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**REMAKING IDENTITY, UNMAKING NATION:
HISTORICAL RECOVERY AND THE RECONSTRUCTION
OF COMMUNITY IN *IN THE TIME OF THE BUTTERFLIES*
AND *THE FARMING OF BONES***

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Postcolonial texts that contest the notion of history often do so by destabilizing history at a very fundamental level, recognizing that it represents one discourse through which we come to know the past. When histories are related from the perspectives of women, the process of historical rehabilitation further entails a redefinition of the parameters that determine national identity because of the traditional exclusion of women from these collectivities. In addressing this exclusion, writers often attend to the ways in which gender has been deployed in formations of the nation. Within the last several years, feminist analyses of gender and national identity have demonstrated that, in constructions of the nation, women are often left out of the national collectivity in that they are denied any national agency. That is, in the gendered divide between public and private that characterizes national structures, women are confined within the private space, and their contributions to public formations of the nation are often ignored or erased from history. Nations are frequently conceived as masculinized entities, as Benedict Anderson's widely recognized idea of the nation as an imagined community and "fraternity" indicates.¹ Further, the nation form is revealed to be a legacy of imperialism because the masculinization of the nation is reproduced with each imperial encounter. In her discussion of the nation, Lois A. West emphasizes that in colonial struggles, women are perceived as the booty of the male conquerors and as the symbols of the land "caught in the struggles between men, not as powerful symbols in their own right" (xviii). Anne McClintock further contends that national communities often rely on the male recognition of identity (that is, national power is recognized as male power) and the interchange of power between men. The nation as such is formed through homosocial bonds and through exchanges of power between men (353–4). In imperial situations, women become the objects of exchange, evidenced in processes like the feminization and eroticization of the land and of the colonial subject. Consequently, they are constructed into symbols of the nation, themselves unrecognized as active participants.² Although women have engaged in nationalist struggles in many ways, they are consistently perceived as secondary to men, their efforts hidden or invalidated.

Women's contemporary texts that attempt to rewrite imperial history not only reconstruct collective identity but also redefine the very boundaries of this collectivity, renegotiating the masculinized national identity that is inherited from imperial-

ism. By disrupting accepted notions of community, such texts offer alternative communal definitions at the same time they strive to present an alternative to imperial history. These recoveries re-imagine the national community perpetuated by imperialism, thus often rejecting a male-defined nationalism and the collective identity it produces.

Julia Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* and Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones* are two such texts that, paired, cogently demonstrate the significance of locating new methods of defining national community. Written about two countries constituting one island cleaved by colonizations and joined briefly by United States occupation, these important texts converge on several levels. Both focus on the conflicts that arise in women's involvement within nationalist struggles. The texts investigate and critique the very structures that produce patriarchal nationalism. In the process they reveal the ways in which gender is necessary to national identity, delineating how this nationalism often relies on the subordination of women to men and the gendered division between public and private spheres. Illustrating historical events through the eyes of women, their texts do not simply include women in their native histories or in the forging of national consciousness to thus "recover" their voices. Rather, through demonstrating how gender plays into constructions of national collectivities, they articulate the ways in which the boundaries of imagined communities may be radically revised without reproducing them.

For each author, the re-envisioning of national collectivity is executed with some ambivalence. Although Alvarez's and Danticat's interventions in United States history may locate a new communal definition for their respective countries, both remain communities constructed from the outside. As immigrants to America (Alvarez moved to America at age ten from the Dominican Republic; Danticat at age twelve from Haiti), Alvarez and Danticat deliver their critique of national collectivity from positions of exile. Because these authors write from the United States, what they each present is a compromised perspective on collectivity, one that is inclusive of those "at home" as well as of those in America—other migratory subjects like themselves.³ Both American immigrants, they migrate between two cultures. Their positioning is thus crucial in any analysis of the collective identity they seek to refashion as they possess their own biases relative to their location.

The authors' positions between cultures become particularly relevant when considering that both novels were originally written in English and later translated into other languages—*In the Time of the Butterflies* into Spanish in 1997 and *The Farming of Bones* into French in 1999. These two novels were originally targeted for an English-speaking American readership. Alvarez's and Danticat's choice of English remains a consideration in interrogating the knowledges that are produced by their texts and the power relations that are at work in their historical re-envisioning.

Both texts also are novels that present fictionalized accounts of historical events occurring during the thirty-one-year rule of Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo: Alvarez's novel relates the history of the Mirabal sisters who were assassinated in 1960 under this dictatorship, and Danticat's work deals with the 1937 massacre of Haitians under the same regime. By utilizing a nonlinear narrative style to demonstrate the many perspectives of history, both novels question the personal and

political investments of history writing and its connections to the construction of national identity.

In interrogating the methods and motives of remembering the past and in revising how histories are recovered, both novels also endeavor to recreate a collective identity for their respective nations and therefore revise the ways in which community has been formed under Trujillo's leadership. In doing so, they critique the patriarchal Trujillo regime and the nationalism it perpetuated. However, an analysis of the content of these narratives, the reformulation of collective identity, delineates how the two works diverge and hence how decolonizing historical recoveries with similar overt aims can produce significantly different forms of knowledge. Alvarez's text puts forth an ideal of a collectivity that crosses gender, race, and class lines, one that counters and critiques masculinized imagined communities; however, her revision of *community* tends to utilize the very masculinist imperialist discourse it seeks to undermine. Although it exposes the limitations of the national collectivity under Trujillo's regime, her text ultimately reifies its patriarchal nationalism by resorting to gendered national dichotomies. Danticat's text as well critiques the ways in which collectivity was historically shaped along gender and race lines in Haiti during Trujillo's rule of the Dominican Republic. Yet her formulation of communal self-definition remains ultimately ambivalent, avoiding the reification of imperial paradigms. It instead gestures toward a collective identity formed through shared experiences as one alliance alternative to national solidarity.

