

[Kings of Bachata: Aventura, Migration and Dominican Nationalism in a Transnational Context;
Laura Pierson, University of Washington, International Studies, Fall 2009]

Introduction

In the documentary film “Santo Domingo Blues” made in 2008, the famous Dominican bachata artist Luis Vargas reflects on his time as a bachatero (bachata artist) since the 1970’s saying, “Que bueno ser bachatero ahora, pero ahora. En aquel tiempo no era tan bueno...” (“How great it is to be a bachatero these days, but only these days. Back then it was not so great.”)¹ This statement reflects the scorn that bachata, a traditional Dominican popular music, received for decades, especially from the Dominican middle and upper classes. Bachata music was formed across the rural Dominican Republic through the imitation of traditional African drumbeats on string guitars. It consolidated into a formal genre as rural populations of African (and often Haitian) decent migrated to Santo Domingo in the 1970’s. These dark skinned, new urban dwellers of rural origins were associated with underdevelopment and the “uncivilized” traditions of the countryside, and suffered from discrimination as they settled in the poorest shantytowns, or *barrios*, of Santo Domingo. Bachata, easily recognized by its twangy guitar sound, romantic lyrics, and slow sensual rhythm, was derided by Dominican middle classes and elites for its association with these rural migrants who had first brought the musical style to the city.²

Luis Vargas’ reflection on his time as a bachatero reveals the drastic changes that have occurred over only a single lifetime in the perceptions of bachata music by Dominicans in Santo Domingo. Once a genre associated with the lower class lifestyles of the poorest *barrios*, it is now an immensely popular genre that shares a space with merengue and salsa in dance clubs around the world. These changes are often attributed to the internationally popular bachata group Aventura. Formed in the Bronx by a group of young Latino men, mostly born in New York of

¹ *Santo Domingo Blues: Los Tígueres de Bachata*, DVD, dir. Alex Wolfe (Mambo Media, 2003).

² *Ibid.*

Dominican and Puerto Rican descent, these self-anointed “Kings of Bachata” (or K.O.B. as they frequently call themselves) began to add urban flare to the traditional rural genre, incorporating influences from R&B and reggaeton, but maintaining the undeniable bachata sound.³ Today, the bachata of Aventura is almost inescapable, blasted by vendors and bus drivers on the crowded streets of Santo Domingo and played with pride in the bodegas and Dominican diners of Washington Heights and the Bronx.

Aventura’s escape from the racist and classist disdain suffered by early bachateros begs the question: *Why has Aventura emerged as a symbol of national pride and drastically changed the perceptions of and attitudes towards the bachata genre that they sing?* More generally, how has migration affected ideologies of race and class in Dominican nationalism?

Dramatic changes in the genre have occurred alongside major social and economic changes in the Dominican Republic. Prior to 1960 there was essentially no notable Dominican population in the United States other than a select political and economic elite. The Dominican Republic was above all a rural and sparsely populated country, almost entirely dependent on the sugar industry.⁴ But after the fall of the Trujillo dictatorship in 1961 and then the end of American occupation in 1965, the nation entered a new era of economic globalization as a fledgling democracy. These changes led to massive urban development in Santo Domingo and a huge surge in migration to the United States, mostly New York City.⁵ Today, Dominicans are a highly visible ethnic minority in the United States with an estimated population of 1.3 million living in the U.S. today,⁶ compared to a population in the Dominican Republic of just over 9.6

³ Jody Rosen, “Crossover Dreams of a Bronx Bachatero,” *New York Times*, June 3, 2009

⁴ Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, *A tale of two cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 26-28

⁵ *ibid.* 30

⁶ “2008 American Community Survey 1-year Estimates,” *U.S. Census Bureau* (Factfinder.census.gov)

million.⁷ As nearly every family has been transformed by the regular cycle of Dominican migrants to and from the United States, Dominicans regularly joke, “¿Quién no tiene un tío en Nueva York? (Who doesn’t have an uncle in New York?)”

A large body of scholarship on race in Latin America and the Dominican Republic has identified how centuries of racial mixing has created racial paradigms different than those in the United States. While race is generally viewed a spectrum throughout Latin America (especially compared to “black and white” views in the United States), white supremacist ideologies have persisted throughout the region as a result of Spanish colonization and North American imperialism.⁸ In the Dominican Republic this has meant that individuals tend to identify as “indio” (literally “Indian” but used to refer those of mixed African and Spanish heritage), rather than understanding themselves as “black” or even “mulatto”. Recent scholarship has often looked at the different ethnic labels that Dominican migrants have used in the United States, sometimes describing themselves as “hispano” or “latino” to fit within North American racial and ethnic labels.⁹ Other scholars have found similarities between Dominican ideologies of race and identity in both the Dominican Republic and the U.S. suggesting that Dominicans are able to maintain their ideas of race in new contexts.¹⁰ In 1981, Dominican historian Frank Moya Pons

⁷ “CIA World Factbook” *Central Intelligence Agency*, (www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/dr.html)

⁸ Ernesto Sagás, *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida Press, 2000)
David John Howard, *Coloring the nation: race and ethnicity in the Dominican Republic*. (Oxford, U.K: Signal Books, 2001)

Pedro Luis San Miguel *The imagined island: history, identity and utopia in Hispaniola*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005)

⁹ Mark D. Hamilton, "Local Actors, Transnational Networks: Negotiating Dominican Identity," *Conference Papers - International Studies Association* 1-29 (2006)
Benjamin Bailey, "Dominican-American Ethnic/Racial Identities and United States Social Categories," *International Migration Review* 35, no. 3 (2001): 677-708

These scholars note that prior to 1990 the census gave Dominicans and other groups of Latinos in the United States no way to identify themselves based on their national origin and were thus forced to choose between “black” and “Hispanic”.

¹⁰ Ginetta E.B. Candelario, *Black behind the ears: Dominican racial identity from museums to beauty shops* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007)

observed changes to Dominican national ideas of race as a result of a new consciousness in return migrants. As Dominican migrants suffer the overt discrimination of racial politics in the United States, he argued, they would become more aware of their “true racial constitution” and move towards the black conscious, antiracist ideologies seen in African-American culture.¹¹ The recent popularity of bachata music, particularly that of Aventura, could be seen as a move in this direction as Dominicans embrace a music genre traditionally derided for its associations with the blackest sectors of the population.

I argue, however, that despite these appearances, Aventura has gained their popularity by actually maintaining the old ideologies behind Dominican nationalism in a transnational context. Aventura is not an expression of a new racial consciousness among Dominicans but instead a re-articulation of the racist ideologies that have historically underpinned ideas of the Dominican nation. This is first evident by Aventura’s role as a unique symbol of *dominicanidad* that has become a means of distancing Dominicans from African-American culture and giving the Dominican nation a distinct place in transnational ethnic politics. Second, I will argue that the patriarchal and overtly sexist ideas expressed in the lyrics themselves demonstrate the persistence of a male, colonial gaze and racist postcolonial ideologies. I will demonstrate this argument by first understanding how migration has affected (or not affected) nationalist ideologies in the Dominican Republic, and secondly how these historically racist and sexist ideologies are re-articulated in transnational spaces. This analysis will demonstrate the persistence and pervasiveness of racism and colonial ideologies even among younger generations who have grown up in this “democratic”, transnational era.

¹¹ Frank Moya Pons, “Dominican national identity and return migration.” In *Migration and Caribbean cultural identity: selected papers from conference celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Center*, 25-33. (Gainesville: Center for Latin American Studies, University of Florida, 1982)

A number of important assumptions and definitions should be accounted for. First and most central to my thesis are the concepts of *progreso* and *cultura* that Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof identifies as the two major underpinnings of Dominican nationalism since the unification of the nation in the 19th century.¹² I have slightly adapted his definitions of these terms in order to better describe the national ideologies articulated by *Aventura* and young Dominicans living in Santo Domingo, however, like Hoffnung-Garskof, I have kept the words in Spanish to better reflect their daily usage in a Dominican context. *Progreso* refers to the use of North American and European standards of “development” or “modernity” to measure progress on an individual, societal and national level. *Cultura* refers to the complex system of values and symbols used to determine belonging in the Dominican nation, with an acute awareness of Dominican’s racial and national Others (mainly, North America and Haiti).

Secondly, my analysis of Dominican nationality has also been heavily influenced by the theories of Lauren Basson in her fascinating account of mixed-race persons in the United States, *White Enough to be American?*¹³ Her analysis describes how American nationalism shifted from purely biological qualifications (that is, “pure blood whiteness”) to ascriptive characteristics that symbolically represented being “American” (that is, white American). While her analysis is situated in a discussion of race in the United States, her theories of ascriptive national characteristics are central to my own analysis of Dominican *cultura*.

Finally, this thesis will for the most part avoid semantic debates that attempt to define the term “transnational” and “transnationalism”. Instead, I choose to understand Dominican nationality as inevitably formed in a transnational field. First, this is based on long standing historical realities in which Spain, the United States and Haiti have all played pivotal roles in

¹² Hoffnung-Garskof, 12-15

¹³ Lauren L. Basson, *White enough to be American?: race mixing, indigenous people, and the boundaries of state and nation* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008)

how Dominican nationalism has been formed. Explains Torres-Saillant, “Dominican identity consists not only of how Dominicans see themselves but also how they are seen by the powerful nations with which the Dominican Republic has been linked in a relationship of political and economic dependence.”¹⁴ However, this is not merely a theoretical understanding of transnationalism, but due to the reality that nearly every Dominican I interviewed for this research (and almost all Dominicans with whom I have worked, studied or otherwise known personally) has been directly or indirectly affected by migration to the United States. This could be through a parent who works abroad and sends remittances, an older brother currently playing in the minor leagues, or a neighbor who recently returned from living in New York for several years. Furthermore, while all respondents had opinions and ideas about how these migrants change *dominicanidad*, none were willing to describe them as any “less” Dominican. As such, I choose to understand the Dominican nation and ideologies of Dominican nationalism as more or less deterritorialized concepts brokered both on and off the island and in constant negotiation with popular culture and ethnic, racial politics in the United States.

In the first chapter I will provide an overview of literature on the racial conception of the Dominican nation both on the island and in the United States. This review of the scholarship will demonstrate how both *progreso* and *cultura* have thrived in Dominican national ideologies during three distinct time periods: Early independence in the 19th Century, the Trujillo dictatorship from 1930-1961, and the transnational era post-1970. This analysis will show that Dominican nationalism has been based on white supremacist ideologies since its origins as a result of Spanish colonial heritage and North American hegemony. However, it will complicate these ideas by showing how ascriptive national characteristics and symbolic representations of

¹⁴ Silvio Torres-Saillant. 2000. "The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity". *Callaloo*. 23 (3): 1088

whiteness were historically used in order to broker a *dominicanidad* in a population almost entirely of African descent. This will demonstrate the historically contradictory attitudes towards nationalism, which help illuminate the contradictions that Aventura demonstrates as a symbol of national pride. In this chapter I will also review scholarship of gender, colonialism and Dominican history to demonstrate how one of these most important ascribed articulations of whiteness in the post-colonial Dominican Republic has been patriarchy and female subjugation. Thus, I will demonstrate the intersectionality between racism and sexism in the Dominican Republic, particularly during the Trujillo Era and the current transnational era, as a result of the nation's colonial history. This chapter will establish these patriarchal ideologies as a historically important characteristic of Dominican cultura. This will allow me to later demonstrate the ways Aventura maintains these historic patriarchal ideologies and how they are connected to racist national ideologies more generally.

In the second chapter I will analyze personal interviews conducted in Santo Domingo by myself during July and August of 2009. These interviews as well as comments on Aventura music videos on YouTube will explain the symbolic role that Aventura plays in articulations of Dominican nationalism. Through this analysis I will demonstrate the ways that the bachata group is strongly linked to the Dominican nation and how it has become a means for Dominicans to symbolically distance themselves from African-American influences in both New York and Santo Domingo. This will establish my argument that the adaptation of bachata music by Aventura is not evidence of a rupture from the racist ideologies of Dominican nationalism but rather a continuation and rearticulation of these same ideas.

The final chapter will further advance my argument through an analysis of Aventura's lyrics. This analysis will be particularly focused on discussions of gender and patriarchy evident

in the lyrics. By examining both romantic and socially conscious bachatas by Aventura, this chapter will reveal how dehumanized and villainized portrayals of women reflect the persistence of a male, colonial gaze. Thus, this chapter will argue that Aventura's music lyrically continues to align itself with racist and sexist articulations of Dominican nationalism, which have survived in the transnational, democratic era both on and off the island.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

Dominican racial paradigms are a result of a history of Spanish colonialism, American imperialism and authoritarian political systems. Racial mixing within the nation has occurred alongside awareness of Haitian, Spanish and North American influences. An understanding of how these forces played out historically can help demonstrate how they persist or have been altered in today's transnational settings.

