“…Because it seems like an inescapable law of the infancy of all races [or nations] that within reach of their cradle and as adornments that are necessary to them, there are always [two things]: the dart or sword on one side, and they lyre on the other; with the first, [the nation] defends its independence whose debility awakens the ambition of the other nationalities, and with the other [the nation] sings its triumphs, whose fame is more grandiose because of the effect of that same debility of its constitution (xiii).”

Thus wrote the young poet José Joaquín Pérez (1845-1900) about three essential elements in the formation of nations. Though Pérez speaks here of a seemingly universal truth, his comments are nowhere more applicable than to his own nation, the Dominican Republic. For unlike most Spanish American countries in the nineteenth century, the Dominican Republic took up arms to gain its independence not once but twice, first from Haiti, then from Spain. If we take the lyre to be a symbol of literature, we find that popular and cultured poetry were as important as prose, if not more so, as a vehicle of Dominican nationalist themes. In the sung and written word, Dominicans celebrated their victories and remembered their defeats, thus giving meaning to the domination they had endured. Through literature, Dominican intellectuals and leaders sought to define their nation’s identity, and to specify the differences between their nation and the nations that had ruled over them. In fact, from a reading of late nineteenth-century poems about Dominican relations with Haiti and Spain, one can discern various sets of statements of national

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1 This passage appears in the essay “Al distinguido poeta dominicano Javier Angulo Guridi,” in which Pérez lauds Angulo Guridi for his 1867 historical drama in verse Iguaniona. The original passage reads: “Porque parece ley ineludible de la infancia de todas las razas que, al alcance de su cuna y como arreos que les son necesarios, se encuentran siempre, de un lado el dardo o la espada y del otro la lira; con los primeros defiende su independencia, cuya debilidad despierta la ambición de las demás nacionalidades, y con la otra canta sus triunfos, cuya fama es más grandiosa por efecto de esa misma debilidad de su constitución.” Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Spanish to English are my own.
identity, statements that normatively describe and define the Dominican nation, that emphasize national unity and uniqueness, and that tell the members of the nation what they are and how they should be. Just as Pérez insightfully noted that national debility motivates defense and heightens glory, we find that in this late nineteenth-century poetry, the Dominican Republic is often defined as weak and vulnerable vis-à-vis its national Others.

This essay will demonstrate how and why a number of Dominican poems of this period inscribe weakness into their definitions of national identity. We will begin with a brief look at some popular poems about Dominican relations with Haiti, and continue with an in-depth analysis of three major poetic works about Dominican views of Spain: the drama *Iguaniona* (1867) by Francisco Javier Angulo Guridi, the collection *Fantasías indígenas* (1877) by José Joaquín Pérez, and the epic poem “Anacaona” (1880) by Salomé Ureña de Henríquez. All three represent the natives and the Spaniards of the Conquest period as a way of making reference to Dominican political and cultural identity in the late nineteenth century.

**Haiti: Images of a Perpetual Invader**

Conflicts with Haiti in the first half of the 1800s made an enduring impression on the ways in which Dominicans imagined themselves and their neighbor to the west. The colonies that would become Haiti and the Dominican Republic began to share the island of Hispaniola in 1697. The Dominican population (on the eastern side of the island) was predominantly of mixed Spanish and African background. In Haiti a minority of French colonists brutally exploited the masses of African descent until the final decades of the eighteenth century, when blacks and mulattos took up arms against the white masters. The Haitian Revolution made slaveholders all over the hemisphere fearful, but it had direct consequences for the Spanish colony on the island. In 1801, Haitian revolutionary leader Toussaint L’Ouverture captured the eastern capital Santo
Domingo and freed the slaves there. In 1805 Jean-Jacques Dessalines and Henri Christophe invaded the eastern territory (then under French control), but they retreated, leaving a great deal of destruction in their wake. At the end of 1821, the Creoles of the eastern colony declared their independence from Spain, but their republic of “Spanish Haiti” was short-lived. About two months later, the more powerful Haitian government took it over and ruled it until the Dominican Republic won its independence in 1844. Haitian troops invaded Dominican territory again in 1849, 1855, and 1856, but they were repelled each time. Despite constant economic interdependence between the two nations, the occupation and the invasions by Haiti highlighted deep cultural differences and provoked in Dominicans a long-lasting antipathy toward the neighboring country. The Haitian trespasses also strengthened the anti-black prejudice that had resulted from the enslavement of Africans on the island. Consequently, a number of nineteenth-century Dominican poems describe Haitians as barbaric invaders, and define Haiti as a threat to Dominican sovereignty, morality, and culture.

It is worth citing a few examples of these anti-Haitian poems, all of which are in the popular décima form. The poem “Cantos dominicanos” (1875) by Félix María del Monte is perhaps the most striking illustration of how opposing national identities were assigned. Using the pejorative term “el mañé” to refer to the Haitian, the speaker in the poem explains that his grandfather had taught him to consider every Haitian his enemy, and to treat this enemy with the opposite of Christian love. The next décima reads:

Con ese [mañé] no hay compasión
With that [mañé] there is [to be] no compassion

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2 The décima is a ten-line stanza of octosyllabic verse which can be traced back to sixteenth-century Portugal and Spain. Though the décima was never able to overcome the popularity of the romance in Spain, in Spanish America it flourished among the learned and unlearned alike. Spanish Americans continue to compose and perform décimas to record historical events, express personal sentiments, and to make social political, and religious commentary.
ni se debe transigir  Nor should one settle disputes with him
bajo pena de infringir Under pain of violating
nuestra Santa Religión. Our Holy Religion.
¿Quién tiene lazo de unión Who has a tie of union
con esos diablos sañudos with those enraged devils
que beben sangre y desnudos, that drink blood and,
en pacto con Belzebú in pact with Beelzebub,
bailan su horrible bodú dance nude their horrible vodou
y comen muchachos crudos? and eat children raw?

(Rodríguez Demorizi 1979: 246)

Subsequent décimas recall some of the atrocities committed by Haitian troops in the invasions of 1801 and 1805, noting them as the cause for vengeance. The poem concludes with this telling stanza:

¡Considere usté, por Dios!  Consider for yourself, by God!
si aborreceré al mañé: if I will abhor the mañé:
los mato de tres en tres I kill them by threes,
los castro de dos en dos. I castrate them by twos.
Y aseguro (acá entre nos) And I assure you (here between us)
que al propio dominicano that the very Dominican
que mire con el haitiano that I see eating with the Haitian
comiendo en el mismo plato from the same plate
fresco y a tiempo lo mato; right away I will kill him;
porque ese es mal ciudadano! (sic, 248) because that one is a bad citizen!
While defining all Haitians as demonic and cannibalistic, and good Dominicans as Christian patriots and defenders, Del Monte’s poem reinforces the idea that Dominicans are or should be absolutely separate and distinct from Haitians, and live in perpetual violent opposition to them.

Renowned popular poet Juan Antonio Alix (1833-1917 or 1918) took up similar themes in a poem titled “Dominicanos!” (undated) (Alix II: 135-136). This poem calls on Dominicans to defend “our beloved fatherland” (“nuestra patria amada”) and “its sacred independence” (“su santa independencia”) against the Haitian aggressor. The poem exalts the killing of Haitians above even life and property.

No pensemos en vivir
Let us not think about living
Ni en nuestros bienes pensar,
Nor about our belongings,
Pensemos en batallar
Let us think about doing battle
Para vencer o morir. (II:135)
In order to vanquish or die.

Haitian culture is described in these condemning terms:

En esa raza inhumana
In that inhuman(e) race
El “Judú” es su religión;
“Voodoo” is its religion
Y allí la civilización
And there civilization
Jamás llegará á su puerta,
Will never arrive at its door,
Porque para ella abierta
Because in that nation, the door is not
No lo está en esa nación. (sic, II: 136)
open to civilization.