A look at the nations' brief but shared histories with the United States lends insight into how Alvarez's and Danticat's efforts serve on one level as responses to American imperialist views of their native countries. Both the Dominican Republic and Haiti, like other island regions targeted for imperial activity, were subject to paternalistic intervention by the United States, which identified the nations as sites of dangerous disorder and then sought to rescue and redeem them from themselves. Yet the histories of the two countries are inextricably bound together through their shared geography; they comprise the island of Hispaniola, a single Caribbean island split between two nations. Their history as two nations begins with the island's first division into Spanish and French colonies in 1697. The separation of the eastern from the western side of Hispaniola fostered an unstable and often volatile relationship between the nations, fueled by the racial tensions arising from the importation of African slaves for labor in the early 1500s. Both Haiti and the Dominican Republic were targeted by the United States prior to World War I, primarily because of Hispaniola's strategic position near the Panama Canal. Concerned with a possible takeover by Germany and the threat to American hegemony in the Caribbean-Gulf region, the United States occupied Haiti from 1915 to 1934 and the Dominican Republic from 1916 to 1924. The stated purpose for military occupation at the time, however, was the maintenance of order because of internal political instability, a danger to the United States because of Hispaniola's proximity to its own shores. During occupation, the military governments established by the United States dealt with each nation separately.⁴ Although the United States was not responsible for the creation of the Haitian and Dominican nations, it carried on the legacy of previous colonizers in preserving their dual identities. Despite their control over the entire

island, the United States maintained the separation between Haiti and the Dominican Republic for reasons of political stability and because of each nation's economic debt to their separate creditors.⁵ The occupations thus continued to prohibit any possibility of alliances across national lines that began with Spanish and French colonizations, despite the common experience of United States intervention and its unwelcome response from both sides. Both periods of occupation were met with nationalist resistance even though for the Dominican Republic, United States intervention was initially viewed as necessary to ease its increasing foreign debt. Atrocities committed by the United States-supported military governments earned the United States criticism from the international community, and eventually led to its withdrawal from Hispaniola. Although in relative terms America's history with Haiti and the Dominican Republic was short lived in comparison with their colonizers, the United States left its indelible imprint on each nation, and would later revisit both nations to intervene again.

The novels function as significant engagements with American imperial history, responding to constructions of the authors' native countries as centers of moral and political contamination. Although not foregrounded, the first American invasion of Haiti and the Dominican Republic haunts each text; the 1915 and 1916 invasions are referred to with bitterness and fear, and the violence the characters face in the present recalls that encountered during the American occupation. Even though both the Mirabals' assassination and the massacre of the cane workers occur after U.S. occupation, the American military presence serves as a backdrop to these events; its legacy is profoundly felt. The texts themselves refer only tangentially to American intervention; however, these references suggest an American presence defined by and against Haitian and Dominican national identities.⁶ Both texts point to a looming 'Americanist' presence as a point of contrast against which Haitian and Dominican self-definition becomes reworked.⁷ Both narratives attempt to reconceptualize a national identity independent of their previous colonizer and of American imperialism. However, *In the Time of the Butterflies* ultimately reaffirms imperialist notions of the Dominican Republic by responding to the United States presence in the same terms that it attempts to contest it. Although it envisions a national community that allows feminism and nationalism to coexist, it essentially reifies masculinized collectivity and hence reproduces imperialist discourse. Danticat's more ambivalent stance, by contrast, disrupts the parameters of Haiti's national collectivity, exposing the political and personal investments of patriarchal nationalism without reproducing its dynamics.

In the postscript of her novel *In the Time of the Butterflies*, Alvarez explains her desire to relate the Dominican legend of the Mirabal sisters, three revolutionaries who were assassinated by Rafael Trujillo's henchmen while returning from visiting their husbands in prison. Although she relates national history, she explicitly destabilizes history as a discourse. She expresses skepticism about the validity of historical discourse, acknowledging its inability to capture fully the "truth" behind events. Her text, a realist national epic, consists of four narrative voices, each representing one of the Mirabal sisters. The novel is framed and supported throughout with the present-day story of Dedé, the sole surviving sister. Dedé's current situation as curator of the

Mirabals' museum and her encounter with an American woman who wants to record the story of her family serve as points of reference for the past that is reconstructed throughout the novel. Her narrative, which moves between past and present, is alternated with those of her sisters, all of whom relate the family's growing involvement in the revolution, their incarceration, their return home, and their final days leading up to the murder of Patria, Minerva, and Mate. The multivocal narrative eloquently conveys how this past is constituted by many different concurrent and often contradictory stories. The author performs important work in revisiting this history, yet she never claims to be a historian. Alvarez in fact suggests the contrary: "A novel is not, after all, a historical document, but a way to travel through the human heart." The character of Dedé recognizes the ambivalence of history when she mentions the multiple tales told by alleged witnesses to the crime and when, speaking of the trial of the murderers, she alludes to the "several versions" that came out of these trials (302). But fiction as well remains an inadequate record of the past. Although Alvarez relates historical events, she does not provide definitive conclusions—we never know and can never know the events that led up to the deaths of the Mirabal sisters. She also asserts that the sisters of *In the Time of the Butterflies* are neither "fact" nor "legend," but pure inventions of her own imagination. As each character's individual recollection of the events represents one of many memories, the text itself represents one story among many tales about the past. But Alvarez's disclaimer invites an interrogation into the politics behind yet another retelling.

