

THE ROUGH EDGES OF PUERTO RICAN IDENTITIES:

Race, Gender, and Transnationalism

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- LATINO CROSSINGS: MEXICANS, PUERTO RICANS, AND THE POLITICS OF RACE AND CITIZENSHIP.* By Nicholas De Genova and Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas. (New York: Routledge, 2003. Pp. ix + 257. \$90.95 cloth, \$25.95 paper.)
- COLONIAL SUBJECTS: PUERTO RICANS IN A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE.* By Ramón Grosfoguel. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003. Pp. xv + 268. \$55.00 cloth, \$22.95 paper.)
- CARIBE TWO WAYS: CULTURA DE LA MIGRACIÓN EN EL CARIBE INSULAR HISPÁNICO.* By Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel. (San Juan: Callejón, 2003. Pp. 448. \$35.95 paper.)
- NATIONAL PERFORMANCES: THE POLITICS OF CLASS, RACE, AND SPACE IN PUERTO RICAN CHICAGO.* By Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003. Pp. xiv + 289. \$50.00 cloth, \$21.00 paper.)
- NEW YORK RICANS FROM THE HIP HOP ZONE.* By Raquel Z. Rivera. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Pp. xiv + 279. \$75.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper.)
- THE LEGAL CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY: THE JUDICIAL AND SOCIAL LEGACY OF AMERICAN COLONIALISM IN PUERTO RICO.* By Efrén Rivera Ramos. (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2001. Pp. xv + 275. \$49.95 cloth.)
- WOMEN, CREOLE IDENTITY, AND INTELLECTUAL LIFE IN EARLY TWENTIETH-CENTURY PUERTO RICO.* By Magali Roy-Féquièrre. (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2004. Pp. xi + 310. \$72.50 cloth, \$24.95 paper.)
- "A QUEER DOSSIER: MAYRASANTOS-FEBRES' SIRENA SELENA VESTIDA DE PENA". Edited by Alberto Sandoval-Sánchez. *Centro: Journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies* 15 (2): (2003) 4–125.

In what sense can Puerto Rico be considered “on the edge”? I suppose that the phrase can no longer refer to the island’s geographic location in the margins of the New World, as Antonio Pedreira famously argued in his classic book *Insularismo* ([1934] 1992). Nor can it mean that Puerto Rico is isolated from current international affairs, such as the war on terrorism the U.S. government is waging. Quite the contrary, Puerto Ricans have recently occupied center stage in academic and public discussions about identity, globalization, and citizenship. The success of the peace movement in Vieques illustrates better than any other single event the transnational significance of local issues in Puerto Rico. Thus, I take the phrase “on the edge” to mean that the study of Puerto Ricans on the island and in the United States has become a productive site for the analysis of the multiple intersections of critical variables, such as gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, nationalism, and transnationalism. My basic goal in this essay is to reflect upon these recurrent themes in the contemporary intellectual production about Puerto Ricans, without claiming to exhaust the leading concerns in our collective research agenda.

Recent studies of Puerto Rican identities on and off the island have increasingly focused on their rough “edges” (such as their subordinate racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, or diasporic locations), rather than on their hard “cores” (such as the Spanish language, the Catholic Church, the canonized literature, and other island-centered cultural practices). This trend clearly reflects the influence of post-structuralist, postmodern, postcolonial, subaltern, and cultural studies in the social sciences and the humanities, which I have reviewed elsewhere (Duany 1998a, 1998b). In the Puerto Rican case, it also articulates a growing disenchantment with the basic tenets of the nationalist discourse that long prevailed among the island’s intellectual elite. Over the past decade or so, scholars have insisted on deconstructing the master narratives of the Puerto Rican nation and replacing them with more fragmentary stories about how blacks, immigrants, women, gays, lesbians, and other “marginal” subjects negotiate their places within the imaginary communities of Puerto Rico and its diaspora. In this regard, the title of Myrna García-Calderón’s book (1998), *Lecturas desde el fragmento* (Readings from the Fragment), could well characterize a large body of literary criticism on the island. Thinking along the fringes of Puerto Ricanness helps scholars move away from traditional portraits of a homogeneous national character or fixed essence that must be defended and preserved against all odds. Instead, contemporary writers often privilege the more modest but perhaps more realistic politics of identities based on one’s sexual preference, gender, race, age, and other crisscrossing subject positions. In particular, essays about the transnational (or even postnational) locations of Puerto Ricans open up new possibilities for considering other

kinds of strategic alliances, such as panethnic and interracial ones, including Hispanic, Latino, African American, and Caribbean.