Later this poem defines Haiti by its Revolution and by the 1801 and 1805 invasions of Dominican territory. In this way, further invasions are made to seem inevitable.

Esa casta descendiente
That caste descended
De Tusén y Desalina,
From Toussaint and Dessalines
Aspires to nothing but the ruin
Of this flourishing nation.
(sic, II: 136)

Here Haiti is frozen into the image of destructive invader. On the other hand, the poem defines the Dominican nation as able to change, but for the worse, through Haitian invasion or influence. The representation of Haiti as uncivilizable suggests that Dominican culture could never influence or overcome Haitian culture. In this and other poems, poet Juan Antonio Alix exploits the sense of Dominican vulnerability in order to legitimate anti-Haitian violence.³

Alix also penned works which reveal that not all Dominicans believed in attacking Haitians or living separately from them. One finds trade, cooperation, and sharing between Haitians and Dominicans in poems such as “Un pasaporte dado en tiempos de vieja España” (undated, II: 72-74), “Un campesino dominicano que estuvo en Haití vendiendo unos andullos…” (1905), and “Origen del nombre del pueblo de Dajabón” (undated, II: 127-130). Yet, poetic admissions of this international contact are not entirely exempt from the concept of Dominican vulnerability. Alix’s poem “Las bailarinas del judú en la calle ‘Santa Ana’” (1904) comments on the police raid of a ceremony where three Dominican women and a Puerto Rican woman were led in ritual dance by a Haitian man. The poem ends with the lines “And if there is no good government, / Good-bye Quisqueyan [or Dominican] people” (“Y si no hay gobierno bueno, / adiós pueblo quisqueyano”) (Alix II: 48). This work treats Haitian vodou as a threat to the culture of the Dominican Republic, but it also shows that some Dominicans have already

³ Alix also composed the lengthy “Diálogo cantado entre un guajiro dominicano y un papá bocó haitiano en un fandango en Dajabón” (Rodríguez Demorizi 1979: 267-286). In this complex poetic duel, a Haitian vodou priest tries to entice a Dominican peasant with the refrain “You must dance vodou” (“Tu tien qui bailá vodú”) to which the Dominican constantly replies “Yo si no bailo judú”. From the beginning the Dominican concedes that the Haitian has superior magical powers; this fact both provokes the Dominican’s fear throughout the poem and justifies his violent attack on the Haitian in the end, for in his very first décima, the Dominican says he will have to “put an
allowed themselves to be influenced by this religious practice. Even while Haitians and Dominicans lived interdependently, there was the persistent definition of the Dominican Republic as militarily and culturally vulnerable, because of a strong enemy without and weak citizens within.

The aforementioned poems designate Haiti as the powerful national Other that Dominicans were to fear and despise. The poems suggest that the Dominican Republic is or should be absolutely separate and distinct from Haiti, especially in the political and religious areas. The definition of Haiti as a formidable military aggressor automatically defined good Dominicans as patriotic defenders of the homeland. Since Dominican patriots had repeatedly won victories against Haitian invasion, these definitions of Haitians and Dominicans had the effect of drawing the glory of defense into perpetuity. On the other hand, the definition of Haiti as the nation with the stronger cultural influence created a self-fulfilling prophecy in which Dominicans were constantly losing a what was considered an essentially Dominican way of life. Though constant contact made it impossible to maintain an absolute cultural difference between the two nations, anti-Haitian discourse rejected and denigrated any influences Haiti had on Dominican life.

**Spain and the Making of the Dominican Nation**

By contrast, in the late nineteenth century, the Dominican Republic fought to separate itself from Spain politically, while continuing to embrace Spanish cultural heritage. After all, as the poems cited above attest, Catholic religion and the Spanish language were cherished as traits that differentiated Dominicans from Haitians. Dominican antipathy toward Spain was grounded, not in cultural divergence, but in political and economic differences that had festered since the

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end to his [the Haitian’s] witchcraft” with a saber”: “Y si me beo apurao / Poi biní con poiquería, / Le acabo su brujería / Poi Dió, con ete encabao” (267).
seventeenth century. Spanish rule over the inhabitants of the Hispaniola colony had left them impoverished and marginalized, as Spain turned its interest to more lucrative mainland colonies and forbade its subjects to trade with other European powers. The young Dominican Republic, established in 1844, might have remained free of the Spanish yoke forever, had President Pedro Santana not reunited it to the metropolis in 1861. Being under Spanish rule during the Annexation proved unbearable for most Dominicans. The Spaniards imposed disruptive economic policies and strict religious standards, and they insulted the darker skin and distinct customs of the Dominicans.4 The subsequent War of Restoration turned the tables on the heirs of the Conquest: disease ravaged the Spanish troops as much as the island’s guerrilla warriors did, if not more so. The Dominicans handily won back their independence in 1865 (Moya Pons 353-354).

The Annexation and the Restoration provided inspiration to Dominican writers for years to come. For example, in their poems “16 de agosto” (1863) and “Diez y seis de agosto” (1874), Pérez and Ureña, respectively, commemorate the day on which their compatriots declared the War of Restoration. Angulo Guridi wrote a play about the war itself, titled Cacharros y manigüeros (1867).5 The Dominico-Spanish conflicts of 1861-1865 were also the major impetus for the Dominican flowering of poetry about the Conquest (M. Henríquez Ureña 280). Iguaniona, Fantasías indígenas, and “Anacaona” are the three major poetic works on the theme.

Clearly, the Annexation reminded some Dominican writers of the Spanish Conquest of the island, and the Dominicans’ declaration of the War of Restoration seemed reminiscent of the

4 Among other things, the Spaniards refused to accept Dominican currency, requisitioned beasts of burden (thereby interrupting the transport of tobacco and other goods), and told darker-skinned Dominicans that if they were in Cuba or Puerto Rico, they would be slaves (Moya Pons 345-347).
5 The manigüeros were the Dominican guerrilla fighters, and the cacharros were the Spanish soldiers. The Dominicans gave the Spaniards this pejorative name “because of the abundance of kettles and other objects that the Peninsular men carried on their back” (Deive 32). According to the Bantam Dictionary, la manigua is the thicket or the jungle; and the West Indian term “irse a la manigua” means “to revolt” (Williams 221).
indigenous people’s resistance to the invasion (Izquierdo 59-60). The Conquest theme allowed Dominican writers to express their anti-Spanish sentiments, and to criticize Spain for the abuses of the natives in the Conquest and for the mistreatment of the Dominicans during the Annexation.

Of course, there is a vast difference in circumstances and outcomes between fifteenth- and nineteenth-century historical happenings. Spain did not invade in order to effect the Annexation; nor did Spain succeed in “conquering” its former colony. Only after many secret negotiations did Dominican president Santana persuade Spain to make the Dominican Republic a province. The fact that Spain did not really threaten the Dominican Republic with invasion in the late nineteenth century leads to other interpretations of these poetic works. As Doralina Martínez-Conde notes, these works about the Conquest grew out of a broader context of threats to sovereignty, which included conflicts with Haiti and the ongoing “annexationist intentions of politicians and intellectuals” (10-11). From the last years of the Haitian occupation to about 1879, there were Dominican politicians who believed the country would be better off under the wing of a superpower. One of the leading proponents of this view was five-time president Buenaventura Báez, whose career spanned the period noted above. While working in the Haitian government during the occupation, Báez advocated annexation to France (Moya Pons 270), and during his dictatorial terms, he actively negotiated to sell or lease the strategic Samaná Bay to the United States in exchange for military and economic aid (374). From exile, Báez supported the Annexation. Through their writing and political activities, Dominican liberals like José Joaquín Pérez and Salomé Ureña combatted this annexationist attitude. They believed that the

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6 Santana’s aim was to improve the country’s financial situation, and to prevent invasion by Haitian forces, or by some American “adventurers” who had taken over a small Dominican island in 1860 (Moya Pons 335-337).
7 According to Rufino Martínez, Angulo Guridi was a supporter of Buenaventura Báez. Martínez accusingly states that the poet even waved an American flag as he participated in an 1870 demonstration in favor of Báez’s plan to
Dominican economic political system could be made self-sustaining; Gregorio Luperón implemented policies toward this goal when he became president in 1879.