The legend is one already familiar to Dominicans as well as Latin Americans. As Alvarez states, the day of their death, November 25, is observed in many Latin American countries as the International Day Against Violence Towards Women. Yet she claims that her purpose for revisiting the myth is not to retell the same story to her fellow Dominicans, but to relate it for the first time to her fellow Americans. Her aim is at once didactic, to inform "English-speaking readers" about the Mirabals and to provide them as "models for women fighting against injustices of all kinds." But her purpose is also recuperative. As she explains to Dominicans "separated by language from the world [she has] created," she means to convey to "North Americans" the extent of the suffering the nation endured under Trujillo, in other words, to give voice to a history little-known outside of the Dominican Republic. Language is therefore a means through which she seeks to "educate" her North American audience about Dominican history. But the primary reason for revisiting a legend well-known to Dominicans is to de-mythologize the legendary heroes that the Mirabals, "wrapped in superlatives and ascended into myth," have become, because "such deification was dangerous, the same god-making impulse that had created our tyrant" (324). Rejecting the construction of women as national symbols, the novel delineates the Mirabals as "ordinary" women, and the men in their lives as "ordinary" men.⁸ In the process it attempts to redefine Dominican national collectivity as a community forged across gender, race, and class lines; the text envisions a community in which women work alongside men as equal agents in nation building. However, in its retelling of the Mirabal tale, *In the Time of the Butterflies* in many ways reproduces the very discourse it seeks to subvert. Alvarez's revision of the patriarchal nationalism of Trujillo to include women ultimately remakes for the Dominican Republic the kind of masculin-

ized collective identity imposed by imperial encounters. By presenting an idealized community between men and women, the novel undermines its endeavor to debunk myth by recreating myth.

Although nationalisms vary in the ways they are defined and maintained, patriarchal nationalisms frequently rely on ideas of the family and domesticity. The family structure with the patriarch at the head offers a paradigm for a national hierarchy, serving as the organizing framework by which a nation is forged and perpetuated. In her analysis of gender and nationalism, Anne McClintock argues that the subordination of women to men and children to adults and the subsequent relegation of both women and children to the domestic sphere point to a "natural" order on which the nation becomes modeled.⁹ The gendered dichotomy between the private and the public restricts women to certain domestic roles with no access to national agency. Under this paradigm, nationalism and feminism are perceived as oft-competing politics that cannot coexist without considerable tension. A woman cannot fight as both a feminist and a nationalist because the latter often requires that she assume supporting and hence subservient roles to men in the cause. As a result, women have often been told to set aside the "women question" for the nationalist agenda.¹⁰

In the Time of the Butterflies attempts to revise this domestication of national collectivity, breaking down the gendered division between the private and the public. Alvarez's vision of a Dominican collectivity includes women as active and, more importantly, equal participants with men. Her text contests notions that confine women to supportive and nurturing relationships to men, illustrating how community can be accomplished despite the disruption of gender roles. *In the Time of the Butterflies* ventures to offer an integrated perspective on the seemingly divergent politics of feminism and nationalism. A national epic written as a family saga, the text also endeavors to collapse the public/private dichotomy, illustrating how the Mirabals' political activism is nationally oriented and personally motivated. The Mirabals are meant to serve as "models" for women and to inspire them to fight for "injustices of all kinds" by showing how women have participated in nation formation. In telling their story as a national epic, Alvarez strives to inform United States readers of an unknown history and to undo the erasure of women's national agency in history. However, the novel's engagement with the terms that it seeks to redefine and its subsequent creation of women as national symbols ultimately undermine any endeavor to reconceptualize Dominican collectivity along anything other than the gendered boundaries established by patriarchal nationalism.

Each of the Mirabal sisters aligns herself with the liberation struggle for different reasons. Each perceives that she is faced with the choice between "romance" or "revolution," but the novel attempts to demonstrate that a choice need not be made. The text offers an alternative to what is exposed as a dilemma constructed by a male-defined nationalism designed to perpetuate gender difference and keep women in their place. Yet this alternative reinforces the difference between romance and revolution, in fact reifying the gendered public/private split. Masculinized nationalism dictates that women must sacrifice their homes and families to actively engage in the nationalist cause. In this sense it relegates women to the private sphere, establishing a gendered divide between the domestic and the political. By positioning national

agency against womanhood, masculinized nationalism reifies masculinized power. *In the Time of the Butterflies* shows how women and men are denied equal access to national agency despite their efforts to combat these fundamental differences. McClintock asserts that “[d]espite many nationalists’ ideological investment in the idea of popular *unity*, nations have historically amounted to the sanctioned institutionalization of gender *difference*. No nation in the world gives women and men the same access to the rights and resources of the nation-state” (353–4). Illustrating that conflicts inevitably arise when romance collides with revolution, the text serves to reinstate the patriarchal nation form that denies both genders this same access. Patria, Minerva, and Dedé find that their involvement in the nationalist struggle demands their break from conventional gendered roles and the emasculation of patriarchal figures. While Patria and Dedé must defy the wishes of their husbands, who believe, as Pedrito tells Patria, that their “first responsibility” is to their children, husbands, and homes, Minerva finds herself confronting her father and challenging her role as a daughter (166). With the exception of Mate, who falls in love with a revolutionary first and then the revolution, Minerva and her sisters are consistently faced with choices that involve sacrifices of home and hearth. The novel confirms that their participation in the national liberation struggle inevitably entails the breakdown of the domestic sphere. The novel indicates that women can contribute to nationalist endeavors; however, their participation basically involves the reordering of their existing roles. In other words, despite their engagement with the nationalist cause, they are always confined within the domestic sphere to the supportive roles of wife and mother. Men, on the other hand, are not confronted with the same decisions. Although the stakes in their participation are ultimately the same, men are automatically implicated in national endeavors by their gender.

