

IMAGINING THE
PUERTO RICAN NATION:
Recent Works on Cultural Identity*

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DEL NACIONALISMO AL POPULISMO: CULTURA Y POLITICA EN PUERTO RICO. Edited by Silvia Alvarez-Curbelo and María Elena Rodríguez Castro. (Río Piedras: Huracán, 1993. Pp. 205. \$8.95 paper.)

LA NACION PUERTORRIQUEÑA: ENSAYOS EN TORNO A PEDRO ALBIZU CAMPOS. Edited by Juan Manuel Carrión, Teresa C. Gracia Ruiz, and Carlos Rodríguez Fraticelli. (Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1993. Pp. 280. \$12.95 paper.)

LA MEMORIA ROTA. By Arcadio Díaz Quiñones. (Río Piedras: Huracán, 1993. Pp. 180. \$7.95 paper.)

NUESTRA ISLA Y SU GENTE: LA CONSTRUCCION DEL 'OTRO' PUERTORRIQUEÑO EN OUR ISLANDS AND THEIR PEOPLE. By Lanny Thompson. (Río Piedras: Centro de Investigaciones Sociales, Departamento de Historia de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1995. Pp. 71. \$10.00 paper.)

THE COMMUTER NATION: PERSPECTIVES ON PUERTO RICAN MIGRATION. Edited by Carlos Antonio Torre, Hugo Rodríguez Vecchini, and William Burgos. (Río Piedras: Editorial de la Universidad de Puerto Rico, 1994. \$22.95 paper.)

Puerto Rico has a peculiar status among the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. As one of Spain's last two colonies in the New World (along with Cuba), Puerto Rico experienced the longest period of Hispanic influence in the region. Since 1898, however, the island has been an "unincorporated territory" of the United States and has been exposed to an intense penetration by U.S. culture rarely equaled in other Latin American countries. Yet Puerto Rico displays a stronger cultural identity than most Caribbean countries. Thus at the end of the twentieth century, Puerto Rico represents the apparent paradox of a stateless nation that has not assimilated into the U.S. orbit. Despite nearly a century of

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U.S. rule, the island remains a Spanish-speaking Afro-Hispanic-Caribbean nation.

Recent studies on Puerto Rican cultural identity have focused on the demise of political nationalism on the island and the growing significance of circular migration between the island and the U.S. mainland. Although most scholars have not posited an explicit connection between the two phenomena, they are intimately related. For instance, most Puerto Ricans value their U.S. citizenship and the freedom of movement that it offers. But as Puerto Ricans move back and forth between the two countries, traditional definitions of national identity based primarily on territorial considerations become less relevant while transnational identities acquire greater significance. This essay will begin by pointing out the main currents in the contemporary study of nationalism and transnationalism to situate the insular debate in its international context. Five recent books on Puerto Rico's cultural identity will then be reviewed. The conclusion will identify some of the recurring themes in the analysis of cultural identity in contemporary Puerto Rico.

The books to be reviewed exhibit several common characteristics. First, most are collective works, suggesting that the study of cultural identity in Puerto Rico has not yet achieved a definitive stage and that many scholars are working on the topic. Second, all these publications draw on an array of intellectual traditions, including history, literature, sociology, and political science. Third, most of the authors are Puerto Ricans who sympathize with their subject—nationalism, at least in its cultural variety. Fourth, many are familiar with recent academic debates on the topic, beginning with relativistic notions of the nation as an imagined community and an invented tradition (Anderson 1991; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) and ending with postmodern approaches to nationalism as a narrative discourse subject to deconstruction (Bhabha 1990; Chatterjee 1986). Finally, most of the authors under review are well aware of the political implications of their arguments in the context of U.S. colonial domination of Puerto Rico. Most view their intellectual undertakings as part of an effort to decolonize Puerto Rico. Questions of practical strategy regarding the independence movement on the island often lurk beneath apparently theoretical debates, giving these books a marked sense of urgency and passionate commitment to social change.

From Nationalism to Transnationalism

Current theories of nationalism emphasize the socially constructed nature of nations in various times and places in the world. Benedict Anderson's suggestively titled *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* has been the point of departure for much of the rethinking about nations (see Anderson 1991, first published 1983).

Anderson defined nations as political communities imagined by their members as limited and sovereign territories sharing a horizontal comradeship (1991, 5–7). Modern nations emerged as cultural artifacts toward the end of the eighteenth century in Western Europe, particularly through new forms of literary representation such as the novel, the newspaper article, biography, and autobiography. Nationalism is also expressed by state institutions of power via censuses, maps, and museums, all of which help to define and classify the nation as a separate entity. For Anderson, nations are not necessarily fabrications but rather cultural creations rooted in social and historical processes—that is to say, ideological constructs with personal and collective significance.

Unfortunately, some analysts have confounded the meaning of the word *imagined* with *imaginary* in the sense of fictive or artificial, thereby suggesting that nations do not exist apart from the ideological machinations of nationalist elites or popular movements engaged in struggles for self-determination. Eric Hobsbawm, who coined the expression “the invention of tradition,” has emphasized the symbolic and ritual components of state building in Western Europe during the late nineteenth century (see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). He claimed that the invention of tradition involves a concerted effort by political leaders to constitute a historical memory and shape a collective identity. Scholars have shown that the production of a national culture always requires the construction of symbolic boundaries and the identification of cultural characteristics that exclude outsiders from the definition of a national identity. Language, religion, territory, and race have commonly been invoked as the basis of nationhood (Hobsbawm 1990; A. Smith 1986). Anthropologists have approached the construction of an imagined community through myths and rituals as well as through discourses articulating a particular view of the nation (Foster 1991). In this light, national identity appears as a provisional, heterogeneous, and variable concept rather than as a fixed, pure, and timeless essence.