Critics agree that Angulo Guridi, Pérez, and Ureña composed their highly polished, cultured poetry about the Conquest in order to stir up nationalist and patriotic feelings, and to oppose invasion and annexationism (Martínez-Conde 10-11; Izquierdo 60, 214). This poetry also connected Dominicans to a distant past and “provided historical roots” for the nation, as René Cristóbal Izquierdo writes of Ureña’s “Anacaona” (69). These poems call on readers to have a mournful respect for the sufferings of the Indians, who struggled to maintain their lives and their sovereignty. In their essays about Iguaniona, Pérez and Angulo Guridi also stress the need to provoke “righteous indignation” (Angulo x) and “abomination” for the cruelties of the Conquest (Pérez xix). The romantic sentimentality of the poems helped to create “an emotional attachment” (“un vínculo afectivo de asociación sentimental”) to the Indian heroes of literary and historical fame (García Arévalo 19). By building on the anti-imperialist spirit of long-dead natives, these poems about the Conquest keep alive the rancor of confrontations with a national Other in order to foster an identification with the nation.

The authors of this Dominican poetry about the Conquest saw themselves as creating a national literature. In his evaluation of Iguaniona, Pérez says that Angulo Guridi’s work is original because it treats the history of the island (xii). According to Pérez, Angulo transcends “servile imitations” by tapping into a nearly forgotten past that was itself a “whole world of poetry, of love, of heroism, of freedom, of martyrdom” (xii-xiii). For Pérez, to “nationalize” and “emancipate” Dominican literature was a matter of working the indigenous theme into a

annex the Dominican Republic to the U.S. (38). Such a pro-annexationist and pro-North American stance seems inconsistent with the fact that Angulo Guridi had staunchly opposed the Annexation and had even served as a colonel in the Dominican War of Restoration (Martínez 37). Pérez and Ureña, on the other hand, were affiliated with the Partido Nacional Liberal, also known as the Blue Party.
performance of patriotism (xiii). For example, he saw the character Iguaniona as a true patriot who “carries the destiny of her fatherland embodied in her own destiny” (xiii). Pérez suggests that the Dominican writer could escape Spanish models by turning the message of the work against Spanish political domination. While rejecting both Spain’s imperialism and its influence over the themes of Dominican literature, Pérez implicitly considers the most basic elements of poetic creation—language and form—to have overcome Spanishness to become a part of literary Dominicanness. He is willing to overlook the fact that Spanish power imposed the language and the forms on the American milieu. This type of selectiveness demonstrates the way in which Spanish cultural heritage was built into a literature that was supposed to represent a nation that had broken with Spain for political reasons.

**Dominican Indianism**

These major Dominican poetic works about the Conquest participated fully in the Romantic values of proclaiming individual and national freedom, defining the nation and excavating its roots, exalting the landscape, and celebrating the indigenous past. In fact, the literary treatment of indigenous peoples was common, and it served various nation-building purposes throughout the Americas, as one finds with works such as the Uruguayan narrative poem “Tabaré” (1888), the Ecuadorian novel Cumandá (1879), and the Brazilian works O Guarani (1857) and Iracema (1865). These and many other works of prose and poetry are part of what has been called “Indianism,” an important trend in Latin American Romantic literature. The term “Indianism” or “Indianist literature” has been defined in various ways. In the 1930s, literary critics Concha Meléndez and Aida Cometta Manzoni⁸ defined Indianist literature as that

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⁸ Concha Meléndez first published *La novela indianista en Hispanoamérica* in 1934, and it was reprinted in 1961. Meléndez described two modes of Indianism, one that exoticized, and one that sympathized with Indians. In her 1939 book *El indio en la poesía de América Española*, Aída Cometta Manzoni distinguishes between Indigenist and Indianist literary works (“indigenista” and “indianista”). Indianist literature treats the native Americans “in a
which sympathized with, exoticized, or idealized the indigenous people. In his 1998 dissertation, John Kyle Echols gives a more expansive and theoretically-rooted definition of Indianist literature: he argues that literary Indianism is a neo-colonial discourse akin to the Orientalism described by Edward Said. Indianism, says Echols, uses the image of the indigenous peoples to defend the political, economic, and ideological interests of the Creole elite (29-40). All of these definitions for Indianism are valid and acceptable, and Iguaniona, Fantasías indígenas, and “Anacaona” are all rightly called Indianist poetic works. However, the term obscures the fact that much if not most of the nineteenth-century Hispanic literature called Indianist is not only about Indians but also about Spaniards. The presence of the Spaniards in the literary works is significant for how the works negotiate the nation’s relationship to Spain in order to engage in discourses about national politics and national identity.

In a sense, it is curious that the indigenous theme would become so significant in Dominican letters in the nineteenth century. Unlike most Central and South American countries, the Caribbean Dominican Republic does and did not then have an ethnic group identified as descendants of the pre-Columbian population. When the conquistadors arrived, there were three main ethnic groups on the island of Hispaniola, each with its own language, social structure, economic modes, and religious practices. There were the Macorixes and Ciguayos, who lived in the northeastern part of the island; and there were the Taínos, who were predominant on Hispaniola and in the Antilles (Cassá 1974: 6-17). The three poetic works analyzed herein never use the term Taínos, nor do they mention the Macorixes, though the Ciguayos do figure prominently in the works. The poems do not carefully delineate cultural differences among the aboriginal ethnic groups of the island; instead they often treat these groups as if they were one “raza” or race or people, divided among regions and tribes, with somewhat distinguishable character traits.
the island’s natives were all but destroyed by 1550, and the small remnant was soon absorbed by the Spanish colonizers and their African slaves (Cassá 1974: 198; García Arévalo 12).

The absence of Indians in the nation, however, did not prevent their prominent presence in Dominican writing; it probably invited them in. Chronicles, diaries, and histories written during the Conquest nourished the imaginations of nineteenth-century authors, as did myths and legends believed to be passed down from the indigenous people themselves. In fact, their physical absence made the Indians of Hispaniola more open to interpretations; they were like ciphers onto which nationalist sentiments were easily inscribed.

Dominican Indianism began in the 1840s with a few works solely about the island’s natives and expanded into a full-fledged cultural movement by the end of the century. The first Dominican to write on indigenous themes was Francisco Javier Angulo Guridi (also known simply as Javier, 1816-1884). He composed his two Indianist poems “Maguana” (1840) and “La cuita” (“The Yearning”) (1842) while his family was in exile in Cuba. His brother Alejandro followed with a short novel called Los amores de los indios (1843). Critic Max Henríquez Ureña considers these early works to be “folkloric,” and notes that Javier Angulo’s drama Iguaniona “was the first Dominican work in which a political intention appears behind the Indigenist and sentimental motif” (281). Iguaniona was written in 1867, shortly after the War of Restoration, and not published until 1881, when Indianism had come to prominence in the Dominican Republic.