Despite the sisters’ resistance to their gender roles, the struggle also draws men and women together. According to the revised Dominican collectivity that the novel envisions, men and women have equal access to national agency. Instead of presenting “romance” and “revolution” as oppositional, the novel portrays them as contingent, suggesting that nationalist struggle can lead to improved understanding between men and women when the “women question” is taken into consideration. In fact, the shared struggle brings husbands and wives together. Although the sisters’ refusal to submit to male-defined gender roles may initially cause strife in their marriages, the novel suggests that the coexistence of nationalist and feminist politics ultimately ensures a more equitable relationship between the sexes. When Dedé and her husband are compelled to join their family in saving the prisoners, Dedé notes that after confronting Jaimito, the dynamics between them shifts for the better: “Their lives, which had almost gone their separate ways a week ago, were now drawing together again . . . they were embarking on their most passionate project to date, one they must not fail at like the others. Saving the sisters” (194). *In the Time of the Butterflies* thus envisions a national politics that challenges existing notions of gender power, one that seems even stronger than a male-defined collectivity.

The novel presents Minerva as a feminist; her views are representative of one extreme, and Dedé’s conservatism represents the other. In illustrating varying degrees of activism, *In the Time of the Butterflies* tries to show that women have choices

within the nationalist cause. Nationalism, the text contends, can serve as the source of community among women, because it eventually brings all four sisters together. Despite their differences, the Mirabals find themselves unified against the Trujillo regime. The text illustrates that nationalism can cross class and race lines as well. In prison, the Mirabal sisters are incarcerated with sixteen other Dominican women. Mate writes of her initial fear of being confined with the other cellmates, “nonpoliticals” who include prostitutes, thieves, and murderers (228). But she later looks to them all as “the girls,” a community in which class and race divisions are discouraged or ignored. With Mate’s dismissal of these differences, Alvarez essentially glosses over class and race issues, erasing such divisions to give primacy to gender as a unifying force. In prison, the sisters locate a collectivity of women forged through common struggle, discovering that the “real connection between people” is not race, culture, or class, but “love among us women” (239).

Their prison experience and the sisters’ experiences in their homes hint at the redefinition of a masculinized collectivity alternately as a community of women and as a nation in which women and men share equal participation. Yet such collectivities are always located within the confines of a masculinized nation. Rather than being agents of nationalism, the Mirabals become subjects of patriarchy. Despite their active participation in nation building, their efforts are eventually subsumed under patriarchal nationalism. Although Alvarez’s text itself serves to make their efforts visible by retelling their story to North Americans, the narrative in effect effaces their contributions to the Dominican nation because it ultimately recasts the sisters into traditional roles within the private sphere, reinstating gendered national dichotomies. Despite their discovery of a women’s community, the Mirabals return to their roles as wives, mothers, and homemakers upon their release from prison. Despite the union of husbands and wives under the cause, once the revolution is over, the family disintegrates—the husbands go their several ways and the remaining sister, Dedé, is left to care for the Mirabal home and museum. She remains a divorcee with the national burden of the past. The text thus essentially admits women to an already established national community rather than a newly reconstituted one. That is, it reveals that women’s engagement in the nation is always conditional, hinging on the sanction of men. *In the Time of the Butterflies* succeeds in stripping the Mirabals of the very national agency it attempts to restore, reinventing them into static symbols of the nation. What is then refashioned is a collectivity that mirrors the patriarchal nation that ultimately denies women complete and free access to national agency. Although it re-envisioned a community in which nation building is shared between genders and across races and classes, it renders the Mirabals as symbols that are ultimately bereft of national agency.

The story assumes mythic proportions because of its rendering of the women into larger-than-life ideals. Rather than humanizing them, the text succeeds in making them more abstract. Significant fissures concerning the sisters’ prison experience create abstract heroes instead of “ordinary” women. The result is a national myth that once again relegates women into national symbols, despite their participation in the rebellion. Although the Mirabals are confined to the SIM prison for seven months, Mate’s diary is the only narrative that is told directly from the prison cell. Her diary

lends insight into life in the SIM prison, but it is a peculiarly G-rated version of prison life that sheds little light on the horrors the Mirabals endured. It is peculiar not because it is told in a naïve manner, as this is characteristic of Mate, but because of the significant and literal gaps in the account. Although Alvarez claims to write the Mirabals' story to convey the reality of their involvement, the details she does provide fail to convey the extent of the abuse the sisters endured under Trujillo. The conditions under which they are kept are deplorable, but prison life is generally idealized. The other inmates express their initial resentment toward the Mirabals because of their class status, but the feeling is quickly replaced by mutual love and respect and a harmonious community among women. Mate innocently relates the seedier side of prison life, the "dirty talk" among the girls (235), and the sexual harassment by the guards. Yet her accounts of the interrogations she undergoes are glossed over; she describes herself as being asked "gruff questions" and ignoring "a bunch of lewd comments I won't bother to repeat here" (232). Even her most horrific prison experience, her torture in La 40, is described in a detached manner that renders her experience sentimentalized.