Many scholars are groping for a more inclusive and democratic vision of Puerto Rican culture, perhaps less “nation centered,” comforting, and politically correct, but more representative of the diverse fragments that constitute the nation and its diaspora. Current theories of identity construction may undermine my own privileged position as a light-skinned, middle-class, middle-aged, heterosexual man of Cuban origin. However, I often find such theories liberating and exhilarating, allowing many other voices to enter the conversation about who can legitimately claim to be part of the Puerto Rican nation and what that means exactly, in cultural and political terms. At the very least, recent writing has shown that one can simultaneously be Puerto Rican and black, poor, young, or homosexual; that such identities are not necessarily incompatible; and that national identity is not always the primary form of allegiance and mobilization. Moreover, one must question the easy equation between being born in Puerto Rico, living on the island, and speaking Spanish as the sole criteria for establishing a person’s Puerto Ricanness.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Over the last decade, some of the cutting-edge research in Puerto Rican studies has dealt with the problematic relations between Puerto Ricans and other racial and ethnic minorities, such as African Americans, Mexicans, Dominicans, and Cubans. Juan Flores and Raquel Z. Rivera have examined the emergence of a hip hop style, especially rap music, among African Americans and Puerto Ricans in New York City, particularly in the South Bronx and Spanish Harlem, since the 1970s. Both authors focus on how “Nuyoricans” negotiate competing discourses of blackness and Latinidad in their daily lives. In one of the chapters of *From Bomba to Hip Hop*, Flores argues that the latter musical style was the result of the intense interactions between Puerto Ricans and African Americans based on shared physical and social spaces. Elsewhere, he has pointed out that, of all immigrants in the United States, Puerto Ricans have been the closest group to African Americans.

Following Flores’s lead, Rivera’s *New York Ricans from the Hip Hop Zone* squarely places the musical practices of young Puerto Ricans in the United States within the traditions of the African diaspora in the Americas. According to Rivera, Nuyorican hip hoppers have expanded the boundaries of Puerto Rican, Latino, and black identities, thereby blurring the differences between the Latin American and African diasporas, which few other authors have broached. Her work contributes to building bridges among African American, Puerto Rican, and

other Caribbean forms of cultural expression. More recently, she has raised the thorny issue of how “narrow-minded” cultural nationalism in Puerto Rico tends to exclude popular music genres such as rap or merengue because they transcend conventional territorial, linguistic, ethnic, and racial boundaries (Rivera 2005).

While Flores and Rivera portray the relations between Puerto Ricans and African Americans in a sympathetic light, other scholars question the potential for interethnic solidarity with other Hispanic groups. In *Latino Crossings*, Nicholas De Genova and Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas document the strong tensions between Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans in Chicago. Even the use of the Spanish language has become a point of contention between these communities, as dialectal differences are brought to the forefront of their daily interactions. The authors argue persuasively that a shared sense of *Latinidad* has not yet emerged among the two groups, primarily because of mutual suspicion, stigmatization, and competition. They find limited evidence for the possibility of a pan-Latino identity based on similar socioeconomic interests and experiences as racialized minorities. Contrary to the classic work of Felix Padilla (1985) on the rise of *Latinismo* as an instrumental form of pan-ethnicity, De Genova and Ramos-Zayas underline the divergent ethnic identities of Puerto Ricans and Mexicans in Chicago.

One conceptual problem with this otherwise fine work is the over-extension of the term “racialization.” Among other topics, the authors propose that the legal distinction between U.S. citizens and undocumented immigrants is racialized, as well as the popular stereotypes of Puerto Ricans as welfare dependents and Mexicans as cultural conservatives. Furthermore, the official Hispanic label for all peoples of Latin American origin; the spatial locations of Mexican and Puerto Rican immigrants in Chicago; the public perceptions of crime and violence; and the interpretation of linguistic differences between Puerto Ricans and Mexicans are all said to be racialized. Used in this expanded way, the term *racialization* may explain too much and yet too little. I would rather restrict the concept to the attribution of biologically inherited origins to cultural practices, social groups, and human bodies distinguished by their physical characteristics (see Winant 1994).