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10 The Angulo family left Santo Domingo in 1822 soon after the Haitian occupation commenced. The family lived first in Puerto Rico and then in Cuba. (Francisco Javier returned to the Dominican Republic in 1853.) It is important to note that the Angulo Guridi brothers wrote about indigenous themes around the same time that several Cuban poets composed their own Indianist works. The Cuban Indianist school known as Siboneyismo included Narciso Foxá y Lecanda, Ramón Vélez Herrera, Pedro Santacilia, and the decimero Juán Cristóbal Nápoles Fajardo (“el Cucalambé”), all of whose Indianist works were published between 1844 and 1857 (Cometta Manzoni 180-184).
Upon completing *Iguaniona*, Angulo Guridi dedicated the drama to the younger poet José Joaquín Pérez (1845-1900), who wrote a laudatory essay about it (quoted at the beginning of this paper). Pérez was inspired to cultivate similar themes. Though he originally planned to write a drama, in 1877 Pérez published a collection of poems titled *Fantasías indígenas* (M. Henríquez Ureña 285). This was the first published book of poetry by a single Dominican writer (C. F. Pérez 1970: 79).

The *Fantasías* opened with a poem called “Impresiones” by the author’s friend Salomé Ureña (1850-1987). Ureña too was moved to write about the indigenous experience of the Conquest; her epic poem “Anacaona” appeared in 1880. Around the same time Manuel de Jesús Galván (1834-1910) published what is perhaps the best known Spanish American Indianist prose narrative, *Enriquillo; Leyenda histórica dominicana* (1503-1533). These critically acclaimed works helped to make the Indian theme a mainstay in Dominican letters throughout the late nineteenth and well into the twentieth.

These and other works of Dominican Indianist writing had repercussions beyond the literary, however. Painting and sculpture also portrayed legendary indigenous figures from the Conquest. Ideas about the relationship between the Indians and Dominicans evolved rapidly. Soon after the emergence of politically-charged Indianist poetry in the 1870s and 1880s, the popular imagination latched on to a metaphor that equated Dominicans with Indians. Rodríguez Demorizi writes that Dominicans began naming their children after the indigenous heroes (1972: 11). The first part of *Enriquillo* was published in 1878, the complete edition in 1882.

11 In his *Panorama histórico de la literatura dominicana* Max Henríquez Ureña includes a chapter about literature on the indigenous theme (283-295). Among the many works he notes are the following: the poem “Ozema o la Virgen Indiana” (1867) by Félix María del Monte; a legend called “La bella Catalina” (1874) by Apolinar Tejera; “Maireni” (1885), a poem by Gastón Deligne based on the suicide of an Indian chief; “Anacaona” (1893), a romance by Félix Francisco Rodríguez; and the poem “Guarocuya; el monólogo de Enriquillo” (1924) by Federico Henríquez y Carvajal. In his book *Indigenismo, arqueología e identidad nacional*, Manuel A. García Arevalo explains that Dominican writers continued to cultivate the indigenous theme in the present century: Juan Bosch published *Indios*...
Mulatos and blacks began to describe themselves with terms like indio claro and indio oscuro (Despradel 96, Fennema 203). The definition of Dominicans as biologically and racially Indians had social and political significance. García Arévalo argues that the “indio” was a “formula that “unified” Dominicans when black and white would have polarized them (20).

“After all,” wrote Pedro Mir, “the Indian has, though not so much, dark skin like the blak and, though more so, straight hair like the white. [The Indian] adjusts racially as a symbol of a people that is, at once, black and white [ . . . ]” (204). It seems that the more Dominicans came to think of themselves as indios, the more they thought of Haitians as blacks, and one sense of the term negro became synonymous with Haitian (Despradel 95, Cassá 1976: 65). During the regime of anti-Haitian Dominican dictator Rafael L. Trujillo (1930-1961) indio became an acceptable (and recommended) entry on the official identification documents of citizens too dark to pass for white.

Some critics have read the Indianist literature of the 1870s and 1880s as a way of excluding the African heritage from dominant definitions of Dominican national identity, so as to draw absolute cultural and racial differences between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Critic Lil Despradel is perhaps the most emphatic. In an article about anti-Haitianism, Despradel argues that the “myth of the Indian” originated with the Indianist writing of Javier and Alejandro Angulo Guridi, José Joaquín Pérez, Salomé Ureña and Manuel de Jesús Galván (95). According to Despradel, “this mulato intelligentsia considered the black contribution as barbaric or degrading, systematically ignoring it” (95). Unfortunately, Despradel does not cite evidence that these authors held such opinions. Despradel also says that the middle and upper classes came to

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in 1935; Pedro Vergés Vidal authored Anacaona in 1947, and in 1978 Marcio Veloz Maggiolo wrote a children’s novel titled De donde vino la gente.
think of the Indian heroes and the Spaniards as their sole forebears. It is not altogether clear if Despradel means to say that the literary works were entirely responsible for this belief.

It is clear, however, that *Enriquillo* by Galván provides the pretext for imagining the Dominican nation without blacks. In its choice of protagonists, the text emphasizes racial and cultural mixing between Indians and Spaniards. Furthermore, the book claims to be a “historical legend” (“leyenda histórica”) about the period from 1503 to 1533. As critics have indicated, Galván relies heavily on sixteenth-century documents by Gonzalo Fernández Oviedo and Bartolomé de las Casas to guide the narration. Furthermore, while the literary text hardly acknowledges the presence of Africans on the island, it ends with the reconciliation of the Spanish crown with Indian leader Enriquillo, after Enriquillo and a group of natives had lived into the mountains to resist abuses by the Spaniards. The culturally Hispanic Enriquillo and his mestiza wife Mencía live happily ever after. This ending leaves the impression that the Dominican people are the descendants of the hero and his wife, that the Dominican nation is culturally Hispanic and racially European and indigenous.

It is more difficult to argue that the major Indianist poetic works were written to exclude blacks from the national identity. *Iguaniona, Fantasías indígenas,* and “Anacaona” do not claim to be historically accurate accounts to the extent that Enriquillo does. The poems do not mention dates, but in general, they describe events that occurred before 1503. Africans were not introduced to Hispaniola en masse until about 1518, with the first sugar plantations (Moya Pons 32).

If Ureña, Pérez, and Angulo Guridi were avoiding the mention of blacks, they also seem to have been avoiding the mention of Spanish-Indian *mestizaje.* Perhaps the authors wished to

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13 The original passage reads: “A fin y al cabo, el indio tiene, aunque no tanto, la piel oscura como el negro y, aunque mucho más el pelo lacio como el blanco. Ajusta racialmente como símbolo de un pueblo que es, a la vez
underline the utter loss of the indigenous peoples, rather than hint at their survival through mixing. Perhaps they felt that portrayals of Spanish-Indian coupling would detract from the idea of indigenous resistance to the conquistadors. If the principal message of the Indianist poetry is nationalist resistance (Martínez-Conde 10, 11; Izquierdo 60, 214), then the texts could be read as allegories in which physical traits do not matter as much as the imperative to remain separate and sovereign. Besides, resistance of a common enemy implies a certain unity that downplays differences of class and color. In my view, the three major Indianist poetic works define the nation first in political and moral terms, and second in cultural terms.

Just as the aforementioned anti-Haitian poems define the Dominican nation through its definitions of Haiti, the texts Iguaniona, Fantasías indígenas and “Anacaona” construct mutually dependent definitions of Spain and the Dominican Republic. These poems portray Spain as a cruel and powerful invader, the Indians as patriotic defenders and the political forebears of the Dominicans. The immorality of the conquistadors is contrasted with the innocence of the natives. The military and political might of the Spaniards increases the courage and selflessness of the indigenous people who resisted them. Of course, the Indians perished trying to defend themselves against Spain. But as Pérez suggested in the poem “El último cacique” (in the Fantasías), the Dominican people inherited the fighting spirit of the disappeared aborigines and avenged the crimes of the Conquest (153). By defeating Spain in 1865, the Dominican Republic won glory as well as independence.