Progreso through Whitening

Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof identifies progreso, “the gradual and inevitable improvement of the human condition”, as a key element of Dominican nationalism since the late 19th Century.¹⁵ After a failed campaign for annexation by the United States, Dominican intellectuals embarked on a nation-building project to modernize and unify the nascent state. These early nationalists “generally lamented what they saw as the backwardness and barbarism of their rural countrymen” and understood the rural populations’ resistance to modernity as a product of poor education and “an unfortunate mixture of races.”¹⁶ To overcome the nation’s “backwardness”, these nationalists argued for expansive public education and urbanization. They also sought to encourage European immigration to the island in order to mix with Dominicans and “improve” the Dominican race.¹⁷ Thus, progreso was tied to whitening, both symbolic and real, through acquiring the characteristics of a modern nation-state as well as lightening Dominicans’ skin color.

Ernesto Sagás explains a similar idea through the ideology of *antihaitianismo*, which he argues has been utilized by Dominican elites from colonial times through the current democratic era in order to maintain authoritarian control. While the popular impression is that anti-Haitian

¹⁵ Hoffnung-Garskof, 19

¹⁶ Ibid., 19

¹⁷ Ibid., 20

attitudes root from the Haitian occupation of the island from 1822-1844, Sagás argues that the ideology of *antihaitinismo* was formed later on as a means of legitimating the power of the new Dominican elites in the late 19th Century. He argues, “antihaitianismo is a deliberate creation: it is an authoritarian, dominant ideology, with the objective of defending a narrow status quo.”¹⁸

While these ideas originated in the nation-building projects of the 19th Century, it was the dictator General Rafael L. Trujillo whose totalitarian regime ruled from 1930 to 1961 who was most adept at using and strengthening the ideology of antihaitianismo to maintain and legitimize his rule. This effort to antagonize Haitian and African cultures was an articulation of *progreso* by the Trujillo regime that was attempting to “modernize” the state.¹⁹ According to Sagás, “The Trujillo regime and its intellectuals did not invent antihaitianismo; it already was an integral part of Dominican culture. What the Trujillo regime did was to take antihaitianismo to new intellectual heights and convert it into a state-sponsored ideology.”²⁰ The Trujillista ideology painted Haitians as racially distinct from the Dominican nation and as a menacing threat that were intent on Africanizing and dominating their white Dominican neighbors. The most violent manifestation of this ideology was the 1937 Haitian massacre ordered by the regime in which 20,000 to 30,000 Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans along the Dominican borderlands were killed by machete over five days.²¹

Antihaitianismo has been maintained in the democratic era of Dominican politics. Sagás’ analysis of the 1994 election between the black presidential candidate José Peña Gómez and the former-Trujillista ideologue Joaquín Balaguer demonstrates its prevalence in recent decades. Balaguer served under Trujillo throughout the regime, was a major architect of the 1937

¹⁸ Ernesto Sagás. *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2000) 4

¹⁹ *ibid.*, 47

²⁰ *ibid.*, 49

²¹ *ibid.*, 50-51

massacre, and returned to power in the 1970's, known as the Twelve Years of Balaguer, which marked a return to authoritarian rule. Balaguer later was elected back to power in 1986 and in 1994 was seeking a third term. When it appeared that Peña Gomez had a significant political following, the Balaguer campaign resorted to racist campaign tactics, spreading rumors that Peña Gomez was of Haitian descent, was seeking to avenge the massacre of his parents, and if elected would open the borders and allow for a new "Haitian invasion."²² Dominican historian Frank Moya Pons called the elections "the worst display of racism that we have seen since the Haitian-Dominican wars."²³

Sagás' analysis of antihaitianismo throughout Dominican politics, while extensive in its historical scope, is limited to discourses created by Dominican elites. His broad assertions that Dominicans have a "false racial consciousness" are somewhat better substantiated in David Howard's analysis of the "indio myth". Howard argues that the ideology of antihaitianismo is maintained through popular discourses of skin color and attitudes attached to these categories. The Trujillo regime mandated all Dominicans to carry a *cédula*, or national identity card, which included a line that identifies the citizen's "color". The regime prohibited Dominicans from identifying as "negro" on their *cédulas* and instead used the term "indio", or Indian. While no longer mandated by law, the tradition of dark skinned Dominicans identifying as "indio" or "moreno" in place of "mestizo" or "mulatto", terms more common in other parts of Latin America, persists. . Howard contends that the term *indio* in a Dominican context has little to do with indigenous identities, but is used as a means of erasing African heritage in the Dominican nation.²⁴ Howard's surveys of Dominicans across skin colors, social classes and different

²² *ibid.*, 108

²³ cited in Sagás 2000, 110

²⁴ In fact, the indigenous Taínos were almost entirely killed off within a few decades after Columbus' landing on the island

geographic spaces of the Dominican Republic show overwhelming preference to “indio” as a means of describing skin color. Furthermore, his interviews reveal consensus across social classes in the importance of finding a lighter-skinned partner and hopes that children will be lighter than their parents.²⁵ In other words, Dominicans of all skin colors and social classes continue to equate progreso with whitening and maintain the racist ideologies historically formed by light-skinned elites.

Hoffnung-Garskof explains how in the transnational era progreso has been articulated through narratives of migration. He analyzes the act of “writing home” by Dominicans in New York to newspapers in Santo Domingo to express the social and economic progress seen by these Dominican migrants. In particular, the image of the Dominican *bodegueros* behind the counter at Dominican-owned bodegas in Washington Heights was a powerful sign for those back home in Santo Domingo that Dominican migrants were achieving great success and respectability in the United States.²⁶ Furthermore, migration to the United States occurred alongside the liberalization of global trade in the Dominican Republic and the influx of American popular culture, both of which formed a strong Dominican consumer culture in Santo Domingo that associated American products with social status and progreso. Writes Hoffnung-Garskof, “the old idea that New York represented the center of modern life persisted, now entangled with a new idea that modern well-being amounted to mass consumption.”²⁷

Lyrics of the Dominican bachata group Aventura reflect this sense of progreso and change through migration in their lyrics. First, lyrics reflect a preoccupation with material consumer culture, such as when the narrator in the song “Obsesión” drives “bien vestido en mi

²⁵ Howard 2001, 85

²⁶ Hoffnung-Garskof 2008, 178

²⁷ *ibid.*, 7

Lexus” (“well dressed in my Lexus”) to impress his love-interest.²⁸ In the song, “Mi Niña Cambió”, the narrator laments the way his former girlfriend has changed after living in New York and sings, “Dicen que Nueva York te cambia hasta la piel” (they say that New York changes you down to your skin), a popular saying in the Dominican Republic.²⁹ The expression implies the real and symbolic whitening that occurs for Dominican migrants in New York—real because the lack of sunlight in the northern climate literally lightens skin, and symbolic due to the changes in an individual’s customs, preferences and behaviors.

However, “Mi Niña Cambió” tells a tragic story in which progress has led to his love leaving him behind. In the chorus Romeo (Aventura’s lead vocalist) sings, “Me alegro que hayas progresado pero acuerdate que [sic] fui yo” (I am happy that you have progressed, but remember who I was). The lyrics suggest the importance of progreso but also reflect the ways progreso can be contradictory to ideals of Dominican belonging. Herein lies the critiques of Sagás and Howard, which shed doubt on the extent to which Dominicans are blinded to their “true” racial make-up.

Both Howard and Sagás are widely critiqued for oversimplifying the ways that average Dominicans understand and react to these discourses. Particularly the assertion that Dominicans have a “false racial consciousness” because of their reluctance towards black affirmation is met with significant skepticism. In Anthony Maingot’s review of Sagás’ work, he asks rhetorically, “Who, other than the people themselves, should identify what their ‘true’ ethnic identity is?”³⁰ In her review of Howard’s book, Rosario Espinal is similarly unconvinced that Dominicans define themselves as white, Hispanic and Catholic simply because official discourses discuss them as

²⁸ Aventura, “Obsesión” in *We Broke The Rules*, (Premium Latin Music Inc.: 2002)

²⁹ Aventura, “Mi Niña Cambió” in *Love and Hate*, (Premium Latin Music Inc.: 2003)

³⁰ Anthony Maingot “Review: Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic” *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 81, no. 3 (2001): 803

such.³¹ Indeed, “Mi Niña Cambió” reflects that just because Dominicans do not see themselves as “black” does not mean they consider themselves “white” either. Torres-Saillant is perhaps the most important critic of accusations that Dominicans are in racial denial. He accuses Sagás and others of ethnocentrism, and argues that, “Generally devoid of the language of racial polarity current in the United States, Dominicans have little familiarity with a discourse of black affirmation.”³² Torres-Saillant provides important historic context, which explains how race in the Dominican Republic is seen as a spectrum as opposed to the distinct racial group that formed in the United States.

These critiques, however, are insufficient in disproving the importance of Sagás’ and Howard’s analyses. Warren and Sue explain that in Latin America, “Far from diminishing racism, mixed-race identities have been claimed as a strategic measure to escape blackness and indianess.”³³ Clearly, racial mixing in the Dominican Republic, which has led to less distinct racial categories, does not make racism less pertinent. Furthermore, the fact that the United States and Latin America have different histories with regards to race does not make U.S. based theories of race irrelevant or “ethnocentric” as Torres-Saillant suggests. Warren and Sue write, “Just as it has proved beneficial to take theoretical and political insights generated in Europe to better understand and navigate capitalism and modernity elsewhere in the world, it is equally suitable to use knowledge garnered in U.S. anti-racist endeavors to situations beyond its borders.”³⁴ In other words, scholars should be cautious of oversimplifying racism and racial

³¹ Rosario Espinal, "Review of Coloring and Nation. Race and Ethnicity in the Dominican Republic," *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 35 no. 3 (2003): 653-654.

³² Torres-Saillant 2000, 1090

³³ Jonathan Warren and Christina Sue “Race and Ethnic Studies in Latin America: Lessons for the United States” *Impulso* Vol 18, Jan-Dec 2008: 36

³⁴ *ibid*, 29

paradigms in Latin America, but these tendencies to oversimplify does not make their conclusions entirely untrue as racism continues to be a serious problem throughout the region.

It is clear that white supremacist attitudes are articulated through the notion of *progreso*, both historically and in the current democratic, transnational era. However, Sagás and Howard do not take into account the complexities and contradictions within the popular responses to racist elite discourses. I will later argue that *Aventura*, both symbolically and through their lyrics, maintain these racist ideologies behind Dominican nationalism. However, I will argue that they also represent a deliberate formation of *cultura* rather than simply the “false racial consciousness” argued by scholars such as Sagás and Howard.

The Carving of Cultura

The notion of *progreso* paints a dichotomous view of race in which whiteness is equated with modernity and pride while blackness resembles the uncivilized and shameful.³⁵ This is, of course, the basis of racist ideologies across the globe, the rationalization behind colonialism, and the legacy faced by all post-colonial societies. In the United States, these ideas of race led to a highly segregated sense of national belonging in which only Americans of European descent were given full rights of citizenship well into the 20th Century and strict segregation was formed to maintain these distinctions. Lauren Basson documents how mixed-race Americans challenged this idea of a pure and racially homogenous United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Rather than forcing the nation to abandon white supremacist ideologies, these Americans changed the idea of the nation to be defined by certain ascribed national characteristics rather than pure whiteness itself.³⁶

³⁵ Hoffnung-Garskof, 20-21.

³⁶ Basson

In the Dominican Republic, as is true throughout Latin America, the sort of strict racial segregation seen in the United States was never possible, but, as demonstrated in the Dominican concept of *progreso*, this does not make racist ideologies any less pervasive. The process of ascriptive concepts of nation articulated by Lauren Basson was evident in the conception of the Dominican nation, and particularly during the Trujillo Era, as racial mixing was an inescapable reality. Hoffnung-Garskof refers to this as the Dominican concept of *cultura*, which carves a space of belonging in *dominicanidad* out of the white/black dichotomy of race.³⁷ By harking back to ideals of Hispanic heritage, Hoffnung-Garskof explains, “*cultura* simultaneously defined the Dominican Republic in opposition to U.S. materialism *and* the African-ness of most Dominicans.”³⁸ He goes on to explain that these ideas of *cultura* could be used by the Dominican elite to ensure the United States that the Dominican Republic “would be ‘responsibly’ governed by a culturally European elite,” even though, in a strict biological sense, most of these Dominicans came from African lineage and may have been seen as black or “unfit to rule” in a North American context at that time.³⁹ Just as seen in Basson’s analysis, the presence of multiracial people does not overthrow racist ideologies but forces it to shift from an emphasis on biology to an emphasis on ascribed characteristics, or *cultura*. For Dominican elites these were characteristics of their Spanish heritage that defined them in opposition to the United States and Haiti. A similar idea of *cultura* based on Spanish heritage is argued by Ginetta Candelario who uses ethnographic work in Dominican hair salons to show that Dominican ideals of beauty are based on Iberian standards rather than Anglo-American or African ones.⁴⁰

³⁷ Hoffnung-Garskof, 18-23

³⁸ *ibid.* 22

³⁹ *ibid.*, 23

⁴⁰ Candelario

While Hispanic ideals have historically been very important to the conception of *dominicanidad*, particularly in the early 20th Century, I will use Dominican music to argue that Dominican *cultura* is articulated by symbols that are collectively viewed as uniquely Dominican in an attempt to defy the white/black dichotomy of race and express racial uniqueness. At previous historical moments, it was a Hispanic legacy that differentiated the Dominican nation from North America and Haiti. I will argue that young Dominicans today have established bachata music, particularly that of Aventura, as being uniquely Dominican in a transnational setting. This has occurred despite the historic connotations with the genre of bachata,. Thus, this attempt at creating *de-racialized* symbols of *dominicanidad* to avoid the white/black racial dichotomy has inevitably led to racial contradictions in the conception and imagining of the Dominican nation.