Despite its intuitive appeal, Hobsbawm’s approach to nationhood remains elusive. For him, nations are primarily political rather than cultural phenomena, as in the notion inherited from the American and French Revolutions in which a people equals a state, which in turn equals a nation. Citizenship—understood as mass political participation—seems to be the crucial criterion for nationhood. Other criteria such as language and ethnicity are usually constructed from above as semi-artificial and occasionally invented traditions. Hobsbawm has recognized the importance of “holy icons” that represent common collective practices, such as ritual performances, patriotic images, periodic festivals, anthems, and flags (Hobsbawm 1990). But in his view, the state manipulates these cultural signs in an effort to bind its citizens to an-imagined community rather than to satisfy the needs and aspirations of ordinary people. Ulti-

mately, the nation becomes a product of social engineering by clever intellectual elites seeking to buttress their own political and economic privileges.¹

A more reasonable, if less controversial, attempt to define nations was made by Anthony Smith in *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1986). Smith argued that ethnicity has historically provided the main model for national identities, particularly with regard to myths, memories, symbols, and values. His study documented the continuity between ethnic communities and modern nations as bases for popular mobilization throughout the world. Nationalist ideologies incorporate elements of enduring ethnic identities to legitimize the creation of a nation-state. In this sense, nations are not entirely invented traditions nor imagined communities but are historically grounded in earlier modes of association, such as kinship and religion. As Smith pointed out, "nations are not fixed and immutable entities 'out there' . . . ; but neither are they completely malleable and fluid processes and attitudes, at the mercy of every outside force" (A. Smith 1986, 211). In a more recent essay, Smith has argued, "we cannot understand nations and nationalism simply as an ideology or form of politics but must treat them as cultural phenomena as well" (1991, vii). This moderate view of national identity seems more appropriate than extreme forms of interpretation suggesting that it is either God-given or utterly nonexistent.

A contemporary challenge to nationalist projects is the fluidity of geopolitical boundaries, a situation caused by the globalization of the capitalist world economy as well as by increased labor migration. Some social scientists have begun to use the term *transnational* to describe individuals who move across national boundaries yet remain tied to their home communities. Originally, the term referred to multinational corporations and other organizations simultaneously present in several countries. When applied to migrants, however, *transnationalism* suggests that "the boundaries of the nation-state no longer correspond to the social spaces these borderless people inhabit" (M. Smith 1994, 16). As Michael Peter Smith (1994) has argued, the symbolic ingredients of national identities as imagined communities are further scattered territorially through migration. The spatial extension of households, social networks, and ethnic communities across national borders often implies the creation of transnational identities.

Transnational communities are characterized by a continuous flow of migrants in both directions, a dual sense of cultural citizenship, ambivalent attachment to two or more nations, and a far-flung network of kinship and friendship ties across state frontiers (see Schiller, Basch, and

1. In his most recent formulation, Hobsbawm (1993) continued to complain that nationalist ideologies manipulate history to suit their particular interests.

Blanc 1992; Basch, Schiller, and Blanc 1994). Many migrants do not choose between exclusive allegiance to the home community or host country, maintaining close ties with both places.² Transnational identities are primarily based not on territory as an organizing principle of social interaction but on the migrants' personal and cultural attachments to their home and host countries. Migrants participate simultaneously in two or more political systems that define their citizenship in different and possibly contradictory ways. As Leo Chávez (1994) has pointed out, living on the other side of a geopolitical border does not mean that individuals automatically stop belonging to their communities of origin. Rather, transnational migrants develop divided loyalties, create imagined communities in the receiving countries, and participate actively in both their host and home societies.

Scholars have only begun to conceptualize migrants as part of transnational sociocultural systems. Transnational identities cross over territorial boundaries and national cultures in ways that are difficult to grasp from a traditional ethnographic perspective (Appadurai 1991, 1990). Recent approaches to transnational communities have begun by discarding the conventional image of immigration as a form of cultural stripping away and complete absorption into the host society (Rosaldo 1989). Rather, immigrants belong to multiple communities with fluid and hybrid identities that are not necessarily grounded in geopolitical frontiers but perhaps in subjective affiliations. Border crossing becomes an apt image for not just the physical act of moving to another country but also the crossover between cultures, languages, and nation-states in which transnational migrants participate. An intense process of cultural hybridization usually takes place (García Canclini 1990; Flores 1993). Transnational identities therefore involve the creation of imagined communities that transcend territorial boundaries and operate outside the official discourse of the nation-state. The massive Puerto Rican diaspora since the end of World War II offers a striking case in point.