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14 Unless otherwise noted, all citations of these poetic works come from the following editions: Javier A. Guridi’s Iguaniona: Drama histórico en verso y en tres actos, with a prologue and introduction by Antonio Fernández Spencer (Ciudad Trujillo: Editora Montalvo, 1953); Obra poética by José Joaquín Pérez, edited by Carlos Federico Pérez (Santo Domingo: Universidad Nacional Pedro Henríquez Ureña, 1970); and the Poesías completas of Salomé Ureña de Henríquez, with a prologue and additional notes by Diógenes Céspedes (Santo Domingo, 1989).

15 The final lines of this poem actually say that the barbarity of the conquistadors in pursuing and murdering the Indians “today spurs to war and cruel vengeance another race / that is free and no longer tolerates the yoke of a master. In Spanish, the whole stanza reads: “Que allí en esa gruta, la ignominiosa afrenta / del bárbaro e inicuo,
In the Indianist poetic works by Angulo Guridi, Pérez, and Ureña, we find varied portrayals of Columbus, moral characterizations of the Spaniards and Indians, and the fatal flaws of both native heroes and traitors. The remainder of this paper will explore how these three elements contribute to the construction of the Dominican Republic as a vulnerable but glorious nation, because of its political and cultural relationship to Spain.

**Columbus: the Pivotal Figure of Dominican Identity**

The presence of Spaniards is an important element of all but a few of the Indianist poems by Angulo Guridi, Pérez, and Ureña. The generally reprehensible character of the conquistadors is contrasted with the innocence, courage, righteousness, and patriotism of most of the indigenous protagonists. Like the Indian regional leaders or caciques who dominate the poems, the most notorious Spaniards are recognized by name and deed.

Not surprisingly, the figure of Christopher Columbus receives special attention in *Iguaniona, Fantasías indígenas,* and “Anacaona.” Christopher Columbus is arguably the most complex European character of this poetry because he is portrayed in both superhuman and human terms. Besides, all of these representations of Columbus have a bearing on how the natives and the Dominicans are defined. To begin with, Columbus is the bridge between the European and the indigenous societies, and he is revered by the Spaniards and natives alike. Among the soldiers and priests, he is “el Almirante,” the Admiral. The native characters of the poems refer to him by the honorific title of “Guamiquina,” which Pérez defines as “jefe superior” (146), and Ureña defines as “jefe blanco” (1997: 274). In the *Fantasías indígenas,* Pérez devotes a whole poem to Columbus’s role as historic link. The title of the poem, “El junco verde,” or “The Green Bulrush” comes from the carved reed that floated within reach of the navigator’s

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falaz conquistador, / a guerra y cruel venganza hoy otra raza alienta / que es libre y no soporta ya el yugo de un señor” (153).
vessel and made Columbus realize that he had finally reached land. This reed becomes his prized possession as he ascends in royal favor. It is also his consolation when that favor fails and he suffers imprisonment and poverty (100). In a sense, the reed serves a reminder of Columbus’s own greatness and vulnerability.16

“El junco verde” makes reference to the losses suffered by the indigenous peoples, but Columbus is not implicated in the Conquest. The poem seems to express a desire to think of Columbus as good, or even as better than good. The famous navigator is portrayed as a man with “sincere faith” in God (98), and as a martyred victim of ingratitude (99). (The text here actually reads: “cuando la ingratitud le dió el martirio.”) Columbus is also associated with the mutual glory of Spain and Hispaniola, here called Quisqueya.

Después que de Colón y de Castilla
la fama el triunfo por doquier pregoná,
y ya Quisqueya, conquistada, brilla
cual joya de la ibérica corona [. . .].

Afterwards triumph everywhere proclaims
the fame of Columbus and of Castille,
and now Quisqueya, conquered, shines
like a jewel in the crown of Iberia [. . .] (99)

16 Carlos F. Pérez (1970:101) and Max Henríquez Ureña (285) agree that for chronological reasons, the poem “El junco verde” should be the first poem of the Fantasías collection, but in the 1970 and 1989 edition of Pérez’s works, “El junco verde” is the second poem. Curiously, it follows the poem “Igi aya bongbé (Primero muerto que esclavo)” (“Death before enslavement”), which gives voice to the most violently aggressive attitudes of indigenous resistance. “El junco verde” and “Igi aya bongbé” could be said to represent the two sources of Dominican pride: the link to Spain through Columbus, and the indigenous resistance to Spain’s Conquest of the island.
The goodness of Columbus seems to color the new relationship with the European power, as if that relationship must be seen as positive, at least in some respects. The Columbus of this Fantasía is one who brings glory and recognition to the island and, therefore, to the Dominican Republic. The poem even goes so far as to call him “that immortal genius who creates a world” (“aquel genio inmortal que un mundo crea” (97).

The excessively laudatory and uncritical attitude of “El junco verde” seems to be what prompts critic José Alcántara Almánzar to write the following about the Fantasías indígenas:

“But these condemnations [of the greed of the Spaniards] lose their force before the exaltation of a non-existent nobility in Christopher Columbus and his brother Bartholomew. It is probable that these ideologically ambiguous points in the Fantasías obey the weakness and inconsistency of the nineteenth-century Dominican bourgeoisie and the predominant admiration for things Hispanic that our intellectual elites have had almost up to our own time (18).”

This criticism overlooks the fact that another poem in the Fantasías indígenas collection does not portray the Admiral as flatteringly nor as flatly as does “El junco verde.” In the prose poem “Flor de Palma, o la fugitiva de Borinquen” the Admiral thinks of himself as an agent of the “redemption of humanity” (203), yet he is shown leading a group of unruly conquistadors on a mission to take over much of the interior (221). He may be able to hold back the cruelty of his soldiers, but he is nonetheless a prime agent of the Conquest. In another instance, Columbus thinks about how the beautiful Borinquen woman called “Flor de Palma” can help to keep the cacique Guanaráí within Columbus’s power (209). When Guanaráí helps Flor and other

17 The original reads: “Pero estas imprecaciones pierden fuerza ante la exaltación de una hidalguía inexistente en Cristóbal Colón y su hermano Bartolomé. Es probable que estos puntos ambiguos a nivel ideológico en las Fantasías obedezcan la debilidad e inconsistencia de la burguesía dominicana del siglo XIX y al predominio, casi hasta nuestros días, de la admiración que por lo hispánico han tenido nuestras élites intelectuales.”
Borinquen women to escape captivity on a Spanish ship, Columbus ends up “meditating deeply on his own weaknesses” (214). Though the Christopher Columbus of “Flor de Palma” is not completely ignoble, he tries to manipulate the natives and ends up outwitted by them. When Columbus seems outdone, the indigenous characters appear strong and clever. This Columbus of “Flor de Palma” is far from the sincere and holy genius of “El junco verde.”

His brother Bartolomé or Bartholomew Columbus is not treated as a saint either; in the poem “Flor de Palma” he is shown demanding tribute from Bohechío the brother of the famous cacica Anacaona. Furthermore, when Christopher leaves the island, Spanish atrocities against the Indians immediately increase, but Bartholomew is apparently unable or unwilling to prevent them (225). The presentations of both the Columbus brothers in “El junco verde” and “Flor de Palma” do not, as Alcántara asserts, simply “exalt nobility.” In fact, the Fantasías indígenas by Pérez present three characterizations of Christopher Columbus that are also found in Iguaniona and “Anacaona”: the unassailable genius and evangelist; the morally ambiguous military and political leader; and the weakling or coward. The last two characterizations also apply to Bartholomew, and the earthly limitations of the brothers leave room for the Indians to rise in stature.

