Loíza. When he arrived from New York City, much like an ethnographer carrying out fieldwork, he moved to Loíza to live among the people whose customs he would immortalize. Up that point Tufiño had been a resolute urbanite.10 Having spent his life mainly in New York City, Old San Juan, and Mexico City, moving to the comparatively rural Loíza must have felt like entering a different world. Speaking about his paintings of Loiza's *bomba* and other folkloric traditions, Tufiño remarked that,

"*Ahí estoy viajando por la Isla de turista. Veo todas estas cosas y quiero hacerlas porque me están tan bonitas, tan importantes*" [In those I am traveling through the island as a tourist. I see those things and I want to paint them because they seem to me so beautiful, so important] (Trelles Hernández 2001, 169; translation mine).

As I have already suggested, because Loíza is Puerto Rico's national site of ancestral blackness, New York-born, urban Tufiño held Loíza as a kind of sacred (rural) site in which he metaphorically anchored his own ancestral black lineage.

In Puerto Rico there are significant cultural and historical meanings attached to the construction of the urban and rural imaginaries. A defining feature of the industrialization process experienced in twentieth-century Puerto Rico was the steady migration of rural-dwellers to cities (mainly San Juan, Ponce, Mayagüez, and Arecibo). In San Juan, these rural cum urban folks often moved to the city's satellite slum communities alongside thousands of others from every municipality. They were and are known as *gente de la isla* [island people or from the island]. In this configuration, the term *la isla* [the island] refers to all the municipalities (including the midsized cities of Ponce, Arecibo, and Mayagüez) located outside the San Juan metropolitan area.

As Scarano has documented, the San Juan/island binary has deep historical roots. Writing about eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Puerto Rico, Scarano persuasively explains that as the center of colonial power, San Juan elites mapped a social universe in which rural folks existed only vaguely "as distant outsiders" (1996, 1415). Urban elites, he writes, "initially imagined their social space as a fundamentally urban arena, occupied by characteristically urban types" (Scarano 1996, 1415). By the end of the eighteenth century, San Juan elites had admitted the rural population into their conception of Puerto Rican society, but they were viewed with ambiguity (Scarano 1996).

Now, like then, definitions of national culture and identity are debated and ratified in San Juan. Rural folks see the island's metropolitan zone as a chaotic, technologically advanced, and intimidating place, a stark contrast to the rural municipalities where the pace of life is slow. Certainly, there are wealthy and influential elites who live in Puerto Rico's smaller cities (such as Ponce, Mayagüez, and Arecibo) and in towns (such as Humacao, Fajardo, and Guayama). Yet San Juan attracts citizens who desire to incorporate themselves into the modern and metropolitan way of life. The opposite is also true of metropolitans who leave the city behind, seeking refuge in "*la isla*" [the island municipalities] by visiting or establishing a second residence there. And for islanders who travel abroad, these trips also signify cosmopolitanism.

Tufiño's life offers an interesting example of someone who, in a very public way, inhabited multiple identities at once: he was the son of the Puerto Rican diaspora to New York City, a metropolitan (having lived in Old San Juan for most of his life), a cosmopolitan and a world traveler (having studied art in Mexico City), and as a black man, he was also Afro-diasporic. These are all important aspects of Tufiño's successful immersion in Loíza. As one of Puerto Rico's most respected artists, his presence offered affirmation that Loíza's history and traditions were significant to the national imaginary. But I argue that his success also hinged on his blackness and on his status as a metropolitan of significant renown. As such Tufiño was able to cross borders between black Loíza and white (upper-class) San Juan. He spent a season in Loíza and produced a set of masterful artistic renditions of the town's iconography and traditions, returning to the metropole to showcase them. Immortalized in art, Loíza's traditions could now be seen and scrutinized in the safe environment of the exhibition venue. Lived blackness, in Puerto Rico deemed both marginal and dangerous, would remain in the confines of the town itself.

Tufiño titled his graphic portfolio *Loíza Aldea* (1972). At the time, Loíza was still officially known as an *aldea*—a village or hamlet—of the town of Canóvanas. But the designation has long been a point of tension for residents because it connotes backwardness. Anthropologist Samiri Hernández Hiraldo explains that Loíza became a municipality in 1973, two years after the governor's Planning Committee granted the petition to change its status from *aldea* to town (2006, 72). Until that year, Loíza had been a coastal or seaside neighborhood of the town of Canóvanas, a town that borders the San Juan metropolitan region to the west and the island's rainforest to the south and east. As early as 1968, the governor's Planning Committee (known locally as the Junta de Planificación) authored two studies about the feasibility of making Loíza a municipality. As Hernández Hiraldo notes,

. . . the Junta de Planificación concluded that the towns were socially and culturally different. [. . .] Canóvanas was described as more economically developed and close to the metropolitan area and its inhabitants as self-sufficient, distanced from tradition, independent, practical, more individualistic, and puritanical (because of local growth of Protestantism). Loíza residents were

described as subordinated to the social group (which was presented as cohesive, integrated, homogenous, and isolated) and inclined toward a bohemian lifestyle, alcohol, carnal pleasures, and free love. (Hernández Hiraldo 2006, 72; cf. Junta de Planificación 1968a, 21–22)

As this passage illustrates, in real-world terms the damaging stereotypes about Loíza and its people permeate policy discourses. Herein lies the crux of what Loíza epitomizes in Puerto Rico. On one hand, Loíza is characterized as a place where people live in perpetual primitiveness (that is, close to Africa), with unemployment and a high crime rate. On the other hand, its traditions and its people exemplify a "pure" Puerto Rican connection to the wider Afro-Caribbean, circum-Atlantic African diaspora and ultimately, to Africa. Yet *loiceños'* lived experiences are qualitatively different from the artistic and metaphorical representations that exalt their traditions and lifeways.

As "high-art," the designation of Tufiño's graphic portfolio contrasts with the *artesanias* [crafts] produced by local Loíza artisans. This distinction serves to underscore the privileges embedded in notions of high art versus low art, categorizations that are largely artificial and are imbricated in hegemonic discourses of wealth and race, but that nevertheless have real economic consequences. Hernández Hiraldo aptly reminds us that Loíza's artisanal folkloric traditions are not only a source of pride, but are also an avenue through which the community ensures its economic survival (2006, 74).

Significantly, in spite of the fact that Tufiño was a master whose work now commands top prizes in the art market, his life was marked by economic hardship. Born to an Afro-Puerto Rican family of modest means in Brooklyn, New York, his art generated an important source of income for his entire family. As Tufiño remarked in an interview,

What I earned did not allow me to sustain my family. [. . .] I had promised my mother that I would build her a house. Because the dream of all the Puerto Ricans who return from New York is to have their own house. . . . Whenever I had money, the cement blocks on the house my uncle was building would grow. (Trelles Hernández 2001, 167; translation mine)11

Even as a respected member of San Juan's creative intelligentsia, Tufiño had much in common with the people of Loíza in the economic realm.

Visualizing Loíza During The 1970S

Visualizing Loíza During The 1970S

Tufiño produced six masterful depictions of traditions representative of Loíza. Four depictions, including *Noche de San Juan, Santiago, Comparsa,* and *Baquiné*, represent collective cultural traditions or rituals, both sacred and profane. The other two, *Pelando cocos* and *La casa verde*, depict traditional, everyday scenes. Tufiño depicts *Noche de San Juan* [Night of St. John the Baptist] using a deep blue to indicate a crowded beach scene under the light of the moon. Men, women, and children sit and walk along the shore, while three men play the conspicuous *bomba* drum. A thick coconut grove stands as the backdrop. The artist effectively communicates that large numbers of townspeople engage in the June 24 communal celebration of Saint John. This seaside celebration coincides with the summer solstice, but perhaps like no other celebration in Puerto Rico, this night centers on the sea—an island's defining feature and an ever-present companion in the consciousness of its residents. Arguably, the sea that edges the island and marks its boundaries dwells distantly for some island residents. As an island-wide, communal ritual celebration, the *Noche de San Juan* emphasizes the significance of the sea not only as part of the island's geography, but as part of its spiritual and symbolic landscapes.

Santiago, or more accurately the three Santiagos—*Santiago de los hombres* [Santiago of the Men], *Santiago de las mujeres* [Santiago of the women], and *Santiago de los niños* or Santiaguito [Santiago of the children]—are the main protagonists of the *Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol* celebrated in Loíza each July (discussed in chapter four). Although Loíza's official patron saint is Saint Patrick and the town's Catholic church—the oldest parish church in Puerto Rico—is devoted to him, the town's population favors Santiago Apóstol (Duany 1998;Ungerleider Kepler 2000;Harris 2001;Fiet 2007).12 The *carnivalesque* festival in honor of Santiago is a popular religious social dramatization. In that regard, Duany has noted that

. . . popular religiosity is a hybrid phenomenon par excellence, the product of a secular *bricolage* or the creative juxtaposition of beliefs and customs stemming from diverse origins. [. . .] In this context, popular religiosity articulates the vision of the world of subaltern sectors—their spiritual values, traditional symbols, and their collective mindset. (Duany 1998, 177–178; cf. Rostas y Droogers 1993; emphasis in original translation mine)13

Ricardo Alegría's (1956) analysis opened the floodgates to scholars seeking to explain and contextualize the prominence of Santiago Apóstol in Loíza's socio-ritual landscape. For instance Quintero Rivera noted that

. . . the Santiago Apóstol festival takes place in Loíza's Medianía Alta, with great certainty, the island's blackest town. This most black of celebrations in Puerto Rico is devoted to the most Spanish of the Catholic Saints: Santiago the Moorslayer. . . . Does this black 'Christian-Spanish' festival represent a manifestation of what years ago we called a *false consciousness*; might it be an example of a Bakhtinian upside-down carnivalesque world, or do we not require alternative analytical parameters? (1998, 12; emphasis in original, translation mine)14

Harris explains that *loiceños* chose Santiago as their favored Saint for ambiguous reasons at best, especially so since

. . . [the] pale-faced Santiago sits astride a rearing white horse, beneath whose forefeet lie one or two severed black Moorish heads. Santiago is thus represented as the patron of Spain, the supernatural leader of Christian troops against Moors and other dark-skinned enemies, and the archetypal hero of White Spanish Catholic triumphalism. (2001, 359)

For his part, Fiet adds,

The cult to Saint James the Moor-slayer begins in Spain during the ninth century and since then the patron saint becomes the Christian symbol for racial

[]purity and warring strength during the centuries when Islamic north Africans occupied great spans of the Iberian peninsula. (2007, 50; translation mine)15

Santiago thus appears to unequivocally defend whiteness (good) against darkness (evil), white racial purity against black degeneration. As such, he seems starkly opposed to what Loíza is and what it stands for as Puerto Rico's black motherland. Still, the three Santiagos are cared for with great gentleness and devotion by his Catholic *loiceño mantenedores* [guardians].

Santiago's central presence and the great dedication with which *loiceños* care for him poses an interesting conundrum: why is the warring Santiago, "slayer of Moors," this black town's most revered Saint? Martínez (2007, 1, 18), following Geertz (1973, 17–18), proposes that by confronting contradiction as an analytic strategy, researchers might arrive at deeper understandings and offer truer representations of the cultural and social systems they analyze. This strategy highlights the complexity of socio-cultural systems. Harris goes a long way in confronting contradiction when he notes, "It is not, I suspect, the relative skin color of Santiago and his victims that appeals to those in Medianía, but his defeat of oppressive forces" (2001, 360–361). For Fiet the meanings with which Santiago is endowed can only be gleaned within the totality of the carnivalesque atmosphere that encapsulates the Saint's public appearance.

. . . the answers do not lie in the examination of the saint or his origins as such, nor in the legend of Santiago Apóstol inside the European cultural mythology, nor necessarily in the syncretization or creolization of African beliefs (Yoruba or Bantu) and Catholic ones. Because Santiago Apóstol does not have an independent meaning aside from his 'transformational game,' as Levi-Strauss would say, in the processions along with his mythical characters and the sacred and profane elements that make up his carnivalesque atmosphere. (Fiet 2007, 62; translation mine)16

Thus for Fiet, Santiago Apóstol is but one actor or character in a larger and more complex pageantry composed of fantastic characters, each one representing various real and imagined, natural and supernatural, moralizing or cunning, and eccentric and mundane traits, all the qualities that constitute the dizzying hybridity constitutive of the New World encounter and experience.

I suggest that an additional methodological separation should be made between Santiago's private meanings, those unique to the context of the *mantenedores*' [guardians'] domain; and his public meanings, those he acquires during the spectacle that is carnival. An interesting vein of research then would be to examine Santiago's private realm. In other words, what tasks does he perform during the rest of the year while under the care of his guardians? I suspect that the systematic study of the saint's guardianship and related quotidian responsibilities—which are taken very seriously, since guardianship is, whenever possible, a position passed down from generation to generation—would reveal much more about his sacred, Catholic, and communal aspects (those available only to the people of Loíza).

I read Santiago's seemingly contradictory position in light of these previous insights, but probe deeper still. To frame this discussion I return to a question I posed earlier in reference to a set of photos taken by Delano. That is, how have *loiceños* managed to remain black in the face of the pervasive national project of *blanqueamiento* [whitening] that seeks to *mejorar la raza* [improve the race]? Clearly, as the town of Loíza illustrates, not all black Puerto Ricans have been eager to engage in a process that would eradicate not only their skin color, but also their lifeways. Keeping this question at the forefront, I propose some alternative views that aim to expand the heretofore explanations about this black town's devotion to Santiago, that most "Spanish of saints."

As a communally sanctioned ritual performance, are the *fiestas* of Santiago in Loíza an example of the strategic ambiguity that has come to characterize the historical black Puerto Rican deployment of a double-consciousness? In other words, is the public praise of Santiago a strategy to appease the (white) Catholic nation while simultaneously proposing an entirely different and hidden transcript knowable only to insiders? In Puerto Rico's national imaginary, the town occupies a paradoxical position. It is a perpetual outsider, closer to Africa than to Hispanic-Puerto Rico. But it is also the capital of (black) tradition, and it occupies a mythical place precisely because it is considered the site of Puerto Rico's black/African motherland in the nation's geography of blackness. Might *loiceño* devotion to Santiago signal residents' efforts to center themselves as part of the Hispano-Catholic nation? Is this a way for *loiceños*—who have been nationally conceived within a schizophrenic framework that at once renders them intrinsic yet perpetually external to the national body—to assert their rightful space as Hispanic and Catholic, very much part of modern Puerto Rico? Put another way, is Santiago deployed as an emblem of *loiceños'* essential Puertoricanness?

As the "slayer of Moors" and guardian of white "racial purity," do *loiceños* honor and respect Santiago so as to pacify him, and thus protect themselves from his racial wrath? Or is his image upheld every July—historically the end of the sugar harvest season—to remind residents that they should never again be subdued under the cruel system of enslavement and white suprem acy? Or, as Mintz and Price would have it (1976),17 might claiming ownership of Santiago affirm that in this "new world," Afro-descendants possess the fundamental freedom and power to reinvent and reimagine their mystical world as they see fit? Aptly underscoring Zaragosa's (1990a) findings, Duany notes that "*. . . Santiago es el símbolo central en la visión de mundo de los loiceños*" (1998, 189). [Santiago is the central symbol in the *loiceño* vision of the world] (translation mine).

If this is true, then the *loiceño* vision of the world acknowledges the centrality of racial antagonism in the "new world" order (i.e., white supremacy, black subjugation). For this reason, Santiago's symbolic and public meanings are concerned with more than acknowledging his triumph over oppressive forces (good versus evil). In commemorating him, the town instead communally appeases the (supernatural) forces that might again unleash (black) racial subjugation. In a re-vision of Zaragosa's statement, I argue that racial subjugation has been the central *experience* of the *loiceños*. As a result, Santiago could be considered divine armor with which to deflect racial violence. The appropriation of Santiago might represent a subversive tactic through which *loiceños* procure social benefits vis-à-vis the (white) saint. In other words, through the saint, *loiceños* temporarily breach the system and reap privileges afforded to whites, all the while welcoming to the "ritual floor" an array of African, European, and Creole characters that can only come together and make sense within the context of the Americas. Moreover, the kind of contradictory spectacle offered in Loíza might only be possible precisely because of the extreme *cultural, social, and physical* isolation with which the town and its inhabitants have contended historically.

In his next painting, *Comparsa,* Tufiño presents a group of revelers dressed in colorful *caballero* [gentlemen] costumes. The image has a photolike quality because it shows a group of men and children in motion, as if walking hurriedly to join the festivities in honor of Santiago. The flowing cape of one the caballeros and the movement visible in their strides accentuates their haste. Fiet explains that the *caballero* "*representa en términos plásticos los rasgos tanto fenotípicos como sociales y políticos del santo español*" [artistically represents the phenotypic features as well as the social and political characteristics of the Spanish saint] (2007, 66). The men and women who dress up as *caballeros* to perform the earthly human embodiment of the Saint wear see-through masks portraying European physical features (blue eyes, rosy cheeks, long-turned up mustaches). Combined with the bright costumes and hats, they offer a "fancy" or effeminate portrayal of Spanish (white) masculinity (Fiet 2007). By donning the white see-through *caballero* [gentlemen] mask *loiceños* playfully call attention to national expectations of racial enactment. That is, that blackness must be subdued by masking it with whiteness.

The coppery color composition in Tufiño's painting, *Baquiné*, distinguishes it from the other five scenes in the graphic portfolio, in which greens and blues predominate. Yet like the other representations, this scene is saturated with lush tones to accentuate a sensual world. Tufiño's Loíza is one profusely inhabited by deep colors, verdant nature, people in motion, vitality, ceremony, and above all, a sense of collective engagement. The *Baquiné* is a Puerto Rican funerary tradition, a wake for an infant or a small child (seven years or younger) whose soul is regarded as pure, angelic, and deserving of a special celebratory ritual to ensure its passage into heaven (Lopez Cantos 1999; Lugo Ramirez 2008). In Puerto Rican historiography and folklore, the *baquiné* has been defined as an African tradition practiced exclusively by blacks on the island. In his significant text, Zenón Cruz (1974, 207–212)18 seeks to correct this error. He explains that the death of a white Spanish child was celebrated in a similar ceremony known as *el florón*.*Baquiné* is the name for *el florón* in Puerto Rico; it represents a truly syncretic celebration that blends Catholic, creole, and African beliefs in observing the death of a "little angel."

In *Baquiné*, Tufiño infused the composition with orange-copper tonalities to signal dawn and/or sunset, the in-between or liminal moments when the day gives way to night and the night breaks into daylight. Tufiño's *Baquiné* depicts a lifeless body at the center of the social event. The body, not yet interred, oc-

Rafael Tufiño, Baquiné, 1972. Courtesy of The Estate of Rafael Tufiño.

Rafael Tufiño, Baquiné, 1972. Courtesy of The Estate of Rafael Tufiño. A painting depicting the Baquiné funerary ritual. A deceased child lies on a table surrounded by mourners in a room with orange-copper tones.cupies an indeterminate space between the living and the dead. In the image, a man plays the *bomba* drum another strums the guitar. Even so, this scene seems tranquil; a calm stillness is apparent in the bodies represented.

In Puerto Rican art, the depiction of funerary ritual, the wake in particular, has a long, distinguished tradition. *El velorio* [The wake], a monumental painting by Francisco Oller ca. 1893, inaugurates the modern attention to funerary ritual as an allegory for Puerto Rican socio-political dramas (Delgado 1998; Lugo Ramirez 2008; Mirzoeff 2011;Cortés 2012). Since Oller's painting, a number of Puerto Rican artists have depicted the iconicity of death, including the burial (Samuel Sánchez Herrera 1953; Antonio Maldonado 1958; Luis Hernández Cruz 1984), the wake (Luis Quero Chiesa 1934; Jorge Rechany 1960; Antonio Martorell 1961, 1964; Luis Alonso 1976), and the *baquiné* (José R. Alicea 1969; Andrés Bueso 1970; Rafael Tufiño 1972; Elizam Escobar 1981). Some have used skulls and bones to represent the motherland to symbolize the death of the nation (Epifanio Irizarry 1954;19 Carlos Raquel Rivera 1959, 1983; Nelson Sambolín 1973).