Race and ethnic relations have also become increasingly complicated in Puerto Rico, primarily as a result of large-scale immigration from other Caribbean and Latin American countries, especially the Dominican Republic and Cuba. In *Caribe Two Ways*, Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel demonstrates the lack of a common ground among Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Dominicans in Puerto Rico and the United States, as articulated in their literary, artistic, and other cultural practices. In Puerto Rico, the case she studies more in depth, Cuban and Dominican immigration has created “a very visible intra-national frontier, marked

by hostility and repulsion toward subjects who are very similar historically and culturally and very close geographically" (132; my translations throughout). As in the case of Puerto Ricans and Mexicans in Chicago, the linguistic and cultural affinities among Caribbean migrants have not ensured their harmonious coexistence either in Puerto Rico or the United States. On the contrary, they have frequently generated tensions, anxieties, and resistance, as reflected in ethnic jokes or graffiti, as well as the marginalization of many writers and artists, especially Dominicans. Lack of academic and public recognition of an "ethnic literature" in Puerto Rico (similar to Latino literature in the United States) makes Dominican and Cuban immigrants on the island more invisible, culturally speaking. The widespread racialization of all Dominicans as black is even more problematic.

It is now commonplace to talk about the racialization of Puerto Ricans in the United States. But scholars such as Arlene Dávila (in *Sponsored Identities*, 1997) have shown that Puerto Rican culture on the island has also been thoroughly racialized through the founding myth of *mestizaje*, which tends to privilege whiteness and sometimes the indigenous heritage at the expense of the African contribution. Although the trope of the three roots—Taíno, African, and Spanish—as the "building blocks" of contemporary Puerto Rican culture seems democratic, it provides a hierarchical and selective reading of the various groups that peopled the island before 1898 (while excluding the cultural impact of U.S. colonization altogether). Dávila and others have denounced the practical effects of this hegemonic discourse of Puerto Ricanness as canonized in the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture, the Tourism Office, and other government agencies on the island. Among other repercussions of cultural exclusion, the African heritage in Puerto Rico is often underestimated in official representations of the nation such as museums, festivals, and textbooks.

Several authors (such as those gathered in the collective volume *Hispanofilia*, edited by Enrique Vivoni Farage and Silvia Álvarez Curbelo, 1998) have rightly criticized the prevalence of a pro-Hispanic discourse among the island's intellectual elite, especially in its literature, architecture, and visual arts. In one of the most important contributions to that volume, Malena Rodríguez Castro approaches Hispanophilia as "the postulation and defense of a trans-Atlantic Hispanic race, family, or community, united by language, tradition, and beliefs" (277). She interprets this gesture as an ideological response to the need to originate and defend the elite's view of Puerto Rican culture against foreign intrusion. Nonetheless, cultural nationalism sought to promote a Creole version of Hispanic culture as the basis for the island's national identity. Some intellectuals have even assumed a Latin Americanist or Caribbeanist posture in their efforts to resist Americanization. This point is developed in Magali Roy-Féquièrre's work, reviewed below.

To date, Hispanophilia has been studied primarily among middle and upper-class whites. Other scholars, like Isar Godreau, have looked closely at how the ideology of *blanqueamiento* (whitening or bleaching) continues to permeate Puerto Rican popular culture through such everyday practices as using ambiguous racial terms and euphemisms, or straightening women's hair. Surprisingly, Godreau (2002) rejects the conventional explanation that black people desire to be white and proposes instead that hair smoothing is a syncretic expression through which racially mixed Puerto Rican women transform Eurocentric notions of beauty. Her basic argument is that, in a culture where "bad hair" (meaning curly or kinky) is traditionally associated with African origin, smoothing it becomes a way to "nationalize" blackness. Thus, popular conceptions of "whitening" do not necessarily coincide with the elite's celebration of whiteness. This issue merits further study and discussion.