The Construction of a Colonial Discourse

Of the five books under review here, the most innovative theoretically and methodologically is Lanny Thompson's booklet *Nuestra isla y su gente: La construcción del 'otro' puertorriqueño en Our Islands and Their People*. Thompson took his cue from Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and its effort to deconstruct the imperial representations of otherness. In the case of Puerto Rico, Thompson traces the origins of a colonial discourse on the natives of the island that defined them as a dependent people in need of U.S. tutelage. He documents his thesis by focusing on

2. On Dominicans in New York City, see Duany (1994); on Mexicans in the U.S. Southwest, see Rouse (1991).

one of two dozen photography books published shortly after the Spanish-Cuban-American War of 1898 that sought to describe the new overseas colonial possessions of the United States. Thompson's text includes seventeen revealing photos selected from *Our Islands and Their People*, first published in 1899. His interpretation of these graphic images from a sociological and historical viewpoint is enlightening, refreshing, and occasionally debatable—as when he suggests that the seated position necessarily conveys a sense of passive renunciation on the part of the posing subject.

Thompson begins by arguing that U.S. political and economic domination of Puerto Rico was predicated on an unequal cultural relation between the two countries. The textual and photographic description of Puerto Ricans helped legitimize the occupation and possession of the island by North Americans. Realistic narrative strategies served to confirm the observers' avowed objectivity, together with statistical data and government reports. Redefinition of the Puerto Rican people as inferior "others" was part of a missionary project based on the doctrine asserting the Manifest Destiny of Anglo-Saxon civilization. Accordingly, U.S. travelers often depicted Puerto Ricans as primitive, poor, dependent, childlike, and effeminate. Thompson concludes that these imperial representations helped justify the cultural assimilation and political subordination of Puerto Rico to the United States.

What emerges clearly from Thompson's essay is a colonial discourse that has denied Puerto Ricans any measure of capacity for independent action and self-government. The U.S. image of Puerto Rico was also colored by the racist and ethnocentric views prevailing in the early twentieth century. To the new conquerors, Puerto Ricans were the last representatives in America of a decaying empire (that of Spain) and as such belonged to a degraded culture and race. The island was portrayed as an undeveloped paradise with unlimited economic possibilities for U.S. investment. The fertility and natural abundance of the soil as well as the supposed innocence and loyalty of the Puerto Rican people boded well for the future. The new colonial regime was envisioned as quickly bringing economic progress and civilized ways to the island, paving the way for making the natives into good U.S. citizens—or so U.S. leaders thought.

A key strategy of U.S. colonial domination was symbolic elimination of the creole elite from these epic narrations. *Our Islands and Their People*, for example, made no reference to the local upper class but emphasized the oppression of the masses by Spanish merchants and *hacendados*. The creole elite later developed a defensive discourse of Puerto Rican identity to reassert its own cultural hegemony over the island. What is less clear is why U.S. observers deemphasized racial divisions existing among the Puerto Rican people by highlighting their aboriginal elements

and neglecting their African components. Perhaps it was a way of allaying the racial fears of white colonizers who did not want to increase the black population of the United States. In any case, the colonial discourse homogenized the Puerto Rican people and disregarded class and racial differences on the island, an approach that later characterized the creole elite's view of Puerto Rican identity. In this regard, the colonized internalized the ideology of the colonizer.

The Demise of Puerto Rican Nationalism

La nación puertorriqueña: Ensayos en torno a Pedro Albizu Campos is an excellent collection of sixteen essays edited by Juan Manuel Carrión, Teresa Gracia Ruiz, and Carlos Rodríguez Fraticelli. The contributions were originally presented as papers at a series of conferences held at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras, in 1991 on Albizu, a towering figure in Puerto Rico's political and cultural history. Several disciplines of the social sciences and the humanities are represented, including history, literature, sociology, political science, law, and philosophy. As a result, *La nación puertorriqueña* explores nearly every conceivable facet of Albizu's thought and practice, from his religious and philosophical ideas to his political strategies and economic policies. Given the complexity of all the arguments contained in the collection, I can cover only the essays most relevant to the understanding of Puerto Rico's cultural identity.

In his introductory essay, sociologist and co-editor Carrión raises fundamental conceptual problems in analyzing Puerto Rico as a nation, such as the thorny issue of class and racial differences. Carrión begins by rejecting the famous argument made by José Luis González in *El país de cuatro pisos* (1980) that Puerto Rico is essentially an Afro-Caribbean nation. Carrión considers this stance a racist and Hispanophobic one that ultimately serves the interests of U.S. imperialism. For Carrión, Puerto Rico is "a multiracial but ethnically homogeneous society" (p. 9), and defense of its Hispanic heritage is "a necessary step in the consolidation of our ethnic identity" (p. 10). Carrión commends Albizu's nationalist discourse for overcoming invidious racial distinctions based on a common Hispanic culture. Although Carrión uses mostly secondary sources to buttress his argument, he refers constantly to the voluminous academic literature on nationalism, thus placing his ideas in an international context. Some of Carrión's claims are polemic and difficult to substantiate empirically, but they are provocative in the best sense of the word.

Juan Duchesne Winter, a literary critic, applies Hobsbawm's concept of an invented tradition to Albizu's speeches. Albizu emerges in this analysis as the shrewd inventor of a national Puerto Rican project in opposition to U.S. imperialism. Through the Partido Nacionalista, Albizu attempted to institute national traditions such as flying the Puerto Rican

flag, playing the national anthem, commemorating symbolic dates, developing civic rituals, and promoting patriotic values. Duchesne Winter's close reading of one of Albizu's seminal texts reveals a founding myth of Puerto Rican identity as a collective historical subject, separate from the United States. According to this essay, his discourse was based on a monolithic and exclusive view of the nation rather than being respectful of racial, cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity.