In Iguaniona, Christopher Columbus is idealized whereas native characters are shown to question his brother’s own claims to righteousness. The Admiral never appears as a character in Angulo Guridi’s play, but he is always described in the most glowing terms. At the beginning of the drama the cacique Guarionex recounts an extremely amicable meeting with Christopher Columbus, for the purpose of making a peace treaty. Guarionex says:

No pareciendo sino haber nacido
A todos superior, por la elegancia
Y el santo fuego, y la verdad sublime
Con que sin arte diestramente hablaba. (9-10)

[He seemed] not to have been born except as a being
superior to all others, because of the elegance
And the holy fire, and the sublime truth
that he spoke with skill and without trickery.

While in Iguaniona Columbus seems to float above the intrigues and scandals of the Conquest, his brother Bartholomew is present and active. As provincial governor of the island, Bartholomew tells the native princess Iguaniona that he is in favor of a peaceful, equitable partnership with the indigenous groups (86). His actions do not quite match his rhetoric, though. When Bartholomew meets with Guarionex and learns that a Spaniard has made a sexual advance on this cacique’s wife, Bartholomew expresses outrage. He also says that Guarionex should have asked Christopher Columbus to arbitrate the case. Although Bartholomew himself would not consent to letting the guilty Spaniard be condemned to death by the Indians, he is sure his brother would have:

Nosotros somos justos: si la queja
Hubieras levantado a Don Cristóbal,
Te juro por mi honor que en este instante
No respirara aquel que así te oprobia. (94)

We are just: if you had raised
this complaint to Don Cristóbal,
I swear to you by my honor that in this instant
The one who so defames you would not be breathing.

Even after having witnessed this episode, Iguaniona still wants to think of Bartholomew as “a noble Christian,” the only “just and honorable” and “prudent” Spaniard; yet she has some doubts about his sincerity (101). This drama places both Bartholomew and Christopher Columbus on a moral pedestal and then subtly suggests flaws in their character. Thus Iguaniona thematizes the ambivalence involved in admiring supposedly good European heroes who headed a destructive campaign. This ambivalence is at the center of the definitions of Columbus as the one who brought glory to the Dominican Republic by linking it with Europe.

Christopher Columbus also receives a mixed portrayal in Salomé Ureña’s poem. Anacaona’s husband Caonabo fearlessly attacks the Spanish settlements. A cunning Spaniard named Antonio Ojeda convinces Caonabo to meet with Columbus in order to negotiate a peace treaty. On the way to what Caonabo thinks will be a meeting, Ojeda tricks the cacique into wearing shackles. Columbus seems almost as cowardly as Ojeda when he comes fact to face with the defiant prisoner. The Navigator is left speechless while Caonabo proclaims himself “The fiercest enemy of your race” and threatens to erase Spanish civilization from his soil (208):

La firmeza del cacique
Colón admira en silencio,
tanta altivez respetando,
tanto valor y denuedo.
Pero a tan fuerte enemigo
aunque cautivo temiendo
medita a solas y ordena

The firmness of the cacique
Columbus admires in silence
Respecting so much pride,
So much valor and bravery.
But fearing such a strong enemy
Although in captivity,
Columbus meditates alone and orders
That the prisoner be well-guarded.

(Canto XVIII, 209)

Although the Admiral does nothing to help Caonabo, later in the poem, the poetic voice describes Columbus as a man with a “noble and generous heart” who “at one time was able to put a stop to criminal intentions” (238). Here we see Columbus, the supposed representative of the power and glory of Spain, displaying fear of an Indian; and we find Columbus failing to live up to his exalted image of a moral and humane leader.

The epic poem “Anacaona” also exposes the imperfections of Columbus’s brother. In Canto XXV Bartholomew demands tribute in exchange for peace from Anacaona’s elderly brother Bohechío, cacique of Jaragua (222-224). From their dialogue one almost gets the impression that Bohechío is outsmarting the provincial governor by telling him that there is no gold in his region, and agreeing to pay in food and cotton. (We could catch Bohechío in moral inconsistency here, too, because he first meditates on the sufferings of the indigenous peoples, then tells Columbus that the other caciques have gold that he lacks.) These presentations of the Columbus brothers as manipulable weaklings and cowards serve to raise the image of indigenous heroes and heroines above that of their powerful oppressors.

One can read these differing characterizations of Christopher Columbus as part of a whole strategy to construct Dominican identity around the strengths and weaknesses of both European and indigenous figures. As a noble achiever, Columbus embodies and redeems the Dominican connection to Europe. Through the greatness of Columbus, Hispaniola gains the greatness of Spain. It is important to note that, in these poems, Christopher Columbus is never

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18 The original text says that conquistadors ruled over ruined regions, and that their cruel passions were running wild; Columbus had been taken prisoner and shipped away from the island: “[…] que si pudo generoso / de Colón el noble pecho / alguna vez poner dique / a criminales intentos / la calumnia y la perfidia / se convocaron de
associated with the gold fever of his subordinates. This implies that if all of the Spaniards had had as much vision and discipline as the great Admiral of these poetic works, the Conquest might have brought about an American Eden. The image of Columbus as a man with moral flaws and human weaknesses allows some of the indigenous characters to show their strengths. The violent invaders provoke the fiercest resistance and cause the most poignant martyrdom of the indigenous leaders; these admirable representations of the indigenous peoples is constructed not only around that of the evil conquerors, but also around the image of the less violent Europeans, like the Columbus brothers.

In a critique of the Fantasías indígenas, Alcántara Almánzar remarked that the condemnation of Spanish conquerors seemed ineffective and ambiguous in light of the portrayals of the Columbus brothers as noble men. I would argue that the Fantasías as well as “Anacaona” and Iguaniona do not always exalt these European figures. Furthermore, the varied portrayals of the Columbus brothers and the negative representations of the conquistadors are not simply symptoms of “weakness and inconsistencies” in the bourgeois intellectuals, as Alcántara suggests. Rather, all of the portrayals work together to produce the concept of the indigenous people whose heroic resistance won a moral triumph over a glorious but corrupt European power. The Dominican nation of the nineteenth century was able to win a military and political victory. The “admiration of things Hispanic” that Alcántara mentions can be read as the complement of an admiration of Dominican patriotism inspired by the struggles of the indigenous peoples of the island.

acuerdo / para ultrajar su alta gloria / y conducirlo entre hierros / de su Quisqueya querida / allá distante, muy lejos” (238)
Patriots and Traitors: Nationalism and Vulnerability

The second verse of the Dominican national anthem, written by Emilio Prud’Homme in 1883, consists of these lines, (which I take in English and Spanish from Alan Cambeira’s book Quisqueya la Bella):

Ningún pueblo ser libre merece
No people deserves to be free if
Si es esclavo, indolente y servil;
They are indolent and submissive slaves;
Si en su pecho la llama no crece
If in their heart there does not rise
Que templó el heroísmo viril,
The flame that tempered virile heroism,
Mas Quisqueya la indómita y brava
But the brave and indomitable Quisqueya
Siempre alta la frente alzará;
Will always raise its lofty head;
Que si fuere mil veces esclava
That if it were enslaved a thousand times,
Otras tantas ser libre sabrá. 19
As many others shall know how to be free.

Interestingly, Max Henríquez Ureña makes reference to these lyrics in his chapter titled “Literature indigenista” in the Panorama histórico de la literatura dominicana. Henríquez points out that this was the text that “consecrated” the “supposedly indigenous” name Quisqueya as a poetic alternative to la República Dominicana (282).