Tufiños's illustrations titled *La casa verde* [The green house] and *Pelando cocos* [Peeling coconuts] represent scenes of everyday life in Loíza. *La casa verde* shows a humble dwelling amid a luxuriant coconut grove, two human figures visible on the porch of the house. The lone house among tall palms is a study in contrast to the depictions of the *jíbaro* dwellings discussed in chapter one. In *Pelando cocos*, a man is busy tearing the thick green skin of a coconut as two children keep him company. A chicken roams nearby and a woman wearing a blue dress and a headscarf is perceptible in the distance. Both of these images depict the centrality of coastal vegetation, specifically the palm tree, in the lives and livelihood of *loiceños*. The coconut is significant in the town's cultural and culinary traditions. For example, the *vejigante* masks made in Loíza are fashioned of coconut shells. Similarly, the coconut fruit is an important part of the local diet in various forms, from *dulce dececoco* [coconut candy] and *limber de coco* [coconut icy], to *arepas de coco* [coconut fritters] and *caldo santo* [saintly broth].20 Coconut pulp is fed to animals such as chickens and *jueyes* [land crabs].21 In the case of the latter, coconut is believed to cleanse the animals making them fit for human consumption. It is also believed that by ingesting coconut, the land crab's meat becomes sweeter and tastier.

The Centennial Of Abolition Commemorative Graphic Portfolio

The Centennial Of Abolition Commemorative Graphic Portfolio

Beginning on November 30, 1973, the exhibit of the commemorative graphic portfolio, entitled *Primer Centenario de la Abolición de la Esclavitud en Puerto Rico 1873–1973*, opened in San Juan's La Casa del Libro. Only one hundred twenty-five copies of this commemorative portfolio were made. The portfolio was funded by a *beca para las Artes Plásticas* [government grant for the arts]. This remarkable collaborative work of art contains nine pieces by renowned artists, the majority of whom belonged to the "sixties generation" and studied with or were mentored by artists of earlier generations such as Miguel Pou, Lorenzo Homar, and Rafael Tufiño. Artists whose works are featured include José R. Alicea, Myrna Baez, Rafael López del Campo, Antonio Maldonado, Augusto Marín, Antonio Martorell, Jaime Romano, José A. Rosa Castellanos, and José Antonio Torres Martinó. Myrna Báez (to whom I return in chapter seven) was the only woman whose work was included in the portfolio.

The artist José R. Alicea created the portfolio's opening piece titled *Rescate* [Rescue]. Alicea studied art with Miguel Pou in his youth, and later studied printmaking with Lorenzo Homar, to whom he became an assistant. The print *Rescate* offers a piercing representation of a black woman holding her son in a gesture of protective rapture, as Segundo Ruiz Belvis and Dr. Ramón Emeterio Betances, his hand resting on the shoulder of another black child, witness the scene. The image foregrounds Betances and his friend and comrade, Ruiz Belvis, central figures in

nineteenth-century Puerto Rican autonomist and abolitionist movements. Betances had studied medicine in France and Ruiz Belvis had studied law in Spain. The revolutionary and reforming events taking place across the European continent had inspired each of them. They met upon their return to Puerto Rico and soon were joined by others interested in abolition and independence from Spain.

Rescate [Rescue] takes place inside a church—the location is revealed by the arches and woodwork—and depicts Betances and Ruiz Belvis' abolitionist work. Alicea portrays the "*aguas de libertad*" [waters of freedom], an abolitionist scheme involving the purchase of the (much cheaper) freedom of unbaptized enslaved children on baptismal Sundays. When the purchase was completed the purchaser would immediately consummate the child's baptism, known as bestowing "the waters of freedom." Through this plot the abolitionists were able to free many enslaved children. Besides working at the local level, Betances and Ruiz Belvis also promoted Puerto Rican autonomy and abolitionism on an international level. For instance in 1865, Ruiz Belvis traveled as a Puerto Rican delegate to Spain to demand the immediate abolition of slavery on the island. For the occasion he drafted a document entitled *Proyecto para la Abolición de la Esclavitud* [Project for the Abolition of Slavery]. It was met with contempt in Spain and caused resentment against the abolitionists from the slave holding class on the island (Lloréns 2005, 172; cf. Jiménez de Wagenheim 1973, 58).

José R. Alicea, Rescate [Rescue], 1973. Courtesy of the Collection Museum of History, Anthropology and Art, University of Puerto Rico.

José R. Alicea, Rescate [Rescue], 1973. Courtesy of the Collection Museum of History, Anthropology and Art, University of Puerto Rico. A black and white woodcut-style illustration depicting a central figure embracing a child, with two other figures in the background. The scene appears to be inside a church.

During this period, island abolitionists faced a great deal of harassment from slave owners and government officials. As a result of their "seditious activities," several high profile advocates of abolition and autonomy, including Betances and Ruiz Belvis were, in June 1867, expelled from Puerto Rico (Jiménez de Wagenheim 1973, 59; Jiménez Malaret 1985, 15). Betances and Ruiz Belvis disregarded instructions to appear before the Queen of Spain to petition for pardon and went to New York City instead. There, before parting ways, they founded, along with other comrades, the Revolutionary Committee of Puerto Rico. Then Betances headed for the Dominican Republic and subsequently, under fear of arrest, traveled to Saint Thomas, while Ruiz Belvis left for South America. In late 1867, while hiding out in neighboring Saint Thomas, Betances, who is known as "the father of the [Puerto Rican] nation," wrote and dispatched to Puerto Rico *Los Diez Mandamientos de Hombres Libres* [The Ten Commandments of Free Men]. Commandment number one was the abolition of slavery (Jiménez Malaret 1985, 15; Jiménez de Wagenheim 1973, 63).

When Ruiz Belvis left New York and headed to South America, he hoped to garner financial support for Puerto Rico's pro-independence revolution. Ruiz Belvis, whose pre-existing health condition had reportedly become worse during the trip, was found dead in his hotel room in Valparaiso, Chile, just one week after his arrival (Enck-Wanzer, Morales, and Oliver-Velez 2010, 93). It is widely speculated that his death was not accidental but rather that he was the victim of a political assassination. The news of Ruiz Belvis' death devastated Betances, who despite the loss of his friend continued to plan for Puerto Rico's revolution. He organized from afar the September 23, 1868, failed insurrection known as *El Grito de Lares*. Among its goals, the insurrection sought to abolish slavery; in fact, many enslaved people had joined the revolt. Betances, who never publicly returned to Puerto Rico (though it is said he made secret visits to the island), settled in Paris where he practiced medicine and continued to advocate for Puerto Rico's independence.

Rafael López del Campo created the portfolio's second print, *¿Abolición?* [Abolition?]. He studied sculpture and printmaking at the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture's workshops before becoming an important sculptor of his generation. His image directly likens the 1873 abolition to the 1973 struggle to end American colonialism in Puerto Rico. At the center of his composition is the face of a black man and behind him, the year 1873. Four broken chains dangle from each number, and the word *España* [Spain] appears directly beneath the chains. The word *España* is linked to the word *abolición*, from which an arrow originates and points towards the other half of the composition, which stands for the United States. Directly facing the black man at the center of this side are barbed wires. They stop at the head of a bald eagle inscribed with the phrase "No Trespassing U.S.A.," and written beneath the eagle is the year 1973. Other symbols permeate the composition such as the dollar sign and the image of masses of enslaved men and women in cargo ships. López del Campo's image is an appeal to Puerto Ricans to enact their second abolition, only this time they are called to break the neo-colonial condition.

The third piece in the portfolio was created by Augusto Marín, a renowned artist belonging to the fifties generation. His print, titled simply *1873–1973*, is one of the few in the portfolio to use color. The scene presents the head and shoulders of a black man. A bright orange background seeps into the lines of the black body as he gazes directly and earnestly ahead. His fist appears to be breaking through a chain as the years 1873 and 1973 seem to fall away on each side of his arm. The print's undulating lines depict movement while his tight lips and flared nostrils signify strength and dynamism.

José R. Rosa Castellanos, known as José Rosa, also created a piece titled *1873–1973*. Rosa was known for his innovative incorporation of popular songs, words, and phrases in his prints. Tió explains that the marriage of words and images or the use of words as images was initiated in Puerto Rico by Lorenzo Homar, an eminent artist of the fifties generation and known as the "dean of the national poster" (Tió 1998, 229). Homar inspired others as well, but Tió notes that Rosa's work illustrates the artistic impetus to experiment and innovate. Writing about Rosa's use of texts she remarks that,

"*Son textos de lectura opcional. A manera de nota marginal, el artista nos ofrece la alternativa de aventurarnos a una lectura que ensancha el entendimiento del significado del cartel, pero que no es obligatoria*" [They are texts for optional reading. The take the shape of marginal notes, the artists offers us the alternative to widen our reading of the poster's meanings, but reading these marginal notes is not compulsory] (1998, 233; translation mine).

The poster Rosa created for the graphic portfolio depicts at its center seven arms, all of them shackled but raised in fist pumps. Written around the edges of the print are the words, "*No queremos reformas para los blancos, si no se liberan los negros, 1873–1973*" [We don't want reforms for whites, unless the blacks are freed], and across the bottom, "Don Segundo Ruiz Belvis." This image was re-worked and turned into the official poster of the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture to commemorate the abolition of slavery. The latter rendition is densely populated with words that spill from the margins, filling the composition's background. The poster's edges read, "*No queremos reformas para los blancos, si no se liberan los negros. Don Segundo Ruiz Belvis. Esclavo Miguel '¡Chota!'*" [We don't want reforms for whites, unless the slaves are freed. Don Segundo Ruiz Belvis. Slave Miguel Snitch!]. Across the bottom, "Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña" appears. Directly beneath the fisted arms are the words, "*Centenario de la Abolición de la Esclavitud en Puerto Rico*." The background holds the names of important abolitionists like Betances, Ruiz Belvis, Acosta, Vizcarrondo, as well as slave-era advertisements warning of fugitive slaves and offering rewards. These are coupled with popular phrases, the most significant of which is "*¿Y tu abula donde esta?*" [And your grandmother, where is she?]. This is a highly packed representation, especially if the viewer chooses to read the text. Myrna Báez, the sole female artist in the collection, created the piece titled *Dos caras* [Two faces]. Báez studied art in Spain and upon her return to the island, became a student in Lorenzo Homar's workshop in the then newly created Institute of Puerto Rican culture (Routté Gómez 1999). Báez explains that in Homar's workshop, "*Aprendí historia de Puerto Rico, apredí política, comportamiento político, comportamiento social, comportamiento artístico*" [I learned Puerto Rican history, I learned about politics, about political behavior, social behavior, and

artistic behavior] (Routté Gómez 1999, 8). *Dos caras* presents sketches of two black faces appearing across from each other as if mirror reflections. Báez used tan, orange, greenish-yellows, gray, and black to depict the contours of a frontally positioned face that appears to be changing, melting, transfiguring. The face opposite is presented as whole. It is filled in with black and gray, with tan lines accentuating its African nose and lips. The viewer is unable to discern which of the two faces represents 1873 and which stands for 1973, therein providing a mystery within the painting.

Arguably the transfiguration of the black Puerto Rican person has occurred at several different historical junctures: when she first arrived from Africa to the "New World," when she became Puerto Rican,22 when she became a free person, when the United States occupied Puerto Rico, and when she migrated to the U.S. mainland. Perhaps in contemporary society, transfiguration is an ongoing part of life. Art historian and critic Marimar Benítez confirms this interpretation of Báez's work when she explains that in her art, Báez " . . . *refleja su interés por captar la cambiante faz del país, por darle una nueva formal visual a Puerto Rico*" [. . . reflects an interest in capturing the changing face of the nation, aiming to give Puerto Rico a new visual form] (1998, 194).

Antonio Maldonado created the piece *22 de Marzo* [March 22]. Like Tufiño he belonged to the fifties generation and had also worked at Rosado's Art Sign Shop before studying art in Mexico. Maldonado also worked for DIVEDCO, serving as the director of its graphics workshop between 1963 until its closing in 1986. In *22 de Marzo*, Maldonado offers a lush and complex composition depicting the moment of abolition. Close to the edge of the frame are the figures of three men, their mouths open as if praising the moment, their arms holding torches and stretched to the sky. Behind them a sea of people open their mouths, faces directed up into the night. The torch flames create their own imagery in the sky, revealing the faces of important abolitionists like Betances, Ruiz Belvis, Román Baldorioty de Castro, and Julián Acosta. Symbolically, the painting proposes these historic figures as having brought the "light of freedom" to the enslaved masses. The image powerfully suggests the profound emotion the enslaved, as a collective entity, must have felt upon hearing that their freedom had been granted. Maldonado certainly depicts the weight of history, bringing to the fore the fact that masses of people toiled in the "New World" for four centuries before ever experiencing a night of freedom. Maldonado also focuses attention on

Figure 6.4. Antonio Maldonado, 22 de Marzo [March 22], 1973. Courtesy of the Collection Museum of History, Anthropology and Art, University of Puerto Rico.

Figure 6.4. Antonio Maldonado, 22 de Marzo [March 22], 1973. Courtesy of the Collection Museum of History, Anthropology and Art, University of Puerto Rico. A black and white print depicting a large crowd of people with their mouths open, looking upwards. A central figure has a raised arm holding a torch, and the flames from the torch appear to contain the faces of several men.the importance of the Creole abolitionists in toppling the system, even when their efforts cost them a life in exile or worse, death.

Unlike the other artists whose work appears in this graphic portfolio, Jaime Romano is known as an abstract painter, one of the most important to emerge in Puerto Rico in the 1960s (Ramírez 1987, 101). Ramírez notes that Romano ". . . has consistently explored the expressive, emotive qualities of the abstract pictorial qualities" (1987, 101). For this portfolio he created *Cumbé*. The title reveals that his depiction is of none other than *Cumbé el de los cocales* [Cumbé from the coconut groves], that mischievous trickster *vejigante*, the protagonist in the film *Nenén de la Ruta Mora* (see chapter five). Romano's abstract composition offers a *vejigante* in motion, thereby capturing an essential characteristic of Puerto Rico's most important carnival figure. Appropriately, Romano's abstract rendering depicts a deconstructed *vejigante* revealing movement, dynamism, and effervescence as his most elemental traits.

José A. Torres Martinó created the piece *Quién compra a quién* [Who buys whom]. Ramírez described Torres Martinó as “the ideological leader of the 50s generation in Puerto Rico. . . . ” and as one of the “staunchest advocates for the formation of the autonomous national artistic movement” (1987, 83). As such, his work often comments on Puerto Rico’s socio-political conditions. The image’s title is integrated into the painting as its background. A black man stands frontally in the foreground, beside him an opening (a door, a window?) through which a shadowy figure steps away from the scene. The simple but evasive imagery supports Martino’s enigmatic title referring to the act of an enslaved person purchasing his own freedom, and yet Martinó subverts this moment by questioning whether the Puerto Rican is free. Furthermore, he appears to allude to some perverse collusion between enslaved and master or, read otherwise, between Puerto Rico and the United States. The American presence in Puerto Rico is signaled in the referent to consumerism (to buy), a feature of contemporary Puerto Rican society attributed to the unmitigated penetration of American corporations, brands, and products into the island.

Antonio Martorell created *Y tu abuela ¿a donde esta?* [And your grandmother, where is she?] for the commemorative portfolio. Unquestionably, Martorell occupies a place near the top of the list of Puerto Rico’s most important artists of the second half of the twentieth century. Like some of the others in this portfolio, he spent time studying with Lorenzo Homar at the ICP’s graphics workshop. But Martorell is an artist of numerous talents working in an array of mediums for he is also known as a writer, critic, performer, and radio personality. In 1968, he founded an independent graphics workshop in San Juan named *Taller Alacrán* [Scorpion Workshop]. The *Alacrán* workshop “. . . was a training center for young artists who wished to express their dissidence through the poster. . . . The poster assumed a critical stand while graphically affirming the strength of the national culture” (Tió 1998, 252). One of Martorell’s signature tactics (and strengths) is his suggestive use of words and phrases to arouse emotion.

In his commemorative image Martorell depicts simple iconography to conjure a powerful message. At a textual level the artwork’s title alludes to the metaphorical practice of hiding the (nation’s) black grandmother (in the kitchen), a metonym for Puerto Rico’s national habit of concealing its black ancestry. Citing Girón, Ramos Rosado explains that the black grandmother hidden away in the family kitchen is mentioned for the first time in Eleuterio Derkes’ play *Tío Fele* (1883) (Ramos Rosado 1999, 7; Girón 1982, 94). In the mid-twentieth century, the adage appears again, this time as the title to Fortunato Vizcarrondo’s now famous poem, *¿Y tu agüela a’ onde ejtá?* (1942). But the most intense treatment of the hidden black grandmother occurs in Francisco Arrívi’s play *Vejigante* (1958) (Lloréns 2005, 63–69).

Like Martorell, these writers aimed to poignantly comment on the nation’s suppression of its black history. *Y tu abuela, ¿dónde está?* remains a

Figure 6.5. Antonio Martorell, Y tu abuela, ¿dónde está? [And where is your grandmother?], 1973. Courtesy of the Collection Museum of History, Anthropology and Art, University of Puerto Rico.

Figure 6.5. Antonio Martorell, Y tu abuela, ¿dónde está? [And where is your grandmother?], 1973. Courtesy of the Collection Museum of History, Anthropology and Art, University of Puerto Rico. A black and white print depicting a photo album page. One photo slot is empty, while the other contains a picture of a man in a suit holding a sign that reads 'NO ME OLVIDES'.popular adage among Puerto Ricans, one often reserved for moments when the speaker’s aim is to be ironic, veiled in humor and brevity. The question simultaneously identifies and “checks” a person’s ancestry. The adage acknowledges that the island’s “black ancestry” is embodied by a black woman (now a grandmother) and imposes a humbling reminder upon its referent. But more than simply “outing” a person’s “black blood” or ancestry, the adage reminds one of the black grandmother’s silencing and erasure from history and public discourse, as well as the sexual violence and exploitation she endured at the hands of the nation’s white grandfather. At the same time, it leaves memory below the level of conscious thought in that it seeks to bring the person

targeted to the level of the speaker as if to say, “You are no better than me. You can’t hide the blackness in your ancestry!”

Astutely Martorell pairs the image’s title, *Y tu abuela ¿a dónde está?*, with a powerful but simple representation of a page from a photo album. The album’s page has space for two photographs, but one of the spaces is empty and the other contains a photograph of a Creole (white) man (grandfather) with the words “*no me olvides*” [do not forget me]. The man wears a suit, a tie, and a hat as he stands on a tiled subway floor. There is a curtain behind him and on the other side, the fronds of a palm. The photo suggests the “old time” photos taken in *fotogiros* (see chapter two) throughout the island in which a person or a family would choose from a small number of backgrounds and then stand against a sign inscribed with the words “*recuerdos*” [remembrances] or “do not forget me.” Obviously, the missing photo is that of the black grandmother, and the viewer assumes that the photo was removed in an effort to “hide away” black ancestry.

Martorell represents the visible elimination of black ancestry from the national photo album, yet the void presented by the absent photograph visibly reveals its obliteration. The national operation to eradicate blackness is an unsuccessful farce. At another level, the representation crystallizes the fact that national history, embodied in the white Creole grandfather, is a male history. Placing national blackness in the body of an elderly grandmother implies that the national mother is a whitened one. Again, even this adage places blackness as chronologically removed from contemporary reality. Placing blackness in the past among the ancestors effectively negates the existence of black grandmothers, mothers, and daughters in present day Puerto Rico. In other words, the black person is believed to have disappeared when the grandmother birthed a lighter skinned daughter who in turn birthed an even lighter offspring (a drama aptly depicted in the play *Vejigante*).