Antonio Gaztambide Geigel reviews the literature on Albizu and nationalism, focusing on a book by fellow historian Luis Angel Ferrao (1990). Gaztambide Geigel underscores the ongoing tendency in political and academic circles to either condemn or exalt Albizu as a historical figure. He also notes that nationalist thought in Puerto Rico is diverse and complex, not limited to Albizu's authoritarian and conservative views on language and religion. Gaztambide Geigel agrees with Ferrao that the leaders of the Partido Nacionalista came primarily from the petty bourgeoisie of Puerto Rican society and that their class origins impeded linking the national liberation struggle to the needs and aspirations of the labor movement. Gaztambide Geigel's most controversial argument proposes that the concept of populism may be fruitfully applied to Albizu's thought because of its anti-imperialism, pro-agrarian and creole discourse, and ambiguous social orientation. Most of the contributors to *La nación puertorriqueña*, however, would disagree with that hypothesis: in Puerto Rico, populism conflicted with and largely superseded nationalism.

Literary critic Silvia Alvarez Curbelo examines a little-known aspect of Albizu's thought: his economic nationalism, which was based on defending the creole capitalism of small and medium-sized property-owners from the onslaught of sugar plantations operated by U.S. absentee owners. Albizu promoted recovering the land as the essence of the fatherland, understood as "a community of material interests over a determined territory" (p. 92). Despite Albizu's idealism, his collected works document a constant preoccupation with the economic prospects of an independent Puerto Rican state. As Ernesto Rodríguez Huertas shows in another contribution, Albizu's thinking on economic issues was greatly influenced by Christian and especially Catholic doctrines regarding private property, work, social classes, and national sovereignty.

Political sociologist Aarón Gamaliel Ramos makes a significant contribution to *La nación puertorriqueña* by examining the transformation of nationalist discourse toward the end of the 1950s as part of the reorganization of the independence movement. Drawing on a close reading of the left-wing weekly *Claridad* (founded by the Movimiento Pro Independencia in 1959), Ramos shows that Albizu's nationalism was an important but problematic source of inspiration for the new liberation struggle. Albizu's ideas and tactics responded to an old form of colonialism that had forced Puerto Ricans to assimilate culturally while excluding them

politically from the U.S. imperial system. With the creation of the Estado Libre Asociado in 1952, a new form of colonial domination increased Puerto Rican participation in local government and allowed the use of symbols of the nation-state (such as the flag and anthem). But the independence movement lost the support of the popular masses because it appealed mainly to an intellectual elite that viewed itself as a patriotic vanguard. Consolidation of the Cuban Revolution, with its mixture of nationalism and socialism, further radicalized the independence movement in the 1960s. But Albizu's influence lingered on, not only as a mythical figure from the past but as a vivid example of the struggle for self-determination.

In the final essay in *La nación puertorriqueña*, poet and literary critic Aurea María Sotomayor examines Albizu's nationalist imagery and confirms its idealist and romantic overtones. She also employs the concept of invented tradition to explain Albizu's attempt to create a patriotic consciousness among Puerto Ricans, especially through national rites of passage such as making a pilgrimage to the town of Lares as the cradle of the Puerto Rican Revolution, establishing the cult of the national flag, constantly invoking the leaders of the nineteenth-century independence movement, and making the homeland a sacred subject. Sotomayor deconstructs Albizu's discourse on Puerto Rico according to three main practices: his preaching of patriotic values, his emblematic use of the past, and the cult of heroic figures. Albizu proposed to reconstruct the historical memory of the Puerto Rican people based on common symbols, myths, and rituals, and he largely succeeded. In tandem, canonized Puerto Rican writers (such as playwright and short story writer René Marqués) have narrated the story of the Puerto Rican nation as envisioned by Albizu and his followers.³

Overall, *La nación puertorriqueña* is a well-edited collection of essays on a seminal figure in the drive for Puerto Rican nationhood. Yet I miss several key elements that could have explained why Albizu became such an important symbol of Puerto Rican national identity in his own right.⁴ Whatever his political ideology or strategies, Albizu struck a chord among Puerto Ricans of different persuasions (if not social classes). Why were his ideas so well received by a particular sector of Puerto Rican society—the intellectual elite and the petty bourgeoisie from which it stemmed? Even today, the pro-independence movement draws most of its membership among liberal professionals, small property owners, and other middle-class sectors. These groups are precisely the ones who now

3. For an excellent study of the constitution of a literary canon based on cultural nationalism in Puerto Rico, see Gelpí (1993).

4. The fact that Albizu has become something of a cult figure in Puerto Rico is suggested by the multiple commemorations of the centennial of his birth in 1993. For one example, see the special issue of *Punto y Coma* (1992–1993) dedicated to this occasion.

control the production and circulation of ideological discourses on cultural identity and who therefore influence disproportionately the definition of the Puerto Rican nation. It behooves social scientists to analyze the interaction between the intermediate and popular sectors of Puerto Rican society to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the kinds of resistance to the dominant views of national identity elaborated by the upper classes.