Similarly contradictory expressions of Dominican cultura were created by Trujillo who, alongside racist and anti-Haitian ideologies, also employed populist strategies to build legitimacy. Lauren Derby explains that Trujillo's identity as an underdog and an outsider from the world of Dominican elites was an integral part of his populism and appeal among working-class and rural Dominicans.⁴¹ When Trujillo identified merengue, music that had been historically scorned by the ruling classes, as a symbol of national identity, he was proving this commoner identity and building legitimacy with the poor and rural Dominican majority.⁴² He also, however, changed the music from the *merengue típica* played by three to four musicians to orchestral merengue played by big bands, incorporating horns into the music that made it more

⁴¹ Lauren Derby "The Dictator's Seduction: Gender and State Spectacle during the Trujillo Regime" *Callaloo* v. 32 no. 3 (Summer 2000): 1136

⁴² Julie A Sellers *Merengue and Dominican Identity: Music as National Unifier* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Co., inc., 2004). 93-94

closely resemble North American swing music of the era.⁴³ Thus, the changes his regime created in the music were part of a larger whitening process even while the use of the music was meant to identify with the majority of Dominican people's native customs (historically of African descent). Trujillo's actions were part of a broader white supremacist concept of nation, but used merengue, something collectively understood as natively Dominican even if historically scorned for its rural and African roots, as a means of symbolically carving a sense of cultura or belonging for *dominicanidad*.

Cultura in the Transnational Era

The Trujillo Era was integral to the conception of the modern Dominican nation, but was also a notably insular period in Dominican history. Under Trujillo, Dominicans traveling off the island were limited to members of the regime itself or those seeking political exile.⁴⁴ After the fall of the Trujillo regime, Dominican migration to the US skyrocketed, with over 10,000 immigrant visas granted to Dominicans each year between 1960-1965, not to mention the influx of unregulated migrants who traveled through Puerto Rico or overstayed tourist visas.⁴⁵ Immigration, coupled with increased global trade, a global entertainment industry and ever-improving communication technologies, has meant a tremendous shift in Dominican culture over the last half century. Thus, while merengue during the Trujillo Era is an important reference point when analyzing the role of Aventura's bachata in the present day national identity, these new social and economic realities must be taken into account.

Increased migration patterns as well as advances in communication technology mean that Dominicans in the United States as well as in the Dominican Republic are in constant interaction

⁴³ Ibid., 96

⁴⁴ Hoffnung-Garskof, 5

⁴⁵ In comparison, 1,150 Dominicans immigrated to the U.S. in the 1930's, 5,627 in the 1940's and 9,897 in the entire decade of the 1950's.
Hoffnung-Garskof, 69

with North American culture and racial paradigms. A number of scholars have framed this as cause for a major shift in Dominican racial identities as Dominican migrants deal with racial discrimination in the United States and Puerto Rico and increasingly interact with African-American culture.⁴⁶ In 1981, Frank Moya Pons claimed, “the social discrimination experienced by thousands of Dominicans in the urban ghettos of New York made them aware of their real racial constitution.”⁴⁷ He goes on to describe the increased popularity of Afro hairstyles and new acceptance of vodou religion and dances as evidence that return migrants to the island have made a significant change in racial ideas and that in the Dominican Republic “now black is beginning to be beautiful.”⁴⁸ In other words, Moya Pons views the cultural productions from Dominican (return) migrants as a major break from the white supremacist nation constructed by colonialism, early nationalists and the Trujillo Regime. However, later analysis will demonstrate that new means through which Dominicans on and off the island construct Dominican cultura signals that Moya Pons’ predictions of increased black consciousness in Dominican identities were false, and that instead cultura is produced transnationally in ways that rearticulate the traditional racist assumptions of Dominican nationalism.

Undoubtedly, Dominicans faced, and continue to face, significant discrimination in the United States. The very image of the Dominican *bodeguero* in Washington Heights, an important sign of progreso for Dominicans back home, was a symbol in New York of the decline of formerly Jewish and Italian working class neighborhoods. As the corner stores became less profitable for white business owners, they began to sell out to Dominicans and instead look

⁴⁶ Benjamin Bailey, "Dominican-American Ethnic/Racial Identities and United States Social Categories". *International Migration Review*. Vol. 35, No. 3 (2001): 677-708.

Silvio Torres Saillant. "Inventing the Race: Latinos and the Ethnoracial Penatagon". *Latino Studies*. Vol. 1 No. 1 (2003):123-151.

⁴⁷ Frank Moya Pons “Dominica national identity and return migration” in *Migration and Caribbean cultural identity: selected papers from conference celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Center*. (Gainesville: Center for Latin American Studies, University of Florida, 1982), 32.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 33

towards the suburbs.⁴⁹ By the late 1970's, Dominican neighborhoods became equated with the "culture of poverty" that was used in ethnic politics at the time to describe African-American and Puerto Rican neighborhoods. Washington Heights began to be seen as a "racial" neighborhood and its schools as part of the "inner city", implying "children who were not white and not middle class and schools that were in institutional collapse."⁵⁰

Hoffnung-Garskof's discussion of student groups at George Washington High School in Washington Heights during the initial decades of Dominican migration to the area provides some initial support for Moya Pons' claim. The term *llevados* (those taken along) referred to young Dominican immigrants to New York during the 1960's who had been involved in radical anti-imperial and anti-American student groups in Santo Domingo during the Second North American Intervention (1961-1965) but then migrated with their families.⁵¹ When these students entered the politically raucous and racially charged environment of New York in the late 1960's they formed a distinct voice through student political groups. Several of these groups aligned with African-American and Black Nationalist movements at George Washington High School at the time. For example, Umoja, an African-American student group working for the hiring of more minority teachers, was joined by the Asociación de Estudiantes Hispanoamericanos, led by a Dominican *llevada* student, in the spring of 1969 and was successful in their negotiations for certain school reforms with the (mostly white) school administration.⁵² By this account, it appeared that Dominican migrants were allying with black conscious social movements of the decade as a means to form a voice in the complex ethnic politics of New York City at the time.

⁴⁹ Hoffnung-Garskof 2008, 178

⁵⁰ *ibid*, 132

⁵¹ *ibid*, 121

⁵² *Ibid*, 142-143

However, these moments of alliance and recognition are better classified as the exception than the norm. According to Hoffnung-Garskof, “while the alliances that [Dominican students] made with black students offer key insights into the ways Dominicans could fit into the local political landscape, these alliances were nevertheless unusual.”⁵³ Instead, the black/white paradigm Dominican students faced and continue to face in the United States led to a carving of cultura similar to those seen during the Trujillo Era and historic conceptions of the Dominican nation. Both Dominican and Puerto Rican students abandoned African-American student movements by fighting for bilingual education reforms (which would necessarily hire more Hispanic faculty) rather than forcing the district to hire more minority teachers. Dominican student groups focused on anti-U.S. imperialism rather than allying with Puerto Rican students who chose to emphasize domestic poverty.⁵⁴ Rather than the proximity of these groups creating a shared sense of black consciousness, George Washington High School became overwhelmed with interethnic gang violence throughout the 1970’s between black, Puerto Rican and Dominican students.

Meanwhile, both conservative and liberal *reformista* political groups were using Dominican cultural groups in New York City for political organization back home. While the politics of this process was complicated, the result was the conception of a distinct Dominican ethnic identity in the United States. Hoffnung-Garskof explains,

“The idea of patriotic projection, at first, had little to do with a conscious immigrant identity. But Reformista civil society eventually turned to the process of ethnic integration too, shifting the function of symbols that had served the Trujillo regime in its attempt to regulate the relationship between the state and the nation to the project of defining ethnic identity in a multiethnic city”⁵⁵

⁵³ Ibid, 151

⁵⁴ Hoffnung-Garskof, 150-162

⁵⁵ Ibid, 131

In other words, in the face of racial discrimination in the United States, Dominican national identities, even those created by liberal Reformista politicians attempting to protest the conservative Dominican regime of the 1970's, did not lead to an articulation of black consciousness but rather continued to use the same strategies and symbols of the Trujillo regime. Just as Dominicans had conceived themselves as different from their Haitian neighbors on the island of Hispaniola, they had to construct their difference from blackness in Washington Heights, Harlem and the Bronx.

Today, reggaeton music or Spanish hip-hop could be viewed as evidence of an increased antiracist consciousness and alliance with African-American culture among Latino-American youth. While reggaeton music is not specifically Dominican⁵⁶, it has had an important influence on Aventura's reformed bachata style, and so the way this music configures race in youth identities is relevant. Initially, argues Wayne Marshall, *underground* or Spanish hip-hop "served to express an explicit cultural politics of blackness within a context of enduring racism and *blanqueamiento*."⁵⁷ Furthermore, the term *underground* itself "embodied the music's marginalized (and proud!) status" against Latin Caribbean mainstream culture. Reggaeton finds its origins in *underground* music and many *reggaetoneros* continue to refer to themselves as *raperos* and cite African-American hip-hop as their main point of artistic reference.⁵⁸

However, there are major flaws in understanding the popularity of *underground* Spanish hip-hop as solidarity with antiracist or Black empowerment movements that the music has traditionally represented in the United States. Ian Condry describes how in Japanese hip-hop,

⁵⁶ The edited volume *Reggaeton* provides ample discussions of the music's contested origins and roots the music in New York, Puerto Rico, Panama, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic, making it a truly transnational genre.

⁵⁷ Wayne Marshall, "From música negra to reggaeton Latino: the cultural politics of nation, migration and commercialization," In *Reggaeton* edited by Raquel Z Rivera, Wayne Marshall, Deborah Pacini Hernandez, 19-78, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009)

⁵⁸ Similar ideas are also articulated as part of the Puerto Rican experience in: Angel G Quintero Rivera "Migration, Ethnicity and Interactions between the U.S. and Hispanic Caribbean Popular Culture" *Latin American Perspectives* Vol. 34, no. 1

mimicry of African-American hip-hop music and style only sometimes means understanding and solidarity with racial discrimination against African-Americans in the United States and more often constitutes an “Elvis Effect” in the transnationalization of music genres.⁵⁹ In other words, while hip-hop music may have been anti-racist in its origins, music that imitates this style does not necessarily carry the same values or ideologies. Indeed the incorporation of *underground* music into reggaeton reflects a larger process described by Wayne Marshall as the movement of the music from “*música negra*” to “*música latina*.”⁶⁰ Thus, the popularization of hip-hop, which has been incorporated into reggaeton and, more indirectly, the bachata music of Aventura, does not necessarily suggest a major shift in Dominican national identities as anti-racist and black conscious. Instead, these influences have been de-racialized to be described as pan-Latin music and incorporated into the transnational *cultura* of Dominican identity.

In the face of racism in the United States and racist ideologies rooted at home, Dominicans have adopted abstract symbols that articulate national identity but avoid distinct racial affirmation. At George Washington High School this was seen when dark-skinned Dominican students sewed Dominican flags to their jeans to differentiate themselves from Black and Puerto Rican students. Dominican adults formed clubs named after Juan Pablo Duarte, the (white and Spanish) liberator of the Dominican Republic from Haitian occupation in 1844.⁶¹ In the second chapter of this thesis, I will argue that Aventura’s effectiveness in hiding the black and rural origins of their bachata music has made it a powerful de-racialized symbol of *dominicanidad*. However, through the music’s articulations of modernity, progress and gender, I

⁵⁹ Ian Condry. *Hip Hop Japan: Rap and the Paths of Cultural Globalization*. Stanford, California: Duke University Press, 2006.

⁶⁰ Marshall

⁶¹ Hoffnung-Garskof, 130-131

will demonstrate how the music continues to articulate racist ideologies within the Dominican nation in a transnational context.

Racism as a Gendered Ideology in Dominican Nationalism

While romance is the primary theme in most popular music genres, romance, sex and gender relations are especially important in bachata and one of the music's defining characteristics.⁶² In explaining the changes seen in bachata music as it was urbanized during the 1970's and 80's, Deborah Pacini Hernandez writes "bachata was transformed from a musical genre defined by its concern with romantic love into one concerned primarily with sexuality, and moreover, a specific kind of sexuality: casual sex with no pretense to longevity or legitimacy, often mediated by money, and whose principal social context was the bar/brothel."⁶³ I will later provide analysis for how Aventura has rearticulated and also altered these representations of women and sexuality in their lyrics in order to establish masculine dominance, antagonize Dominican women and re-exert a male colonial gaze. These articulations of patriarchy, which have an established history in bachata music and in Dominican nationality, will provide a lens to analyze how Aventura has maintained racist and sexist concepts of Dominican nationalism and belonging.