More important, the narrative of the torture is the only missing portion of the diary that resurfaces and is later revealed to the reader. Presented to the Peace Committee of the Organization of American States, the pages are used to gain the sisters their freedom. But significant gaps which hint at other atrocities remain, and details are never provided. Four other excerpts from Mate's prison diary remain blank spaces for the reader. In their place Alvarez inserts the enigmatic phrase "[pages torn out]" (sic). Yet the gaps point to other unspoken horrors, as they follow ominous lines from Mate like "What a pity I missed seeing my little girl! But that loss seems small now compared to what has happened" (241). Several other missing sections appear to indicate the possibility that Minerva was somehow punished, because these spaces follow her incidents of insurrection: the refusal to relinquish her crucifix and her defiant reaction to learning of hers and Mate's absurd prison sentence. The suspicion of some violence against her is fueled by the marked change that comes over Minerva after her prison stay. She suffers from anxiety attacks, admits to being "frail" (259), and experiences a sense of detachment from the "calm, courageous *compañera*" she once was (267). Through this narrative technique, Alvarez is able to convey the inability to recount all aspects of the past, to demonstrate that history is ultimately unknowable. The use of the missing pages validates her own disclaimer about her novel's historical accuracy; because she did not have access to all the information about the Mirabals, she could not "adequately record" the details of their lives (324). But the result is a sense of mystery that renders the women more legend than flesh and blood. By leaving out details that would humanize their story, the text creates the Mirabals as exempla. In rewriting the Mirabals' tale to replace their legend, Alvarez thus undermines her own claim to de-mythologization. What she establishes in place of the Mirabals of fact or legend is another national myth. In presenting the Mirabals as "models" for oppressed women, she in fact proposes a "model" collectivity to which Dominicans can aspire. The collectivity she envisions thus becomes itself mythic, because its participants are represented as symbols rather than "ordinary" women and men.

The particular investments of such a reconstruction of national myth are revealed when considering Alvarez's position as a feminist and migratory subject now located in the United States. By retelling the Mirabals' story with the intent to give hope to "women fighting against injustices of all kinds," the text seeks to debunk not only the myth of the sisters, but also those myths created by cultures of imperialism. In its endeavors to show the Dominican Republic as a "progressive" nation, this view essentially reifies American imperial hegemony by reinstating an imperial divide between the Dominican Republic and the United States. This becomes clear when considering the character that the novel constructs as the *gringa dominicana* who returns to the Dominican Republic to learn the story of the Mirabals. Dedé recognizes her as another "mythologizer," and the text establishes her as an uninformed Westerner, and more importantly, as a "typical" American woman, a "thin waif of a woman," with mistaken notions of the Dominican Republic despite her own Dominican heritage (6–7). The woman, a one-dimensional character known only as the "interview woman," arrives with little understanding of the culture she is trying to investigate. She appears as a woman whose position as an American renders her "outside of things" in the Dominican Republic (4). The novel constructs the interview woman against Dedé to demonstrate how misinformed American conceptions of the Dominican Republic are, as the text suggests when mentioning the perceptions by "American women who think of this as an 'underdeveloped' country where Dedé should still be riding around in a carriage with a mantilla over her hair" (172). The *gringa dominicana* serves as the conduit through which Alvarez delivers her critique of U.S. imperialist attitudes. The text instead conveys how the republic has "developed," that it is in fact far from the days of Trujillo. As Lío proudly reminds Dedé, the Dominican Republic is currently a better country because of the Mirabals. The country is prospering as "the playground of the Caribbean," with "Free Zones going up everywhere, the coast a clutter of clubs and resorts" (318).

The text delineates Dedé as a "modern woman," a Subaru-driving divorcee who balances her job as a successful insurance salesperson with her role as caretaker of the museum dedicated to her sisters and of her own home (6). Dedé's success at work has enabled her to travel the world, and she exhibits a certain level of sophistication, having smuggled an orchid from Hawaii into her homeland and having been propositioned by a "smart-looking Canadian man" in Barcelona (172). The novel's clear attempts to revise stereotypical assumptions of Dominicans, particularly Dominican women, emerges in a conversation between the interviewer and Dedé, who responds defensively when asked about her role in the revolution:

Dedé shakes her head. "Back in those days, we women followed our husbands." Such a silly excuse. After all, look at Minerva. "Let's put it this way," Dedé adds. "I followed my husband. I didn't get involved."

"I can understand that," the interview woman says quickly as if protecting Dedé from her own doubts. "It's still true in the States. I mean, most women I know, their husband gets a job in Texas, say, well, Texas it's going to be."

"I've never been to *Tejas*," Dedé says absently. Then, as if to redeem herself, she adds, "I didn't get involved until later."
(171-2)

The narrative thus deflates assumptions that Dominican women are subject to the *macho* culture of Spanish patriarchy that disallows their free will. It also pokes fun at American women who have little knowledge of the world beyond United States borders. But at the same time, it succeeds in re-colonizing Dominican women by holding them to an American, New World standard of "progressive" womanhood. The interview woman's reference to "most women in the United States" is meant to reassure Dedé. She points to a "universal" behavior shared by many women, at least women in the United States and the Dominican Republic. However, the text itself critiques this claim in stating that the American's comment is made "as if" it would make a difference. Further, Dedé's distracted response is made "as if" to defend her choice and save herself from a feminist critique. Yet despite this critique, the novel represents Dedé as a modern woman because she has the necessary accoutrements that come with middle-class privilege (a car, insurance sales position, travel opportunities) and because she can balance a career and a home. Further, the exchanges between the women throughout the novel center on the refutation of Dominican women's "backwardness"; the text attempts to prove that Dominican women are just as progressive as American women.