The Conflict between Nationalism and Populism

Silvia Alvarez-Curbelo and María Elena Rodríguez Castro's *Del nacionalismo al populismo: Cultura y política en Puerto Rico* gathers six papers presented at the Encuentro de Historiadores held at the University of Puerto Rico in 1990. The meeting included literary critics, sociologists, and economists as well as historians, as the resulting volume shows. Covering the period from the 1920s to 1950s, the collection ranges topically from the populist discourse of Luis Muñoz Marín and the nationalist discourse of Pedro Albizu Campos to Puerto Rican participation in U.S. foreign-aid programs and the pitfalls of Operation Bootstrap as a model of industrial development. Methodologically, *Del nacionalismo al populismo* is also diverse. The contributors draw on an array of primary and secondary sources, including political speeches, newspaper articles, literary texts, census data, government reports, and personal interviews. Despite the chronological, thematic, and methodological variety, the essays in this volume share a common theme: the examination of how Puerto Rican populism incorporated—and sometimes displaced—nationalism in its discourse on the island's cultural identity.

The authors contribute to this overall project in their own ways. Co-editor Alvarez-Curbelo traces the development of Muñoz Marín's thinking on national identity by analyzing certain foundational myths, especially that of the oppressed Puerto Rican people joining in an epic march toward their liberation from U.S. sugar corporations. Luis Ferrao situates the defensive pro-Hispanic nationalism of the Puerto Rican intellectual elite in its socioeconomic context: a privileged class characterized by higher education, urban residence, white skin color, Catholic religion, and Spanish origins. Literary critic María Elena Rodríguez Castro interprets the publication of a 1940 forum on Puerto Rican culture as a transitional text between nationalism and populism as well as an ominous sign of the intellectual elite's incorporation into the state bureaucracy.

Sociologist Angel Quintero Rivera focuses on the growing institutionalization of the social sciences as academic disciplines at the University of Puerto Rico as part of the populist reforms introduced by the Partido Popular Democrático (PPD) after 1940. Historian Mayra Rosario Urrutia explores the role played by Puerto Rico in the technical assistance

programs developed by the U.S. government during the cold war with the former Soviet Union. Finally, economist James Dietz criticizes the Puerto Rican model of economic development, Operation Bootstrap, for its marked orientation toward the export market, extreme dependence on external investment, and excessive reliance on imported technology.

A recurring theme of the essays in *Del nacionalismo al populismo* is that the populist discourse was erected as a political alternative to the nationalist movement during the 1930s. In this sense, Muñoz Marín's rise to power in the 1940s, along with the PPD, must be situated in a Latin American context that witnessed the growing popularity of Juan Perón in Argentina, Getúlio Vargas in Brazil, and Lázaro Cárdenas in Mexico as results of the crisis of the capitalist world system. In Puerto Rico and elsewhere, populism represented a class alliance led by a charismatic leader in pursuit of economic development and social justice. In many countries, this political movement coincided with construction of a national identity that could unify different sectors of the population into a coherent people. The Puerto Rican case is singular in that populism developed under a colonial regime, but its ideological discourses and strategies resembled those emerging in other Latin American countries.

A profound transformation occurred in the Puerto Rican intellectual elite between the 1930s and 1950s. As Ferrao shows, most of the island's intelligentsia embraced nationalism as a means of defending its Hispanic Catholic culture following the Anglo-Saxon Protestant invasion from the United States during the first three decades of the twentieth century. The creole elite succeeded in forging a myth of national identity based on the image of *la gran familia puertorriqueña* as part of its dominance of local literary journals, newspaper articles, political machines, and cultural institutions. According to this myth, the descendants of the creole hacendados were destined to lead a patriotic battle to establish an independent state supported by the popular masses. Even today, much of what passes for Puerto Rican culture is the product of the generation of the 1930s. For example, all three major political parties agree that the Spanish language should be preserved under any political status option.

By the 1940s, however, political nationalism was waning and populist ideology was expanding. Rodríguez Castro suggests that nationalist symbols persisted in the cultural sphere as a nostalgic version of the Hispanic creole rural world. But influential intellectuals linked to a rising urban bourgeoisie (such as the rector of the University of Puerto Rico, Jaime Benítez, and his first dean of social sciences, Antonio Colorado) underplayed the nationalist overtones of an earlier era in justifying the socioeconomic and political reforms that culminated in 1952 in the Estado Libre Asociado. In these circumstances, Eugenio Fernández Méndez, a leading Puerto Rican anthropologist, declared that Puerto Rico retained its own national culture, even though it was politically associated with

the United States. Cultural nationalism thus was officially promoted while political nationalism was violently repressed.

Since the 1940s, Puerto Rico's rapid industrialization has required incorporating larger cadres of intellectuals and technocrats into the expanding island government. Thus public policy and economic planning have fostered the growth of social sciences that could study and administer the modernization process. In his contribution to this volume, Angel Quintero Rivera argues that the state university became the privileged site for social analysis, which was formerly linked to the labor movement, cultural organizations, and government agencies. The Puerto Rican social science establishment was geared primarily toward training public servants under populism. U.S. models of quantitative empirical research were imported uncritically to the island. In the process, much local social science was denationalized in personnel, theory, methodology, and style.

As Puerto Rico's industrialization model internationalized, the island's public image changed from that of an underdeveloped third world country to a showcase for democracy and development. The University of Puerto Rico has played a key role in training technical and professional personnel from the Caribbean and Latin America. As Rosario Urrutia emphasizes, Puerto Rico became a hemispheric "middleman" for the United States while the PPD elite was consolidating its economic and political hegemony on the island. Although the limitations of Operation Bootstrap were inherent from the start, they did not become evident until the economic crisis of the 1970s. Dietz believes that the fatal error of government planners was abandoning the import-substitution strategy too early in the industrialization process and insisting on attracting foreign capital and technology at the expense of local entrepreneurs. The result is that the Puerto Rican economy today is even less "national" than it was fifty years ago.