The Turbulent Years Of The Carlos Romero Barceló’S Governorship

The Turbulent Years Of The Carlos Romero Barceló’S Governorship

In November 1976, after three years as director of *Asuntos Culturales,* Ricardo Alegría presented his resignation to Governor Hernández Colón on the grounds that he wanted to retire from public service (Hernández 2002, 332, 349). But instead of retiring, Alegría took up an earlier project and saw it through to fruition when in August 1977 he became the executive director of the *Centros de Estudios Avanzados de Puerto Rico y el Caribe* (CEA). The *Centro* became a post-graduate degree-granting institution. In 1977, Alegría also helped found the *Fundación Puertorriqueña de las Humanidades* [Puerto Rican Foundation for the Humanities], Puerto Rico’s branch of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The entity aimed to foster the humanities outside the university and to promote a “humanities for the people” (Hernández 2002, 383). In January and February 1978, Alegría organized a conference on the theme of *La Cultural Negra en el Caribe* [Black Culture in the Caribbean], hosted at the CEA and funded in part by the humanities foundation.

The 1976 gubernatorial election, in which the PNP incumbent, Carlos Romero Barceló, defeated PPD governor Rafael Hernández Colón, led to a prolonged period of societal crisis. Romero Barceló had been San Juan’s mayor since 1969, and during his time in office, he focused on building and promoting Puerto Rico’s tourism industry. As one of the founding members of the PNP, Romero Barceló was assertively pro-statehood.23 His governorship was forever marked by the July 25, 1978, assassinations, at the Cerro Marravilla hilltop, of Carlos Soto Arriví and Arnaldo Darío Rosado, two proindependence activist members of the Armed Revolutionary Movement.24 A third man, an undercover policeman called Alejandro González Malavé, had joined the two who were

eventually killed. The three had planned to sabotage communication towers to protest the continued imprisonment of the Puerto Rican nationalists who had attempted to murder President Truman in 1950. The three hijacked a taxi and ordered the driver to bring them to the Cerro Maravilla, where armed police ambushed them and subsequently murdered Soto Arriví and Darío Rosaldo. In a televised address shortly after the incident, Governor Romero Barceló called the police officers “heroic” for putting their lives at risk and preventing a “terrorist attack” (Nelson 1986). The first investigation initially acquitted the justice department of any wrongdoing, but a second inquiry into the case led to the reassignments, demotions, and resignation of several functionaries involved in the case.

The years of Romero Barceló’s governorship were also marked by a contentious culture war during which, Hernández writes, “*Los recortes en todos los renglones de la administración pública, pero sobre todo en la cultura . . . se magnificaron. . . .*” [The budget cuts in all areas of public administration, but particularly in the area of culture . . . were magnified] (2002, 284). As Carrión has noted, “In Puerto Rico the last decades of the century correspond to the extended crisis of a subsidized colonial economy” (1997, 184). The economic recession that hit the island especially hard at the beginning of the decade showed no sign of improving at its end. The situation on the island was not only fragile economically but also, as the 1980s made apparent, socially and culturally fragile.

Notes

Notes

The careful study of Puerto Rican arts would reveal both the immense contributions of blacks—we are talking about black people, not of the African heritage—as well as the terrible discrimination they have suffered in them.

Writing about the 1970s, Tió explains that “Puerto Rico shared the global causes, but had others of a national nature, such as the drive against the military draft, and the presence of the ROTC in the University campus, plus the protest

In the 1860s, autonomists working to declare Puerto Rico an independent republic also demanded the end of slavery. However, the end of slavery did not mean the eradication of racism and in the twentieth century, pro-independence activists did not take up the fight against racial and gender inequality or xenophobia.

Interestingly, in 1960 Sánchez published a short story titled “*Aleluya negra*” [Black hallelujah] which takes place in Loíza Aldea during the Festival in Honor of Santiago. He uses fictive characters to denounce not only the racial prejudice against blacks from upper- and middle-class whites, but also between blacks themselves (Ramos Rosado 1999, 94–101).

Dávila noted that, “The industrialization strategy had caused unemployment, underemployment, and poverty to increase, especially in urban areas. By 1970, 65.2 percent of the population was living below the poverty line. . . . The rise in poverty and unemployment on the island allowed the PNP to present itself as an alternative for the poor and to develop a popular base for the statehood option (1997, 49).

Duany explains that *vaivén* [fluctuation] refers to “the back and forth movement of people between Puerto Rico and the United States (2002, 2).

Benitéz explains that, “The never-ending bandwagon of new styles emerging from ‘the city’ (the name given to New York), their quick acceptance by the establishment, and the instant exegesis and consequent imprimatur of every manner of expression for a while convinced the world that it was the fountainhead of contemporary art” (1998, 75).

El Vate was Muñoz Marín’s nickname.

The *coquí* frog is part of Puerto Rico’s cultural heritage and is one of the island’s most beloved icons from the natural landscape.

In *Entrevista con Rafael Tufiño* [Interview with Rafael Tufiño], Mercedes Trelles Hernández calls the artist “*un hombre de ciudades* . . .” [a man of cities] (2001, 168).

Original: *No me daba con lo que ganaba para sostener a mi familia. . . . Yo le había prometido a mi mamá que le iba a construir su propia casa. Porque el sueño de todo puertorriqueño que vuelve de Nueva York es tener su propia casa. . . . Cuando yo tenía los chavos, los bloques de la casa que estaba construyendo mi tío, subían* (Trelles Hernández 2001, 167).

Alegría (1954), Harris (2001), and Fiet (2007), among others, have recounted Santiago’s origin stories.

Original: . . . *la religiosidad popular es un fenómeno híbrido por excelencia, producto de un proceso secular de* bricolage *o yuxtaposición creativa de creencias y costumbres religiosas de diversos orígenes. . . . Es ente contexto, la religiosidad popu-*

lar articula la visión de mundo de los sectores subalternos –sus valores espirituales, símbolos tradicionales y mentalidades colectivas (Duany 1998, 177–178; cf. Rostas y Droogers 1993; emphasis in original).

Original: . . . las Fiestas de Santiago Apóstol en Medianía Alta en Loíza, con toda seguridad, el más negro de los pueblos en la Isla. La más negra de las celebraciones en Puerto Rico se hace en homenaje al más español de los santos católicos: Santiago Matamoros. . . . ¿Representa esta fiesta negra ‘cristiana-española’ una manifestación exarcebada de lo que años atrás repetíamos y manoseábamos como *falsa conciencia*; será más bien ejemplo de bakhtiniano mundo-al-revés carnavalesco, o no requerimos acaso parámetros analíticos alternativos? (1998, 12; emphasis in original).

Original: El culto al ‘matamoros’ Santiago Apóstol comienza en España en el siglo 9 y desde entonces el santo patrón se convierte en símbolo del cristianismo, la pureza racial y la fuerza guerrera durante los siglos en que los norteafricanos islámicos ocuparon grandes sectores de la peninsula ibérica. (2007: 50)

Original: . . . las respuestas no se encuentran en la examinación del santo y sus origines, como tal, ni en la leyenda de Santiago Apóstol dentro de la mitología cultural europea, ni necesariamente en la llamada sincretización o criollización de creencias Africanas (Yoruba o bantú) y católicas. Por que Santiago Apóstol no tiene un signifiado independiente de su ‘juego transformacional,’ como diría Lévi-Strauss, de las proceciones con sus personajes míticos y los elementos sagrados y profanos de su ambiente carnavalesco (Fiet 2007, 62).

Mintz and Price (1976, 18–19) wrote that: While immense quantities of knowledge, information, and belief must have been transported in the minds of the enslaved, they were not able to transfer the human complement of their traditional institutions to the New World. . . . Thus the organizational task of enslaved Africans in the New World was that of creating institutions—institutions that would prove responsive to the needs of everyday life under the limiting conditions that slavery imposed upon them.

In *Narciso Descubre Su Trasero*, Vol 1 (1974), Zenon Cruz offers a list of artworks in which blackness is the main subject (277–281).

Epifanio Irizarry painted several scenes depicting Afro-Puerto Rican traditions. Among these are two evocative paintings titled *Baile de Bomba* [Bomba dance] 1951, and ca. 1959.

Caldo Santo is a sweet and salty soup traditionally made for consumption on Holy Thursday. It contains many root vegetables and herbs as well as *bacalao* [cod fish] and/or pieces of another fish, but it must be made with coconut milk and white yam.

Jueyes [land crabs] are a significant representational icon for blackness and coastal life in Puerto Rico. Jose A. Torres Martinó created an early representation of men hunting land crabs titled *Cangrejos* (1951) for the CAP's first graphic portfolio. Also, *Loiceño* artist Samuel Lind, Loíza depictied the hunting of land crabs in a Loíza mural painted ca. 1996, see Lloréns and Carrasquillo 2008.

In his important work, José Luis González wrote that ". . . African slaves *had already become black Puerto Ricans*. It is because of this that I believe . . . that the first

Puerto Ricans were in fact *black* Puerto Ricans. [. . .] What I *am* claiming is that it was blacks, the people bound most closely to the territory which they inhabited (they were after all slaves), who had the greatest difficulty imagining any other place to live" (1980, 10; emphasis in original).

His maternal grandfather, Antonio Barceló was a founder of the Liberal Party and the first president of Puerto Rico's senate. As a result of his formative experiences, though, Romero Barceló developed strong ideological ties with the United States. He completed high school at Philips Exeter Academy in 1949. He then attended Yale University where he earned a bachelor's degree in 1953 and later earned a law degree at the UPR.

One of the men killed, Carlos Soto Arriví, was the eighteen-year-old son of writer Pedro Juan Soto, an important novelist who was also a DIVEDCO writer.

Chapter 10: What The American Century Has Wrought

What The American Century Has Wrought

In 1980, our work was interrupted by the stunning news that Muñoz Marín had died. A grief-stricken cry of anguish seemed to erupt from the entire island. [. . .] I spent all day and all night at the capitol, photographing men, women, and children in the interminable line of mourners that filed past the coffin—members of the cabinet and the legislature, government workers, officials, political adversaries, poor people from the housing projects, the slums, and the countryside. —Jack Delano, *Photographic Memories*

The eighties were years of profound anxiety in Puerto Rico. In the first months of the decade artists and cultural workers were at the forefront of what local newspapers called a "battle over culture" (Hernández 2002, 351). Backed by Governor Romero Barceló,1 the New Progressive Party (PNP) endorsed a series of "culture laws" with the end goal of passing legislation that would create the *Administración para el Fomento de las Artes y la Cultura* [AFAC or the Administration for the Promotion of the Arts and Culture] (Dávila 1997, 44; Hernández 2002, 339). This new administrative entity would report directly to the governor and would limit its purview to "universal" culture, leaving "autochthonous" culture to the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture (Dávila 1997, 47). Previously, the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture (ICP) had been the only governmental entity in charge of arts and culture. Thus, the PNP's creation of the AFAC was perceived as a direct political affront to the ICP, one that aimed to destabilize and possibly destroy it.

A few months before the ratification of the "culture laws," artists, cultural workers, intellectuals, and university students formed the *Comité Pro-Defensa de la Cultura Puertorriqueña* [Committee for the Defense of Puerto Rican Culture]. They staged demonstrations during the legislative hearings (Dávila 1997, 47; Hernández 2002, 341, 351). At one of these demonstrations artist Myrna Báez carried a sign that read, "Puerto Rico is a nation; these legislative bills are attempts to destroy its nationality and culture" (Fernández Zavala 2001, 151; translation mine). A concerned Muñoz Marín, now eighty-one years old and quite fragile, publicly exclaimed that ". . . we must be vigilant in order to make sure that the ICP's work, which it has done so well for many years, not be destroyed" (Hernández 2002, 342; translation mine). Despite the mass protests and opposition, the government passed Law 76 ratifying the creation of AFAC on May 30, 1980 (Hernández 2002, 339). This conflict, as illustrated by the 1981 destruction of several aircrafts at the National Guard at Muñiz Air Base by the nationalist group known as *Ejercito Popular Boricua* [Boricua Popular Army], was as much about the island's political status as it was about safeguarding national arts and culture.2

Luis Muñoz Marín's death just prior to the formal creation of AFAC on April 30, 1980, plunged the island into a state of national mourning. Martínez-San Miguel explains that the death of Puerto Rico's most beloved political patriarch, coincidental with a terrible economic recession, definitively and symbolically closed the modernization and development project he had initiated in the 1940s (2003, 61). The cultural depression exacerbated by the ratification of AFAC intensified when in August of 1980 Romero Barceló appointed a scientist, Dr. Leticia del Rosario, as ICP's executive director. Executive level ICP employees responded with a mass resignation (Hernández 2002, 342–343). The conflict over the direction of Puerto Rico's cultural politics lasted more than three years, beginning to wane only when Dr. del Rosario resigned in June of 1983 and continuing its decline in 1984, when the PPD was re-installed with the election of former governor Rafael Hernández Colón.

The PPD's slogan during its political campaign, "Much More Puerto Ricanness" (Dávila 1997, 48; cf. Jiménez 1985), reflects the perception that the PNP had been dismissive of Puerto Rican culture. In 1985 with the PPD in office, the AFAC was swiftly abolished and the ICP strengthened with a two million dollar fiscal infusion. Although the worst of the cultural conflict had passed, a deep and lasting division had been created between those who supported a Puerto Rican national culture distinct from that of the U.S., and the annexationists who believed that Puerto Rico must move away from tradition to embrace a "universal" (read Euro-American) culture.

Although in 1969, Julia Rivera de Vicenti was the first woman appointed to a cabinet-level position, Secretary of Labor under the PNP, it was not until the eighties that there was a greater incorporation of women into positions of political leadership. For example, in 1982 the renowned runner Angelita Lind became the first Puerto Rican female athlete to win a gold medal at the Central American and Caribbean Games. In 1984, Miriam Naveira de Rodón was the first female appointed to Puerto Rico's Supreme Court and in 1987, another woman, Ileana Colón Carlo, was the first to occupy the post of Puerto Rico's Comptroller (Fernández Zavala 2001, 205).

But the 1980s also introduced island citizens to the steady growth of social problems such as high crime rates and gun violence, drug addiction, joblessness, increased poverty, and chronic landlessness. The crime epidemic corroded the island's social fabric to such alarming degrees that people began to avoid outdoor public spaces in fear of being mugged or worse, killed. It was a time too that saw the widening of the gap between the rich and the poor. On a daily basis, newspapers such as *El Vocero* printed gaudy stories often depicting graphic photographs of bloodied and dead bodies on its front page, victims of the island's unrelenting crime epidemic. The fear of crime was so widespread that many people were frightened of the possibility of being robbed in their own homes, as home invasions became common. The crime epidemic was tinged with class and race undertones and concomitantly the lumpen became key suspects, as the state increased the surveillance of the poor and their communities often doling out harsh treatment. Deemed inherently criminal, poor people as the case of *Villa Sin Miedo* [Neighborhood without Fear or Fearless Neighborhood] discussed below makes apparent, became police targets and scapegoats for the state's ineffective curtailing of crime.

Picturing 1980S Puerto Rico

Picturing 1980S Puerto Rico

The date belongs to the photograph: not because it denotes a style (this does not concern me), but because it makes me lift my head, allows me to compute life, death, the inexorable extinction of the generations. . . . —Roland Barthes, Camera Lucida

This section draws on the photographic corpus contained in the books *Villa Sin Miedo ¡Presente!* (1989), written by John Brentlinger with photographs by Mel Rosenthal and Jack Delano's *Puerto Rico Mío: Four Decades of Change* (1990). I specifically analyze the photographic portrayals of Puerto Rico in the 1980s collected by Mel Rosenthal and Jack Delano. What the aforementioned texts have in common is their use of the photographic image as a central tool in communicating specific Puerto Rican realities. The images are deployed as witnesses to the socio-cultural world represented in each book. The photos fall under the category of documentary realism within Lundström's definition of realism:

Realism is representation plus belief. Realism is convention plus worldview. Reflection and *intervention*. To be a realist is then not only to represent, but also to suggest, propose, put forth, demonstrate, claim, acclaim. . . . Realism is thus conceived as an *encounter* . . . Such a view

focuses on the production of meaning, on the act of interpretation. Moreover, it brings out not only what a work means but also *what it does*. (1999, 61; emphasis mine)

Both Rosenthal and Delano emphasize the photographic encounter; even when the photographer is not seen, their presence is palpable in the photographs. Often the subjects stare back, smile, look directly at the camera, and/or pose. These photographic encounters highlight the importance of the photographed subject, underscore their humanity, and bestow significance on the subject's life. The images picture people who might otherwise be unseen—the marginalized and those left out of history. Other photographs portray objects or cultural rites that bourgeois society shuns as primitive, passé, low-class, or folkloric. Essentially, the documentary photographer works close to the ground and close to the margins of society to portray the life ways of people and communities ignored by the metropolitan state.

These books are also intended to perform a kind of social work. By photographing the slums and the poor, the peasants, and the factory workers, the photographers use the medium to raise public awareness of the life conditions of their subjects. Their photographs represent the transformations, generational and material, besieging Puerto Rican society at a pace so rapid that memory alone cannot be counted on as the only tool for remembering. Rosenthal and Delano's photographs of 1980s Puerto Rico offer a particular type of criticism—a moral condemnation—of the American presence on the island and show image-based evidence of the negative outcomes of the colonialist development project. That is, they represent the underbelly of the colonial project in Puerto Rico. Delano's life-long photographic project is also concerned with documenting the shifts in cultural practices, material life, and the people themselves. He shows that some cultural practices have been replaced and others remain the same. He aimed to document life ways that would succumb to industrial modernity and disappear altogether both from the island's cultural landscape and eventually from memory, too.

Villa Sin Miedo ¡Presente!

Villa Sin Miedo ¡Presente!

Mel Rosenthal was born in the South Bronx in 1940. In the 1940s a steady stream of Puerto Ricans migrated to New York City and to the South Bronx specifically (Rodríguez 1989, 108). Rosenthal came of age in a rapidly changing multicultural city where newly arrived Caribbean migrants and other people of color disproportionately suffered racial injustice and inequality. However, Rosenthal credits meeting and working with Paulo Freire in Tanzania for igniting his lifelong passion for documentary photography.3 While working as a teacher at Empire State College in New York City, Rosenthal embarked on his first significant documentary project, documenting life in the South Bronx in the 1970s. The New York artist and critic Martha Rosler explains that Rosenthal ". . . re-entered the old neighborhood cautiously. It was, to put it succinctly, no longer his turf—not least because so much of it had been reduced to rubble. . . . In the city of cities, New York, the South Bronx was the slums of slums, a zone of pollution and decay" (Rosler 2000, 112).

Rosenthal's South Bronx photographs depict the shift in the region's demography after mid-century, when African Americans arriving from the rural south lived alongside the newly arrived Puerto Ricans (Rosler 2000, 114). It was this contact with Puerto Ricans making a life amid brutal urban blight that eventually led Rosenthal to the island in May 1982 to document one community's struggle for land, housing, and dignity there. *Villa Sin Miedo* (Neighborhood Without Fear), the community Rosenthal documented, was one of several communities that had been built by squatters on idle lands. Cotto Morales explains that, "Invasion or rescue is an illegal way of acquiring land that is characterized by its collective, community-centered, and urgent nature" (2006, 10). *Villa Sin Miedo, ¡Presente!* (1989) is a documentary testimony written in Spanish, born out of a

collaborative project between Mel Rosenthal and John Brentlinger. The residents of squatter communities such as *Villa Sin Miedo* were mostly second-generation urban-dwellers and return émigrés. Their parents had comprised the first wave of rural migration to the urban slums and workers' barrios that Rosskam and Delano had photographed in the 1940s and 50s.

The PPD began building housing projects and other low cost housing in the mid-1950s with the goal of abolishing the slums and offering affordable housing options. But by the late 1960s, this development model had reached its limit. Thousands were under- or unemployed and lacked appropriate housing. Many, unable to make payments, had lost their dwellings (Cotto-Morales 2006). Others had returned to the island, having fled subpar living conditions on the mainland or having lost their apartments in the tenement fires that swept through the places like the South Bronx. Cotto Morales explains that in the 1970s the Office of Public Housing received 30,000 applications each year and families often waited over ten years for unit assignments (2006).