By now the largely Hispanic and white bias of much of what passes for Puerto Rican identity on the island has been debunked in most academic circles. Ironically, perhaps, the main intellectual problem may now be Hispanophobia—the reluctance to recognize the important contributions that the Spanish language, Catholic religion, folklore, and other cultural practices of Hispanic origin have made to Puerto Rican and Latino identities, without arguing that they are the predominant or exclusive influences. One of the political implications of this position (with which I partly sympathize) is that being Puerto Rican is not (only) a question of language, which raises a Pandora's box regarding language policies, especially toward bilingual education, which I cannot elaborate here. (See the excellent book on this topic by Roamé Torres González 2002.)

GENDER AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Over the past few decades, feminist scholars have scrutinized the representation of women in literary texts, popular music, political speeches, legal discourses, educational curricula, and other cultural products. The study of Puerto Rican identities has been engendered through the work of a growing number of practitioners of literary criticism, cultural studies, history, anthropology, sociology, and to a lesser extent political science (see, for example, Martínez Ramos and Tamargo López 2003). In 1998, Frances Aparicio published a groundbreaking book, *Listening to Salsa: Gender, Latin Popular Music, and Puerto Rican Cultures*. (That the author chose the plural *cultures* in the subtitle is itself a significant move, suggesting the diverse experiences of Puerto Ricans on the island and in the U.S. mainland.) Although identifying herself as a *cocola* (salsa music lover), Aparicio dismantles the traditional masculine discourses that permeate the lyrics of many songs.

She notes that such patriarchal representations of women are also common in other popular music genres, such as the bolero, merengue, and rap—as Raquel Rivera has shown in her own work.

Anthologies by Félix Matos-Rodríguez and Linda Delgado (1998), as well as Altagracia Ortiz (1996) and María del Carmen Baerga (1993), have sampled a substantial amount of interdisciplinary work on Puerto Rican women in Puerto Rico and the United States. They focus largely on women's incorporation into the paid labor force, particularly domestic service, home needlework, cigar making, and the garment industry. More recently, feminists have interrogated the dominant nationalist discourse for its exclusion or subordination of women (see, for instance, Schmidt 2003). For my purposes here, much of this research can be summarized in the title of Martínez-San Miguel's essay in *Puerto Rican Jam*, edited by Frances Negrón-Muntaner and Ramón Grosfoguel (1997): "Deconstructing Puerto Ricanness through Sexuality: Female Counternarratives on Puerto Rican Identity." Another essay by Roy-Féquièrre (1997), significantly entitled "The Nation as a Male Fantasy," argues that for the most part cultural nationalism in Puerto Rico has not welcomed women—particularly black and mulatto women—in its definition of the nation, except perhaps as subservient spouses, mothers, and housewives. The basic point of many feminist re-readings of the Puerto Rican literary canon is precisely to propose alternative (or subaltern) visions of the nation from the perspective of women as well as gay, lesbian, and other "peripheral sexualities."

Roy-Féquièrre's book, *Women, Creole Identity, and Intellectual Life in Early Twentieth-Century Puerto Rico*, offers a superb analysis of how white, male, Creole intellectuals have tended to shun nonwhite and lower-class women from their nationalist discourse. The author focuses on the *Generación del Treinta*, led by Antonio S. Pedreira, Tomás Blanco, Luis Palés Matos, and Emilio S. Belaval, which defined much of what passes for Puerto Rico's national identity today. However, this generation included several prominent women writers, such as Margot Arce, Concha Meléndez, Nilita Vientós, and María Cadilla de Martínez, who attempted to expand the gendered boundaries of nationalist discourse while maintaining its racial and class divisions. Roy-Féquièrre offers a critical analysis of Arce's predicament as a white elite woman who chaired the Hispanic Studies Department at the University of Puerto Rico and was a founding member of the Puerto Rican Independence Party. It suggests that middle-class women intellectuals were often forced to adopt a "genderless" tone "in order to further establish authority and credibility in the male-dominated discourses on culture and the nation" (55).

Lately, scholars have begun to engage with queer studies in their analyses of homosexuality among Puerto Ricans. An important contribution to this expanding literature is Lawrence Lafountain-Stokes's

doctoral dissertation, "Culture, Representation, and the Puerto Rican Queer Diaspora" (1999). Here and elsewhere, Lafountain-Stokes examines the numerous implications of migration for the understanding of Puerto Rican homosexualities through multiple cultural productions such as literary texts, theatrical performances, and public festivals like the Puerto Rican Day parade in New York City. On this last point, Lafountain-Stokes (1998, 9) has published an insightful essay on how "gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Puerto Ricans' use of the flag [during the parade] reflects the heterogeneity and diversity of the Puerto Rican nation, one which resists efforts toward inclusion."