Concepts of race and gender are not distinct phenomenon but instead are intertwined, both contributing to the rationale behind colonization and white supremacy. In her introduction to the edited volume *Women and the Colonial Gaze*, Tamara Hunt explains the juncture between the colonial "Other" (originally defined by Said) and the feminine "Other" (defined by Simone de Beauvoir) as imperialism and gender have been historically linked. Hunt explains that imperialistic nations with patriarchal social structures viewed the alternative gender constructs in

⁶² Deborah Pacini Henrandez, *Bachata: A Social History of a Dominican Popular Music* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1995), 16

⁶³ *ibid*, 153

colonized societies as evidence of their “uncivilized” nature. Patriarchal values also led imperialistic nations to feminize the dominated cultures as a means of casting them as irrational, unfamiliar and undesirable. Thus, Hunt explains, the conquering nation was given “masculine” characteristics, “thereby legitimizing colonial rule as a reflection of male superiority which was seen as ‘natural’ in society.”⁶⁴

Andrea Smith’s discussion of the colonization of Native peoples in North America illustrates this phenomenon described by Hunt as white colonizers utilized sexual violence to instill patriarchy and thus legitimize their colonial rule.⁶⁵ Smith explains that the need for the subjugation of Native women was two-fold for white colonizers: first, to emasculate Native men through the conquest of Native women and, second, to ensure continued domination over white women who might otherwise be exposed to the relatively egalitarian Native cultures.⁶⁶ Smith concludes, “If sexual violence is not simply a tool of patriarchy, but is also a tool of colonialism and racism, then entire communities of color are the victims of sexual violence.”⁶⁷ Thus, the subjugation of women in colonized societies is a means through which colonialism and racism towards both women and men are articulated and enacted.

Frances Aparicio examines Cuban salsa lyrics, transnational literature, and the discourse of transnational cultural events to reveal the ways Latin American cultures are feminized and subjected to a male and colonial gaze.⁶⁸ For example, the image of the seductive, tantalizing *mulata* in Latin American (and particularly Caribbean) music is an articulation of machismo and

⁶⁴ “Introduction” *Women and the Colonial Gaze* ed. Tamara L. Hunt and Micheline R. Lessard (New York: New York University Press, 2002): 1

⁶⁵ Andrea Smith “Not an Indian Tradition: The Sexual Colonization of Native Peoples” *Hypatia* 18(2) 2003: 70-85

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 75

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 71

⁶⁸ Frances Aparicio “Ethnifying Rhythms, Feminizing Cultures” in *Music and the Racial Imagination* ed. Ronaldo Radano and Philip V. Bohlman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000): 95-112

male domination and an integral part of Latin American national identities.⁶⁹ Moreover, Aparicio explains, “while the icon of the rhythmic mulata builds on the social and patriarchal imaginary of nation, particularly in the Caribbean, it is also deployed interculturally to ethnify and feminize Third World cultures.”⁷⁰ In other words, articulations of Caribbean cultures as “rhythmic” and “exotic” produce an image in North America and Europe of the Caribbean as a feminized Other. These images, in turn, continue colonial discourses and rationalize the continued cultural and economic domination of Latin American cultures, particularly by the United States.

These examples illustrate the importance of patriarchal domination as a means to legitimize Western imperial rule. The masculinized colonizer thus becomes a legitimate authority in colonized societies, which makes female subjugation by men of these same societies a means for proving their fitness to rule. Machismo and female subjugation were particularly prevalent in the white supremacist ideology of the Trujillo Era. Trujillo, in order to legitimize the power of his totalitarian regime, adopted the same logic as the white European colonist, actively promoting the inferiority of women and emphasizing his personal “conquests” of the female body in order to establish his masculinity and, thus, authority. Lauren Derby writes, “feminine imagery functioned as a foil for the dictator’s multiple masculine identities,” particularly as a sexual *conquistador* and as a father figure for the nation.⁷¹ Furthermore, Derby explains, “in these narratives of sexual conquest, gender served as an allegory of class and race.”⁷² Thus, Trujillo’s virility and (often violent) sexual conquest of women was a reflection of his own social rise and “whitening”.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 95

⁷⁰ Aparicio, 96

⁷¹ Derby 1113

⁷² *ibid.*, 1113

As a part of the regime's national mythology, "signs of progress equaled the regime, which equaled the man himself."⁷³ Thus, if signs of Trujillo's masculinity were a means to progress and "whiten" him personally, they were also signs of modernization and whitening for the nation as a whole. In this process, Trujillo was painted as the bearer of progress and father of the nation. Perhaps the most unabashed reflection of this mythology is the phallic shaped Obelisk built in honor of the man and the nation upon the reconstruction of Santo Domingo (renamed Ciudad Trujillo) after a devastating hurricane. Its unveiling led to a number of innuendos including one speech by Vice President Jacinto Peynado, calling it an appropriate symbol for a man "of superior natural gifts."⁷⁴ When women participating in that year's Carnival celebration were asked to circle the monument and sing praises to their national leader, Trujillo's masculinity was being equated with symbols of the nation's progress and modernity. Writes Derby, "He made *la nación* great by making in masculine."⁷⁵ This process did not just occur alongside Trujillo's real and symbolic whitening of the Dominican nation, but was an integral part of it. Progress, due to the colonial history of the Dominican nation, meant the strengthening of patriarchal and white supremacist ideologies. The Regime's efforts to emphasize Trujillo's virility and conquest of Dominican women were an effort to portray him as the white male European colonizer, an already legitimate ruler in the Dominican national context. Through this process, the subjugation of women became symbolically necessary to conquer "backwardness"—read African influences—from the Dominican nation and an ascriptive characteristic of Dominican nationality.

In the current era, machismo continues to be a means of expressing symbolic whitening in Dominican identities and authority. One way this is articulated is through the symbol of the

⁷³ *ibid*, 1112

⁷⁴ cited in Derby, 1119

⁷⁵ *ibid*, 1122

Dominican *tíguere*, the idealized Dominican man of the public sphere who uses his *cajones* (balls) to climb the social ladder. Christian Krohn-Hansen describes the present day idea of the Dominican *tíguere* and explains, “Notions of masculinity among Dominicans have played, and continue to play, a central part in the everyday production of political legitimacy.”⁷⁶ While Krohn-Hansen outlines a number of characteristics of the *tíguere*, one important trait is the *tíguere* as a womanizer, moving from one woman to the next. Political legitimacy for Dominican men continues to rest on their ability to dominate Dominican women.

Additionally, the continued dominance of Catholicism in Dominican culture also reveals the ways race and gender are intertwined. David Howard explains how Spanish Catholicism maintains traditional patriarchal gender roles.⁷⁷ Furthermore, it continues to be the public, official religion of Dominican culture while vodou or syncretic Afro-Caribbean practices are contained in the domestic realm “away from the public, and Catholic, gaze.”⁷⁸ While Catholicism is male dominated, vodou⁷⁹ is delegated to the female realm and maintained by the matriarchs of the household and rural communities. The preference of the Catholic religion in public spaces shows the dominant position of male led cultural practices of European origins and reveals how gender and race function side by side to create systems of dominance and subjugation.

The economic globalization of the Dominican Republic since the 1980’s has maintained the hierarchy of white men dominating Dominican men who, in turn, exploit Dominican women. First, the export-based economy offers new growth in employment for Dominican women, but

⁷⁶ Krohn-Hansen, Christian. 1996. “Masculinity and the Political among Dominicans: ‘The Dominican Tiger’,” in *Machos, Mistresses, Madonnas: Contesting the Power of Latin American Gender Imagery*, Marit Melhuus and Kristi Anne Stølen, eds. pp. 108-9. London: Verso. p. 108

⁷⁷ Howard, 89

⁷⁸ *ibid*, 91

⁷⁹ However, it is important to note that few Dominican vodou practitioners would use the term “vodou” but prefer the terms “popular religion” or “believer in the saints”. (Cristina Sánchez-Carretero, 309)

also economic exploitation of these women. Laura Reynolds explains how foreign (usually North American) business owners take advantage of existing patriarchies within the Dominican Republic to create managerial structures in which Dominican women work under Dominican men who work under foreign (white) factory owners.⁸⁰ Denise Brennan's study of the sex tourism industry in Sosúa, Dominican Republic, examines how "exotic" Afro-Dominican women are marketed to European men, and then pass on their earnings to Dominican husbands and boyfriends.⁸¹ Both these examples show how systems of patriarchy run parallel to racism and the continual process of colonization and dependency in the Dominican Republic.

Some scholars have argued that the new transnational era in the Dominican Republic has brought significant changes to ideologies of gender and, with it, race, in the Dominican nation.⁸² For example, female-led Dominican vodou, which Dominican elites have long attempted to deny in order to erase or ignore all African and Haitian influences on the Dominican nation, has gained popularity in parts of the Dominican Republic in recent decades. Cristina Sánchez-Carretero's ethnographic study of networks of female Dominican migrants in rural Southeast Dominican Republic and Madrid have used Dominican vodou practices to assert their new social power which has been cultivated by migration and transnational spaces.⁸³ Thus, at moments female-led migration has led to new levels of female autonomy and these women have, in turn, begun to remove taboos around Afro-Dominican rural traditions, such as vodou.

⁸⁰ Laura T Reynolds "Harnessing Women's Work: Restructuring Agricultural and Industrial Labor Forces in the Dominican Republic" *Economic Geography* 74(2) 1998: 149-169

⁸¹ Denise Brennan. "Women Work, Men Sponge, and Everyone Gossips: Macho Men and Stigmatized/ing Women in a Sex Tourist Town" *Anthropological Quarterly* 77(4) 2004: 705-733

⁸² Ninna Nyberg Sorensen "Roots, Routes and Transnational Attractions: Dominican Migration, Gender and Cultural Change" *The European Journal of Development Research* no. 6 (1994): 104-118

Luis Eduardo Guarnizo " 'Going Home': Class, Gender and Household Transformation Among Dominican Return Migrants" in *Caribbean Circuits: New Directions in the Study of Caribbean Migration* ed. Patricia Pessar. (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1997), 1

⁸³ Cristina Sánchez-Carretero "Santos y Misterios as Channels of Communication in the Diaspora: Afro-Dominican Religious practices Abroad" *Journal of American Folklore* 118(469): 308-326

However, just as with racist ideologies, transformations in the conception of gender relations in Dominican identity are the exception rather than the rule. Furthermore, migration has allowed for a new “contact space” in which the “colonial gaze” is reconfigured and continues to feminize non-white elements of Dominican culture. Patricia Pessar explains,

In my earliest work on Dominican migration, I was quite adamant about the gains I believed Dominican immigrant women had made... Yet, as I have come to both follow the lives of several of these women over the years and critically engage the comparative literature on immigration and patriarchy, I have tempered my enthusiasm. I now conclude that, in general, immigrant women’s gains have been modest.⁸⁴

Indeed, Greta Gilbertson’s study of women in Dominican enclaves in New York City reveals how women migrants are highly exploited by Dominican male small-business owners.⁸⁵ There are a substantial amount of scholars who concur that migration, while increasingly female-led, rarely leads to major changes in gender hierarchies but instead continues the exploitation of women’s labor, both within families and in the aggregate economies of sending and receiving nations.⁸⁶

Aparicio expands on this concept and argues that migration to the United States has created new articulations of Latino culture that are feminized and sexualized in a transnational context. For example, Aparicio’s analysis of memoirs of Latina immigrant girls demonstrates how they viewed their own Latina mothers as most “ethnic” when referring to their responses to Latin music. By describing their mothers as “out of control” and “native”, these girls evoke the

⁸⁴ Patricia R. Pessar. “Engendering Migration Studies: The Case of New Immigrants in the United States” *American Behavioral Scientist* 42(4) 1999: 577, 589

⁸⁵ Greta Gilbertson. “Women’s labor and enclave employment: The case of Dominican and Colombian Women in New York City” *International Migration Review* 29(3) 1995: 657-671

⁸⁶ Pessar 1999

Yen Le Espiritu *Home Bound: Filipino American lives across cultures, communities and countries*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

colonial gaze as a result of their transcultural experience.⁸⁷ Thus, migration has not overthrown the feminization of cultures through the colonial gaze, but has rearticulated it. My lyrical analysis of Aventura in chapter four will demonstrate how, like these Latina-American daughters described by Aparicio, Aventura has evoked a male colonial gaze on the female subjects depicted in their music. The prevalence of this male, colonial gaze is important to understand how concepts of gender, race and nation have stayed consistent, albeit in new transnational spaces and contexts.

Chapter Summary and Overview of Methods

This chapter has demonstrated a number of trends in Dominican nationalism which are important to consider as I analyze the attitudes towards Aventura's bachata music, the messages their lyrics convey, and how these perceptions and messages link with larger discussions of Dominican nationalism in an increasingly transnational era. This chapter has first concluded an association between modernity, development and whiteness that has historically persisted since the Colonial era. These attitudes, described originally by Hoffnung-Garskof through the term *progreso*, have a clear connection to white supremacist attitudes in Dominican nationalism and individual and national *progreso* is achieved through real and symbolic whitening.