A graphic documentary, *Villa Sin Miedo ¡Presente!* offers historical context coupled with testimonies of residents. The book is part of the testimonial narrative tradition that emerged in Latin America particularly after the 1959 Cuban Revolution and became popular in the 1980s in the context of the dirty wars and the civil wars in South and Central America (for example, Chile, Argentina, El Salvador, Guatemala, and the Nicaraguan Revolution). First-hand witness accounts are placed at the center of the testimony to give voice to the powerless. *Villa Sin Miedo ¡Presente!* chronicles the community's struggle for dignity in a story of hope, commitment, and courage. The community's illegal appropriation of government land placed them in a bitter conflict with the authority of Romero Barceló, regarded as one of Puerto Rico's most repressive leaders.

The testimonies reveal that the state, embodied by the police force, mounted relentless and vicious attacks against community residents. The attacks continued despite a court order barring the police from the community during a court case seeking the residents' expulsion. The police continuously entered the community, beat and arrested residents, deployed tear gas, and sabotaged structures, roads, and gardens. Brentlinger writes,

The majority of the legislature sympathized with the community's demands and even approved a law that would grant them the lands. But the governor Romero Barceló vetoed the project with the statement that he did not support transgressors and subversives" (Brentlinger and Rosenthal 1989, 65; translation mine).

One and a half years after the land "rescuers" settled on the idle government land, a judge signed the community's eviction. On the morning of May 18, 1982, hundreds of police entered the community with helicopters overhead and began to burn houses, shoot guns, and deploy tear gas. Residents tried to resist but soon everyone, including the elderly, the infirm, and the disabled were pushed, hit, gassed, and beaten with police batons and then made to walk to State Road Number Three outside the community (Brentlinger and Rosenthal 1989). The police burnt the houses along with all of the residents' earthly possessions, including their cars. They also burnt or shot their animals. The day after the eviction, employees from the *Departamento de Viviendas* [Housing Department] were ordered to burn any remain- ing houses and bulldoze the land flat. The eviction was one of the State's most virulent attacks on its own people.

The book, published in 1989, is illustrated mainly with photographs taken by Mel Rosenthal during visits to the community in 1982, just days before the eviction, and photographs from later trips to Puerto Rico in 1984 and 1987. The photos of the eviction itself were sourced from the newspapers *Claridad* and *The San Juan Star*. With the images in the book's first section, titled "Villa Sin Miedo's Rescue," Rosenthal portrays everyday life in the community (n=23). The photographs represent themes including people (such as leaders, residents, children, n=19), community construction projects (n=2), families and a home interior (n=2), and singular photos of a housing structure, a community gathering place (the ecumenical church), a man in his vegetable garden, a man tending his horses, a car turned sideways as barricade against police, a sign reading "Romero you will pay for each life," community members and children marching in solidarity days before the eviction, and a jeep and its passengers reading news to the community on a loudspeaker mounted on a vehicle.

The book is bolstered with quotes from Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), and through the testimonies, photographs, and contextual history it seeks to expose the ways in which the annexationist Puerto Rican state, acting on behalf of U.S. interests rather than those of its own poor people, crushed so inhumanely a popular effort to create decent housing with dignity.

This first chapter's photos reveal the large number of children living in the community, and show people smiling and posing for the camera as they engage in the tasks of building a community. The photographs of children are the most poignant because the kids are smiling, full of life with their futures ahead of them. As they are unable to make decisions about their own living conditions, this visual narrative proposes that these young residents are the greatest victims of the community's ordeal. Another remarkable feature of Rosenthal's pre-eviction images is the racial diversity of the people represented. At first glance the photographs depict Puerto Ricans as a "rainbow" people upholding the national discourse of *la gran familia Puertorriqueña* [of Puerto Rico as a grand family composing a multiracial democracy]. The images support the idea that the urban slums are distinguished by poverty, not race. In other words, landlessness and economic and educational disadvantage unite these residents, not racial inequality. Class is conveyed as the great racial equalizer.

While class united the people of this community, the public viewed them racially, as either *trigueños* [wheat colored] or as blacks. For example, the kind of whiteness—both physical and ideological—embodied by pro-statehood Romero Barceló is largely absent from the community. Even the community members who had been born in or had lived in New York City for years expressed nationalist (not annexationist) desires for Puerto Rico. These returned migrants challenged the notion that life in the U.S. mainland was an improvement over life on the island, and that by becoming a U.S. state, Puerto Rico's economy would improve. Government functionaries such as the Secretary of Housing, Jorge Pierluisi, wasted no time in publicly declaring his antipathy for the people of *Villa Sin Miedo* because "they threatened to subvert the democratic order and destabilize owners' rights over their private property" (Brentlinger and Rosenthal 1989, 22; translation mine). In a public speech to the *Overseas Press Club*, Secretary Pierluisi likened the community to Jonestown, the doomed Jim Jones Peoples' Temple Agricultural Project in Guyana. By proposing the community as a cultish aberration rather than a grass-roots secular and anti-systemic movement, the PNP concealed its disdain for the poor who comprised a large segment of its voters.

The book's next section, "The Eviction," covers the tragic events that took place on May 18, 1982. Although the community, the press, and the entire island were aware that the expulsion was imminent, the government did not divulge the exact date for fear that local and international supporters would prevent the operation. As a result, the morning hundreds of police entered the neighborhood clad in riot gear, residents were engaged in their usual morning chores and completely unprepared for the ambush. They had no choice but to surrender. The media had been camping outside the community and documented the brutal events; later some reporters officially testified to the brutality. As a community member recounted,

They did not come to evict us, they came to massacre us. When the government orders you to desist from a place, and they force you to leave, what they do is put your things outside so that you can take them. But when they came to *Villa Sin Miedo*, they came to destroy us. Those people are programmed to kill. They did not come to dialogue. And they did not warn us about what would happen. (Brentlinger and Rosenthal 1989, 71, translation mine)

Certainly, by crushing *Villa Sin Miedo's* illegal occupation of government land in such a violent manner, the state intentionally sent the message to others who wanted to engage in land "rescues" that their efforts would meet a similar fate. Romero Barceló was also acting in line with Reagan-era policies that sought to eradicate "subversives," "communists," and revolutionary elements from society to prevent another Cuba-like socialist revolution in their hemisphere. Ada Rivera, one of the community's leaders, describes in the waking up to the sounds of the police outside her house. They had come to cut off the community's electricity and water. Still in her nightgown, Rivera left her three children in bed and went outside to ask the police to stop because the utilities were

needed for making food for the children. The police swiftly arrested her. As they dragged her to the patrol car, her nightgown became shredded and her skin torn and bloodied. She was later beaten in an interrogation room by a police agent who pressed her to give him the names of all the "communists and subversives" living in *Villa Sin Miedo* (Brentlinger and Rosenthal 1989, 50).

The photographic account of the eviction portrays dozens of policemen armed with rifles against the backdrop of makeshift wooden dwellings. Visually the state is depicted as technologically advanced, while the people's humble dwellings signify not only their lack of resources, but primitiveness. The testimonies support this assertion. A man declares that the only weapons they had to defend themselves against the police were stones—certainly no match against the well-armed police. Seven of the section's ten photos depict the police on the day of the removal. In some of these, the police stand over a group of people or herd people along a path; the subdued, scared adults and children are pictured prominently. In the landscape images, large black clouds rise over houses in the distance. Rosenthal apparently took three of the images days after the expulsion. One depicts from a distance bulldozers and trucks in the flattened land where the community once stood, along with police cadets and unidentified workers. Another is a view of the march that took place in Old San Juan in front of the governor's mansion (La Fortaleza) in the days immediately following the eviction. The marchers carry a sign that reads, "Stop the police aggression." The third image depicts a pregnant Ada Rivera and two other women holding a large Puerto Rican flag during the aforementioned march.

Upon their eviction community members, most of whom were either crying, in shock, angry, or expressing a combination of these, began walking to the governor's mansion in Old San Juan. Then, when friends, family and sympathizers picked them up in cars and trucks they decided to go to the *Capitolio* [Statehouse] instead. Since they had no place to live, they decided to camp on the premises. Again supporters brought food, clothes, and mattresses and they slept inside the Statehouse for a few days until they were relocated to facilities belonging to *Hogar CREA* (a non-profit organization dedicated to the rehabilitation of drug-addicted adults). But there was not enough space. After two days, Episcopal Bishop Francisco Reus Froylan came forward offering the families campgrounds on land belonging to the church in Saint Just, a neighborhood in the town of Trujillo Alto (adjacent to San Juan). Not all the original community members continued on through these displacements. Those who did lived in Saint Just for a year and three months. The provisional lands they occupied in Saint Just were swampy and turned muddy when it rained, which was often. Brentlinger writes, "There were a lot of mosquitoes and illnesses. They had to cook, take care of the children and clean in the mud" (1989, 81). At first they lived in camping tents, eventually supporters, religious organizations, and friends brought materials and tools and built sixty small wooden houses for the families. But the community knew that these circumstances would not last. They were not willing to "rescue" idle land again because they were traumatized by the brutal treatment during the eviction. The images (n=13) from the book's third chapter titled, "To other homes," depict the community making a life under difficult circumstances. Rosenthal took most of them (Brentlinger shot one). They essentially constitute the community members as internal refugees.

But as Agamben writes, ". . . the status of the refugee is always considered a temporary condition that should lead to either naturalization or to repatriation" (1995).4 The residents of *Villa Sin Miedo* did not embody the definition of citizens without a country. Rather they were legal citizens living within the territorial boundaries of the nation-state. The community's presence brought to the forefront the fact that landlessness and economic marginality thrust people to a fringe even further away from the center than the slums. In fact, as Agamben notes, "the refugee is the sole category in which it is possible today to perceive the forms and limits of a political community . . ." (1995). By casting community members as citizens who did not respect "democratic rights over private property," the refugee-like status of *Villa Sin Miedo* residents offers an early example of how the neoliberal state deals with the landless citizens it helps create. In essence, for the Romero Barceló government the citizenship and humanity of the landless was contingent on a) their proper acquisition and ownership of land and a house or b) the family head's acquisition of legal documents stating his/her name on a (colonial) public housing lease.

Villa Sin Miedo residents were twice stateless: first, because of Puerto Rico's colonial status and second, because they were landless and homeless. The irony here is that Puerto Rico's political status itself casts the island not as nation-state proper but as a stateless territory, "an orphan" under the tutelage of the United States. The residents of *Villa Sin Miedo* were working under the premise, "the land belongs to the people of the land," but to the Romero Barceló government, the land unequivocally belonged to the imperial state.

In the photos showing the residents as internal refugees, the children are rep

Mel Rosenthal, "Children Adapt," 1982. Courtesy of Mel Rosenthal and Roberta Perrymapp.

Mel Rosenthal, "Children Adapt," 1982. Courtesy of Mel Rosenthal and Roberta Perrymapp. Three smiling children sitting on a large tree branch.resented as suffering most in the difficult conditions, but as the caption of a photo of a group of smiling children sitting on a tree branch states, "Children Adapt" (Brentlinger and Rosenthal 1989, 110).

The book's last chapter, "The Move to Cubuy," opens with an epigraph drawn from a community member's testimony: "I feel good because I know I can stay here, that no one can take this away" (Brentlinger and Rosenthal 1989, 117; translation mine). At the end of 1983, and with $67,000 in donations from four local and international religious organizations, the group managed to buy fifty acres of land on a former coffee plantation near the Yunque rainforest in the Cubuy neighborhood. In 1987, four years after the community had moved to this new and final location, residents were still waiting for the government to install the necessary infrastructure such as paved roads, water, and electricity lines. The move to Cubuy meant new hardships and sacrifices, but the images that make up the visual narrative (n=15) illustrate a community still engaged, against the odds, in building houses and community spaces and cultivating gardens.

The epilogue to *Villa Sin Miedo ¡Presente!*, titled "The History of Puerto Rico's Domination by the United States," details how increasing colonial involvement in the island led to a system of total dependency and societal corrosion. Brentlinger writes,

The majority of the people suffer great difficulties and frustrations. A sentiment of unhappiness predominates in the society. Each one of the symptoms of this social deterioration increases dramatically, especially those related to crime, drugs, alcoholism and family violence. The problems with housing, health, and education are dire. (1989, 158; translation mine)

By the 1980s, unemployment in Puerto Rico had reached a crisis point. Weisskoff noted that "By 1983, 67 percent, or nearly 1.5 million adults, were not working. This situation represents a steady deterioration of the entire labor picture in Puerto Rico since 1950" (1985, 72). In 1984 the island was besieged with a catastrophic crime wave that did not improve until 1997.5 The apex of 1980s violence occurred in 1986 with 719 murders and homicides, 436 rapes, 16,545 robberies, and 8,397 aggravated assaults for a grand total of 26,097 violent offenses.

The 1980s was a transformative moment for neoliberal policies that entered and expanded in Puerto Rico. When the Romero Barceló government destroyed what Grosfoguel (1996) has called "anti-systemic movements," of which *Villa Sin Miedo* is a prime example, he also paved the way for the neoliberal "free market" policies that have increasingly characterized the island's political and economic policies since the 1980s. One modest but important manifestation of this ideology is the mass gating of elite and middle-class subdivisions (*urbanizaciones*) in Puerto Rico (Lloréns 2009; cf. Rivera 2003). The initial wave of gating was shrouded in notions of the "democratic" right of owners to private property. Private companies providing all the services related to gating—the construction of gates, watchtowers, and security personnel—flourished. Later, this mass gating would expand even to the recently privatized housing projects as a way to surveil the poor (Dinzey-Flores 2013).

In Puerto Rico, privatization is the code word for the economic transactions made in the name of the free market. The privatization trend that began in the mid-1980s has continued unrelentingly with the private acquisition of schools, highways, prisons, hospitals, housing projects, and the telephone company, for instance. Under neoliberalism, government interventions “are presented as the problem rather than the solution” (Harman 2007). Yet in Puerto Rico the colonial government has become the mediator between citizens and large private interests. Rather than having “less government,” the government acts as the main channel for the mass privatization of public services. In many ways the government is perceived as the main partner to private industry, facilitating its entry into local markets at the expense of the needs of the citizenry.

Puerto Rico Mío: Four Decades Of Change

Puerto Rico Mío: Four Decades Of Change

Looking at them after four decades, with all the memories they brought back, how could we not feel that photography was indeed a most marvelous invention? As images of the present preserved for the future all photographs are important historical documents. —Jack Delano, *Puerto Rico Mío*

One day in 1979, after fetching the mail, Irene Delano rushed excitedly into her house, exclaiming, “We got it! Jack, we got it!” (J. Delano 1990, 28). They had been awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant that would allow them to once more photograph Puerto Rico and to contrast these new images with those they had taken in the 1940s. “Off we went carrying many of the old pictures with us to help find the same places and perhaps even the same people we had photographed in the forties” (Delano 1990, 29). The Delanos had made Puerto Rico their home in the mid-1940s and in so doing witnessed the great political, economic, artistic, cultural, and technological transformations that took place on the island. The grant gave them the opportunity to photograph contemporary Puerto Rico and to juxtapose it with the Puerto Rico they had photographed as newlyweds.6

Sadly, in the early phase of the project Irene Delano was diagnosed with cancer. She would not live to see the project’s outcome because she passed away in February 1982. However, during those last two years of her life she conducted interviews, planned their itinerary, kept track of negatives, selected photographs and organized the file (Delano 1997, 192). Irene had been a beloved teacher, mentor, and inspiration to generations of artists on the island. News of her illness prompted the artistic community to organize a retrospective exhibit of her work which quickly turned into a celebration of her life. Later, looking for solace from the grief of losing his wife and artistic partner, Jack plunged himself into finishing the photographic exhibit titled *Contrasts*, which opened at the University of Puerto Rico’s museum in November 1982. About the exhibit, Delano observed that it “. . . seemed to affect people deeply” (1997, 195).

Nostalgia permeates *Puerto Rico Mío* (1990), the book that was born out of the *Contrasts* exhibition. Writing about *Puerto Rico Mío,* Rodríguez Juliá noted that, “These mere social contrasts become tiny dialogues between nostalgia and interiority. Without noticing it, the social testimony has turned into biographical introspection. Nostalgia remains repressed” (Torres Caballero 2004, xvi; translation mine).7 In fact, I argue that nostalgia does not remain repressed but rather opens the channel *through which* biographical introspection flows. In other words, nostalgia for *what is no longer* moves individuals to reflect on *what has been* and how their lives, and the lives of all Puerto Ricans in this instance (the imagined community), are reflected in the photographs. The photographs surely stimulate the kind of reflection that Barthes suggested allow people to “. . . compute life, death, the inexorable extinction of the generations” (1981, 84). To the twenty-first-century reader or viewer, *Puerto Rico Mío* offers an *encounter* with the past, with

preceding lives and lost social, cultural, and political practices, beliefs, and initiatives. It offers a resolutely historical visual text.

Puerto Rico Mío also offers viewers and readers the possibility of engagement in the nostalgic processes, both restorative and reflective, which Boym suggests ". . . characterize[s] one's relationship to the past, to the imagined community, to home, to one's self-perception" (2001, 41). Restorative nostalgia aims to ". . . rebuild the lost home and patch up memory gaps"; it is the kind of nostalgia of which nationalisms are made (Boym 2001, 41). But reflective nostalgia dwells on "longing, loss and remembrance" (Boym 2001, 41). For Puerto Rican viewers the text affords a retrospective "view" of a specific history: that of the poor and dispossessed during the American century. The viewer is confronted with the lives of ordinary citizens. Delano's documentary project leaves out the rich and the powerful, with a few exceptions. The visuals do not uniformly romanticize; the agricultural worker in the 1940s, his humble abode, his eight hungry children, his anemic wife, and their dead baby all stand as "no-trespassing" signs in the face of a restorative nostalgic impulse. Delano's 1980s images of rampant modernization set against the backdrop of excess, obsolescence, and decay also dissuade the viewer from the desire to restore a time period characterized by social anxiety.

Nevertheless, the text opens the way for sustained reflection on the island's history and in many ways, it asks viewers to consider and imagine what Puerto Rico would have "looked" like had it not been a U.S. colony. If in the 1940s there was widespread hunger, the 1980s were rife with unemployment, drug addiction, and anxiety about violent crime. Cultural critic Rodríguez Juliá hints that the text constitutes Delano's personal (and public) meditation about "time's relentless melt." After all, the viewer is witnessing *his project*,*his view* of Puerto Rico, the passing of a historic era and with it the people *he loved* (such as Luis Muñoz Marín and Irene Delano), and *his life* moving ruthlessly forward. Reflecting on the changes he experienced in his own lifetime, Delano wrote,

Television, radio, electronics, the scientific marvels of today were all unimaginable when I was growing up in Voroshilovka. That is where I was

[]when the Soviet Union was born. Eight decades later, I found myself living in San Juan when the Soviet Union collapsed. I can't help thinking of the profound changes and the tumultuous events that the intervening years have seen. (1997, 215)

Yet Delano's public project also hails the Puerto Rican to engage in his own reflection on the historic and social changes experienced by members of his "imagined community," a reflection that might turn into biographical introspection depending on the viewer's generational proximity to the eras represented in the photographs. Inevitably the nature of the consumption of the images depends on whether the viewer's past is represented within them or whether they stand only as historic referents.

Delano's *Puerto Rico Mío* is ripe for analysis. In what follows, I analyze the visual text using a framework of technology, excess, and decay. Certainly, the visual narrative reveals that although Puerto Rico's rural past was fraught with suffering and inequality, it gave way to a technological future no less burdened with poverty, suffering, and disparities. I argue that while Delano does not offer a romanticized version of the rural past nor the techno-present (the early 1980s), he ascribes a mythical quality to the "spirit," the "soul" of the Puerto Rican people. Commenting on the qualities of the people of Puerto Rico, Delano writes, "After all, we had remained in Puerto Rico all those years not because of its delightful climate and beautiful beaches but because of the special quality of its people" (1990, 30).