A recent issue of *Centro*, the journal of the Center for Puerto Rican Studies, focuses on the critically acclaimed novel by Mayra Santos-Febres, *Sirena Sirena vestida de pena*. As Alberto Sandoval-Sánchez writes in his introduction to this issue, the novel undermines the authority of previous canonical literary works and their dominant discourses through the metaphor of cross-dressing (7). As Sandoval-Sánchez puts it, "transvestism functions as an insubordinate act of disobedience and rebellion and/or ultimate liberation, that perversely and ironically defies and deconstructs Puerto Rican national culture" (9). (Jossianna Arroyo [2003] has also written an excellent book invoking the image of "cultural transvestism" to understand much of the creative and ethnographic literature in Cuba and Brazil.) The works of Santos-Febres and other writers of her generation profoundly disturb the paternalist, male-centered, and some would say phallogocentric mode of representation in Puerto Rican culture. It is still very difficult to teach and write about homosexuality in Puerto Rico, more so than in the United States, which helps to explain why this topic is more common among mainland-based scholars.

One problem with a gender and sexual perspective on identity construction, similar to the concept of racialization (and colonization), is the overextension of the terms *feminization* and *queerness*. For instance, Carlos Pabón devotes a chapter of his polemical book *Nación postmortem* (2002) to respond to critical reactions (particularly by Luis Fernando Coss) to postmodern takes on Puerto Rican nationalism. As part of his lively rebuttal, Pabón writes:

it is also worth noting the implications of Coss's denunciation that "postmodern pessimists" are distinguished by the constant use of "unnatural and affected phrases" [*frases rebuscadas y afectadas*]. In the country's macho and homophobic codes, "unnatural" and "affected" are associated with "effeminate" and "queer" [*amariconado*] . . . It seems that, for him, the theoretical reflection of such "postmodernists" is a kind of "queerness," a "weakness" in which the *machos boricuas* [Puerto Rican machos] who "defend" the nation do not participate. Aren't women and homosexuals part of the nation that he defends? Isn't there space in the nation for affectation? (61).

Admittedly, Pabón's work does not elaborate a feminist or queer approach to Puerto Rican studies. Still, his rhetorical use of the terms *effeminate* and *queer* is typical of the ways in which other scholars have expanded their meaning to include cultural practices that are not explicitly grounded in gender relations or sexual preferences. I am thinking, for example, of Frances Negrón-Muntaner's provocative interpretation of "Ricky [Martin]'s Hips: The Queerness of Puerto Rican 'White' Culture," a chapter of her book *Boricua Pop*. Here she too asks, "what does it mean for the 'nation' that the most famous Puerto Rican in history may not be heterosexual?" (2004, 264)

COLONIALISM, NATIONALISM, AND TRANSNATIONALISM

Much of the work I have reviewed so far has avoided confronting directly the question of U.S. colonialism in Puerto Rico. The eternal "status issue" on the island has lost some of its former prominence in academic debates, while other kinds of "colonization" (especially racial, gender, and sexual oppression) have become more salient. Several scholars like Ramón Grosfoguel, Agustín Laó-Montes, and Kelvin Santiago-Valles have productively applied Aníbal Quijano's notion of the "coloniality of power" to the Puerto Rican case. In *Colonial Subjects*, Grosfoguel argues convincingly that colonial forms of domination can continue even after the end of Euro-American colonial administrations, as a result of the persistence of racial and ethnic hierarchies in modern capitalist peripheral countries such as Puerto Rico. However, he further stretches the expression "coloniality of power" to gender and sexual inequality in postcolonial societies (21, 31, 49). I am uncertain about the explanatory value of the term *coloniality* to refer to a wide variety of situations such as racial discrimination, ethnic prejudice, gender inequality, and sexual exclusion. But I recognize that identifying the underlying parallels among various forms of subordination can help to subvert power relations and promote multiple strategies of resistance that may, in the end, undermine the established order.