While contending that ideologies of white supremacy have been a major cornerstone of Dominican nationalism, I have also presented scholarship which complicates this idea by discussing how Dominicans have attempted to define themselves in the face of a colonial gaze which constantly reminds them that they are, in fact, not entirely "white". By using Hoffnung-Garskof's term of *cultura* and Lauren Basson's theories of ascriptive national characteristics I have presented a number of scholarly viewpoints which attempt to explain the cultural productions used by Dominicans to carve an identity between the white North American and

⁸⁷ Aparicio, p. 10

black Haitian Others which are constantly present in discussions of the Dominican nation. Finally this chapter presented theoretical postcolonial views of gender as well as empirical examples in the Dominican context that demonstrate how patriarchy and hyper-masculinity have become major ascriptive characteristics of Dominican nationalism as they symbolically represent the white, European colonizer.

In this chapter I have demonstrated how these racist and sexist ideologies in Dominican nationality are not so much challenged by migration as they are strengthened in new contexts. As Dominicans entered the multi-ethnic environment of New York City they sought new strategies to distance themselves from the African American urban communities that they shared neighborhoods and schools with. As women gained new economic freedoms, new everyday practices were created in order to maintain patriarchal ideologies and machismo and masculinity continued to be important signifiers of political legitimacy and power.

In the data analysis in the following chapters I will extend these arguments through a discussion of the bachata group Aventura. In chapter two I will use personal interviews to illustrate how Aventura is understood as a symbol of Dominican nationality and how this symbol fits with larger discussions of race and migration pertinent for Dominican young people in Santo Domingo today. These interviews were conducted in July and August of 2009. All respondents were between 18 and 30 and thus grew up in the transnational era post-1970, and mostly since 1990. This was important to my data in order to demonstrate how historical ideologies from early nationalists and the Trujillo Era have continued to influence contemporary attitudes towards race and nation. The respondents were from both lower and middle classes and all resided in Santo Domingo at the time of the interview, however about half had family members living in rural areas. Almost every respondent had a family member who currently lived in the

United States and several had spent extensive time living in Dominican neighborhoods of New York City (although never more than two years). While I collected a total of ten interviews, five are quoted directly in this analysis. However, the excerpts I use from these interviews represent trends that were discussed by almost all the interview respondents. These common themes in interview responses serve as the backbone to my analysis.

The second half of my analysis centers around the lyrics of Aventura themselves, written by lead singer Anthony “Romeo” Santos. This was a useful point of departure for my analysis as the lyrics and themes of Aventura’s music is most often cited as the main evidence that they have “progressed” or “evolved” Dominican bachata. After reviewing all recorded music of Aventura, I found important examples of their lyrics in three major categories: (1) songs about heartbreak or despair, (2) songs that related to social or moral issues, and (3) songs about male virility or sexual dominance. I also attempted to pick lyrics from relatively popular songs in each of these categories that I had heard in public during my time in Santo Domingo rather than obscure lyrics that could be seen as rare exceptions. In these lyrics I pay close attention to discussion of gender roles and portrayals of women, expanding off the assumption made by Ninna Nyberg Sorensen that “overall changes in identities and cultural practices can be read from changes in gender relations.”⁸⁸ Furthermore, portrayals of women in these lyrics allow me to analyze the ways that Aventura themselves have usurped the male colonial gaze on Dominican women discussed in the latter half of this literature review.

Finally, to supplement both these sections of the analysis, I use comments made on YouTube in response to Aventura music videos. This allows me to analyze not just what messages the band articulates but how these messages are understood by listeners. While it is not always explicit which users are in fact Dominican, I chose to imply this based on context of

⁸⁸ Sorensen, 105

their other posts.⁸⁹ Furthermore, it was not always apparent if these users were Dominicans living in the United States or the Dominican Republic, however I chose to integrate comments whether or not I knew the exact current location of the respondents because, as I previously discussed, I understand their views as a reflection of a larger transnational context in which Dominicans living both on and off the island are involved. Through an analysis of these three sets of data I conclude that Aventura's popularity has come through maintenance of historical ideologies behind Dominican nationalism which are essentially racist and sexist in their conception.

⁸⁹ For an example of this sort of analysis I used: Deborah Pacini Hernandez "Dominicans in the Mix: Reflections on Dominican Identity, Race and Reggaeton" in *Reggaeton* ed. Racquel Rivera, Wayne Marshall and Deborah Pacini Hernandez, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009

Chapter 2: Aventura as a National Symbol

While Aventura has not always dramatically changed the bachata music itself, they have provided radically different perceptions of the music. This is due to the symbolic role Aventura plays in articulating Dominican nationality. It is necessary to understand how they have come to occupy this role to understand how Dominican nationality is perceived today more generally. Much of this has to do with the cultural and popular music context in which they have emerged.

Latin Crossover Music and Dominican Ownership

Aventura's rise as a mainstream, commercial group in the United States and Latin America has occurred alongside the commercialization of Latin crossover music more generally. Especially since Daddy Yankee's major hit "Gasolina" in 2005, reggaeton and Latin crossover music has become increasingly profitable and internationally ubiquitous. Understanding the role of Dominicans living in the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico and New York in the rise of reggaeton and crossover music helps explain the relevance and popularity of Aventura, who have incorporated reggaeton styles into their bachata music. While the success of Latin crossover music is notable for the recognition of Latino influence on North American culture, as the genre has been commercialized it has increasingly emphasized a pan-Latino identity rather than recognizing individual Latin American cultures and immigrant groups in the United States.⁹⁰ Thus, behind the popularity of these genres, the ownership of the music is regularly being contested on a local level.

Deborah Pacini Hernandez (2009) demonstrates the contested ownership of reggaeton music between Dominican and Puerto Rican fans through an analysis of internet discussion board posts. While she acknowledges that the majority of successful reggaeton artists are indeed

⁹⁰ See: Marshall, 19
Raquel Rivera *New York Ricans from the Hip Hop Zone* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

Puerto Rican, she also concludes “the historic tensions between [Dominicans and Puerto Ricans] have muted the visibility of Dominicans in public discourse about reggaeton.”⁹¹ Despite Dominican’s active role in the creation of the music, inter-Caribbean ethnic and racial politics decreases their recognition within the music’s origin stories.

In many ways, Aventura’s formation echoes the transnational characteristics of reggaeton music. While their music is primarily in the style of bachata, they were innovative in incorporating reggaeton and hip-hop into the traditional style. Indeed, Aventura’s most recent album “The Last” features reggaeton artists Wisin y Yandel and American hip-hop artist Ludacris. Furthermore, the majority of the band members were born in the United States rather than the Dominican Republic, and the lead singer Romeo⁹² is of both Puerto Rican and Dominican descent. Nevertheless, the group themselves continues to identify their music as “bachata” and interviews with Dominicans in Santo Domingo reflect that listeners also view their music as essentially Dominican bachata. One interview respondent explained Aventura’s bachata:

“It’s not American bachata, it’s Dominican bachata, but focused on current times. They have evolved the times to listen to bachata. Before, bachata was more romantic, now it is a way to dance, to enjoy bachata. Before when a person was heartbroken they listened to bachata, but today it continues to be the same bachata. It is more modern, but it still is bachata”⁹³

These comments, similarly expressed in a number of interview responses, reflect that while other Latin crossover music faces ownership disputes, bachata remains an unequivocally Dominican genre.

⁹¹ Pacini Hernandez 2009, 157

⁹² Full name, Anthony Romeo Santos, will be referred to as Romeo in this thesis

⁹³ Personal Interview, July 28, 2009

Also interview responses have been translated by myself

Aventura and Progreso

The fact that Dominicans view *Aventura* as performing essentially Dominican bachata music is important as it represents an acknowledgement of Dominican (not just Latino) culture in the United States and Europe and demonstrates the notion of *progreso* as a part of the Dominican migration story. Hoffnung-Garskof's analysis of "writing home" explains that Dominican migrants in the U.S. were viewed from Santo Domingo as a sign of economic progress and modernity for the nation as a whole. Similar ideas were echoed in my own interviews as respondents saw influences from Dominican migrants as a positive influence to modernize the nation. The following passage of an interview with Eduardo⁹⁴, a university student in his 20's, demonstrates this idea:

LP: Can you see their [Dominican migrants living in the United States] influence here in Santo Domingo?

Eduardo: Well, yes, with those steps toward modernism, with globalization. Because those that live *allá* [in the United States] can see all the changes, changes of technology, so that when they return to their own country they want to be something different. For example, the current President of the Republic spent many years living in the United States—when he arrived back in his own country he said 'no, we are going to change things, we need to begin to be a developing country.'

LP: And do you think that this is a good thing that Leonel [the President] lived in the United States and returned here?

Eduardo: Of course! Because he comes with an open mind to the closed minded people

LP: So, the people here are closed minded?

Eduardo: Of course, the people living here continue to be very closed. They don't have an open mind like Europeans and North Americans.⁹⁵

This passage reflects the assumption that North Americans and Europeans are more modern than Dominicans, and that the Dominican Republic should, as a nation, strive towards their example of modernity and development. Thus, ideas of *progreso* similar to those articulated by early nationalists over a century ago continue to be prevalent among Dominican youth. Similar to the

⁹⁴ All interview respondents will be referred to with pseudonyms

⁹⁵ Personal Interview, July 28, 2009

views of those 19th Century leaders, Eduardo's response values European and North American mentalities over the "closed minded", suggesting primitive or backwards, mentality of Dominicans. Furthermore, he saw the time that President Leonel Fernandez had spend in the United States as an important qualification for his expertise in developing the nation. Thus, racist ideologies that emphasize the importance of white, North American influence and viewpoints persist among young Dominicans.

Furthermore, in every interview I conducted, the respondents agreed that it was very important that Dominican music is heard all over the world and all valued the popularity of Dominican music in North America and Europe. Many respondents cited knowledge of Dominican music as a means through which tourists discover the country or recognize Dominican culture. *Aventura*, in particular, is seen as an important symbol of Dominican progress abroad. One respondent explained, "I have a Russian friend that could speak very little Spanish but knew all the words to an entire *Aventura* song. For me, this is incredible. People that never knew anything about the DR are now curious. It informs on an international level."⁹⁶ As Dominicans have been historically taught to value North American and European opinions, the recognition of *Aventura* abroad is further evidence for younger generations in the Dominican Republic of the modernity of *Aventura*'s music as well as evidence that their nation as a whole is gaining respect and prominence internationally.

Almost all interview respondents also described *Aventura* as "evolving" the genre of bachata. The verb suggests that *Aventura*'s bachata represents ideals of progreso, presumably by becoming more urban and incorporating modern styles. The description of the music as "evolving" becomes even more important when compared to answers from respondents when asked about the music of Haiti. Many simply admitted a lack of any sort of knowledge of what

⁹⁶ Personal Interview, July 24, 2009

sort of music was popular in Haiti, but those who attempted to explain Haitian music usually described it as “traditional” or based on older, African customs. These attitudes are seen clearly in another part of the interview with Eduardo:

LP: How is [Dominican music] different from music from the United States?

Eduardo: It’s not different than the United States because that was before. Now we listen to all types of music.

LP: And how is it different than music from Haiti?

Eduardo: Well, in Haiti it is different because Haiti continues with their culture. They have not evolved. They keep listening to the same music since *su origen*.⁹⁷

LP: So, what type of music do they listen to in Haiti?

Eduardo: Now a days... I don’t know exactly, but they have not changed their music style.

It is clear that Eduardo had little actual knowledge or awareness of Haitian music to back up his claim that Haitians continue to listen to the “same music.” This exchange demonstrates certain assumptions he has made that Dominican culture has become more closely tied to North American culture while Haitian culture remains unchanged. Rather than simply admitting a lack of knowledge of Haitian music and culture, it is apparent that he makes this distinction to help define *domincanidad* as more “modern” or “evolved.” Thus, Aventura’s proximity to popular American and European music scenes is evidence of this sort of progress that differentiates it from their blacker, less modern Haitian neighbors.

Aventura as a symbol of Dominican progreso is particularly evident in responses to the group’s performance in May of 2009 at the White House for President Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama in the “Fiesta Latina.”⁹⁸ YouTube comments in response to a video of the performance demonstrate the pride that Dominicans have for the group’s success as well as an awareness of the historical significance of such a performance:

⁹⁷ literally, “origen” but frequently used in Spanish to refer to the emergence of a culture (rather than the beginning of the human race as it could connote in English).