Hence, aside from the national territory the thread that binds the 1940s and the 1980s are the "special" characteristics of the Puerto Rican people, several of which Delano successfully signaled in his images. For instance he frequently photographs people's joy and love for life ("Country musicians at a Christmas Party in Guánica," 117; "Governor Luis Muñoz Marín and a friend at a Three Kings party in Ciales," 119). He also pictures people's faith and devotion ("In the Cathedral in San German," 134); the importance of family ("In the home of a farmer . . .," 154; "In the home of

the school superintendent . . .," 155); solidarity ("Villa Sin Miedo . . .," 142; "Striking sugarcane workers in Yabucoa," 65); respect ("Mourners filing past the coffin of Governor Luis Muños Marín . . ." 172, 173, 174); resignation ("Women in Cabo Rojo waiting in the line for the distribution of food by an agency of the Federal Department of Agriculture," 147; "A group of unemployed waiting to get into the Unemployment Insurance Office in Hato Rey," 202;); resilience ("Harvesting tomatoes . . .," 73; "Rosin Casellas in her house in Cidra . . .," 97); and hope ("Sugarcane workers, near Ponce," 58; "Graduation day the University of Puerto Rico . . .," 65).

Technology

Technology

In some ways Delano's images of technology and modernization bring the investigation of colonial photographs, which I have undertaken throughout this book, full circle.8 I have argued that the ideas and facts regarding "development," "progress," "technology," and "modernization," are defining characteristics of the post-1898 brand of Americanization. In other words, the American occupation of Puerto Rico introduced the unrelenting twin *processes* of "progress" and "modernization" that American photographers so carefully documented. In using the camera (a machine, too), American photographers mediated their encounters with the world around them. Jack Delano's photographs, no doubt important historic documents, are the result of the same technological impetus to record a quickly changing cultural world that compelled Henry William Jackson at the turn of the century. Yet Delano's photographs depict people's uneasy or ambivalent relationships with the rise of mechanized labor and the assembly line and with the kind of "progress" these new technologies hailed. In using the "marvelous" machine (the camera) to record the changes Puerto Ricans experienced over a forty-year period, the photographs perform the documentarian's social work by affectively prompting the viewer to reflect on what "progress" and "modernization" has meant for Puerto Ricans.

During his 1940s tour, Delano, the adept documentarian, photographed people with the technology they used to live and make livings. It is important to remember that a people's level of cultural sophistication and modernity was measured by their technological achievements. As the colonial narrative goes, Americanization freed islanders from technological darkness and misery bestowing advancements in public health, education, and infrastructure for instance, allowing them to join the world of modern nations. Consequently, early photos demonstrate that the island was just emerging from technological backwardness and beginning the process of modernizing. *Puerto Rico Mío*'s 1940s photographs represent the human body as the people's main tool: men bent over, hoe in hand, cultivating the land ("Cultivating tobacco on a farm in Barranquitas," 40); men and animals (zebu cows) engrossed in the laborious task of harvesting sugarcane ("Harvesting sugarcane near Guánica," 48); men surrounded by stalks of sugarcane wielding machetes, the cutter's only tool besides their muscles ("Don Toli as a young man working in sugarcane field near Guayanilla," 51); men working in the artisanal tobacco industry ("Stringing tobacco on a farm near Barranquitas," 70; "In a cigar factory in Yauco . . .," 178); and men going out to sea in wooden *yolas* (small fishing boats) to hunt for seafood that was sometimes the main source of protein for entire coastal communities ("In the fishing village of Puerto Real, on the southwestern coast," 42) (Griffith and Valdés Pizzini 2002;García-Quijano 2009).

During this period women are also represented working. Again, their bodies, hands, and eyes are the main technology for carrying out work. Images such as "Coffee picker on a farm near Corozal" (74); "Harvesting pineapples in Manatí" (75); "In a dress factory in Río Piedras" (98); "In a small needlework shop in Rio Piedras" (177); and "Sewing tobacco leaves to be hung for drying, near Barranquitas" (180) depict Puerto Rican women's early incorporation into the work force. Women are depicted performing traditional women's (unpaid) work, too, such as fetching water (94), making

lunch (150), standing in food distribution lines (147), and tending to children (144, 145).

However, in the 1940s, mechanization and automation were emerging as part of the industrial landscape as well. For instance a 1941 photograph titled “Interior of the sugar mill in Guánica” (66) portrays a massive, meticulously greased machine that crushed the sugar cane inside the mill house. In the image, the viewer sees how a mechanized belt drops the product onto the crusher. In the top right hand corner, a man stands on a tall platform (on the third floor) apparently to operate the hoister. On the second floor, four men on two different platforms watch as the cane makes it ways through the crusher. On the first level, two mechanics mind the giant steel wheels and conveyer belts that allow the entire mechanism to function. On the ground floor, another man is busy sweeping. A total of eight men appear in the mill, each with a specific role. They act as intermediaries between machine and the raw product.

By the 1980s automation and the assembly line prevailed. Delano often shows a colossal machine operated by a solitary person in this era’s poignant images (“Cutting cane by machine near a field near Juana Díaz,” 49; “A cane cutting machine near Juana Díaz,” 55; “A pineapple-juice canning plant in Bayamón,” 76). The images evoke the cliché observation that machines had replaced many of the workers. Mechanization ushered in the era of “robotic efficiency,” but it also heralded the period of environmental and material decay and degradation that Delano documented.

Mechanization created the need for specialized workers, such as machine operators, mechanics, engineers, and chemists, who in turn required some education and training (“In the main control room of the oil refinery in Yabucoa,” 179; “In the laboratory of a pharmaceutical plant in Cidra,” 210; “Inspecting parts of a computer factory in San German,” 211). Accordingly, providing citizens with higher education was of paramount importance to the project of modernization (“A candidate for her doctorate at the nuclear biology laboratory at the University of Puerto Rico,” 164; “Graduation day at the University of Puerto Rico at Río Piedras,” 165; “Mathematics class at a private elementary school in San Juan,” 163). A photo dated 1980 entitled “Manager of a pineapple canning company meeting with two of her staff in Bayamón” (99) epitomizes the notion of competency. The company’s manager, a white Puerto Rican woman in her mid-to-late thirties, sits behind a desk as two older white Puerto Rican men, her staff, sit facing her in a meeting. There are twelve framed diplomas and certificates hanging on the wall directly behind her. If the two men had any reservations about her qualifications to manage the plant, these official documents ought to serve as evidence of her competency.

Excess

Excess

Delano’s visual narrative articulates material excess in relation to deprivation. This visual contrast is not a simple one. While the 1940s photographs beckon a general state of material deprivation among the masses, they also imply that these subjects possess spiritual and moral wealth. The photographs uphold the cliché that poor people have riches in the shape of their dignified character and stoic resignation in the face of hardship. The 1940s photographs portray people leading their lives in utilitarian ways, and excess figures only in terms of unfilled needs such as an excess of hunger, illness, appropriate housing, clothing, and so on. In the face of this kind of “excess of negatives,” Delano deploys the island’s lush rural landscape as a source of wealth. Using only their machetes, peasants could not hope to tame such tropical luxuriance and fecundity. It was only the colonial and scientifically driven American intervention that could “upgrade” the Puerto Rican’s utilitarian life ways and cultural practices beyond the level of mere subsistence.

By the 1980s, Delano's visual chronicle portrays a people no longer bound to "nature." They had become a modern and consuming citizenry. They could chose to consume an array of foods, material products, and experiences. In effect, Puerto Rican society was removed from the traditions bound to the Catholic calendar. Instead, Puerto Ricans had become deeply invested in the secularized fads and dramas bestowed upon them by consumerism and modernization. In the book's introductory section, "The Island," Morales Carrión writes,

The problems of the *socioeconomic underdevelopment* of the forties were visible and easy to quantify. The new problems that surround the present *social under-development*, in the midst of a life of relatively greater abundance, are more difficult to see and understand. (1990, 9; emphasis mine)

Later Alan Fern, in his brief description of Delano's photographic project, notes similarly,

Puerto Rico is revealed to us in this book as an island that in the course of four decades has evolved from a primarily agrarian culture to a substantially urban one. The faces of the people depicted in the 1940s are often gaunt and hungry, while those photographed in the 1980s are well-fed and healthy. . . . We see that progress has come at a price. (1990, 11)

Delano also commented on the societal changes *as experienced* by Puerto Ricans:

There are no more thatched-roof huts, no more company towns. Yes, much has changed since those early days. . . . But many old problems remain—unemployment, a shortage of housing, crowded and deteriorated schools and medical centers—and many new problems have arisen during the period of rapid industrialization: rampant crime, drug addiction, urban congestion, pollution of the environment, and corruption in and out of government. To confront these conditions people, too, have changed. . . . We found people today are more outspoken, more assertive in their demands for social justice, more aggressive in the struggle for their rights, and far more confident in their own power to affect the course of their future. (1990, 31)

Delano's photographic archive offers evidence to substantiate these claims. The photographs present the pictorial truth about a people too swiftly transformed from the ways of rural life and into an urban proletariat. Certainly, these changes were already evident in his first photographs of the workers' quarters and slums in 1940s San Juan (140), of the homeless sleeping on stairways (141), and of street beggars (94), for instance. Urban decay was already visible in the pre-industrialization era, but it has taken on new dimensions in industrialization's aftermath. The mid-century's technocratic optimism that had given birth to Operation Bootstrap and to the expectation that technology, progress, and modernization would eradicate the island's social problems had all but disappeared by the late 1980s. As Delano noted, old problems such as poverty and rampant inequality had not been resolved. In fact the decade's high unemployment and crime rates suggested that Puerto Rico was (still) in the midst of an intense social crisis.

Essentially, a story emerges of a society confronted with the difficulties associated with extreme inequality. No longer were the masses collectively poor. Now they were engaged in "free-market" style competition to survive in the face of limited economic opportunities. Thousands had chosen to migrate to the United States since the beginning of the twentieth century and the 1980s witnessed with renewed force an increasing number of Puerto Ricans leaving the island to try their luck in the north.9 This decade was also characterized by what Duany aptly called "revolving door migration." Thousands of Puerto Ricans passed through the door going north and then again on the return to the island (2002). Some would spend an entire decade passing through the revolving door until eventually deciding to settle in one place. This kind of migration was and is dictated by the ebbs and flows of economic recessions and the attendant perceptions of economic opportunities.

As I have already noted about the 1940s images, the photographer signifies several excesses including the luxuriant tropical landscape (40, 152), poverty (140, 141), fertility (144, 145), and the excess in human suffering (169, 171). The excesses of the 1980s are those typically associated with modernity and affluent societies: addiction, obesity, pollution, and fear of crime. In the 1940s

images, women perform traditional and expected roles such as mothering, attending church, cooking, and working in the labor force. In the 1980s these images appear, too, but the viewer also encounters women who not only attend political rallies but who stare frontally and unabashedly at the camera, cigarettes hanging from their mouths ("At a political rally near Toa Baja," 86). Images of women smoking cigarettes emerge multiple times in the book (115, 139), and one wonders if Delano aimed to call attention to cigarette smoking as an aspect of women's liberation, as an ill of modern life, or perhaps as the combination of both.

Undoubtedly Delano was aware of the epidemic level of narcotics addiction sweeping the island. In trying to convey Puerto Rico's social reality, he offers a heartbreaking portrait entitled "In a detoxification room at the drug rehabilitation center known as CREA in Río Piedras" (196). In this image a man's body is strapped to a mattress as another man looks at the first man in bed. Smartly, Delano positioned the camera so that the sunlight pouring through the window concealed the men's faces. In a shame culture such as Puerto Rico's where everyone knows everyone and people's gazes function as surveillance devices, addiction and the process of recovery must remain under the cover of secrecy.10

To the twenty-first-century viewer, the notable difference in body types from one era to the next emerges as one of the most poignant photographic contrasts. Martínez-San Miguel notes this when she juxtaposes two photos of workers, one from the 1940s (184) and another one from the 1980s (185): "When we look at the photos, our attention is called to the physical types of the dock workers. The workers from the decade of the eighties appear to be better fed—possibly even overfed—in comparison with the fibrous bodies of the forties dockworkers" (Martínez-San Miguel 2003, 68; translation mine). Additional visual evidence of the fitness of Puerto Rican bodies in the forties emerges in the photographs titled "A worker in the sugar refining mill in Guánica" (207) and "Drivers of *públicos* . . ." (110) portraying thin but fit-looking men. People were not necessarily healthy because they were thin, but in Delano's photographic archive an obvious difference in body types emerges in connection with the rise of mechanization and the "modern" sedentary lifestyle. By the 1980s, not only had agricultural production generally and the sugar industry specifically become highly mechanized, but as Martínez San-Miguel notes, agricultural labor had also become a peripheral economic activity in the throes of sure death (2003). Physical work was largely replaced with more sedentary work such as driving, manning or fixing machines, and standing or sitting in the assembly line. Machines replaced the body as the main tools for getting work done.

This, coupled with fast-food chains and the rise of warehouse-sized supermarkets full of processed foods, is emblematic of workers new fast-paced modern lifestyle. The ever-alert Delano documents the emergence of the mammoth food market in a photo titled "A supermarket in Río Piedras" (187) and the frenzied crush of people caught in a shopping cart jam inside the same market (151). To the contemporary viewer, the photo "Spectators at a carnival in Ponce" (139) might be one of Delano's most powerful and complex visual commentaries on the state of the body. In this photograph, an overweight woman sits on top of a car puffing on a cigarette with a sign in the background that reads, "Burger King Home of the Whopper." A boy and a girl, presumably her children, sit beside her as a man, (her husband?), looks on, the shape of a cigarette box apparent through his shirt pocket. The photograph signals the kinds of excesses (the fat body) and decadence (cigarette smoking, fast food) that have become emblematic of bad health in American society.

Another form of excess emerges in Delano's focus on the automobile, a symbol of modernity in Puerto Rican society that reminds one of Myrna Báez's important paintings, *Autopista Hacia el Sur* [Highway to the South] (1974), *Parada 31* [31st Stop] (1962), and *El Tapón* [The Traffic Jam] (1969). By the 1980s, cars had become ubiquitous and an integral part of the landscape. They had also altered people's relationship with their surroundings (Marqués, 2000). The rise of the car signaled the shift from collective transportation to individual ownership as status and class symbols. The photograph "Parking lot at the shopping mall Plaza Las Americas in San Juan" (111) is an impressive depiction of endless rows of parked cars. The cars

Jack Delano, "Parking lot at the shopping mall Plaza Las Americas in San Juan," 1981. Courtesy of the Jack Delano Estate.

Jack Delano, "Parking lot at the shopping mall Plaza Las Americas in San Juan," 1981. Courtesy of the Jack Delano Estate. A black and white photograph showing a massive parking lot filled with cars, illustrating consumerism and the dominance of automobiles.reflect the powerful rays of the tropical sun, underscoring how heat becomes trapped inside metal and glass. This photograph is a powerful commentary on the triumph of the automobile as the main source of transportation on the island, coupled with the intensification of consumerism. Plaza Las Americas, which opened its doors in 1968, was the first enclosed, air-conditioned mall in Puerto Rico and by the 1980s, with parking for four thousand cars, it was the largest mall in Latin America.

Decay

Decay

Fittingly, *Puerto Rico Mío*'s fifth photograph, "A housing development under construction in Trujillo Alto" (41), depicts the remains of a car on the side of the road amidst garbage. In the background of this depressing image, a large cement subdivision sprouts up in the distant valley. The juxtaposition that arises is between greenery, cement, and a disintegrating metal machine. But more than that, I argue that this image sets the stage early in the book for a visual narrative proposing that technological modernity coupled with the excess of cheap consumer goods has thrust Puerto Rican society into a pattern of consumption that fails to take into account the island's size and finite territory. Therefore, as this image makes clear, an illegal garbage dump sits in proximity to "modern" housing. The photograph also alludes to another darker truth about extreme levels of inequality and unemployment that together gave rise to appalling numbers of thefts. Car theft was one of the era's major social problems. Stolen cars would often be dismantled and their remains thrown on the side of solitary roads, also the grounds of illegal dumping. Similarly, in "Automobile junkyard on the highway near Caguas" (112), "Abandoned public housing in Río Piedras" (195), and again in "A church building converted into a drug treatment center in Cataño" (197), the photographer focuses on the growing problem that garbage presents for such a small territory.

Although Delano does not focus on the ruins of old industrial enterprises, he could not altogether ignore that they now dotted the landscape. "Ruins of the Rufina sugar mill in Guayanilla," (68) offers an example of an abandoned and largely disassembled sugar estate. The mill's estate house, once an impressive architectural gem, stands slowly falling apart in the tropical climate. The smokestack still stands impressively but its decay is imminent. Even the leafless tree near the photographer's lens appears to be dying. The photograph point outs the demise of "king sugar," once the island's most important industry. But throughout the book Delano powerfully depicts obsolescence and the passing of ways of life. Workers have gone from the agricultural fields to the factory, movie theaters (122) have given way to television sets (127) and video rental stores (123); on a positive note, sick babies could now be treated, and possibly saved, by advances in neonatal technology (170), and so on.

Delano also framed the signs of another kind of deterioration, moral decay, yet in his written account he underscores that he doesn't believe the Puerto Rican has lost his essence. He asks, "Do these changes mean that traditional moral values of decency and respect for one's neighbors (*respeto al prómijo*) are being lost? I don't think so. We still found them, though less in cities than in the countryside. Some of our Puerto Rican friends are, however, less optimistic than I am" (1990, 31). Still, the photographs "Locksmith's shop on Piñero Avenue in San Juan" (198) and "Little girl in a housing development in Trujillo Alto" (199), both show a girl staring at the camera from behind her

home's locked security bars. In the 1980s metal bars and locks had become signifiers of the widespread fear of violent crime that urban, and later, rural residents felt throughout Puerto Rico.

American Pictures Of Puerto Rico

American Pictures Of Puerto Rico

Jack Delano and Mel Rosenthal, both keen social documentarians, represented Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans with the ethical compassion characteristic of people committed to social justice. Their artwork, a type of social work, sought to "expose" social conditions, ways of life, and the plight of the dispossessed along with their hope and their courage. From the outset, Rosenthal's representational work was framed by a critique of colonialism and American empire. Through the testimonial word- and image-based narrative, Rosenthal and Bretlinger chronicled and exposed sustained colonial policies affecting the island's poor in the hopes of affecting public opinion. Jack Delano's lifelong project moved from mainly ethnographic documentation under the guidelines of the FSA, to a project that reflected deep engagement with the island and its people. It is as if the photographs constituting the core of his vast artistic *oeuvre* are his contributions to the people of Puerto Rico for accepting him as an honorary member of the "imagined community."

Both photographers grasped and upheld Puerto Rican peoples' "spirit" and moral character, characterizing them as generous, caring, family-oriented, and joyful. These characteristics prevail in the face of great adversities such as poverty, hunger and even when engaged in bitter and ongoing political struggles with the colonial state. Both chroniclers envisage a "rainbow people," where class rather than race equalizes the fate of the masses. This emphasis on the people's racial mixture signals that they conceived of Puerto Rico as culturally and socially different from the United States, where racial binarism prevails. It looks as if for these American photographers, positive moral qualities like respect for one's *projimo* [neighbor] triumph over racebased discrimination. Rather than celebrating the American presence on the island, these photographers propose that viewers reflect on the complexities and contradictions that result from Puerto Rico's political status.

Art And Artists In The 1980S

Art And Artists In The 1980S

During the 1980s amidst this confusion Puerto Rican artists experimented with diverse art forms and representational modes and problematized the notion of a preexisting, archetypal Puerto Rican identity, "an essence that art must affirm and recover" (García 1998, 325, translation mine). As Ramírez has observed, ". . . the Puerto Rican artist of the 1980s does not feel restricted to a particular outlook or iconography to assert commitment to a national artistic tradition" (1987, 44). Island artists interrogated the often contradictory and conflictive nature of Puerto Rican identity (García 1998, 326). Whether working in abstract or realist forms, however, Puerto Rican artists did not completely distance themselves from national representational mo tifs, but employed familiar color compositions and uses of light, rhythm, and titles as they found these effective (Ramírez 1987;García 1998).