Colonization in its classic form (as well as in its more recent, *lite* incarnation) remains a key problem for legal scholars, historians, and political scientists. One of the basic issues in this respect is the emergence of a colonial form of citizenship in Puerto Rico, which is not entitled to all the constitutional rights and legal privileges enjoyed by mainland citizens. In *The Legal Construction of Identity*, Efrén Rivera Ramos asserts that "the extension of U.S. citizenship to Puerto Ricans in 1917, has probably been the most important decision made by the United States regarding the political future and the lives and struggles of Puerto Ricans" (11). Among other consequences, it separated the juridical aspects of the

state as a sovereign political entity from the collective sense of belonging to a dependent nation as an imagined community. Many authors have noted the increasing divorce between colonialist and nationalist discourses of Puerto Rican identity, including Grosfoguel, but few have examined the profound legal and political repercussions of that historical rift as systematically as Rivera Ramos. As he contends, “the status of U.S. citizen has become one of the key factors in the production of American hegemony because it is associated with tangible benefits and values” (23), such as the protection of civil rights and the provision of social programs.

Christina Duffy Burnett and Burke Marshall’s edited volume (2001), *Foreign in a Domestic Sense*, assesses many of the ideological and practical implications of the legal doctrine of “unincorporated territories” as applied by the U.S. Supreme Court to Puerto Rico and other overseas possessions. Several contributors to this collection trace the congressional and judicial debates (especially the *Insular Cases*) about the island’s political status to the early decades of the twentieth century, when the ideology of Anglo-Saxon racial and cultural superiority over other peoples prevailed in the United States. Again, the racialization of Puerto Ricans as Others to white Americans helped to legitimize their colonial subordination. As one of the contributors to this volume, Rogers Smith, has noted, Puerto Ricans were placed in a legal category similar to “the second-class citizenship of blacks and Native Americans, as well as women” (108). Nevertheless, the possession of U.S. citizenship, as a legacy of Puerto Rico’s colonial relationship with the United States, is a crucial distinction between Puerto Ricans and other Hispanics on the mainland, as De Genova and Ramos-Zayas have shown so well.

Several scholars, notably those included in *Puerto Rican Jam*, have trenchantly criticized cultural nationalism because it tends to articulate an essentialized Puerto Rican identity in opposition to U.S. colonialism. In *Colonial Subjects*, echoing Pabón, Grosfoguel charges that U.S. colonialism has institutionalized cultural nationalism and deprived it of its subversive edge. In Grosfoguel’s view, “the recognition of Puerto Rican culture is the central ideological mechanism through which American colonial domination is exercised on the island today” (62). I do not entirely agree that cultural nationalism is simply a convenient way to camouflage U.S. control over Puerto Rico, but would rather acknowledge its counter-hegemonic potential. For example, the defense of the Spanish language, the public display of the Puerto Rican flag, and the creation of institutional mechanisms to promote national culture should not be dismissed so quickly as minor concessions in the struggle against U.S. colonialism. Moreover, Puerto Rican migrants in the United States have often deployed cultural nationalism to combat the dominant discourse of cultural and racial inferiority vis-à-vis white people of Anglo-Saxon

origin, as Ramos-Zayas documents in *National Performances*. Paradoxically, cultural nationalism can serve both as a strategy of resistance and cooptation of Puerto Rico's colonial status, as I develop in my own book *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move* (Duany 2002).

Some of us have approached the reconstruction of Puerto Rican identity in the diaspora from a transnational perspective (see the book by Gina Pérez [2004] and Elizabeth Aranda's doctoral dissertation [2001]). Still, the definition, magnitude, forms, and consequences of transnationalism remain a highly contested academic terrain. Along with Mayra Santos-Febres (1997), Agustín Laó-Montes has elaborated the useful notion of Puerto Rico as a "translocal nation" "whose boundaries shift between the archipelago of Puerto Rico and its U.S. diaspora" (in Negrón-Muntaner and Grosfoguel, eds. 1997, 171). Laó-Montes further points out that "the ultimate territory of Puerto Ricanness is the body of a fragmented subject" (183). Although I doubt that any nation can remain completely deterritorialized, I agree with Laó-Montes that it can transcend the geopolitical borders of the state, colonial or otherwise. Similarly, I have proposed the expression "nation on the move" to describe the constant back-and-forth movement of people between Puerto Rico and the continental United States (Duany 2002). I also use this expression to refer to the lack of fit among the standard criteria for nationhood—such as a common territory, a single language, state sovereignty, citizenship, or even a "psychological makeup," to quote Stalin—in the Puerto Rican situation. Many of us are trying to decouple the multiple meanings of "nation" from "state," which are usually conflated in the hyphenated term "nation-state." I would expect that debates about colonialism, nationalism, and transnationalism will continue to be at the heart of Puerto Rican studies.