⁹⁸ Originally broadcasted on PBS on October 15, 2009 as part of the series “In Performance at the White House”

nikkidadominican:

Tengo un maldito orgullo ahora mismo k casi quiero llorar viendo lo tan lejos que han llegado los dominicanos que viva aventura!! los vere en miami dec. 19

gaticaDR:

Lord how good I feel[!] Like all previous comments I love [Aventura] [and] I feel so proud!!!! Congratulations and thank you for carrying our name so far[.] Continue this way...

mybaby2807

Arriba Dominican Republic... Aventura has carried our music to the entire world

ovi2324

Bachata en the White House in front of the president of the U.S., 30 years ago this would be unthinkable, bachata was considered a vulgar rhythm from the classless people of the *barrio*... today there is a new reality... it is an international rhythm.⁹⁹

Just as was seen in interview responses, Aventura's crossover success is seen as evidence of the Dominican nation's progreso internationally as the music is so tightly connected with Dominican nationality. This is particularly evident as these comments remark "how far Dominicans have gone" or thank Aventura for taking "our name so far". These comments reinforce my assumption that Aventura the group is symbolically equated with the Dominican nation, both on the island and transnationally. Furthermore, they demonstrate an awareness among everyday listeners of the historical changes that Aventura has made to bachata music. In particular the final comment from "ovi2324" demonstrates that bachata's past stigmas are not at all forgotten but instead that Aventura represents a widely recognized change in the popularity of the genre.

This listener's comment also implies that international recognition, particularly from the President of the United States, is what signifies this change and makes it a more important, dignified music genre. This awareness of how the music is perceived by outsiders demonstrates the continued legacy of a colonial gaze coming from North American imperialists. Clearly, these

⁹⁹ These comments were translated by myself from the set of YouTube comments:
<http://www.youtube.com/comment_servlet?all_comments&v=pAkiSx-VuIU>

comments further demonstrate how Aventura symbolically embodies the notion of progreso in Dominican nationality, which uses North American or European views as a measure of progress, modernity and success. In this sense, the transformation in perceptions that Aventura has made to bachata music is very similar to the changes made to merengue by Trujillo in the 1930's. Aventura's popularity in the United States reinforces a value system that places North American tastes and preferences above local Dominican practices in an attempt to "modernize" the Dominican nation and erase or obscure African origins. While bachata music during the later half of the 20th century was associated with backward, rural and dark-skinned urban migrants, these associations have been overlooked as it has become an important and unequivocal symbol of *dominicanidad* transnationally. Because of its new context, Aventura's bachata is no longer viewed as a symbol of backwardness but instead a symbol of the Dominican people's "progreso" and "modernity," ideas closely tied with the symbolic whitening of the nation that reinforce postcolonial racial hierarchies and demonstrate the continued presence of a neo-colonial gaze.

Aventura and Contradictions to the Progreso Narrative

Aventura is seen in these responses as a successful product of globalization and Dominican migration. By maintaining its label of "bachata" it provides recognition for the Dominican Republic around the world. Yet anxieties about globalization, particularly with the growing number of Dominicans living abroad, are also prominent. All respondents agreed that their generation had less of a sense of nationalism than their parents or grandparents' generations. Many cited the popularity of North American holidays, such as Halloween, over traditional Dominican holidays, such as the Día de Duarte, which one respondent observed is

celebrated today with “less enthusiasm than before.”¹⁰⁰ An interview with Hector, a student at the private Catholic University in Santo Domingo reflects these anxieties:

LP: Do you think [return migrants] have affected Dominican culture more generally?

Hector: Of course, because they come... for example, the celebration of Halloween. Now we celebrate it, and we are very *copiadores*.¹⁰¹ We copy everything. [Mocking tone] We do that too, look, now we have a Halloween party *igaulito a* [just like] the United States!

LP: And do you think this is good or bad?

Hector: Bad. Of course, because if we don't have our own culture... The people don't practice their own culture; they don't practice what is ours.¹⁰²

These discussions also have classist overtones. Later in the interview, Hector articulated these class distinctions:

LP: Has *dominicanidad* changed since the generations of your parents or grandparents?

Hector: Yes, yes. I'll give you an example. For example, the way of dressing. For example there are many people that dress like Americans.

LP: And do you dress like an American?

Hector: No. I dress very traditionally.¹⁰³ Those who dress like Americans... for example jeans like this [gestures baggy clothes], a really wide polo shirt, a backwards hat, an Afro [hairstyle].

LP: Afros, those are American?

Hector: Well yeah, they are from the culture *de allá* [the United States]. If it comes from the United States than some *tigueres*¹⁰⁴ will use it.

LP: *Tigueres*? So, from the lower classes?

Hector: Yes, from the people of lower classes.¹⁰⁵

Clearly, Hector laments the loss of Dominican culture, but blames these changes principally on those *tigueres* who, according to him, blindly copy American popular culture. He describes himself as following “traditional” styles, implying that he is of a certain class that continues to

¹⁰⁰ Personal Interview, July 31, 2009

¹⁰¹ People that copy others

¹⁰² Personal Interview, Aug. 13, 2009

¹⁰³ Note that during the interview, this respondent was wearing dark wash, fitted jeans and a fitted button-up shirt. Thus, while it is unclear what he means by “traditional” styles, he seems to imply fitted, well-kept clothes.

¹⁰⁴ In this context, *tigueres* would roughly translate to “gangster” in English. While the term does not necessarily denote illegal activity, it implies that it is a young man from a low socioeconomic class with “street-smarts”. While *tiguere* can be a positive attribute, particularly when referring to a man's ability to pick up girls or earn money quickly, in this context the respondent was using it in a derogatory way.

¹⁰⁵ Personal Interview, Aug. 13, 2009

respect Dominican cultura. Thus, there is a contradiction as interviews revealed a classist disdain for “closed-minded” Dominicans who need to be enlightened by North American ideas and customs, and also a disdain for those *tígueres* who blindly follow American culture and are blamed for a larger loss of cultura and *dominicanidad*.

This contempt for influences from the United States, particularly gangster culture, is not a new phenomenon. Hoffnung-Garskof explains that since the beginning of the 20th Century Dominican nationalists expressed anxiety about the influence of social ills from the US, and that in the 1980’s this concern spread beyond the political left to barrio activists and conservative politicians such as Balaguer: “Now the treacherous path to modernity seemed not only to be leading Dominican campesinos to the city, but also teaching them to behave like the urban poor of the United States.”¹⁰⁶ As drug use and gang violence began to plague barrios of Santo Domingo, political leaders increasingly blamed Dominicans living overseas for bringing these influences from American inner-cities. Just as the political and community leaders referenced by Hoffnung-Garskof, respondents to my own interviews don’t specify what exactly they mean by “American”. A critical race analysis, however, shows a clear value for *white* American culture and fear of the influence of *black* American, “inner-city” culture. Thus it is a positive influence for the nation when President Leonel learns effective ways to govern and to economically develop from the United States, but a threat to Dominican cultura when *tígueres* begin to wear Afros and baggy clothing.

These responses are understandable as a colonial gaze from White America has extended to and was even strengthened for migrants living in the United States. Distancing Dominican culture from African American culture was and is an objective with material concerns as Dominicans seek to avoid the stigmatization from White America which has often plagued Black

¹⁰⁶ Hoffnung-Garskof, 231

American urban communities.¹⁰⁷ Predictions by scholars such as Frank Moya Pons that migration would create black consciousness among Dominicans are in these interviews challenged as respondents do not reflect an admiration for African-American style and culture but rather fear its influences as evidence of a loss of *dominicanidad*.¹⁰⁸

Dominican music plays an important role in brokering these contradictions and soothing anxieties of a loss of cultura by being so firmly associated with Dominican nationality even as it enters new international stages. One interview respondent explained, “There are Dominicans that live in all parts of the world, and listening to music from their own country helps them maintain their cultura.”¹⁰⁹ Another respondent explained that he had not grown up listening to Dominican music because his parents were leftists who preferred Cuban protest music, but that in his 20’s he has chosen to listen to more Dominican music as he has recognized the importance of maintaining Dominican national cultura.¹¹⁰ Thus, when respondents argue that Aventura, despite changes made to the bachata style, “continues to be the same Dominican bachata”, they are emphasizing the way the music maintains Dominican cultura in both New York and in Santo Domingo. Faced with this contradiction of American influence as both symbolically whitening and blackening the Dominican population, Aventura’s bachata provides a sense of Dominican cultura maintained across borders and in transnational spaces simply by being a form of music so closely associated with *dominicanidad*.

¹⁰⁷ see: Hoffnung-Garskof, 115-116

¹⁰⁸ Moya Pons

¹⁰⁹ Personal Interview, July 31, 2009

¹¹⁰ Personal Interview, July 24, 2009

Chapter 3: Aventura Lyrics as an Articulation of Racist and Sexist Ideologies

The second part of this data analysis will extend this argument by looking beyond the symbolism of Aventura as a group to the specific messages concerning race, gender and nationalism communicated and understood through its lyrics. This analysis will further demonstrate how Aventura does not challenge racist and patriarchal conceptions of the Dominican nation but instead reinforces these ideas in the face of anxieties brought on by migration and globalization. In particular, by examining the attitudes towards gender and patriarchal values present in Aventura's lyrics, we can better understand the prevalence of traditional and white supremacist values that continue to be present in Dominican nationalism. A gender analysis will also demonstrate how Aventura's lyrics have taken up the role of the white, male colonizer through the Otherization of female subjects. As such, this analysis will demonstrate the continued connections between patriarchy racism and Dominican nationalism. Especially due to the historical ties between race and gender in the Dominican context described earlier in this paper, as well as the importance of love and gender relations in bachata music, articulations of gender roles and relations in Aventura's music is an important lens for understanding attitudes of race and nation more generally.

Heartbreak and Hostility towards Women

In her study of early bachata music in Dominican barrios, Pacini Hernandez found that in the 1970's and 80's bachata lyrics began to reflect increasingly negative male-female relations than the music of the 1960's, and argues that "these changes reflected deteriorating social and economic conditions that characterized the late 1970's and 80s, which devastated the traditional family and community structures of bachata's practitioners and patrons."¹¹¹ She explains that while economic changes in these times meant increased economic freedom for many women,

¹¹¹ Pacini Hernandez, 153-154

notably with the growth of free trade zones and domestic work in the cities, men became increasingly hostile and angry towards women as their traditional masculinity was undermined.¹¹² Bachatas of this era, she explains, focused primarily on men's sexual appetite, the *engaño* (deceptiveness) of women, loneliness and despair, and the bar and drinking. Meanwhile, the music almost never discussed commitment, family life, marriage or children, reflecting the breakdown of the family during this era.¹¹³

Journalistic accounts of Aventura as well as the band itself have argued that they have made significant moves away from these thematic traditions in bachata. By pointing out these changes they often suggest that Aventura's bachata music is, to some extent, socially progressive, breaking away from the racist, classist and sexist underpinnings that have historically constituted *domincianidad*. In these arguments, Aventura is praised for their socially relevant lyrics, which will be discussed later in this paper. Another notable praise of the lyrics is the move away from the sexist and hostile lyrics described by Pacini Hernandez in the 1970's. A 2009 music review of Aventura's latest album "The Last" in the New York Times claimed, "If concert audiences are any indication, Aventura's stories hold special meaning for Latinas. Even in the songs that are the roughest on women... Mr. Santos's lyrics, like his quavering voice, carry a vulnerability that sets Aventura apart from the coarser sexual politics of rap and reggaetón."¹¹⁴

However, it is notable that Aventura continues to discuss many of these same themes from the past, expressing hostility and anger towards women. These lyrics frequently portray women as snakes, beasts or devils. The lyrics from the song "Peligro" off Aventura's most recent album "The Last" demonstrate this continuity:

¹¹² *ibid.*, 158

¹¹³ *ibid.*, 159

¹¹⁴ Jody Rosen, "Crossover Dreams of a Bronx Bachatero," *New York Times*, June 3, 2009

Quien te ve no pensara, que se disfrazo una
serpiente peligrosa,
Tus caprichos y vanidad me han llevado a la
ruina y la pobreza.
Mi madre dijo peligro, hijo mío, te vas a
lamentar,
Todos decían lo mismo, que contigo me iba
a ir mal.

Eres el demonio vestido de mujer, tu nuevo
apodo será Lucifer,
Debiste ser un aborto y no llegarte a
conocer,
Te enseñe de Roberto, Cavalli y Chanel,
Ensuciaste esa ropa siéndome infiel.
Jamás pensé que en la vida una mujer sería
tan cruel.
Peligro (peligro)
Peligro (peligro)
Que se libren los hombres de tu camino.
Danger (danger)
Danger (danger)
Fellas be aware this woman it's dangerous.
Peligro (peligro)
Peligro (peligro)
Pobrecito él que termine contigo.

Ole
yup, the devil wears prada.
I know because she used my credit card
115

Whoever would see you wouldn't think that
you are a dangerous snake in disguise.
Your whims and vanity have led me to ruin
and poverty
My mother told me, "Danger, my son, you
are going to regret it"
Everyone said the same, that with you it
would go badly.

You are the devil dressed like a woman,
your new nickname will be Lucifer
You should have been aborted and not given
a chance to know life,
I showed you Roberto, Cavalli and Chanel
You dirtied those clothes being unfaithful
I never though in my life that a woman
would be so cruel
Danger (danger)
Danger (danger)
Free men from you path
Danger (danger)
Danger (danger)
Fellas be aware this woman it's dangerous
Danger (danger)
Danger (danger)
The poor guy who ends up with you.