During this decade, artists were faced with the disintegration of old artistic venues. They could no longer find employment as artists with government agencies such as DIVEDCO, for instance. The

PNP's emphasis on a "universal" culture had begun to dismantle the artistic and cultural agencies perceived as promoting a nationalistic Puerto Rican culture. This period coincided with the rise of private galleries and a more affluent public capable of purchasing, collecting, and investing in artworks. Concomitantly, as García notes, artists increasingly produced paintings with a "mythical one of a kind character" that they felt fetched higher prices in the art market (1998, 326). At the same time this decade witnessed increased arts funding from private and corporate interests (Ramírez 1987, 42). Local firms as well as American-owned global companies with branches in Puerto Rico, such as Bacardí Limited, Chase Manhattan Bank, Smith Kline French, and First Federal Savings Banks began to sponsor art shows (Ramírez 1987;García 1998;Fernández Zavala 2001).

As a result of this new social landscape, artists responded by becoming increasingly professionalized and by allying themselves with private entities capable of funding their work. For instance, to commemorate Women's Week in March of 1983, the *Asociación de Comerciantes de Plaza Las Américas* [Plaza Las Américas' Merchant Association] in collaboration with Maud Duquella, the owner of Botello Gallery organized a show held at the Plaza Las Américas mall titled *Women in Art* (Fernández Zavala 2001, 159). The idea to create the professional group Women Artists of Puerto Rico, Inc. was born during this exhibition. By this time a small number of female artists were beginning to achieve artistic prominence including the artists Myrna Báez, Consuelo Gotay, Haydeé Landin, Marta Pérez García, María de Mater O'Neill, and María Antonia Ordoñez, among others (working mainly in sculpted pottery) (see Dwight García 1998; José David Miranda 1998; and the book *Nuestro Autorretrato: La Mujer Artista y la autoimagen en un contexto multicultural*, 1993). A new and heterogeneous generation of Puerto Rican artists, of which women formed a noticeable contingent, came of age during this period. These younger artists embraced cosmopolitan artistic trends such as performance art and installation, but they borrowed from and re-imagined the work of previous generations and their work was imbricated within uniquely Puerto Rican cultural and social concerns.

In what follows I offer a critical review of important art works created by some of the island's renowned artists belonging to the eighties generation.11

To be sure, Puerto Rican artists whether living on the island, the U.S. mainland or in Europe were part of the same global artscape, their work often having in common the use of Puerto Rican national referents. To orient this analysis I use as reference the significant texts *Puerto Rican Painting: Between Past and Present* (1987), curated and introduced by Mari Carmen Ramírez and the essays *Puerto Rico in the Late 20th Century*, written by Silvia Álvarez Curbelo, and *1980–1990 (More or Less): Preliminary Comments*, written by Dwight García, both of which are part of *Puerto Rico Arte e Identidad* [Puerto Rico Art and Identity] (1998), edited by artists Myrna Báez and José A. Torres Martinó. I pay particular attention to the ways in which these artists still signaled a preoccupation, similar to that of artists from previous generations, with nation, race and gender. The preoccupation with nationality and cultural identity persisted in the 1980s.

Still, unlike previous generations, as Cuban art critic Samuel B. Cherson attests in his review of the exhibit *Ocho de los 80s* [Eight of the 80s],

This group represents a new generation of artists who do not shy away from their roots but who do not feel the duty to indoctrinate or use it as propaganda, in this way they remain open to the currents that blow from the great art capitals. Although the references to the island's nationality are frequent, in general this is not an art committed to that cause. Their compromise is with individual expression and with experimentation. These are the signs of the Times. (Cherson 1986, 14; translation mine)12

Similarly, writing about María de Mater O'Neill critic and curator Elaine King, noted that, "She along with fellow artists who emerged in the 1980s demonstrated early in their careers an awareness of, and engagement with, global cultural trends and a need for creative experimentation" (2007, 33). One of the assessments about the eighties generation then is their common interests in experimentation and in transcending previous artistic boundaries and norms.

In fact, as careful analysis will reveal one of this generation's greatest challenges involved the overcoming or "painting beyond" the national symbols that master's, such as Oller, Frade, and even Tufiño, so powerfully etched in earlier eras. And although the quest to affirm the realities of a specific historic moment (that of the 1980s) was an imperative informing all artists, it was even more so for female artists who had to contend with a male-dominated national artistic canon. For instance, remarking about the master's conceptions of Puerto Rican reality, María de Mater O'Neill stated that, It became clear to me that the conceptions of the nation were created, although not exclusively by, but were definitely shaped by male painters, who transformed the nation into a woman . . . a poor woman but nevertheless somehow proud of her condition . . . and that the city was always a place of evil and the countryside was a paradise, that the latter was the authentic Puerto Rican space. It was difficult for me to identify with this because I was born in the city. . . . (King 2007, 21; translation mine) O'Neill's statement reveals something that is confirmed in any survey of the era's visual arts, that is that island artists increasingly confronted a resolutely urbanized milieu one that spread out in concentric circles from the San Juan Metropolitan region. And yet, this urbanity encroaching on Puerto Rico, a result of the drive toward modernization and progress, was conceived as a negative byproduct, the degeneration of its rural, agrarian character. For the masters Old San Juan had once stood as the island's symbol of cosmopolitanism, as did, to a lesser degree the island's smaller cities. By the eighties, island residents experienced Caribbean urbanity with its attending characteristics, including crowded neighborhoods, traffic, garbage, economic inequality, as well as social ills all part and parcel of daily life. Urbanity though existed in levels; at one end was New York City's ultra-modernity with its mammoth structures and high-paced life, and both Chicago and Miami offered still other kinds of urbanscapes. My point is that in the eighties urbanity reigned supreme and for artists working during this period, as it has been for artists since, the ways of popular urban culture and modern life have been a defining feature of artistic output. In this regard, Puerto Rican artists, like international artists around the world, worked with an awareness that they belonged within a network of highly organized, urban artistic nodes. Artists would become imbricated in this network through the art schools they attended, and the museums, galleries and biennales at which they exhibited. What they could not escape and what was something previous generations experienced differently was the global artscape's marketing machine, one that promoted "third-world" artists using essentializing categories such as nationality, gender, or the banners of multiculturalism and diversity as core elements of their campaigns. But as art critic Haydee Venegas remarked, "Of the political slogans to take root in our minds is that Puerto Rico has 'the best of both worlds.' But sometimes we don't fit in either of them" (2003, 1). She further observed that as a result, Puerto Rico and its people are often excluded altogether, as was the case with the book *Latin American Art of the 20th Century* (1993), written by Edward Lucie-Smith. Puerto Rican art was not represented in this text because the author claimed that "it is difficult to draw an absolutely firm line between twentieth-century Puerto Rican art and that of the United States" (Venegas 2003, 2). However, as the art historian Robert Hobbs has observed in the United States, Puerto Rico is considered culturally Latino and consequently it is excluded from U.S. histories as well (1995, 6).

A Generation Whose Past Images The Future

A Generation Whose Past Images The Future

My generation is heir to a special brand of thinking from the 1950s . . . we were born into an urban environment . . . as a generation we were influenced by the hope/progress of Modernity. Luis Muñoz Marín was the first governor of Puerto Rico elected by Puerto Ricans, in 1948—he promoted cultural enterprise, industrialization, urbanization, and the creation of the Commonwealth. I grew up hearing such optimistic stories. However, after gaining acute knowledge about the multifaceted history of this place, it was obvious to me that all the attitude/dogma of modernist thinking in Puerto

Rico was a lie. The only way to be free of this fictional history and its myths is to have no representation. Therefore, I ceased to make work—I wanted no more stories.

—María de Mater O'Neill, *Artist Interrupted: Selected Works by María de Mater O'Neill From Post to After, 1983–2006*

Beginning in April and ending in July 1986, the exhibit *Ocho de los 80s* [Eight of the 80s], featuring this new generation's emerging young artists, opened in San Juan's *Arsenal de la Marina* [Navy Arsenal]. The exhibit was organized by the ICP and as it was by then the custom, sponsored by the privately owned firm Barcadí Limited. In his review of the exhibit, Cuban art critic Samuel B. Cherson explained that the eight artists were born between the years 1952–1960, that four were born on the island, three in New York, and one in Cuba. He also noted that almost all of the artists had studied abroad and that a few of these lived in the U.S. mainland at the time the exhibit took place (1986, 14). Artists were selected by the esteemed curators Mari Carmen Ramírez, Teresa Tió, and the sculptor Jaime Suárez, and included works by Carlos Collazo,13 Carlos Marcial, María de Mater O'Neill, María Antonia Ordóñez, Arnaldo Roche Rabell, Gloria Rodríguez, Nick Quijano, and Joyce Ann Wlodarczyk. Seeking to present a gender-balanced exhibition the committee selected four male and four female artists.

Even though all of the artists and artworks featured in *Eight of the 80s* are equally compelling, here I focus my analysis on the artistic productions of María de Mater O'Neill and Nick Quijano. I chose these two artists for their very different visual apprehension of Puerto Rican reality. De Mater O'Neill, who beside being an artist is also highly engaged in intellectual debates about art history, and Puerto Rican art history more specifically, offers a visual confrontation with canonical arts, expected social conventions, and the Caribbean's geo-political reality. Quijano, also an astute observer, offers visual vignettes focused on aspects of everyday life and popular culture. The female figures prominently, although differently, in the work of both artists. These artists regarded as central to Puerto Rico's artistic canon offer a fascinating "look into" how race, class and nation shaped their artistic productions during the last decades of the twentieth century.

I begin this analysis however by exploring the work of Myrna Báez, an artists who as critic Dwight García has noted was "Already a relatively consecrated artist during the seventies, she produced her strongest and most meaningful work from 1975 to 1990" (1998, 364). I do so to understand how her work influenced younger artists and specifically, the work of de Mater O'Neill and to a lesser degree also Nick Quijano's renditions of women. I follow the artistic production of both de Mater O'Neill and Quijano into the nineties. Finally, I offer a critical analysis of the public discourse that resulted from the exhibit titled *Paréntesis: Ocho Artistas Negros Contemporáneos* [Parenthesis: Eight Black Contemporary Artists], which toured the island from May to October 1996.

The Women In Myrna Báez'S Canvases

The Women In Myrna Báez'S Canvases

Myrna Báez (1931–) is widely regarded as the most prominent female artist in Puerto Rico in the second half of twentieth century. Sullivan has noted that "The names of Rafael Tufiño, Lorenzo Homar, Francisco Rodón, Carlos Raquel Rivera and Julio Rosado del Valle are among those defining individuals of mid- and late-twentieth-century painting and graphic arts. To this list of fundamental personalities must be added the name of Myrna Báez . . ." (2001, 28). Báez has made it into the male dominated canon of great Puerto Rican artists. Here I seek to understand how her artwork stands as a reference point for younger female artists in Puerto Rico, specifically as it pertains to María de Mater O'Neill, whose work I analyze below.

Myrna Báez is among a small number of female artists to have achieved both distinction and recognition from her artistic peers in twentieth-century Puerto Rico.14 Critic Marta Traba wrote that Báez was ". . . the most qualified person I know in the visual arts in Puerto Rico" (Sullivan 2001, 3, 28; cf. Traba 1971, 121).15

Báez is well known for her iconic nudes depicting primarily although not exclusively the figures of women. As Benítez has observed, "In Myrna Báez's work women represent a fundamental theme" (1988, 64).16 For the most part, however, she represents women who belong specifically to her own socio-cultural sphere. As such, she represents the bodies of white women—fleshy, rounded bodies in which large breasts prevail (for instance, *Desnudo No. 1*, 1960; *Desnudo No. 11*, 1960; *El desnudo del diván*, 1964; *Desnudo frente a gavetero*, 1967; *El espejo*, 1978; *Desnudo frente al espejo*, 1980; *Diálogo*, 1981; *El verde en la habitación 11*, 1983; *Ella*, 1993; *Las cortinas del encaje*, 1994; *Hechicera*, 1993). These bodies stand in contradistinction to the bodies of black women, such as Tufiño's *Majestad negra* (1958) or *Danza negra* (1968), in which the backside symbolizes a sexualized blackness and the feminine bodies of women of African descent. In contrast, the women Báez represents, while naked, rarely suggest sexuality; rather her compositions suggest a sense of stillness and passivity. Benítez has noted that the passive women motif found in Báez's work is ironic given that in her public life the artist is a well-known defender of the rights of women. In 1983 for example she helped found *Mujeres Artistas de Puerto Rico, Inc.* [Puerto Rico Women Artists, Inc.] and she has simultaneously rejected the traditional gender roles expected of Puerto Rican women, those of wife and mother (Benítez 1988, 64–65).

I suggest that when viewed from the perspectives of race and class, Báez's iconic representations of women appear laden with privilege and power (see Figure 7.3). The women she represents often appear alone, on their own terms, and in their own space fully inhabiting their plump bodies. In other words, the women appear as occupying reflective, introspective spaces suggesting a freedom that married women, mothers, and black and lower-class women do not often have. The majority of Báez's women are not stylized for the male gaze—they are quite the opposite. They often appear seated (rather than at work fetching food for a husband or children), in meditative poses, or gazing lazily or dreamily at the landscape, their large breasts and bellies hanging freely.

These women are a lot like Báez: freed from expected roles, they are thinking women, privileged women, women who have free time to contemplate their lives. They also have the power of mobility, for at times these meditative white women's bodies appear facing a verdant landscape (for example, *El Verde en la habitación II*, 1983) and at other times, they marvel at the urban cityscape (*La terraza*, 1993). But these women most often appear alone and are thus seemingly lonely. Loneliness, I contend, is a direct result of their upper-class status.

In a small island like Puerto Rico, upper-class women are circumscribed both socially and geographically. Geographic boundaries limit "upper-classness" to sanctioned locations. Because the wealthy represent a comparatively

Myrna Báez, Desnudo frente al espejo, 1980. Courtesy of Myrna Báez.

Myrna Báez, Desnudo frente al espejo, 1980. Courtesy of Myrna Báez. A black and white photograph shows the back of a naked woman sitting on a stool in front of a mirror, which reflects her front.small group within Puerto Rican society, those belonging to this stratum have only a small group of contemporaries with whom they socialize. This idea correlates with Báez's frequent depiction of women in interior spaces such as the bedroom, the bathroom, and the living room, upholding my argument that in Puerto Rico women's lives are (expected) to be led in the private sphere and within the confines of the home. Writing about the feminine figures in Báez's work, Fernández Zavala points out that, ". . . from the interiors, from the reclusive spaces of the Puerto Rican middle-class, whose description the artist seeks to portray—from here on out—she depicts how greatly compromised is the happiness of the people in her social class" (2001, 62).17 Zavala adds, "The solitude portrayed by the characters who populate these domestic spaces is

devastating" (2001, 65).18

In the striking portrayal of the female characters populating her canvases, Báez proposes a representational contrast: some of the women are portrayed inside the home yet gazing directly at the luxuriant tropical landscape just beyond them (and outside the home), their backs to the viewer (see for example *María Eugenia en el paisaje*, 1981; *La puerta de cristal*, 1987). Other women she depicts near a window or a door facing the viewer, still inside the home with the lush landscape outside behind them (see *El sofá*, 1977; *La hora azul*, 1993). Although positioned against the world outside, her female subjects are confined to their "human" interiors, tropical vegetation just beyond their reach—wild, uncontained, and free. It is as if by juxtaposing the island's flora against the figures of women, Báez is underscoring women's fecundity yet contrasting the upper-class sociocultural trappings that work to contain the feminine figure with tropical vegetation which left to its own devices reproduces itself enthusiastically over vast spaces.

MaríA De Mater O'Neill: Representational Confrontations

MaríA De Mater O'Neill: Representational Confrontations

María de Mater O'Neill was born in 1960 and by 1980 had established herself as an important emerging artist. Although, as King has noted, she prefers painting, de Mater O'Neill is an adept multi-media artist creating comfortably in diverse mediums from painting and installations to video production and computer graphics (2007). Her professional autobiographic timeline19 (1960–1989), reveals that already by 1978, when Lorenzo Homar wrote a letter of recommendation on her behalf for admission to Cooper Union School of Arts and Sciences in New York City, she was well regarded by at least one of the masters of San Juan's artistic intelligentsia. Her biographic timeline also notes that she met artist Myrna Báez in 1979, a meeting of consequence since it is the only biographical entry for that year. De Mater O'Neill lived in New York City between 1978 and 1988, spending the years 1982–1983 working in Master Printer Workshop in Florence, Italy. However all the while she lived abroad, she was an active participant in island-based exhibits winning several local, but important prizes. Since returning to Puerto Rico in 1988, she has continued to create, curate, write, and teach new generations of artists, scholars, and theorists.

María de Mater O'Neill's diverse and rich *oeuvre* will, no doubt, be subject to many studies. Indeed, a fascinating aspect of de Mater O'Neill's undertaking is the meticulous, precise, and up-to-date on-line documentation of her prolific work, which includes writings by her and about her, photographs and videos of her paintings, exhibitions, as well as access to the history of the important on-line cultural e-zine *El cuarto del Quenepón*, which she created in 1995 and closed in 2005. The creation of the e-zine is in itself an important and historic undertaking as it was one of the first ten Spanish e-zines to exist on the Internet.20 In comparison to her abundant and multi-faceted output, my investigation here is limited to only a tiny fraction of her artistic production.

I briefly analyze four of her works: *Central I* (Sugar mill, I) (1985); *Autorretrato, VIII: Desnudo frente al espejo* (Self-portrait, VIII: Nude in front of the mirror) (1988); *Mapa #12* (Map #12) (1994); and *Ella, la más artista de todos* (She, the top artist of them all) (1999). I chose these works for several reasons, including her representational confrontation with canonical masters Myrna Báez and Ramón Frade, but also because of their important social commentary on specifically Puerto Rican and Caribbean cultural and geo-political realities. *Central I* [Sugar mill, I] dated 1985, is significant as a work that provides the artist with a type of historical grounding. It signals her position as part of a sugar-producing Caribbean island and similar to artists in earlier generations, when sugar was king, *Central I* offers a nod to what was once the island's most important economic enterprise, one around which social relations were built and organized. The painting's importance does not lie in the fact that by 1985, as Delano so aptly documented in his photograph, "Ruins of the Rufina sugar mill

in Guayanilla" (discussed previously), sugar mills were largely out of order, a fallen enterprise, but rather in that it was *the* emblem for the Caribbean, and of Puerto Rico more specifically. This becomes more evident, when one considers that in 1983, Mater O'Neill created *El coliseo* [The coliseum], and in 1984, *Plaza Mayor, Madrid* [Main Square, Madrid]. *Central I* created when she was twenty-five years old signals her engagement with canonical national symbols.

Between 1986 and 1989 de Mater O'Neill created a series of self-portraits (*Autorretratos*), that in the assessment of art critic Elaine King offer a

. . . curious mix of narrative and symbolism within a frame of frenzied expressionist lines and color. . . . The artist is not concerned with representational likeness but instead focuses on an unusual articulation of identity that touches on such general themes as gender, ethnicity, nationality, and sexuality, as well as on personal aspects of her life that overlap with her philosophical and psychological concerns. (2007, 34)

Autorretrato VIII: Desnudo frente al espejo [Self-portrait, VIII: Nude facing a mirror] (1988), is de Mater O'Neill's appropriation and re-interpretation of Myrna Báez's iconic *Desnudo frente al espejo* [Nude facing a mirror], (1980).21

In *Desnudo frente al espejo*, Báez's subject—a white woman—sits motionless her back to the viewer a gently sloping green landscape reflected back alongside her blurred reflection. This evocative painting, which in a classically Báezian way appears to have been rendered with painstakingly precise concentration, is characterized by a muted palette and her usual restraint. There is a quiet modesty to this woman, her neatly braided blond hair with a few strands falling away from her face glow almost halo-like. The image's stillness is daunting.