In sum, *Del nacionalismo al populismo* traces the fall of political nationalism and the rise of populism as the leading discourses on Puerto Rican identity. Indeed, Puerto Rican populism was fundamentally anti-national in its political orientation. Most of the essays included in this volume stress the role played by local elites, rather than the popular sectors, in defining the nation. In this sense, Puerto Rican identity was essentially constructed from above, in a paternalistic fashion. Even though the lower classes participated in consolidating a national identity, they were not adequately represented in the elite's effort to define Puerto Rican culture. Although subaltern social sectors forged alternative discourses of national identity, they are not explored at any length in this collection.⁵

5. In her recent dissertation, Arlene Dávila (1995) argues that community centers throughout the island have reformulated nationalist ideologies imposed by the state. Political par-

Many of the authors point out that whereas nationalist politics have declined in acceptance by the Puerto Rican masses, cultural identity remains rooted in a nationalist discourse. The strong Hispanic orientation of the intellectual elite of the 1930s has been institutionalized in the Departamento de Estudios Hispánicos of the University of Puerto Rico and the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña. Assimilation into U.S. culture has become an electoral drawback for all political parties, including the pro-statehood Partido Nuevo Progresista (PNP). As former PNP governor Luis Ferré once explained, Puerto Rico remains the fatherland (*la patria*) while the United States is the homeland (*la nación*) of the annexationist movement. Paradoxically, the demise of political nationalism has been accompanied by a strengthening of cultural nationalism in Puerto Rico. In Anderson's terms, most Puerto Ricans now imagine themselves as a national community without a sovereign state.⁶

Recovering a Collective Memory

In *La memoria rota*, Arcadio Díaz Quiñones has assembled nine of his perceptive literary essays dealing with the last forty years of Puerto Rican cultural history. Originally published between 1978 and 1991, the essays pay special attention to canonical Puerto Rican writers like Luis Palés Matos, José Luis González, and Luis Rafael Sánchez. Díaz Quiñones is closely identified with the so-called new history movement on the island and its nearly defunct institutional expression, the Centro de Estudios de la Realidad Puertorriqueña, founded in 1971 by Angel Quintero Rivera, Gervasio García, Marcia Rivera, and other scholars. Díaz Quiñones anachronistically refers to a "new way" of conducting cultural studies that is strongly rooted in historical materialism. But he also cites extensively the work of Edward Said and other contemporary cultural critics like Renato Rosaldo, Raymond Williams, and Partha Chatterjee. At one point, Díaz Quiñones even rejects the Marxist reductionism of using social class as the single paradigm for analyzing cultural identity (p. 147). In these essays, Díaz Quiñones is clearly moving away from economically determined theories of nationalism.

The opening essay of *La memoria rota*, "La vida inclemente," offers fascinating personal testimony on the social changes transpiring in Puerto Rico since the 1950s, under the hegemony of Muñoz Marín's populist and developmentalist ideology. Díaz Quiñones presents a critical yet intimate portrait of the island's industrialization project and its utopian images of

ties and transnational corporations have also entered the contested terrain of cultural nationalism.

6. This is the question addressed in recent studies from diverse viewpoints by Angel Israel Rivera (1995), Juan Manuel Carrión (1995), Carlos Pabón (1995), Nancy Morris (1995), and Eliut Flores-Caraballo (1991). I have not included Morris's excellent book in this review because it was released after my essay was finished.

progress, modernity, and democracy. He focuses primarily on an official history that has silenced a good share of the collective past. Hence came the book title's reference to "broken memory," meaning the discontinuities and exclusions implied by the foundational myth that "modern Puerto Rican history" began in 1940 with the first electoral triumph of the PPD. Díaz Quiñones also denounces the government's attempt to separate artificially the sphere of "culture" from "politics" by suggesting that national identity can thrive without a sovereign state. Creation of the Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña under the Estado Libre Asociado represented an attempt to invent a new tradition, to accommodate national culture to a colonial regime. Díaz Quiñones therefore argues that "a 'culturalist' definition of nationhood began to take root, which could coexist perfectly well with North American domination" (pp. 64–65).

An important contribution made by *La memoria rota* is that it incorporates the Puerto Rican diaspora into the redefinition of national identity. For Díaz Quiñones, migrants are no less Puerto Rican because they live in the United States. Many "Neo-Ricans" have preserved their cultural identity even more strongly than those who have remained on the island.⁷ New York City, not San Juan, has served as the cultural capital of Puerto Rican artists and intellectuals since the 1920s, and even more so since the 1950s. According to Díaz Quiñones, Puerto Ricans in the United States—regardless of their language of preference—cannot be excluded from the discourse on Puerto Rican identity. This opinion leads him to counter the policy promoted by the PPD of declaring Spanish the island's official language. Such a policy cannot do justice to the increasing number of bilinguals or even English monolinguals (especially among second-generation immigrants) who also consider themselves Puerto Rican. Adopting an unconventional stance, Díaz Quiñones advocates the combination of Spanish and English—or Spanglish, at it is commonly known—as the daily form of communication used by Puerto Ricans in the United States and in Puerto Rico as well.⁸

The main value of *La memoria rota* lies in its questioning of traditional concepts such as state, nation, and identity in grappling with the difficult issues raised by Puerto Rican culture. Díaz Quiñones makes a lasting contribution by personalizing the crude statistics on the island's socioeconomic transformation since World War II. Moreover, he breaks away from the insular mold by citing non-Puerto Rican scholars who

7. I am using the term *Neo-Rican* (also spelled *Nuyorican* or *New York Rican*) to refer to Puerto Ricans residing in New York City and other places in the United States, especially second- and third-generation immigrants. No negative connotations are intended in using the term, only to distinguish islanders from residents of the U.S. mainland.

8. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, pro-independence intellectuals have defended the Spanish language as a cornerstone of Puerto Rico's national identity. Until 1948, official use of English was imposed as part of an effort to Americanize the island. For a typical nationalist stance on language, see Castro Pereda (1993).

have worked in other countries with similar issues, such as the subaltern studies group in India. Díaz Quiñones also does a great service in summarizing the argument against the reification of Spanish as the sole indicator of national identity. Finally, he places the diaspora on the conceptual map of intellectual discourse on Puerto Rico in a way that few Spanish-speaking scholars have done before.

The Reconstruction of National Identity in the Diaspora

The Commuter Nation: Perspectives on Puerto Rican Migration arose from a conference on the Puerto Rican diaspora held at Yale University in 1985. This multidisciplinary volume contains fourteen essays, a prologue, and an epilogue written by distinguished researchers from the social sciences and the humanities. Most of the authors are Puerto Rican academics who reside in the United States; thus many of them have participated personally in the diaspora. The volume stresses the bi-directional pendular movement of those who go back and forth between Puerto Rico and the United States. The essay by political scientist Juan Manuel García Passalacqua proposes the volume's central thesis: that the Puerto Rican people are now a nation of commuters, divided almost equally between two territories (by 1990, nearly 44 percent of all persons of Puerto Rican origin lived in the continental United States). Although some of the authors highlight the negative consequences of circular migration, most insist on its positive results, such as intergenerational solidarity, bilingualism, and cultural creativity on both shores.

Literary critic Hugo Rodríguez Vecchini elaborates the book's main theoretical framework in his long essay on the circulation of Puerto Ricans between two different countries, cultures, and languages. In his view, the free movement of Puerto Ricans northward since the imposition of U.S. citizenship in 1917 has become "a structural characteristic of the Puerto Rican social reality" that "has geographically and sociologically transformed the historical referent of the 'Puerto Rican nation'" (pp. 40, 42). Luis Rafael Sánchez's (1994) literary image of Puerto Rico as *la guagua aérea* (the flying bus) has displaced earlier metaphors of national identity, such as Manuel Alonso's *jibaros* (highland subsistence farmers), Antonio Pedreira's *insularismo*, Luis Muñoz Marín's *punte panamericano*, and González's *país de cuatro pisos* (four-story country). Unlimited access to U.S. territory distinguishes the Puerto Rican diaspora from other Latino migration flows, such as Mexicans, Cubans, and Dominicans. As Rodríguez Vecchini notes, the Puerto Rican diaspora has exceeded the conventional connotations of the concept of migration to include other referents such as moving, visiting, traveling, commuting, and going back and forth (p. 53). All these dimensions suggest that the Puerto Rican nation is in con-

tinuous transit between its place of origin and its destination, without setting roots in either community.

The essays presented in *The Commuter Nation* show that the notion of Puerto Rican culture itself is being redefined. Puerto Rican nationhood refers to more than one's country of birth or current residence, to one's sense of origin and cultural identity. Over the past few decades, New York City has become a symbolic extension of Puerto Rico through the popular reappropriation of cultural icons (such as language, music, and food) and the creation of transnational spaces (like the transplanted *casitas*, wooden boxlike structures in the South Bronx resembling rural dwellings in Puerto Rico). As literary critic Efraín Barradas argues in this same collection, the island's nationalist discourse has traditionally excluded Puerto Rican migrants from its definition of the nation because of geographic, linguistic, and cultural differences. This discourse has been charged with an ideological essentialism that assumes the nation to be an immutable, homogeneous, and sacred entity rather than a social and historical construct, as a community imagined by its members as a network of horizontal comradeship (to employ Benedict Anderson's terms). In this context, the metaphor of the flying bus captures the current state of flux in Puerto Rican culture, floating between the two islands of Puerto Rico and Manhattan.

In his usual polemical style, García Passalacqua concurs with Rodríguez Vecchini in insisting that being Puerto Rican is a question of origin, not of residence, that the Puerto Rican people are suspended in a transient state because of their freedom to travel to the United States. According to García Passalacqua, "[t]he circulation of people is now an integral feature of the movement of capital, commodities, and other values; it constitutes a long-term traffic between colony and metropolis" (p. 109). From this standpoint, the transitory character of Puerto Rican migration is determined primarily by changes in the structure of the labor markets in Puerto Rico and the United States. This structuralist perspective is widely shared by the other contributors to *The Commuter Nation*, especially sociologists Frank Bonilla and Alice Colón-Warren, economist James Dietz, and political scientist Margarita Ostolaza. Certain contributors subscribe explicitly to some variant of historical materialism to explain the population flows between Puerto Rico and the United States. But the collection as a whole displays a variety of ideological paradigms ranging from liberalism and nationalism to feminism and postmodernism.