These lyrics reflect some of the modern elements that Aventura's music is known for and that
were often pointed out in my own personal interviews by referring to, for example, major

¹¹⁵ Aventura, "Peligro," *The Last* (Premium Latin Music, Inc: 2009)

All lyrics are translated by myself. See Appendix A for complete lyrics in Spanish from songs analyzed in this thesis.

designer brands (Roberto, Cavalli and Chanel), or incorporating a reference to the popular American movie, “The Devil wears Prada”. However, these are superficial changes to the lyrics. Overall it displays the same hostilities and aggression towards women as was discussed by Pacini Hernandez in bachatas of the 1970’s. Furthermore, the lyrics compare this woman with the Devil, Lucifer, and snakes, demonstrating a clear dehumanization of the song’s female subject.

Similar comparisons that illustrate women as snakes or witches are drawn in the lyrics of Aventura’s popular song “Su Veneno:”¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Aventura, “Su Veneno,” *The Last* (Premium Latin Music, Inc: 2009)

No sé
 Cómo puede ser tan bella
 Y a la vez envenenarme con su dosis de hiel

I don't know
 How she can be so beautiful
 And at the same time poison me with her
 dose of bile

Ay, ella tiene un toxico agridulce
 La sustancia de mi amor
 tiene el control

Ay, she has the bittersweet toxin,
 The substance of my love,
 She has the control.

Su maldito veneno que viene en frasco de
 besos
 En potecitos de miel
 Me engatusa el sentido
 Soy un iluso perdido
 Que vende el alma por la sensatez
 Por su maldito veneno
 Esto se va poner feo
 y ya verán lo qué haré
 Voy a jugarme con fuego
 A derretir este hielo
 No moriré por una mujer

Her damn poison that comes in bottles of
 kisses
 In little jars of honey
 She coaxes my sense
 I am a lost dreamer
 That sells his soul for wisdom
 Because of her damn poison
 This is going to get ugly
 And we'll see what I do.
 I'm going to play with fire
 To melt this ice
 I won't die because of a woman.

“Su Veneno” evokes another tradition pointed out by Pacini Hernandez as common in the 1970's by referring to the woman in question primarily in the third person. According to Pacini Hernandez this reflects the lyric's role as being written for other men, evoking a gaze upon their female subjects. This, along with the frequent references to women as poisonous, or as snakes and devils, shows a clear continuity with the older bachatas of the 1970's. A continued hostility towards women evident in these lyrics refutes superficial comments from the New York Times suggesting otherwise.

On the other hand, observations that Aventura's bachata touches on social issues relevant to everyday life are valid, as this marks a notable departure from the past. Much of their success and popularity have come from music which touches on challenges to modern family life, such as domestic violence or the threats of drug and gang violence for sons or boyfriends. YouTube comments about these songs reflect gratitude among listeners that Aventura touches on

controversial issues relevant to the lives of Dominican youth on the island as well as the United States. For example, in response to a YouTube video of “La Niña”, the lyrics of which discuss the rape of a child by her father, one user writes:

“This video made me shed so many tears, but what a strong message. The truth is that I am on my feet, congratulations to Aventura... GOD BLESS THEM FOR PASSING THIS MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE!”¹¹⁷

This music that deals with challenges for modern families represents a departure from themes of earlier bachatas, and is part of what makes Aventura more widely respected than traditional bachateros who many complain only want to discuss superficial themes.¹¹⁸ In an interview with *Billboard Magazine*, lead singer and songwriter Romeo himself boasted, “I talk about a lot of issues other artists don’t want to touch.”¹¹⁹ Romeo reflects pride in discussing issues of morality and social challenges that young Dominicans deal with on a daily basis, especially as other popular Latino genres limit themselves to discussions of romance or club scenes.

However, I argue that these thematic changes do not demonstrate a move away from patriarchal values, but rather reflect a new means of articulating these values as migration and globalization have led to new familial contexts and changes in gender roles. Since the 1970’s, globalization and urbanization has meant increased economic opportunities for women. This has been particularly true in the last decade as migration has been increasingly female-led and growing economic sectors in the Dominican Republic, such as tourism and manufacturing, offer greater employment opportunities for women than men. However, as demonstrated in Denise Brennan’s study of the sex industry in Sosúa, Dominican Republic, these changed economic

¹¹⁷ funky995,

http://www.youtube.com/comment_servlet?all_comments&v=ZFRrhV4VBWY&fromurl=/watch%3Fv%3DZFRrhV4VBWY%26feature%3Drelated

¹¹⁸ For further information on the history of stigmas and associations with bachata, see: *Santo Domingo Blues: Los Tígueres de Bachata*, DVD, dir. Alex Wolfe (Mambo Media, 2003).

¹¹⁹ Leila Cobo, “The Billboard Q&A: Anthony ‘Romeo’ Santos,” *Billboard*, February 10, 2007.

conditions do not translate to greater social freedoms for these women. The sex industry in Sosúa offers economic opportunities for women while men in the town have extremely high unemployment rates, yet, she writes, “Even though these particular [women in the sex industry] have freed themselves from the constraints of traditional gender ideologies and practices in their home communities, they find themselves nevertheless ensnared with a new set of gender-based expectations.”¹²⁰ Because these women continue to be trapped by male-determined gender expectations, Brennan argues that their lives “are more marked by continuity than change, and thus demonstrate the endurance of gender ideologies.”¹²¹

Ninna Nyberg Sorensen reveals the ambiguity of being “macho” for Dominicans with changing economic times. She writes, “‘Macho’ was never a univocal concept: it always possessed ambiguous connotations. The conflicting images of man-the-provider and man-the-sexual exploiter were then, and still are, constantly challenged in the Dominican Republic”.¹²² As globalization has created greater economic opportunities for women than for men, being “macho” has become increasingly focused on men’s ability to control their partners, that is, the later image of *machismo*. This image of machismo becomes especially important as a means of re-exerting traditional gender ideologies as global economic changes threaten to break down gender norms.

A need to re-exert traditional gender ideologies is evident in Aventura’s lyrics that focus on family values and place a strong emphasis on the responsibilities of women as mothers and the dire consequences for their failure to effectively fulfill this role. For example, in the song

¹²⁰ Brennan, 706

¹²¹ *ibid*, 707

¹²² Sorensen, 110

“No Lo Perdona Dios,” the narrator expresses his anger towards his partner for aborting their child.¹²³

¹²³ Aventura, “No Lo Perdona Dios” *Generation Next*, (Premium Latin Music, Inc: 2000)

Por tu poca ignorancia me dan ganas de
 llorar
 Me prometiste un hijo para luego abortar
 Quizás pudiera ser una modelo algo
 importante como los demás
 Pero no lo sabrás mujer, no tienes
 sentimientos
 Mataste mi amor, y un bebe que llevabas a
 dentro
 Dios debe mandar castigos, a esas mujeres
 como tú
 No saben valorar un hijo, el nuestro lo
 mataste tú
 Nunca nos entendimos es por eso que ese
 amor llego a fracasar
 De los buenos momentos hoy recuerdo una
 criatura que murió al final
 Y hoy quedo adolorido porque tu me
 ilusionaste y no llegue hacer papa

I want to cry because of your ignorance
 You promised me a son, to just abort it later
 Maybe he could have been a model,
 something importance like others
 But you won't know, woman, you don't
 have feelings
 You killed my love, and a baby that you
 carried inside you
 God should punish women like you
 They don't know how to value a son. You
 killed our [son].
 We never understood each other and that's
 why our love failed

Out of all the good moments, today I
 remember a creature that in the end died,
 And today I hurt because you had deceived
 me and now I won't be a dad

In this verse of the song, the narrator first accuses his partner of being intentionally deceitful and without feelings or empathy. As the verse continues he begins to address women in a plural sense (“No saben valorar un hijo”), thus condemning women as a group. This attitude towards “these women” is echoed in the YouTube comments in response to the song. For example, one listener writes, “Abortion is not a game and many women do not appreciate the gift it is to be a mother.” Others go further. For example one who writes, “those who support abortion don't think but act worst than beasts.”¹²⁴ Both the lyrics and these YouTube comments are significant first for the anger they direct at the female subject of the song and second for their anger toward women more generally.

Most notable about “No Lo Perdona Dios” is that it is a woman who breaks traditional female roles by aborting her child who provokes this anger. Both the lyrics and the reactions on

¹²⁴ These comments found on YouTube discussion board:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVGp6bkIMUM&feature=Playlist&p=F609F69C96113022&playnext=1&playnext_from=PL&index=20

YouTube reveal a focus on women as violators of important family values, rather than discussing other potentially relevant factors such as poverty or the role of the father (the song's narrator). Furthermore, both the lyrics themselves and the reactions from listeners put the humanity of these women into question by claiming she "does not have feelings" or that they "act worst than beasts". This condemnation of women who break traditional gender roles shows how migration and changing economic conditions have not led to a shift in traditional gender values but rather a greater need to articulate them, often very explicitly.

Portrayals of Women and the Colonial Gaze

The three sets of lyrics discussed here, "Peligro", "Su Veneno" and "No Lo Perdona Dios", touch on different romantic and social topics. However all three demonstrate a trend in Aventura's lyrics to dehumanize and villainize women. "Peligro" does this by accusing female subject of being a snake in disguise, while "Su Veneno" represents women as poisonous beings. "No Lo Perdona Dios" describes the subject as being without feelings.

The dehumanization of women seen in these lyrics is especially significant considering the historical colonial ties between race and gender. Historically, colonizing nations have dehumanized the peoples they colonize as a means of rationalizing their right to rule and link colonized peoples with savagery and barbarity. As women are dehumanized in these lyrics, a similar process is at play. Scholars such as Andrea Smith and Tamara Hunt have demonstrated that white European colonizers viewed systems of gender equality in particular as a sign of the uncivilized nature of colonized people.¹²⁵ Tamara Hunt and Frances Aparicio have discussed the role of the male gaze in this process and characterized it as an essential element of the colonial

¹²⁵ Hunt, 1
Smith, 75

gaze that has historically Otherized colonized nations.¹²⁶ In this sense, the colonial Other and the feminine Other are intrinsically linked. This process has meant that postcolonial societies suffer from a set of logic in which “masculine” characteristics are seen as “naturally dominant”. In the Dominican Republic this has meant that male leaders have exerted their authority through embodying the hyper-masculinity of the already legitimate white male colonial leaders. Thus, these lyrics from *Aventura* demonstrate a continuity of logic adapted from the colonial era based on specific racial hierarchies that define “civilization” and “barbarity”.

The women in these lyrics are further subjected to a colonial gaze through the evocation of a presumably Catholic, Christian God. David Howard explains how religion is racialized and gendered in a Dominican context.¹²⁷ Popular religions that incorporate vodou traditions allow for greater female leadership but are confined to the domestic sphere “away from the public (and Catholic) gaze.”¹²⁸ In this sense, vodou or Afro-syncretic religious traditions that allow for greater gender equity are those social characteristics that “the dominant imperial culture...used to explain the ‘uncivilized’ nature of [the colonized people’s] society.”¹²⁹ These traditions of African decent have become shameful practices, which continue to be associated with domestic and feminine realms. Thus, it is particularly significant that the female subject in “Peligro” is nicknamed “Lucifer” by the lyric’s narrator, as vodou in the Dominican context is publically associated with demonics as well as femininity. Furthermore, in “No Lo Perdona Dios” the narrator emphasizes the judgement of the woman *by God*, evoking the Catholic gaze, a legacy of the male, Colonial gaze discussed previously.

¹²⁶ Hunt, 1

Aparicio, 96

¹²⁷ Howard, 86-92

¹²⁸ Ibid., 92

¹²⁹ Hunt, 1

The presence of this colonial gaze in Aventura's lyrics shows the legacy of colonial ideologies in the messages their music conveys. Furthermore, it demonstrates how globalization, migration and the continued awareness of a neo-colonial gaze are translated into everyday gender politics as the band continues to articulate sexist and racist ideologies of Dominican nationality. This continuity comes even more sharply into focus when depictions of women in Aventura's lyrics are compared with discussions of Dominican men as womanizers and sexually dominant beings.

"Ser Mujeriego" and Dominican Nationalism

While women in Aventura's lyrics are held to high moral standards, particularly in reaction to the pressures of modern life, men are absolved from such responsibilities. Dominican masculinity continues to be associated with hypersexuality and control over as many women as possible. Christian Krohn Hansen describes a number of (often contradictory) characteristics of the Dominican *tíguere*, an expression of masculinity that plays "a central part in the everyday production of political legitimacy."¹³⁰ As discussed earlier, the notion of Dominican men as a *mujeriego* (player or womanizer) has been an important aspect of legitimacy since the Trujillo Era and Krohn Hansen agrees that it is one of the central elements that create the Dominican *tíguere*. Aventura continues to value these characteristics, as can be seen in their song titled "Mujeriego."¹³¹ The chorus of the song summarizes its main themes:

¹³⁰ Krohn Hansen, 108

¹³¹ Aventura, "Mujeriego," *Generation Next*, (Premium Latin Music, Inc: 2000)

No tengo culpa de ser como soy
 Soy mujeriego porque soy varón
 No me critiquen así me hizo Dios
 No controlo mis sentimientos
 Muchas mujeres me hacen feliz
 Solo con una no puedo vivir
 ¿Qué hay de malo de yo ser así
 si a ningunas nunca le miento?