In contrast, María de Mater O'Neill's *Self-portrait, VIII* (1988) depicted in Figure 7.4, offers a visual confrontation with Báez's canonical woman and thereby subverts the expected norms and symbols regulating her framing.

De Mater O'Neill's portrait is in every way diametrically opposed to Báez's original portrayal. About de Mater O'Neill's portraits, King has opined that although a "Plethora of sub-themes and texts is inferred throughout the autobiographical imagery . . . an objective reality is never made visible, the self-portraits remain clandestinely subjective" (2007, 34). By encrypting the frame with enigmatic symbolism, available only to the artist herself, she circumscribes possible readings. In other words, in spite of the visually frenetic, pulsating, and boisterous character of *Autorretrato, VIII*, de Mater O'Neill submerges her feminine subject into an inaccessible introspective state. In doing so, she travels another path to meet Báez in the same place: a place where women, whether still and muted or frenzied and bright, live mysterious interior lives (See Figure 7.4).

Still, as Romero-Cesareo has written about de Mater de O'Neill's eighth self-portrait, "oscillating between play and belligerence," it "seems to be an exercise in unleashed tension" (1994, 914). The bright array of colors—deep yellows, oranges, reds, blues, whites and pinks, suggests intensity and the undulating lines of a woman possessed by movement and energy, the plethora of symbolism proposes her as psychologically hard-working. It is as if she is pondering many realities, possibilities, and ideas at once. In this woman's mirror the viewer sees a reflection, but the reflection is not the same as that of the sitter, the floating reflection proposes a second woman, possibly the sitter's psyche as she hovers over a blue background: could this be de Mater O' Neill's depiction of the island as a woman, a play on the painterly and literary master's conception of the island as a female entity? Painted inside the head of this floating reflection is a tiny blue map of the island, national identity is decisively etched on the psyche's reflection. Another provocative

Figure 7.4. María de Mater O'Neill, Autorretrato VIII: Desnudo frente al espejo,1988.

Courtesy of María de Mater O'Neill.

Figure 7.4. María de Mater O'Neill, Autorretrato VIII: Desnudo frente al espejo,1988. Courtesy of María de Mater O'Neill. A black and white abstract painting depicting a fragmented female form in front of a mirror, with various symbolic elements and a map of Puerto Rico inside a head.aspect in this depiction is that the leg of the ghostly figure breaks through the reflective frame effectively piercing the body of the woman looking in the mirror. By connecting the two figures—the sitter and her reflection—de Mater O'Neill shatters the notion that the sitter must search for interiority in her reflection, but rather decisively inscribes the ghostly reflection as an inherent part of the sitter.

Amid the symbolism, in the bottom right hand side of the frame is a leg, whose calf is being injected with a needle—it is easy to speculate that this representation might somehow be a commentary of the island's epidemic rates of heroin addiction. An aspect of Puerto Rican social reality in the eighties, one that Delano also noted with his photographs "In a detoxification room at the drug rehabilitation center known as CREA in Río Piedras" (196) and "A church building converted into a drug treatment center in Cataño" (197). On the opposite side of the frame in *Autorretrato #8*, there are rows of eyes leading to the conjecture that the artist wanted to draw attention to the island's shame culture in which collective surveillance ("all eyes on you") works to maintain expected behaviors and specifically so as related to women's comportment. The word "correct" appears mysteriously written beside an unreadable phrase.

In *Mapa #12* [Map #12] (1994), the artist depicts a triptych of life vests, the first, from right to left, is an orange life vest labeled San Juan, the next one a bright yellow vest with a stark black background is labeled Port-Au-Prince and the last is labeled Santo Domingo. It is easy to read that this representation aims to make a social commentary on the state of affairs in these three geo-political locales. Interestingly though, de Mater O'Neill labeled the capital cities, rather than the country names for the three islands. Already, it seems there has been an internal migration of citizens to each of the country's major cities—after that first rural to urban displacement these now urbanized citizens don life vests as they venture—through legal and illegal migration to other shores. But there is another layer to this visual narrative, and that is the stair step migration that has come to characterize the Caribbean. The "stair step hierarchy" is a migration pattern in which, "the poorest people move to the less poor nations and people from the latter, in turn move to the economically developed countries" (Loeb Adler and Gielen 2003, 128; cf. Bach 1983;Duany 1994).

What is compelling is that although she signals this migratory pattern, Haitians cross the borders into Dominican Republic, while Dominicans cross the border into Puerto Rico, the representation remains incomplete because it does not depict Puerto Ricans moving to the U.S. mainland. It could be that de Mater O'Neill simply wished to call attention to the three cities—islands—floating adrift on the same sea like life vests whose condition as "savers" and keepers of human life is merely temporary. Therefore these vests, temporary floating devices, might signal that the three islands, one a colonial entity, the others independent republics, one of which is routinely referred to as "the poorest nation in the Western Hemisphere," may not be after all so different from each other. Remaining afloat then is dependent on a shared fate, one that responds to the whims of the global free market economy. Resenting the increasing commercialization of her work during the years 1996 and 1998, María Mater de O'Neill felt that she needed to step back from painting and art making altogether. She explains, "I dropped out just when my career was picking up in the continental USA. I resented the restricted space of what others expected my work should be. I enthusiastically damaged my career in order to protect my work. . . . A label is death, because it takes away the liberty to fail" (King 2007, 37). However, during these years she invested a great deal of time and effort into the cultural e-zine El Cuarto del Quenepón. It seems that writing, theorizing, as well as mentoring younger artists took precedence over painting at least for a brief period.

With Ella, la más artista de todos [She, the top artist of them all] (1999), the artist punctuates the end of the century by breaking from the past. King suggests that during this period de Mater O'Neill "rejects identity issues and multiculturalism, and creates works critical of Latin American tradition as a means of separating herself as an independent global artist" (2007, 79). Her interest in shedding

national and gender labels occurred during a time when in the global art market it is almost impossible for artists to be read as anything but “a woman from Puerto Rico,” for instance. These very labels that she sought to reject are significant in the marketing of artwork and of placement and categorization within institutional settings.

In 1998, when she returned to art making, de Mater O’Neill took a new approach. She began a series of comics containing critical social commentary within the dialogue bubbles. In her search to debunk the past, a past she felt was still too present in contemporary Puerto Rican visions of itself, she created a heroine: “a woman, not any woman, but a commanding, detached lesbian” (King 2007, 37). In She, the Top Artist of Them All (1999), her heroine, an imposing figure to be sure, stands triumphantly atop Ramón Frade’s lifeless jíbaro (from El pan nuestro [Our daily bread], discussed in chapter one), a dagger in hand lifted to the sky. Her head is tilted back toward the sky her mouth open as if engaged in a cathartic scream. A dramatic image to be sure, de Mater O’Neill has just committed patricide. Her heroine has not just killed any man, she has killed Ramón Frade’s jíbaro, that most beloved painted depiction who has come to signify both a nostalgic vision of Puerto Rico’s agrarian past and the nation’s father figure. In the background, a lone palm tree is flanked by two of Puerto Rico’s most significant cultural institutions, Ponce’s Art Museum and the Puerto Rico Museum of Art. At the end of the century, María Mater de O’Neill’s super heroine, a white woman, a powerful muscular yet sexy lesbian, avenges a canon that has largely ignored women’s artistic production. Yet, as she evokes within the frame’s narrative, institutions and the (straight?) women who work in them have been complicit in this erasure.

Nick Quijano’S Vignettes Of Everyday Life

Nick Quijano’S Vignettes Of Everyday Life

Nick Quijano (1953–), a Bronx-born Puerto Rican artist (who at this point has lived in Puerto Rico longer than he did in New York City), is a renowned member of the eighties generation. In 1967, he settled in Puerto Rico where he studied architecture, he also worked as a graphic designer until 1980, when after two successful solo shows he dedicated himself exclusively to art making (Ramírez 1987, 123; García 1998, 346). As curator and critic Mari Carmen Ramírez has explained:

Like many children born and raised in New York City by Puerto Rican parents, Nick Quijano’s childhood was shaped by stories and idealized images of Puerto Rico. The imaginative power generated by this childhood experience later became the basis for development of his work as an artist. (1987, 123)

Similarly, in a review of Quijano’s work, cultural critic Rodríguez Juliá deepened the previous understanding by adding that:

Nick Quijano, the primitive painter born in New York . . . and who as a child dreamed of his ardent island . . . intends yet another affective retrieval, and I say this because it seems that memory turned nostalgic appears to be one of the significant signs defining Puerto Rican artists—poets, writers and painters—belonging to the generation born between 1945 and 1955. Born during *the crisis*, during the *social transformation*, the organizing of childhood experiences appear to be one of this generation’s promised lands. (2004, 5; translation mine; emphasis in original)22

Rodríguez Juliá, one of Puerto Rico’s utmost cultural critics, does not miss out on the ironic detail that Quijano, known for his primitive or naïf style, was born in New York City, that most moderns of cities. Yet, as Ramírez reminds in deciding to render his childhood visions of daily life and popular culture using folk techniques, Quijano made a conscious choice to situate his production within a uniquely Caribbean aesthetic (1987, 123).

In what follows I examine four of Nick Quijano's paintings, including *Memories of the Veteran* (1984, this book's cover), *La siesta* [The nap] (1985), *Ensueño del Caribe* [Dreaming from the Caribbean] (1990), and *Botánica La Milagrosa* (1990). In *Memories of the Veteran*, created in 1984, Quijano brings the viewer to a colorful living room in which a black youth flanks a black woman seated on a couch sipping coffee as a girl holding a doll sits beside her. Hanging in the center of the wall above the trio is a framed photograph of a black man in military uniform. Underneath the couch is a white cat. The four people, woman, boy, girl and man in the photograph as well as the cat look directly at the viewer. The painted image suggests a photographic encounter. The living room's furniture, with its neatly arranged flowers in matching vases, the doilies atop the tables, the white-clothes worn by children (to signify purity and innocence), the robust woman's lime green-dress, her bright red lips, her coifed hair and string pearl necklace, evoke order, control, stability, and middle-classness. Yet, Quijano alludes symbolically to something else. Similar to Rafael Tufiño's use of color (discussed in chapter five), the red ball the boy is holding and the red-dressed doll across the girl's lap evoke *Chango*.*Chango*, who is signified by the color red, is an African deity often invoked by the popular classes for protection and to represent strength. The children who appear wearing white and holding red objects are dressed in the colors of *Chango* signifying both race and class. The woman's green dress might similarly emphasize *esperanza* [hope], a color and cultural construct that appear elsewhere in Quijano's work (Rodríguez-Juliá, 2004).

In these details this painting can be read as representing a family who belongs to the lower-middle class. To be sure, *Memories of the Veteran* offers an endearing family portrait. The veteran's image depicts the involvement of Puerto Ricans in U.S. wars and stirs recollections: is Uncle Juan still alive or did he perish while defending the U.S.? Did he fight in Korea or in Vietnam?

This painting, part of the American Folk Art Museum's collection, is explained as portraying ". . . the artist's grandmother sitting in between the artist as a young boy and his sister. Above them and looking down over them is a symbolic rendering of Uncle Juan, an army veteran."23 Quijano, a light-skinned mulatto, like other island artists and writers, depicts his black grandmother as the family's matriarch. By portraying her within a neatly arranged home, a domain of respectability in which she sits front and center, is well-dressed, leisurely drinks her coffee in the company of her grandchildren and her cat with the respectable image of her veteran son above her, Quijano negates the image of the black woman as only confined to the kitchen and to work more generally.

In *La siesta* (see Figure 7.5) (1985), Quijano again portrays his grandmother, but this time she naps peacefully wearing a dark green dress with white earrings, a string-pearl necklace, bracelets, an ankle-bracelet and red

Nick Quijano, La siesta, 1985. Courtesy of Hostos Community College.

Nick Quijano, La siesta, 1985. Courtesy of Hostos Community College. A painting titled La siesta by Nick Quijano. It shows a Black woman napping on a red sofa. A portrait of a man hangs on the wall behind her. A small table in front of the sofa has a coffee cup, a small portrait, glasses, and a note.lipstick with perfectly matching manicured red finger and toe nails. She is asleep atop a red velvet sofa. Her lighter-skinned husband's elegant portrait framed and hanging on the wall directly behind her hovers over her rotund body. Her feminine sandals rest on the floor near the center table on which is a cup of coffee, her small wedding portrait, eye glasses, and as Rodríguez Juliá reveals, a Puerto Rican lottery ticket and a note from the artists that reads "*Abuela: Aquí te dejé unos billetitos para que te pegues la semana que* viene. Te quiero. Nicky . . ." [Grandma: Here I left you some lottery tickets so that you can win next week. I love you. Nicky . . .] (2004, 7). A tan dog naps on the floor beside her. There are two matching tables on each side of the sofa: on the table located near her head is a shadeless lamp in the figure of a naked and winged woman, her long hair falling to her waist as her raised hands hold up a light bulb; on the other side table is the *Virgen de los Milagros* [Virgin of Miracles], a lighted votive in front of her and a vase of flowers behind her.

In this rich and detailed composition Quijano envelops his grandmother in beauty, comfort, and love. This is a healthy well-regarded and well-kept woman. Her elegance as well as the neatness and order depicted in her domestic space reveal a flawless feminity. Her husband's large portrait and their small wedding portrait, both placed at the center of the composition, are reminders of her duties—both physical and domestic—to the man of the house. Yet, as she sleeps, he watches dutifully. The couple's union seems to be one in which each attends to their expected spheres: he to the public domain, protector of his wife, and she to the domestic realm as a goddess, safe to dream inside of her home. In the composition, Quijano's grandmother is the queen; she is a majestic beauty free to take leisurely naps on her plush red velvet couch. This image of a self-possessed black woman resting peacefully in a beautifully arranged interior-scape reminds the viewer of an altar. *La siesta* can be read as a depiction of an altar, an offering to the artist's grandmother for watching over him, for bringing him luck, and for creating a rich world of symbols, textures, safety, comfort, and love that would support his prolific artistic career.

La siesta offers a break in the representation of Puerto Rico's black grandmother, in this rendition Quijano goes a step further than *Memories of the Veteran*. Here, alone, inside her sleep the black grandmother is free, completely free to unwind. And although there is lots of visual noise around her, her full still body, resembles Báez's women; and yet, the vibrancy of the colors, the undulating lines, the round curves of the couch and table, the photos of her man, all signal a full-life, a meaningful life; in her restful sleep, a deep contentment is revealed. Quijano renders his black grandmother as a figure in which a deep, wise equilibrium prevails.

In 1990, Nick Quijano created *Ensueño del Caribe* [Dreaming from the Caribbean], in which similar to *La siesta* (1985), the viewer sees a close-up image, this time of a light-skinned woman napping peacefully on a couch. She wears a tan dress, the same color as the couch, her hair is long, her lips are the same red color of her manicured finger and toe nails. Like the woman in *La siesta*, this woman also wears an ankle bracelet but that is the only ac cessory that is visible. A framed portrait of a couple is hanging on the wall behind her above the couch. The portrait depicts the woman who is napping and her man, their heads pressed together their eyes closed. Two floor vases flank her their deep greenery arching over the couch.

Is she the artist's mother? The lighter skinned daughter of his black grandmother and light-skinned grandfather? Is she the triumph of a family project that sought to *mejorar la raza* [improve the race], making each successive generation lighter, whiter? This woman who is obviously an heir to the grandmother's self-possession and aesthetic sensibility, also occupies a peaceful domestic space. Even though Quijano portrays his feminine figures asleep and thus experiencing internal states that are inaccessible to the viewer, he highlights their richly textured lives, lives which are far from lonely. Unlike Báez's work in which feminine figures propose a "devastating loneliness," and de Mater O'Neill's in which female protagonists are engaged in deep intellectual and psychically challenging states, Quijano places his women reposing from lives that are at once filled with family, beloved others, and yet contented that this is just so. In addition, the fact that his resting women, both of whom evoke the sleeping European beauty in *Flaming June* (1895),24 appear with their eyes shut and away from the motions of the world, suggests that Quijano (and perhaps male painters more generally, is not able to depict female interiority). That this is after all, a private state. What is moving about Quijano's portrayal is the utter care and gentleness with which he handles the women in his portraits.

Finally, in *Botánica La Milagrosa* (1990), Quijano takes the viewer to a folk-popular milieu, one uniquely associated with "poor folks" or the "popular classes." A *botánica* is a store that sells religious candles, incense, figures of Catholic saints, African and Indigenous deities, amulets, lucky soaps and perfumes, and all matter of syncretic magico-religious goods. It is an outlet that caters to syncretic beliefs including Catholicism, *santería*, folk healing, and spiritism, among others. Furthermore, *botánicas* usually offer the services of a "seer," a diviner or a shaman/healer. As such it is a place where women and men seek "consultations" to deal with circumstances as varied as mending a broken heart, getting the attention of a potential lover, communicating with ancestors, receiving a tarot reading, praying for the safety of a loved one, or repelling negative energy.

Syncretism is at the very center of the *botánica*, it is a unique space that embodies the cultural and racial mixture that is inherent to Caribbean society. Depicting Puerto Rico's popular classes as opposed to "high-society or the Anglo experience" has been Quijano's trademark, a way of "painting what he knows," upholding scenes that narrate uniquely local cultural practices.25 In *Botánica La Milagrosa*, Quijano depicts a group of well-dressed women the colors of their skins the varied shades of tans and light browns common to Puerto Rican people, as they stand in small groups on both sides of the front door. Two nearly identical women dressed in white, their hands clasped together their heads slightly bowed, their eyes closed sit barefoot on blue stools, flanking each side of the main entrance. Through the open door the viewer sees the statue of *La Milagrosa*. She is placed on an altar and stands atop a globe of the world, visible is the American continent (north and south), a candle on each side, a plain light bulb hanging over the virgin's head, and beneath her leading all the way out of the *botánica* and into the street are red roses. The cobblestone streets, on which two nearly identical tan dogs sleep aside the door positioned similarly to the seated women, signal that this *botánica* is located in Old San Juan.

Several meanings emerge in this configuration. By painting the benches on which the two women dressed in white sit, Quijano subtly evokes *Yemayá*, the great mother who lives and rules over the seas, and whose colors are blue and white. One of the characteristics associated with *Yemayá* is her power of divination and her special care for anyone who feels lost and lonely. Another revealing aspect are the red roses scattered from *La Milagrosa's* feet all the way into the street, as red roses signify passion and love. The two women guarding the doorway, themselves saintly figures, reveal that this *botánica* might specialize in matters of the heart. The women Quijano has depicted in this composition remind one of the way in which he envisioned his elegant grandmother, their carefully patterned dresses and matching shoes, their manicured nails, necklaces, and long luxurious hair signaling women in the prime of their lives. Their colorful, Caribbean-styled appearance also signals the dress of the popular class. On the left side of the frame, under the words *botánica* stand two women; one wears a burgundy dress, her arms folded against her chest, and the other wears a green dress, her skin noticeably darker, her hair a light-brown reddish hue a typical choice for hair dye among Puerto Rican women. This woman's hand is placed on the shoulder of one of the mysterious women sitting barefoot at the entrance to the *botánica*. On the other side, there are three more women; one wears a long black dress her arms folded over her chest, the woman next to her wearing a yellow dress with one hand placed on the shoulder of the women in the black dress and on the other holding a note a red spot visible on the white paper, and a third woman stands wearing a coral dress, a rosary hanging from her neck, her hands near her chin as if in a praying position.