Methodologically, the essays also demonstrate diverse analytical strategies, from criticism of literary texts to analysis of census statistics with a detour through the lyrics of salsa songs. The contributors' approaches reflect their varying disciplines, which include sociology, economics, political science, psychology, literary criticism, education, and musicology. Unfortunately, history and anthropology are not represented

in the volume, depriving it of more temporal and cultural depth. For instance, it would have been useful to analyze the formation of the Puerto Rican community in New York prior to World War II, as Virginia Sánchez Korrol has done elsewhere (1994), or to describe the daily life of the residents of Puerto Rican barrios in Manhattan, the Bronx, and Brooklyn. A historiographic and ethnographic perspective could have addressed little-studied aspects of circular migration between Puerto Rico and the United States. Commuting is not an entirely new phenomenon in Puerto Rican history, nor does it imply an indiscriminate transfer of cultural values and practices in both directions.

The most provocative thesis in *The Commuter Nation* is that migration to the United States has redefined the geographic, linguistic, and cultural terms of the debate over national identity in Puerto Rico. The massive two-way traffic, evident since at least the 1960s, has created Neo-Rican enclaves in both places: transnational spaces like La Loisiada, the Puerto Rican barrio on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, or Levittown in Toa Baja on the island, where a high proportion of return migrants reside. In either locale, it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between cultural elements of Puerto Rican and U.S. origin. Puerto Rican identity persists on both sides of the ocean but in a novel way, displaced toward the porous borders of a hybrid frontier where bilingualism and biculturalism prevail. The movement of Puerto Ricans is not only a labor migration but also a cultural circulation, as expressed in music, literature, the visual arts, and popular manifestations like food and religion. Thus circulating are not only labor and capital but also ideological discourses, collective mentalities, and the emblems of Puerto Rican identity.⁹

Conclusion

Since the nineteenth century, Puerto Rican nationalists like Ramón Emeterio Betances and Pedro Albizu Campos have imagined their nation as a sovereign state, independent from Spanish or U.S. domination. But since the establishment of the Estado Libre Asociado in 1952, most Puerto Ricans have asserted their cultural identity within a colonial context. Local observers have noted that even though Puerto Rico has become increasingly dependent on the U.S. economy, its cultural identity is now stronger than ever. The growing schism between political and cultural nationalism in Puerto Rico is a fascinating topic for scholarly reflection and a central issue in the books reviewed here.

Nationalism is no longer the leading political ideology in Puerto Rico today, as it was in the early decades of the twentieth century. As

9. On Puerto Rican icons, an excellent source is Juan Flores's *Divided Borders: Essays on Puerto Rican Identity* (1993). I have not included it in this essay because it was already reviewed in this journal by José O. Díaz (1994).

several of the authors cited have shown, populism replaced nationalism as the dominant discourse on cultural identity. Muñoz Marín and the *populares* managed to divorce the practical implications of continued political dependence on another country from the day-to-day assertion of cultural distinctiveness. Thus even though Puerto Rico continues to be a colonial state, it bears all the major cultural attributes of modern nations, including a national flag and anthem, national heroes and rituals, a well-defined national literature, national institutions of culture such as museums and universities, and national representation in Olympic sports and other international events like beauty pageants. The island's intellectual elite has striven to define a national identity based on defending the Spanish language, the Hispanic heritage, and other creole traits as well as some Catholic traditions. These elements have become emblematic of Puerto Rican culture at the popular level.

Thus the symbolic boundaries between Puerto Rican and U.S. culture have been drawn clearly, perhaps even exaggerated. For instance, musical conflicts during the 1980s pitted *cocolos* (lovers of salsa music) against *rockeros* (those who preferred U.S. rock music), as if they were completely opposed, notwithstanding the fact that salsa was conceived and marketed in New York. Similarly, the deeply rooted spiritual antagonism between the Three Wise Men as representatives of the Hispanic tradition and Santa Claus as an alien importation has given way to peaceful coexistence at Christmas. The culinary clash between creole staples such as *arroz con gandules* and U.S. fast food has been resolved in favor of a creative blending of the two. In short, popular definitions of national culture do not always coincide with the purist and essentialist arguments developed by the intellectual elite. Contemporary Puerto Rican culture is alive and well and probably increasing in vigor.

Few Puerto Ricans can now imagine their nation apart from some form of political association with the United States. Common citizenship and permanent union with the United States are fundamental elements of the popular discourse on cultural identity, which may seem to contradict the assertion of a separate nationality. This contradiction suggests that both the colonialist discourse examined by Lanny Thompson and the nationalist discourse analyzed by Juan Manuel Carrión and his colleagues have been partially successful. On the one hand, U.S. imperialists have convinced many Puerto Ricans that the island cannot survive as a sovereign state. On the other hand, most Puerto Ricans have not and will probably never become fully absorbed into U.S. culture. Even those who have moved to the United States have not assimilated into the U.S. mainstream, as Juan Flores (1993) and others have pointed out. Although the cultural implications of commuting between the island and the mainland have not been worked through, circular migration represents a significant departure from previous immigrant experiences. Neither Puerto Ricans

living in Puerto Rico nor those living abroad will be the same as a result of the two-way flow of discourses, mentalities, symbols, and identities. A new way of imagining the Puerto Rican nation in the twenty-first century will have to take these emerging realities into account.

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