The interactions between Dedé and the *gringa dominicana* bring to light yet another way in which the text itself reinforces existing imperial power relations. For Alvarez's text, language is a relatively inconsequential barrier between Dominicans and Americans, as is evidenced in the ease with which the language differences between the interviewer and Dedé are surmounted. Although Dedé makes note of the American's awkward use of Spanish in phrases like "I am so compromised by the openness of your warm manner," the two women are able to relate easily to each other despite their linguistic and cultural differences (7). Yet as Alvarez's stated choice of English for English-speaking readers as noted earlier suggests, the text itself to some extent reveals an internalization of imperial power relations. By giving primacy to the English language and to a United States readership, Alvarez reaffirms American hegemony. Although it can be argued that Alvarez's text occupies a space in between the United States and the Dominican Republic and that it critiques both nations through its portrayal of the two women, it does little to level the playing field between nations. Rather than collapsing the boundaries between America and the Dominican Republic, *In the Time of the Butterflies* thus serves to reinstate the division, using American woman as a yardstick against which Dominican women should be measured and privileging American culture over Dominican culture.

In the Time of the Butterflies remains a significant intervention in American imperial history because of its attempt to recover local Dominican history and to foreground women's roles in this history. Yet its problematic rendering of Dominican collectivity ultimately echoes imperial history and the power relations it produces. Like *In the Time of the Butterflies*, *The Farming of Bones* exposes patriarchal nationalism's dependence on gender. However, Danticat's novel deconstructs the terms of collectivity to

expose the limitations of national solidarity and to show alternatives that address its erasure and omissions of alliances across gender, race, class and other subjectivities. Like Alvarez's text, *The Farming of Bones* also articulates a concern throughout about the "truth" behind history. The story of the Haitian massacre is told by Amabelle Desir, a young woman born in Haiti and raised in the Dominican Republic by a Dominican family who takes her in after her parents drown. She tells of her last days in the Dominican Republic before the massacre, her separation from her lover, Sebastien, her forced migration to Haiti, her new life there, and her brief return to the Dominican side. Amabelle's narrative of the massacre and the events surrounding it is alternated with poignant memories of her parents, her dreams, and her conversations with Sebastien. Past and present, "reality" and imagination, are therefore intertwined to convey the uncertainty of the events and memories that make up history. This recognition of history's ambivalence is also represented through the assumed deaths of Sebastien and his sister, both never verified nor explained completely. After the war, Amabelle goes searching for the truth behind their disappearance, only to confront more unanswered questions. Amabelle's return to the Dominican Republic reveals the absence of a single narrative not only of Sebastien's disappearance and the border war, but also of a larger history. Hearing from Valencia one story of how *perejil* becomes the word used to test the nationality of Haitians, Amabelle thinks, "Perhaps there was no story that could truly satisfy. I myself didn't know if that story was true or even possible, but as the señora had said, there are many stories. And mine too is only one" (305).

As the text reveals, history is a tale authorized by those in power, and for this reason, it is always suspect. Following the war, victims and their families are invited by government officials to relate their stories. The irony is that the victims must show proof of their suffering, "papers" that indicate the loss of a family member or their own victimization. Although their mutilated bodies clearly evidence their struggle, without "proof" their persecution remains unacknowledged. Their experiences are thus invalidated unless related to someone in power, a "civilian face to concede that what they had witnessed and lived through did truly happen" (236). Yet this undermining of history problematizes Danticat's own role as storyteller. She herself becomes this "face" by putting the story of the sugar cane workers on paper. Her very action reveals not only her privileged position as a writer but the inherent contradiction within the novel. History is not entirely knowable but it must be related so that it can become known, so that it can be proved that it "did truly happen." The text is a recovery of a lost history, yet it remains a conflicted history. Yves, Sebastien's friend who escapes with Amabelle, recognizes this problem in relating the past, explaining to Amabelle why he refuses to testify to "newspapers and radio men" and others who would authorize his tale: "I know what will happen. You tell the story, and then it's retold as they wish, written in words you do not understand, in a language that is theirs, and not yours" (246). Danticat's novel, like Amabelle's tale, represents "only one" story, and it is one told in a language that is "not yours."

The text self-reflexively points to the fact that this story of the sugar cane workers is retold as Danticat herself wishes, in a language that is hers and also ironically in a language of imperialism. The French translation of *The Farming of Bones* would not

appear until 1999. Like Alvarez's text, this novel is directed at a United States English-speaking readership, and its overt motivation is to retell a history to those unfamiliar with it. Unlike Alvarez's text, however, *The Farming of Bones* recognizes the significance of its use of the English language. Danticat's choice of English serves as one source of ambivalence for her in the retelling of the Haitian massacre because it is not the *Kreyól* language of those persecuted. Yves' comment hints at this problem in relating the past, and Danticat's own discomfort re-emerges in her acknowledgments, where she says to her mother, "Yes, I do always remember that these stories—and all the others—are yours to tell and not mine" (312). Yet it is only through this reinvention that Danticat is able to criticize the nationalism that fueled the massacre and that continues to adversely influence Haitian–Dominican relations. By relating this history to shed light on the contemporary plight of migrant cane workers, she critiques and revises the national identity that such history produced and that is today reproduced. Her undermining of history is an admission that as her story is only one, there are many others to be told, including those from the Dominicans who themselves lived through the struggle. She thus avoids completely blaming the Dominican people, instead performing a critique of the patriarchal nationalism exercised by the Trujillo dictatorship. In addition to her overt motivation of advocating the rights of sugar cane workers and testifying to their struggle, Danticat's retelling of Haitian history reveals how masculinized nationalism perpetuates the rift between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. As it seeks to reframe history itself, the text attempts to reformulate a communal identity based on shared experiences, thus undermining the disavowal of community beyond national borders. By exposing nationalism's prohibition of collective alliances across national lines and thus questioning the division between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, *The Farming of Bones* endeavors to offer an alternative to a collectivity perpetuated by imperialism.