With this composition, Quijano depicts the private world of women, one to which a man rarely has access, that is unless he is the consultant waiting to offer advice and divination in the inside of the *botánica*. The women, who stand patiently waiting their turn to enter this magico-spiritual realm, appear in contemplative poses their eyes closed. The painting suggests that again, this is, as far a male painter will be allowed; to the exterior of the *botánica* as well as to the exterior of women's inner life. Access to the inside, the psyche, and the mysterious emotional and syncretic world of Puerto Rican women is not entirely available to him. This feminine depiction is a stark contrast to another Quijano painting in which he depicts a group of men standing and playing dominoes outside of another *botánica*, one named *Sagrado Corazón*, in which a portrait of the *Sagrado Corazón de Jesús* hangs just inside the door, and the men, with their eyes open appear variously engaged in drinking, smoking, and hanging out.

Race-Ing The Frame

Race-Ing The Frame

The exhibit *Paréntesis: Ocho Artistas Negros Contemporáneos* [Parenthesis: Eight Contemporary Black Artists], curated by Edwin Velázquez and organized by the eight artists themselves, took place in 1996, four years shy of the new millennium. To be clear, this was not the first exhibit to present the work of Afro-Puerto Ricans. This exhibition was preceded by *La Presencia Africana en el Caribe* [The African Presence in the Caribbean], organized by Ricardo Alegría working from the *Instituto de Estudios Caribeños* and the *Museo de Arte e Historia* in 1989. Another exhibit, this one titled *La Tercera Raíz: La Presencia Africana en Puerto Rico* [The Third Root: The African Presence in Puerto Rico], was organized by the *Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Puertorriqueña* and took place in 1992.26 The aforementioned exhibits as their titles make apparent are tinged with archeological, historic, and folkloric tones. Organized from a historic perspective, these exhibits show the unfortunate tendency in Puerto Rico to "fossilize" blacks in the past—to deny their existence in the present day. Furthermore, the insistence on representing "African contributions" in the form of the *vejigante* mask and the drum obscures other kinds of representations beyond what has been sanctioned as folkloric. Lastly, this maneuver of grasping onto the continental signifier "Africa" to refer to the contributions of blacks in the American Diaspora obviates the significant history of how Africans became blacks in the New World.

In light of this, the historic implications of *Paréntesis* is that it was the *first* collective exhibition to use the word *negro* [black] as part of its titled with the explicit goal of making blackness a visible and important personal, social, and lived category one that constituted and informed the creation of art in late twentieth-century Puerto Rico. As Velázquez noted in his brief introductory remarks in the exhibit's catalog:

When I began organizing this exhibit I found that some artists and organizations rejected the exhibit because of its title . . . they did not doubt the quality of the artworks, but the use of the word *negro* in the exhibit's title because they felt that racism did not exist in Puerto Rico. . . . In Puerto Rican reality racism is masked and the word *negro* is considered offensive, repulsive, and it is frequently associated with negative traits. (translation mine)27

The decision to use the word *negro* in the exhibit's title to define themselves and their art engendered a heated debate among cultural workers in Puerto Rico. For instance, in an article titled "Plastic Arts and Racism," published in the newspaper *El Nuevo Día* the important artist and art historian José A. Torres Martinó wrote, "The exhibit by these eight young Puerto Rican artists is welcomed, *but it so* without its divisive, disorienting, and baseless dedication, that rather than reflecting national reality, tends to promote conflictive situations more attuned to North American society than to ours" (1996, 95; translation mine, emphasis mine). Similarly, writing for the newspaper *El Vocero* journalist José Rodríguez noted that: "I think that what I saw was an exhibition of Puerto Ricans artists, and not of any color. As Puerto Ricans, we are the synthesis of three races" (Den Tandt 1999, 78–79; cf. Rodríguez 1996:39). Writing for the leftist newspaper *Claridad*, journalist Vilma Maldonado Reyes noted that, "The fact that in North America blacks and Puerto Ricans are identified as minorities, within the cultural and political context, should not make this exhibition the torch for racial separatism" (1996, 25). As Den Tandt has cogently summarized about the reactions to the *Paréntesis* exhibit

On the one hand there is the veiled and not so veiled accusation that calling yourself black in Puerto Rico is unpatriotic, that it invokes a United States model of racial politics (segregationist) that does not correspond to Puerto Rico as a *mestizo* space. On the other hand is the artists' insistence that the discourse of *mestizaje* in Puerto Rico is just that, a discursive construct that reifies black culture in folkloric celebrations of Afro-Caribbeaness and hybridity whiles obscuring the inequalities experienced by black Puerto Ricans. (1999, 79)

Black Puerto Rican artists felt that their contributions had been largely ignored in the history of Puerto Rico's artistic canon. And what's more, that the presence of black artists and their artistic contributions were still being ignored in the present time. In an open letter published in the newspaper *El Nuevo Día*, the artist Daniel Lind wrote that,

Some of the reactions from the press to the exhibit's title are not at all surprising . . . since these reviews were written in their majority by mulattoes—people with light skin—their opinions were expected. It is logical to suppose that these reviewers who in some sense represent the "dominant" class would disregard the matter by saying that blacks in Puerto Rico have no base or right to protest . . . in our country we are constantly reminded of our blackness (with all that this implies) but saying publicly that we are black is not "approved" (Lind 1996; cf. den Tandt 1999, 79).

The exhibition, organized with the aim of making the artwork of contemporary black artists part of the public, cultural-artistic scene was, as Enied Routté-Gómez noted in the exhibit's catalog, born from, ". . . a collective wish to see their reflection, their expression on the face of their motherland. They want their voices to be heard reflected through the commentary from colleagues, critics, gallerists, and from the official world of culture" (translation mine).28 The exhibit also intended to offer artistic representations that went beyond the image of the *vejigante*, to break away from cliché images that worked to deny the contemporaneity of black artists in Puerto Rico.

The artists who took part in this important exhibit included Liz D. Amable (b. 1968), Jose Ramon Bulerin (b. 1952), Jesus Cardona (b. 1960), Arleen Casanova (b. 1967), Daniel Lind (b. 1953), Gadiel Rivera (b. 1963), Awilda Sterling (b. 1947), and Edwin Velázquez (b. 1961). All of these artists had studied art formally having received arts degrees from such places as the School of Plastic Arts of Puerto Rico, the National Autonomous University of Mexico, New York University, and Pratt Institute. By the time of the exhibit they were well known in the local art scene, some had received prizes and grants and all had exhibited widely in both solo and collective shows. Still, writing about *Paréntesis* Velázquez observed that

. . . none of Puerto Rico's art critics reviewed the exhibit even though it traveled itinerantly throughout the island for six months. This fact shows once again the problematic attitude from the country's art critics who refuse to accept the contributions of blacks to the Puerto Rican artistic canon. (translation mine)29

Similarly striking is that the significant exhibit *Puerto Rican Painting: Between Past and Present* (1987) for example, did not include the work of any of the aforementioned artists. It is noteworthy however, that in its sampling of artists representing 1980–1987 is Nick Quijano's *La siesta* (1985), portraying his black grandmother and Arnaldo Roche's *Me llevan* [They are taking me away] (1985), representing a dark figure who holds on to the artist's head at- tempting to take it/him away. The two artists, both of whom are considered light-skinned mulattoes, have repeatedly represented themselves as black in their artwork. In other words, by representing their skin color as several shades darker than it is in real-life, they have sought to make visible and claim their African ancestry. What is interesting about this is that because culturally and historically Puerto Ricans claim to be descended from the three "racial roots," the Spanish, the Indigenous Taíno, and the African, there is a long history in Puerto Rican arts—from literature to plastic arts—of celebrating the "black art" produced by whites and light-skinned mulattoes, while relegating the art produced by visibly and recognizably black people to the realm of folklore or worse, ignoring it altogether.

This becomes even clearer in the significant art history survey titled *Puerto Rico Arte e Identidad* (1998), in which García's essay about Puerto Rican art and artists from 1980–1990 only includes the work of one of the artists, Daniel Lind, who participated in the *Paréntesis* exhibit two years prior to the book's publication. While again, Nick Quijano and Arnaldo Roche's depictions of blackness as the works of lighter skinned Puerto Ricans receive considerable attention. To be sure, Quijano and Roche's masterful artistic productions deserve critical attention, but what I am critical of are the ways in which the national discourses of *mestizaje* and *la gran familia puertorriqueña* [the great Puerto Rican family] collude to disregard black artists in Puerto Rico. This instance manifests the continuation of a long tradition of excluding black artists and their productions from the canonical history altogether.30 The public dialogue that emerged as a result of the exhibit *Paréntesis* also makes evident that the voices of black artists are summarily unheeded by cultural and artistic gatekeepers on the island. For instance, if eight black artists are attesting to feeling marginalized in Puerto Rico's artistic milieu and to have experienced racism first hand, why not believe them? Why do whites and light-skinned mulattos continue to forcefully silence the experience of blacks? Isn't it

about time that when black Puerto Ricans speak and represent themselves they are taken seriously, that they are respected, and understood in their own terms and in light of their unique experiences as blacks in Puerto Rico, and the American Diaspora more widely?

Notes

Notes

Attorney Rina Biaggi, who worked tirelessly to defend the residents of *Villa Sin Miedo*, has called the difficult years of the Romero Barcelo's governorship "el Romerato" (Claridad, October 2013).

The 1980 publication of José Luis González' *Puerto Rico: The Four Storeyed Country*, added fuel to the fire by challenging the heretofore conceptions of Puerto Rican national identity and culture. In a Marxist and staunchly anti-colonial vein, González resists canonical interpretations positing the white *jíbaro* as the soul of the nation and as representative of national identity. He proposes instead that what in Puerto Rico has been called national culture is merely a description of the dominant culture of the oppressed (3). He writes that, "the literary '*jibarismo*' of the élite has been nothing else at the bottom than a class's statement of its own racial and social prejudice" (26). Significantly, one of his most striking propositions is that ". . . it was blacks, the people bound most closely to the territory which they inhabited (they were after all slaves), who had the greatest difficulty in imagining any other place to live" (10).

Some biographical information obtained from http://melrosenthal.com/bio.html.

http://www.egs.edu/faculty/giorgio-agamben/articles/we-refugees/.

Source: www.tendenciaspr.com/violencia p. 6 Table 2: Violent Offenses.

All of the photos in *Puerto Rico Mío* are black and white.

Original: "Los meros contrastes sociales entonces se convierten en diminutos diálogos de la nostalgia con la interioridad. Sin sospecharlo, el testimonio social se ha convertido en introspección autobiográfica. La nostalgia queda reprimida."

This analysis is limited to Delano's photographic depictions of technology and modernization.

My nuclear family first migrated to the U.S. in the early 1980s, an experience I have described in an auto-ethnographic essay titled *Dislocated Geographies* (Lloréns 2006).

Lewis Hyde defines "shame" and "guilt" cultures in *Trickster Makes this World* (1998). I take up these ideas in an analysis of Puerto Rican popular culture and constructions of gender respectability in *HackingAway@Convention* (Lloréns 2009).

This discussion is limited to island-based artists, although it is important to note that by this time Puerto Rican-descended artists living in the United States had also created a masterful *oeuvre* (see Goldman 1995;Ramirez 2005).

Original: Este grupo representativo de una nueva generación de artistas no rehuye sus raíces, pero tampoco siente el deber doctrinario e propagarlas, manteniéndose al mismo tiempo abiertos a las corrientes que soplan de las grandes capitales del arte. Aunque son frecuentes las referecias a la nacionalidad isleña, no es éste en general un arte comprometido con sus causas. El compromiso es con la expresión individual y la experimentación plástica. Son los signos de los nuevos tiempos

(Cherson 1986, 14).

Sadly, Carlos Collazo was only thirty-four years old in 1990 when he died from AIDS-related complications.

In fact Sullivan, citing Ruiz de Fischler, has noted that “Within Puerto Rico itself a number of women distinguished themselves in the visual arts at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Fairly little is known about the female pupils of Francisco Oller beyond their names: Mercedes Blanco, María Caro, Am-

Original: “. . . la persona más capacitada para ser artista que he conocido en las artes plásticas de Puerto Rico.”

Original: “La mujer es uno de los temas fundamentales de Myrna Báez.”

Original: “. . . desde los interiores, desde los espacios recluidos de la clase media puertorriqueña, con cuya descripción, la artista acorralará—de aquí en adelante—la tan mediatizada felicidad de su clase social.”

Original: “La soledad de los personajes que habitan estos espacios domésticos es devastadora.”

Found here: http://marimateroneill.com/timeline_60_89.html.

For a history of the e-zine see first entry under the year 1995 @http://marimateroneill.com/timeline_90_99.html.

In a poetic essay titled *Myrna Báez: El trabajo del paisaje* [The landscape’s work], critic and writer Lilliana Ramos Collado reflecting on the latter image wrote that:

This woman whose pale, undefined face glimpses at her reflection in a mirror that allows her to transcend—or to reflect, or present, or reproduce—the landscape. . . . it would have to be said that the image reflected by this female subject constructs her own subjectivity in an equally feminine landscape . . . . she offers her model the iconic pose of melancholy: her elbow placed atop the table, her face resting on the palm of her hand, her gaze lost in contemplation of what lies in an elsewhere that is no other than her very inside . . . this is the reason the title does not refer to windows, but to mirrors (translation mine; original at http://bodegonconteclado.wordpress.com/2012/03/26/myrna-baez-el-trabajo-del-paisaje/#_ftn4).

Original: Nick Quijano, el pintor primitivo nacido en Nueva York . . . y que de niño soño con su isla ardiente . . . intenta aquí otra recuperación afectiva más, y digo así porque la memoria vuelta nostalgia parece ser uno de los signos que major definen la generación de artistas puertorriqueños—poetas, escritores y pintores—nacidos entre el 1945 y 1955. Nacidos de *la crisis*, en el *cambio social*, el ordenamiento de la experiencia infantil parece ser una de las tierras prometidas de esta generación.

http://www.folkartmuseum.org/index.php?p=folk=images=4392.

This 1895 painting by Sir Frederic Leighton was bought for $1,000 in Amsterdam in 1963 by Luis A. Ferré (who became governor of Puerto Rico five years later), and was installed in the Ponce Museum of Art which he founded.

See statement in: http://www.folkartmuseum.org/index.php?p=folk=images=4392.

See Edwin Velázquez Collazo *Introducción al Arte Afro-Puertorriqueño* http://culturaafropuertorico.blogspot.com/p/generacion-del-30-y-40.html.

Original: Al comenzar la tarea de organizar está exposición me encontre con el rechazo de algunos artistas, y organizaciones hacia la exposición por su titulo . . . No

[CONTINuity]ponían en duda la calidad de la obra que pudieran presentar los artistas participantes, sino, el uso de la palabra negros en el título de las misma e indicaban que en nuestro país no existe el racismo. . . . En nuestra realidad puertorriqueña existe una estética de la apariencia donde el discrimen esta disfrazado y el termino negro es considerado ofensivo, repulsivo y frecuentemente asociado con lo negativo. See Entre lo social, lo racial y lo plástico: http://artecoa.com/profiles/blogs/parentesis-ocho-artistas.

Original: ". . . su deseo común de ver su reflexión, su expresión en la faz de la Patria. Quieren que su voz sea escuchada a través de los comentarios de sus colegas, de los críticos, de los galeristas, en el mundo cultural de la oficialidad." See *Artista Negros para Catálogo* at http://artecoa.com/profiles/blogs/parentesis-ocho-artistas.

Original: ". . . dicha exposición no fue reseñada por ningún crítico de arte del país a pesar de que la misma estuvo viajando itinerantemente durante seis meses por diferentes salas de exposiciones de Puerto Rico. Hecho que demuestra nuevamente una problemática actitud de la crítica del arte del país por aceptar la aportación del negro en la plástica puertorriqueña." See Edwin Velázquez Collazo *Introducción al Arte Afro-Puertorriqueño* http://culturaafropuertorico.blogspot.com/p/generacion-del-30-y-40.html.

The neglect of Cecilia Orta Allende's artistic *oeuvre* from Puerto Rico's canonical art-history represents a case in point.

Part: Back matter

Back matter

Chapter 11: Epilogue

Epilogue

“The starting-point for all systems of aesthetics must be the personal experience of a peculiar emotion. The objects that prove this emotion we call works of art. . . . That there is a particular kind of emotion provoked by works of visual art, and that this emotion is provoked by every kind of visual art, by pictures, sculptures, buildings, pots, carvings, textiles, &c.;, &c.;, is not disputed, I think, by anyone capable of feeling it. This emotion is called the aesthetic emotion; and if we can discover some quality common and peculiar to all objects that provoke it, we shall have solved what I take to be the central problem of aesthetics. We shall have discovered the essential quality in a work of art, the quality that distinguishes works of art from all other classes of objects.” —Clive Bell, *Art* 1

The images—both still and moving—I have analyzed throughout this book were born from different imperatives. On the one hand, colonial image-makers sought to “discover,” explore, and record the lives led by the subjects of its American colonial possession. On the other hand, artists have historically rendered Puerto Rican national realities and cultural traditions as a way to construct iconic imagery to reaffirm the island’s unique cultural identity. In the process, American photographers and Puerto Rican artists have provided a profound *visuality*, in Mirzoeff’s sense, of the rapid cultural changes ushered in by the American Century. I have pointed out throughout the book that as significant actors in the shaping of national conceptions of history image-makers have created iconic symbols deeply enmeshed in what I am calling an emotional aesthetics of nation. These affective feelings for traditional artistic and photographic images, Ramón Frade’s *jíbaro* in *El pan nuestro* and Edwin Rosskam’s and Jack Delano’s cane cutters to name only two instances, created in the early twentieth century, have come to stand for Puerto Rico but the meanings embedded in that “standing” change over time and perspective.

Certainly, transformations in island imaging abound. If at the turn of the century, American photographers focused their ethnographic-like curiosity on the “primitive” Others, by mid-century they had shifted their lens from that of explorers to compassionate social workers depicting the plight of the “poor,” “backward” Others in need of colonial tutelage and scientific intervention. Still by the end of the century, American photographers signaled yet another transformative turn with justice-minded images condemning the continued American colonial involvement in Puerto Rico. Island-artists experienced a range of transformations also evident in their visual productions. With the wound of colonial occupation still raw at the beginning of the century artists engaged in producing *costumbrista* portrayals of their people’s noble life ways. The peasant and the rural landscape emerge as protagonists of these depictions, which by the turn of the century become

emblematic of the authentic Puerto Rican nation. By the 1930s however a competing though less potent visual conception of the nation, albeit one widely believed to be confined to the island's coastal plains, also surfaces. That is the portrayal of the black woman and black man as characteristic of Puerto Rico's geo-political kinship with the wider Caribbean. This is a subtle but important difference in how artists have helped shaped national visions of the national body and its politic. In other words, dwelling and carving a life in the interior territory the *jíbaro* is deployed as the definitive icon of the national soul. Blacks however, are deployed as entities that give Puerto Rico a uniquely Caribbean character. These are the deeply affective, traditional, and longstanding canonical visions of the nation with which younger generations of artists have had to contend. As identity makers and critical social commentators image-makers have also been subject to the whims of politics, prejudice, and economic changes but they have been a group whose work has been ahead of islander and colonial leadership in offering cogent, poignant critique.

In *Imaging the Great Puerto Rican Family* I underscore the affective and complex relationship that the creation, reception, and visual analysis of the selected images entail. But the book's purpose is to suggest that *images* as important conveyers of knowledge and information are a fertile data site. Together they narrate a history that in Puerto Rico has remained scarcely documented and translated. I contend that visual translation is an especially significant endeavor in light of our increasingly visually mediated sociocultural world. Finally, colonial modernity turned global, the conceptual framework for my analysis, not only calls attention to the national and global networks in which image-makers have been imbricated and by which they have been influenced, but highlights the manners by which technologies of *imaging* and "seeing" have been prime movers as well as critics of modernity.

Note

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About the Author

Hilda Lloréns, PhD, is a cultural anthropologist and writer who has published widely on race, blackness, and gender in Puerto Rican cultural production; on the wellbeing and models of success of Latina youth; and on Latina women's body and beauty practices. She is co-author of *Arrancando Mitos de Raíz* (2013), a book that aims to combat racism in Puerto Rico's school curriculum. She teaches in the sociology and anthropology department at the University of Rhode Island.