CONCLUSIONS

Recent writing on the rough edges of Puerto Rican identities has tended to move away from modernist representations of the nation as a territorially grounded, linguistically uniform, racially exclusive, androcentric, and heterosexual project. Many writers have eschewed the so-called Hispanophilia of the island's intellectual elite and recognized the fundamentally hybrid culture and racially mixed character of Puerto Ricans. Much of the current literature is concerned with the practical implications of the racialization of Puerto Ricans on the island and in the U.S. mainland. Some authors have begun to explore the prospects for more cooperative interactions with African Americans and other Hispanics, such as Dominicans, Mexicans, and Cubans. Nevertheless, a few scholars are very anxious with or frankly allergic to the "Latinization" of Puerto Ricans in New York City and elsewhere (see

Laó-Montes and Dávila 2001 and my review of recent books on Hispanic/Latino identities in the United States [Duany 2003]). Gender and sex have become critical variables for the analysis of Puerto Rican identities, especially for women and gays. For instance, the representation of female bodies, the articulation of homoerotic desire, and even the significance of transvestism as a metaphor for many kinds of border crossing are now important research topics.

Despite the substantive contributions of recent works on Puerto Rican identities, they often share a fundamental conceptual problem: the over-expansion of analytical frameworks. If everything can reasonably be described as racialized, "othered," feminized, queered, colonial, postcolonial, transnational, or postcolonial, then nothing is gained by the application of those ambiguous adjectives. Here I would simply suggest more terminological precision to distinguish various kinds of social relations and cultural practices, such as those based on racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, generational, national, or diasporic affiliations. Scholars should avoid the temptation to "colonize" all of these fields with their own intellectual projects.

A glaring absence in many contemporary writings on Puerto Rican identities is class. Perhaps because this was one of the central concerns of Marxist theories, which many younger scholars have discarded, the question of social stratification due to occupational, income, or educational differences has receded in importance in Puerto Rican studies. (A major exception to this trend is Ramos-Zayas's *National Performances*.) Yet, current socioeconomic patterns suggest the increasing significance of class as a basic cleavage among Puerto Ricans on the island and in the United States. As Elizabeth Aranda (2004) has noted in her review of my book, *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move*, class is a key factor in the interpretation of Spanish as a symbol of national identity on the island, as well as in the rejection of "Spanglish" as a token of cultural treason in the United States. More broadly, Hispanophilia is largely a class-based ideology, as is the prevalent depiction of Nuyoricans on the island as assimilated to U.S. culture. I fully agree with Aranda that "more attention should be paid to the role of migrants' class backgrounds as they interact with national identity constructions in questions of who gets excluded from the imagined nation of Puerto Rico, and why" (Aranda 2004, 127).

Finally, a central strand in thinking about Puerto Rican identities locates them in the broader context of contending discourses of colonialism, nationalism, and transnationalism. But the very meaning of these terms is now under critical interrogation and semantic flux. For instance, how do colonial migrants differ from those coming from sovereign states? What is the difference between crossing a cultural "border" and a geopolitical "boundary"? And how does transnationalism reshape the form that nationalism takes in a colonial situation? The paradoxical

status of contemporary Puerto Rico as a “postcolonial colony”—as Juan Flores and others have dubbed it—provides fertile ground for reconsidering questions of colonial domination, cultural and political nationalism, transnational communities, and diasporic identities, which are not unique to the island, but may well be typical of our postmodern, global age. How exactly Puerto Rico fits within this wider context, to what extent it differs from other places, and how it prefigures or reflects them, are topics for further reflection and discussion. At any rate, it seems clear that intranational, pan-ethnic, translocal, transnational, and even postnational allegiances have emerged as pivotal elements for reconfiguring the rough edges of Puerto Rican identities on the island as well as in the United States.

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