This alternative is revealed as the novel exposes how gender plays in the construction of national community. The text compels us to think about how gender is implicated in nationalist struggles through perhaps the most startling reminder of the animosity with which Haiti greeted the United States occupation, Man Rapadou's murder of her husband. It also reveals that for women, nationalism binds together family, nation, and self. To prevent her husband from betraying his fellow Haitians to the Americans, Man Rapadou mixes rat poison and ground glass into his favorite meal and serves it to him upon his return from an American prison. She confesses to Amabelle the details of her murderous act, placing national loyalty over wifely duty: "[G]reater than my love for this man was love for my country. I could not let him trade us all, sell us to the Yankis" (277). The murder signals the ultimate subversion of patriarchal order, accentuated by its enactment within the privacy of the home, during one of the most domestic of situations. It is not only a testament to her fierce nationalism but also an indication of the potential power invested in those conventionally viewed as powerless in imperial situations. She herself recognizes the threat of female subversion when she hesitates to relate her tale to Amabelle for fear of what she might do to her son. Faced with the choice between husband and country, Man Rapadou chooses Haiti. But in the process, she loses her own identity as a "young, happy woman whose man was by her side, with joy in his eye and honor in his heart" (277–8).

Man Rapadou's transgressive act in the name of Haiti brings to the forefront Señora Valencia's complicity with her husband's participation in the massacre in the name of the Dominican Republic. Although Valencia's response to her role as wife is antithetical to Man Rapadou's, they both are motivated by national allegiance, and their actions reveal gender's centrality to nationalism. The novel delineates nationalism's reliance on gender difference through the relationship between Valencia and her husband, Pico. Although Valencia does not share her husband's political aspirations, she endorses his patriotism, expressing her admiration for such a "good man" (138), one "so full of ambition" (28). By passively serving Pico as the "good wife," never questioning his behavior and supporting his endeavors, Valencia herself fulfills her own national duty. For Trujillo's regime to survive, men like Pico rely on women like Valencia to stand behind them. Valencia also implicitly participates in the national project to eradicate the Haitians from the Dominican side of Hispaniola. The danger of her passivity becomes clear when she defends Pico's actions during the massacre. Stating that he "merely followed the orders he was given" and thus exhibiting his lack of conscience, Valencia succeeds instead in condemning Pico further and herself as well by excusing his violence (300). Her inaction is as nationalistic as Man Rapadou's overtly violent act.

But the text demonstrates that Valencia falls victim to the very politics she supports. As a woman, she occupies a specific place within the nation. The cause confines her to a particular gendered role. Married to a man she barely knows and who spends the majority of his time away on military duty, she is left alone to bear their children, to confront the death of her son, and to raise the surviving twin, Rosalinda. But more important, the one relationship that can provide her with some fulfillment is undermined by Dominican ties. Although race and class differences separate the women, Valencia's national loyalty ultimately prevents her from forming a friendship with Amabelle. Both young women share a common bond, having endured the traumatic loss of their mothers, yet the community between them cannot exist across national alliances. Valencia must choose between her nation and her own needs and desires. Dominican nationalism, determined by institutions like the plantation system, disallows the community of women across national boundaries. In her discussion of the prohibitions of national alliances, V. Spike Peterson argues that patriarchal nationalism fosters the gendered, as well as class and racial, division of power, thus "dividing women from men and *from each other* (insofar as their identification with women as a group is disrupted in favor of identification with the male-defined group)" (7). The patriarchal plantation system and the system of servitude to which Amabelle is subject serve to reinforce cultural, racial, and class differences between Dominicans and Haitians. Amabelle's status as a servant to the Dominican family further guarantees that she and Valencia can never meet as equals. As the privileged position of Juana, the Dominican servant, over Amabelle indicates, however, national ties take primacy over class status. Valencia chooses the older Juana over Amabelle to accompany her after her labor despite Amabelle's help with the delivery because of their common nationality and because she knows that Pico would approve of her choice for this reason. Masculinized Dominican nationalism perpetuates the division between Dominicans and Haitians and discourages relations be-

tween women. Upon her return to Alegría after the massacre, Amabelle confirms that any bond between herself and Valencia is destroyed, that they are now “neither strangers nor friends” (300). Although Valencia sheltered other Haitians during the massacre, her defense of Pico indicates her choice of Dominican loyalty as well as her belief that she is inextricably linked to her husband and her nation: “If I denounce this country, I denounce myself. I would have had to leave the country if I’d forsaken my husband” (299).

This critique of such nationalism stems from the divisiveness that has characterized Haitian–Dominican relations for decades and has resurfaced in recent years in the sugar industry disputes. For more than half a century, the Dominican sugar industry has recruited Haitian workers to meet its labor demands; however, the need for laborers has dramatically decreased as the industry undergoes privatization. As a result, massive deportations of Haitian nationals and some Dominican citizens of Haitian descent have taken place. The protests arising from these deportations and from the “Haitian invasion” have exacerbated an already tenuous relation between the nations and have continued to fuel anti-Haitian sentiments in the Dominican Republic.¹²

The constructedness of national identity is exemplified through Amabelle’s experiences and the process by which she comes to identify herself as Haitian. Brought up on the Dominican side of the island, she has mixed feelings about where she belongs and what she considers “home.” She finds herself torn between her Dominican family—despite her status as their servant—who raised her since age eight, and her Haitian heritage. When Sebastien questions her national loyalty, Amabelle confesses to him, “The señora and her family are the closet to kin I have” (110). Her feeling of kinship arises not only from her membership within the family but also from the feelings and experiences of the loss of a mother and a motherland that she shares with Valencia as well as with Papi. Yet despite these alliances, class, racial, and ultimately, national differences prevent Amabelle from ever being a part of the Duarte family. Danticat’s narrative suggests that it is only after the massacre that Amabelle learns where “home” is, and hence, where her allegiance must lie.