With the terms Quisqueyanos and Quisqueya, the national anthem implicitly connects the citizens of the nation to the indigenous people of the island. With its emphases on bravery, heroism, slavery, and freedom, the anthem seems closely related to the three major poetic works about the Conquest. What is intriguing about this passage is its insistence on the possibility of national bondage. This probably alludes to the twenty-two-year Haitian occupation and the

19 N.B. that the Spanish here is not a direct quote of Cambeira’s text, which seems to have a few typographical errors: his reads “Qué templo […]” and “Más Quisqueya la indómita y brava [...].” The English translation, however, is a direct quote from Cambeira. Perhaps a better rendering of the final line might be: “As many more times, it will know how to be free.”
annexation to Spain. However, one might also read it as a remembrance of the defeat, enslavement, and ultimate extinction of the indigenous peoples, despite their courageous resistance to the Conquest.

We should also note that this passage of the anthem talks about people who “deserve” slavery because they acquiesce to it. While these lines are not supposed to apply to the Dominican nation, it is significant that they are there at all. In other words, their presence in the national anthem ambiguously indicates that the Dominican people or some individuals within it have in some way fit the description of “indolent and submissive slaves.” Pedro Santana, Buenaventura Báez, and their followers might be prime examples of this because they supported annexation. On the whole, this text implicitly and explicitly projects into the future the image of the Dominican nation as vulnerable to enslavement by outside powers, and vulnerable to its own failure to resist. The national anthem could be said to describe the Dominican Republic as a nation whose patriotism is the consequence of oppression, and whose “strength is made perfect in weakness.”

This final section will demonstrate how the three major Indianist poetic works use indigenous patriots and traitors to inscribe bravery and vulnerability into the national character. I use the term national character to mean a set of behavioral and attitudinal tendencies. National identity, as I use it, emphasizes racial, cultural, territorial, and political traits. In my view, both national identity and national character imply a set of normative statements describing the nation.

Critics tend to make generalizing statements about what “the Indian” represents for the Dominican people. Some say that the Indian is a “symbol of patriotism and freedom” (Candelier 35, Martínez-Conde 130). The figure of the freedom-loving Indian may indeed have been incorporated into national consciousness. However, the three major Indianist works do not in
any way present a monolithic Indian. *Iguaniona, Fantasías indígenas,* and “Anacaona” all
include two types of Indian characters: those who resist Spanish domination, and those who take
the side of the conquistadors. The former I call patriots, and the latter traitors, although the
poems do not necessarily give them these labels. The traitor figure cannot represent patriotism,
but he also should not be overlooked. There is one principal traitor figure in the poems,
Guacanagarí, the cacique of Marién, who is motivated by self-interest. Generally, the patriots act
to preserve the honor, dignity, freedom, and sovereignty of themselves and their people. Among
the hero-patriots of these poems are Caonabo, Anacaona, Iguaniona, and Guatiguana. Angulo
Guridi’s character Guarionex proves that the difference between patriots and traitors is not
always clear-cut; he makes an allegiance with the Spaniards for patriotic reasons, that is, because
he thinks it will benefit his people. The indigenous patriots and traitors of these poems do share
a certain weakness: they trust the Spaniards too much and are dazzled by European power.

Salomé Ureña’s epic poem “Anacaona” is about a heroic and patriotic husband and wife.
Caonabo and Anacaona each use a different strategy to keep themselves and their subjects alive
and free in the face of Spanish invasion. He fights and she pays tribute, but they both end as
martyrs. Of course, the demise of each, especially that of the gentle cacica, underlines the
inordinate cruelty and deceptiveness of the Spaniards. Yet, what is interesting is that at the
moment they fall prey, these leaders and their people are completely in awe of their conquerors.
Despite mistrusting their enemies, Caonabo and Anacaona seem to lapse into a momentary
fascination with power.

Caonabo realizes early on that the Spaniards are usurpers and exploiters, so he leads an
attack on the foreigners and their indigenous allies. When invited to negotiate a truce with
Christopher Columbus, the warrior cacique is determined to preserve his dignity. The crafty

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20 From the King James Version of the Bible, 2 Corinthians 12:9.
Antonio Ojeda finds that dignity is, in fact, Caonabo’s Achilles heel. Caonabo refuses to travel without his armed guard, so Ojeda offers the ruler some iron shackles as a “rich gift” from Columbus. Ojeda explains that Guamiquina also wears them to “give more greatness to power” (206). Caonabo willingly puts on the irons and is promptly taken away on a horse; not even his guards are aware of the trick until it is too late. Caonabo dies in captivity soon afterward.

Anacaona conclude that Caonabo’s aggressive response to the Spaniards has invited a violent reaction. She agrees to purchase peace and sovereignty over her native region. While other cacicazgos succumb to the ravages of the gold-crazed invaders, Anacaona’s Jaragua remains intact. Furthermore, her “imposing dignity” and “sovereign goodness” gain the conquistadors’ respect and holds back Spanish encroachment for a time. When the governor Ovando comes to visit, Anacaona shows him and his men the greatest of hospitality. Intent on destroying the indigenous population and assassinating the caciques, Ovando prepares a massacre. He invites all of the Jaraguans to a demonstration of Spanish weaponry. The Indians are so excited, innocent, and trusting that they come unarmed. The text devotes three four-line stanzas to describing the eagerness, pleasure, impatience, and awe with which the people attend the display. The climax of the passage reads:

Rompe la fiesta de atractivos llena;
fascinada la grey sin movimiento
sigue del juego los extraños giros,
y suspende la voz, y hasta el aliento; [. . . ]. (243)

The festival commences, full of attraction;
motionless with fascination, the flock
follows the strange turns of the game,
they suspend their speech, and even hold their breath; [. . .].

The Spaniards kill or hunt down everyone present, except the cacica, whom they take prisoner, “as a trophy” (244). Anacaona dies stoically at the gallows.

The tragic flaws in the Indian characters of Iguaniona are not quite as blaring as those of “Anacaona.” This drama presents some of the same fascination with European power, but it also explores the question of determining an appropriate reaction to the Spaniards. The play opens with the cacique Guarionex explaining that he has made a peace treaty with Columbus and sworn allegiance to the Spanish king. Guarionex believes it will bring about peace and prosperity for his region of Maguá (5). Guatiguana, a chief of one of the tribes of Maguá, strongly opposes this move; he is sure that the treaty will only hasten destruction and exploitation (12). The priest and the people (represented by a chorus) agree with Guatiguana, and urge the cacique to resist the Spaniards (16, 21). The text never refers to Guarionex as a traitor, paradoxically because and in spite of the fact that he was destined to lead his people into slavery. Guarionex himself feels that the prophecy releases him from any culpability (21, 93). The sexual advance on the wife of Guarionex is perceived as an affront to the personal and collective honor; and this misfortune spurs the leader toward patriotic and heroic vengeance (33, 37).

This drama makes an issue of whether the indigenous peoples should take the Spaniards as individuals or as a group. In the beginning Guarionex believes that he can make a treaty with Christopher Columbus because of the Admiral’s seemingly superior character. Guatiguana reminds him that Ojeda deceived and captured Caonabo. Guarionex makes an anti-racist argument in response and refuses to accept Guatiguana’s negative expectations of the Spaniards (8-9). Yet, the latter holds that they are proven enemies and therefore, they must be mistrusted. Guarionex counters that his peace treaty has transformed them into allies, if not friends (11, 10).
Iguaniona is one of the same opinion as Guatiguana, but her view of the foreigners is tested when she meets Bartholomew Columbus. The gentleness of his disposition, his profession of Christianity, and his expressions of concern for the Indians persuade her that he is different from the other conquistadors. On reflection, she realizes that she nearly let herself be taken in:

[...] casi estuve perdida

Cuando tierna, conmovida,

“Hija”, su voz me llamaba.