It's not my fault that I am like I am
 I am *mujeriego* because I am a man
 Don't criticize me, God made me this way
 I don't control my feelings
 Many women make me happy
 With just one I cannot live
 What's wrong with me being like this,
 If I never lie to any of them?

Un dominicano no se puede contener
 Ya eso no se usa de tener a una mujer
 Yo con mas de una me siento muy bien
 Si una me abandona todavía mi quedan diez

A Dominican man cannot contain himself
 Now it's no use to just have one woman
 With more than one woman I feel great
 If one abandons me I still have ten

In contrast to *No Lo Perdona Dios* which places blame on women for familial difficulties, *Mujeriego* explicitly absolves men of fault for their promiscuity by naturalizing their desire to be with more than one woman. By taking it a step further and suggesting “Un dominicano no se puede contener (A Dominican man cannot contain himself)”, being a *mujeriego* becomes a characteristic that partially defines *dominicanidad*. As the song goes on to list all their Dominican friends who have “más de una” (more than one woman), it continues to reinforce a notion that “true” Dominican men openly advertise their promiscuity.

In my own interviews, male respondents also expressed the importance of Dominican men's sexual prowess, especially compared to American men. One respondent insisted that American men do not dance as “pegado” (close together) to women as Dominican men, and went so far as to physically demonstrate the differences in Dominican and American dancing styles during the interview, obviously mocking the asexual nature of American men's dancing.¹³² Thus, machismo and male sexuality become important characteristics to establish *dominicanidad*.

¹³² Personal Interview, August 14, 2009

This thesis has established sexual prowess as an ascriptive quality of the white colonizer, which Trujillo elevated to even greater importance as what Derby calls the “original Dominican *tiguere*.”¹³³ “Mujeriego” and interview responses both show that this continues to be an important characteristic of *dominicanidad*. By emphasizing the sexual power of Dominican men over (white) American men, this discourse exerts a view that Dominicans, despite their skin-color, are more powerful and ascriptively *whiter* than North Americans. The pride in sexual domination of Dominican women thus comes from a history in which the white colonizer questioned the sexuality of Dominican men and sexual prowess was established as an important signifier of authority. This analysis demonstrates a lack of change in Dominican racial ideologies as Aventura and young Dominican men continue to see sexual dominance as a characteristic of powerful and authoritative men, and thus, as a symbolic characteristic of whiteness.

In all, it is clear that superficial observations that characterize Aventura lyrics as somewhat socially progressive are inaccurate upon further analysis. Songs that discuss romance or heartbreak maintain the hostility towards women and misogynistic attitudes present in bachata lyrics from the 1970’s. Lyrics that address socially relevant issues do so in a way that reinstates traditional gender values. Finally, while women’s personal values are put into question, Dominican men’s sexual promiscuity is naturalized as an essentially “Dominican” trait as men are absolved on major social responsibilities. In all these lyrics demonstrate how Aventura has maintained a colonial gaze through otherizing the female subjects of their music. Furthermore, the attitudes of patriarchy evident in the lyrics demonstrates little change in historic characteristics of Dominican nationalism.

¹³³ Derby, 1122

Conclusion

At the beginning of this thesis, I offer a quote from the character Lola in the novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* by Junot Diaz. The novel is a compelling and realistic tragedy that follows three generations of a Dominican family, from Baní to Santo Domingo to Patterson, New Jersey. Lola, who spends her adolescence in both Santo Domingo and New Jersey in the 1980's, becomes involved in activist groups for women of color during her time at Rutgers University. She survives her family's tragedies as well as enduring racial and gendered discrimination and violence in both Santo Domingo and the United States. In the end, frustrated by her activist efforts and demoralized by her family's suffering, she has resolved to not return to the Dominican Republic saying, "Ten thousand Trujillos is all we are."¹³⁴ Through a story of tragedy and anger, Diaz's novel drives home the serious implications of the Dominican national ideologies discussed in this thesis. While Lola's character reflects the ways that individuals resist these attitudes, in the end the dominant ideologies that have persisted from Spanish Colonization through U.S. imperialism and the Trujillo Era seem to defeat her efforts.

Through this thesis I do not wish to ignore the voices of Dominicans and Dominican-Americans like Lola who resist these national ideologies, nor portray them as already defeated. Instead, I wish to demonstrate the deeply entrenched forces these individuals fight against. Forces of globalization that have led to migration and a transnational consciousness have created new social realities for many Dominicans, but they have not created a significant movement away from the historically racist and sexist ideologies on which the nation was founded. The popularity of Aventura and their role as a symbol for the nation deterritorialized across borders

¹³⁴ Junot Díaz, *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, (Riverhead Books, New York: 2007).

represents the changed context in which many Dominicans live today, however the messages of Dominican nationalism continue to be articulated and understood in similar ways as in the past.

The reality this thesis explains of Dominican nationality today first demonstrates that migration and globalization have created significant anxieties over a loss of Dominican national identity among even younger generations of Dominicans. In response, individuals and communities cling to “traditional” and unequivocal Dominican symbols and ideologies. Bachata music that clearly identifies itself as Dominican is one of these symbols, but it comes coupled with historically racist and sexist concepts of *dominicanidad*, making it an even more pertinent and important message for Dominicans on and off the island.

Secondly, Aventura’s bachata demonstrates the ways that the transnational era has perpetuated colonial legacies historically suffered by the nation through the colonial gaze. While the Dominican Republic pre-1960 was arguably a relatively insular society as few had the opportunity to leave the island or interact with foreigners on a regular basis, an awareness of how they are viewed by outsiders has always shaped the national narratives used by the political elite. Migration has meant that Dominicans interact with the different racial paradigms in North American urban settings, but it also has meant an increased awareness of the way they are viewed as a nation by (white) North America. The colonial gaze which shaped early nationalist and Trujillista ideologies continues to be present and even magnified as an ever increasing number of Dominicans participate in a transnational field, geopolitically dominated by the United States. In all, the “Kings of Bachata” have created new perceptions of the bachata genre, but the band reflects larger social transformations in which historical consistencies persist and continue to be plagued by white supremacist, patriarchal, colonial ideologies.

Appendix: Complete Lyrics of Select Aventura Songs (in Spanish)

."Peligro"

This... it's a problem, yes sir.
Oh yeah... peligro.

Quien te ve no pensara, que se disfrazo una
serpiente peligrosa,
Tus caprichos y vanidad me han llevado a la
ruina y la pobreza.
Mi madre dijo peligro, hijo mío, te vas a
lamentar,
Todos decían lo mismo, que contigo me iba a ir
mal.

(CORO)

Eres el demonio vestido de mujer, tu nuevo
apodo será Lucifer,
Debiste ser un aborto y no llegarte a conocer,
Te enseñe de Roberto, Cavalli y Chanel,
ensuciaste esa ropa siéndome infiel.
(Jamás Pensé que en la vida) una mujer sería tan
cruel.

Peligro (peligro)

Peligro (peligro)

Que se libren los hombres de tu camino.

Danger (danger)

Danger (danger)

Fellas be aware this woman it's dangerous.

Peligro (peligro)

Peligro (peligro)

Felicito el que termine contigo.

Ole

yup, the devil wears Prada.

I know, 'cause she used my credit card.

Abran paso, for the kings, Aventura...

Baja Lenny baja, ponla a llorar.

Y pensar que puse en ti mi confianza, mis
ahorros mis anhelos.

Nadie merece morir, pero a tu funeral no irá ni
un perro.

Mi vieja dijo peligro, hijo mío vas a fracasar,
Todos decían lo mismo, que contigo me iba a ir
mal.

Eres el demonio vestido de mujer, tu nuevo
apodo será Lucifer,
Debiste ser un aborto y no llegarte a conocer,
Te enseñe de Roberto, Cavalli y Chanel,
ensuciaste esa ropa siéndome infiel.
(Jamás Pensé que en la vida) una mujer sería tan
cruel.

Peligro (peligro)

Peligro (peligro)

Que se libren los hombres de tu camino.

Danger (danger)

Danger (danger)

Fellas be aware this woman it's dangerous.

Peligro (peligro)

Peligro (peligro)

Felicito el que termine contigo.

Y dicen.. que no hay mal que por bien no venga.

Ja. That's what they say.

Que diosito te mande un castigo,

Que te hagan lo mismo y me pidas perdón.

A si yo me rio en tu cara, celebro tu pena por esa
traición.

Sufre, llora, cáete en los mares intensos de la
perdición.

Que delirios, martirios te lleven por malos
caminos, como sufrí yo.

Peligro (peligro)

Peligro (peligro)

Danger (danger)

Danger (danger)

“Su Veneno”

En el proceso de dejarla
De mi vida arrancarla
Vuelve a pedir perdón(wow wow wow)
Y me someto a los instintos
Convenciéndome sus gestos
Y Mi Juicio Es El Error(wow wow wow)

Tal vez
Mi futuro este en sus manos
Y si acaso es un pecado que le voy hacer
No sé
Como puede ser tan bella
Y a la Vez envenenarme con su dosis de hiel
Ay ella tiene un toxico agridulce la sustancia de mi amor
Tiene el control

Su maldito veneno que viene en frasco de besos
En potecitos de miel
Me engatusa el sentido soy un iluso perdido
Que vende el alma por la sensatez
Por su maldito veneno esto se va poner feo
y Ya verán lo que haré
Voy a jugarme con fuego a derretir este hielo
No moriré por una mujer

(Who else?)
(The kings)
(jaja)
(Yes Sir.)

“Mujeriego”

Señores me encuentro algo muy inexplicable,
tengo dos mujeres, y las dos tienen detalles
la negrita es mi amor, y la rubia mi ilusión,
¿cómo puedo decidir si le quiero a las dos?

Señores no sé que hacer, ni que decirle al mundo,
ahora me critican por brindar mi amor profundo,
que de malo hay darle a todas un chin de amor,
si ellas me provocan tengo que tomar acción

coro:

no tengo culpa de ser como soy
soy mujeriego porque soy varón
no me critiquen así me hizo Dios
no controlo mis sentimientos
muchas mujeres me hacen feliz
solo con una no puedo vivir
¿que hay de malo de yo ser así
si a ningunas nunca le miento?

un dominicano no se puede contener
ya eso no se usa de tener a una mujer
yo con mas de una me siento muy bien
si una me abandona todavía mi quedan diez

no tengo culpa de ser como soy
soy mujeriego porque soy varón
no me critiquen así me hizo Dios

no controlo mis sentimientos
muchas mujeres me hacen feliz
solo con una no puedo vivir
que hay de malo de yo ser así
si a ningunas nunca le miento

oye Henry tres el mínimo, ¿oíste?
deja esa vaina
pero no me ataquen tanto señores
yo no soy el único
mira a más players que yo
lo voy decir lo voy decir
Sammy la vepa (‘ás de una)
mi amigo domii (domii)(domii) (más de una)
mi amigo platanito (más de una)
mi primo Manuelito (más de una)
Cesar Pea (más de una)
la cura(más de una)
Mi barbero Kelvin (más de una)
Tambin el playboy (más de una)
Hamley Hill (más de una)
Juan Gabriel(más de una)
don Antonio(más de una) oops met la pata
y Tony el muñequito no se queda
que Guillermo se atreva eso no va pa’ nada
la cura true player
oye chino pero let me find out muchacho
ah va...

“No Lo Perdona Dios”

Eso que has cometido no lo justifica Dios
 Le has quitado la vida a un niño sin razón
 Quizás pudiera ser un pelotero un bachatero o algo mas
 Y no lo sabrás, porque la vida tu le has quitado
 Como fuiste capaz a nuestro hijo tu lo has matado ooh ooh ooh ooh
 Solo por cosas del amor, problemas entre tu y yo
 que culpa tuvo ese niño, de nuestra mala relación
 dices que a la pobreza no se trae una criatura a pasar dolor
 que estás arrepentida y que no quieres ser la madre de lo que es un error
 por eso yo te culpo porque ahora buscas excusas no tienes corazón
 ay Dios

Eso que has cometido no lo perdona Dios ay
 Eso que has cometido es pecado ante Dios ay

Por tu poca ignorancia me dan ganas de llorar
 Me prometiste un hijo para luego abortar
 Quizás pudiera ser una modelo algo importante como las demás
 Pero no lo sabrás mujer, no tiene sentimientos
 Mataste mi amor, y un bebe que llevabas a dentro ooh ooh ooh ooh
 Dios debe mandar castigos, a esas mujeres como tu
 No saben valorar un hijo, el nuestro lo mataste tu
 Nunca nos entendimos es por eso que ese amor llevo a fracasar
 De los buenos momentos hoy recuerdo una criatura que murió al final
 Y hoy quedo adolorido porque tu me ilucionaste y no llegue hacer papa
 ay Dios

Na na na, na na y na na na
 Nay nay nay nay nay nay

Appendix B: Select Aventura Album Cover Images

(From www.aventuraworldwide.com)



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