Quizá si sería un engaño

Con que a probarme tentó . . . (sic, 101)

[...] I was almost lost

When with tenderness and affection

His voice called me “Daughter.”

Perhaps it might have been a trick

With which he tried to test me . . .

Even as she questions Bartholomew’s motives, she tells herself that he has not offended her nearly as much as Avendaño, the soldier who says he loves her. It is telling that Iguaniona has this momentary fascination with Bartholomew’s religion and country, and that she is willing to see the Governor as a father figure. These attitudes bring to mind the idea of Spain as a legitimate and protective parent for the weak and vulnerable Dominican people. Both Guarionex and Iguaniona show how easy it is for well-meaning and patriotic Indians to fall under the spell of seemingly benign but powerful Others.
The figure of Guacanagarí appears in all three poetic works; each poem provides a somewhat different aspect of this indigenous ally of the Spaniards. In *Iguaniona*, Guacanagarí is portrayed not so much as a political traitor as a cultural one. He allows the *arijuna* (Spaniard) to “eat the sacred mango” (58); this angers the gods and puts in effect a prophecy of destruction. The play actually has a second traitor, who remains anonymous; it is not clear why this person informs the Spaniards of impending attack by Guarionex and other leaders. At any rate, Angulo Guridi’s work leaves betrayal on the side-lines and instead gives a nuanced treatment of the vulnerability of patriots.

Ureña’s “Anacaona” gives a diachronic view of Guacanagarí. We read about the *cacique* of Marién in cantos VI, VIII, and XIII. He forms a fast friendship with the foreigners, and offers them the best of everything. The alliance is said to be based on mutual self-interest, “vivísimo interés” (186). Rather than call him a traitor outright, the text describes Guacanagarí from the outset as a person with some innate character traits:

Alma débil, indolente,  
que del fuerte la altivez  
no comprende ni conoce;  
y del huésped en la sien  
su corona deposita  
con ingenua candidez. (186)

A weak and indolent soul,  
who does not know or understand  
the arrogance of the strong;  
and on the temple of the guest  
he deposits his crown  
with ingenuous innocence.

Like the indigenous people as a whole, “the family of Marién” is “incautious” (“incauta”), and goes along with their leader’s plan (187). Of course, this tribe is also described as “generous,

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21 In the third canto, one reads that the “incautious flock” forgot about the prophecy of its own destruction: “[…] y el augurio pavoroso / olvida la grey incauta” (183). The Indian is also incautious in exchanging gifts with the strangers: “Y él, incauto, los recibe [los dones] / lleno de gozo inocente / y en cambio rico presente / le vuelve con grato afán” (185).
without duplicity” and ready to offer “blind faith” to those who will become “tyrants” (187). The cacique and his band are as much victims of their own naiveté as they are of the untrustworthy, greedy Spaniards. As the story advances, Guacanagarí and his people aid the Spaniards when Caonabo attacks their settlement, La Navidad (190-191). Caonabo wounds Guacanagarí and burns down his village, and the latter appeals to Columbus for protection from his belligerent neighbor (197-198). In the end, the Spaniards turn against the marienses, and Guacanagarí wanders into the wilderness, overcome with grief and remorse (239). The poetic voice insists even at the point on the cacique’s weaknesses and his subjects’ generosity.

In the poem “Flor de Palma, o la fugitiva de Borinquen” by Pérez, Guacanagarí is described as “the unconscious executioner of his race, the weak monarch, surrendered to the foreigner’s covetousness” (“El inconsciente verdugo de su raza, el débil monarca, entregado a la codicia del extranjero,” 204). In fact, he is just as easily manipulated by the “strong will” of the female protagonist (213). Pérez focuses on the climactic repentance of the cacique in the poem “Guacanagarí en las ruinas de Marién.” This piece takes the form of an anguished monologue. Though Guacanagarí describes himself as the “incautious accomplice of the perverse power,” he takes full responsibility for helping to kill his own people. Now he cannot escape his guilt:

Where will I go to hide? Wherever I go

my betrayal follows me. ‘Traitor!’ the doleful voice

of that rubble shouts at me;

‘traitor!’ says the wind that stirs the jungle . . .”

(135, sic)²²

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²² The complete passage reads: “La tumba con horror me rechaza; / todo lo mancha con mi impuro aliento; / mi nombre es la ignominia de mi raza; / mi existencia es un cruel remordimiento … ¿Adonde iré a ocultarme? Por doquiera / me sigue mi traición. ‘¡Traidor!’ me grita / la voz de esos escombros lastimera; / ‘¡traidor!’ el viento que la selva agita . . .”
Max Henríquez Ureña notes that contemporary readers of this poem would probably have seen a “parallel between Guacanagarí and President Santana, who carried out the annexation to Spain, destroying the Republic that already existed, and who died defeated by his compatriots” (286). One could conjecture that anti-Santana feelings colored characterizations of Guacanagarí in this poem, and of Guarionex at the beginning of Iguaniona. In the latter case, it is interesting that Guatiguana tells the ruler that he should have consulted his people before making the treaty. Guarionex defends his right to make decisions unilaterally (17).

This discussion is reminiscent of Pedro Santana’s imposition of the annexation on the Dominican people. Moya Pons relates that Santana secretly informed the military officers of the negotiations and expected them to enforce support for and compliance with the annexation (341). Juan Bosch appears to harbor some of those resentments when he writes that Santana and others of his livestock-producing class “saw the Dominicans as a thing, and not as a people,” and therefore, felt justified in their authoritarianism (200). It is important to point out that like the Guarionex of Iguaniona, Santana felt that he was doing the right thing in submitting the country to Spain. Perhaps, like Guacanagarí in the poems, the president acted out of self-interest, expecting Spain to honor and strengthen his political position (Moya Pons 344). Perhaps like these indigenous leaders, he was not willing to believe that the Spaniards would exploit and mistreat him and his people.

The similarities between Santana and the characters of the poem suggest that the poetry served as a medium for reinterpreting recent and distant history. These writings can be read as vehicles for the construction of certain national characteristics. In other words, the poem may be a way of saying that there have always been certain traitorous elements in the Dominican nation, even before it was a nation.
The figure of the traitor in these poems may very well elevate the hero-patriots, by standing in contrast to them, as Alcántara writes in reference to Guacanagarí, Caonabo, and Guarionex in the Fantasías indígenas (21). However, my reading has shown that the traitors and patriots complement each other with their similarities. They are all in awe of the Spaniards, and even if for a moment, they all have a fantasy of receiving acceptance and respect from the foreigners. They wish to be connected to the Spaniards but not overcome by them. It is as if the patriots and the traitors think their own ways and things are somehow deficient and need a supplement from the exotic and powerful “men from the sky.” This attitude leads the caciques of the poems to trust their own conquerors just enough to be destroyed by them.

Conclusion

The tumultuous events of the nineteenth century profoundly shaped the ways in which the Dominican Republic was discursively constructed as a nation. Domination by Spain and Haiti forced Dominicans to define their own nation in opposition and contrast to these two more powerful nations. Poetry was an especially important medium of discourse about Dominican national identity, for it conveyed normative descriptions of the nation and its Others. Many popular poems about Dominicans relations with Haiti as well as the three major poetic works about the Conquest all inscribe vulnerability and weakness into their definition of the Dominican nation. By defining the nation as constantly under threat of military attack or cultural influence, this nineteenth-century poetry transforms its loyal citizens into heroic patriots who never tire of defending their fatherland and their culture. Ironically, the poems also admit that not all citizens conform perfectly to this image of patriotism. Thus, the nation is vulnerable even to the decisions of its citizens. Still, as the national anthem suggests, the glory of Dominican weakness is the promise that it can be overcome over and over again.
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