The fluidity of the boundary dividing Haiti and the Dominican Republic and the primacy given to national status becomes painfully clear in the language barrier that separates the nations. The text reveals an awareness of language differences that is noticeably absent in *In the Time of the Butterflies* as becomes clear in her ambivalence about using English to tell the story of Haitians and in her portrayal of the language divide between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Danticat reveals how during Trujillo’s dictatorship, differences of race and class were also superseded by linguistic differences. She retells how Haitians were identified for persecution by a simple test in which they were told to pronounce the Spanish word for *parsley*. The utterance of *pewejil* rather than *perejil* would reveal a *Kreyòl* accent and hence mark that individual as a Haitian national. Trujillo’s choice of *parsley* as the litmus test, as revealed by Valencia’s story, attests to the arbitrariness of national borders. As she says to Amabelle and her young Haitian servant, “On this island, you walk too far and people speak a different language. Their own words reveal who belongs on what side” (304). This arbitrariness is further exemplified by Amabelle when she, Yves, and Tibon face

the Dominican mob at Dajabòn. When the young men demand that they say *perejil*, she realizes that she could pronounce it if given the opportunity:

At that moment I did believe that had I wanted to, I could have said the word properly, calmly, slowly, the way I often asked “Perejil?” of the old Dominican women and their faithful attending granddaughters at the roadside gardens and markets, even though the trill of the *r* and the precision of the *j* was sometimes too burdensome a joining for my tongue. It was the kind of thing that if you were startled in the night, you might forget, but with all my senses calm, I could have said it. But I didn’t get my chance. (193)

Her experience emphasizes the absurdity of how mere pronunciation can divide an island into two opposing sides. The text thus suggests that such a national division itself is arbitrary and dangerous. The two countries have a shared history resulting in a cultural and racial blending that defies national distinctions. Their present situation reveals the result of multiple cultural crossings, and it attests to their former union as an island. This shared identity is rendered through descriptions of Valencia’s twins as representations of the twin nations. Rafi is a seemingly strong, “coconut-cream colored” boy, named after the dictator Trujillo and hence representative of the Dominican Republic. Rosalinda, the “dusky rose” daughter, born with a caul, is linked to the Haitian state through her resemblance to Amabelle (12). Yet Rosalinda’s dark complexion points to the mixing of races between the nations, a “hybridity” that exists despite Papi’s adamant claim that Valencia is of “pure Spanish blood,” descended from the Conquistadores, and evident in Pico’s own dark skin (and, incidentally, in Trujillo’s Haitian ancestry) (18). The relationship between the two countries is further characterized by Doctor Javier, who describes to Amabelle the behavior of the twin infants. Comparing the strength of Rafi with the frailty of Rosalinda, Javier says to Amabelle that “sometimes you have two children born at the same time, one is stillborn but the other one alive and healthy because the dead one gave the other a life transfusion in the womb and in essence sacrificed itself” (19). Although Amabelle finds Javier’s comment strange and misplaced, it suggests an undermining of Dominican hegemony by pointing to the Dominican Republic’s dependency on Haiti, as evidenced in the past by their need for Haitian migrant workers to support their sugar industry. Rafi’s death and Rosalinda’s survival perhaps gesture toward Haiti’s triumph over adversity, but the death of the son also signals a disruption within the existing patriarchy and echoes Man Rapadou’s murder of her husband. Yet Javier’s comment also points to a mutually dependent relationship between the two countries, one that inextricably joins them together. Although it delineates the unjust treatment of the cane workers during Trujillo’s regime, the novel points to the complicity between the nations regarding their labor needs. The novel suggests that although Haiti and the Dominican Republic remain divided, their past and their present reveal that they are essentially one island community, joined by common labor needs as well as commonalities resulting from years of intra-migrations.

Instead of a nationalism that forces women to choose between themselves, their families, and their countries, the text envisions a collective identity that surpasses national boundaries and is instead based on mutual struggle and endurance. *The Farming of Bones* points to the importance of shared experience as a source of community, thus rejecting a collectivity structured along gender, class, or race lines. This is not to say, however, that it ignores the various positionalities of identity, but that it looks for possible alternatives to national collective identity, recognizing its limitations. It is also important to note that the collectivity it envisions remains ultimately ambivalent. The text essentially critiques the kind of national identity imposed by imperialism and proposes a new community, but one that is never fully realized in the novel. Despite the absence of a definitive alternative, *The Farming of Bones* points to the urgent need to rethink the restrictive terms of national identity and to locate instead other alliances that accommodate the intersections of race, gender, and class, as well as experience.

The text encapsulates a collective search for identity, one to replace not only that which was imposed on Haiti by cultures of imperialism but also that which was lost through a history of political struggle. Danticat demonstrates the frustration of the Haitians who cannot understand what has become of their country, their people, and their freedom. In a clinic across the border, Yves and Amabelle meet a group of other Haitians who have escaped the massacre. They express their disappointment in their current president and become nostalgic about “those times we had respect. When Dessalines, Toussaint, Henry, when those men walked the earth, we were a strong nation” (212). As a group, they share memories of lost relatives, first meals, and then the state of Haiti: “They looked back and reordered the moments—second vision, hindsight. What could have been done differently? Whatever became of our national creed, ‘L’union fait la force’? Where was our unity? Where was our strength? And how can we not hate ourselves for the people we left behind?” (212–3). The characters reveal a communal sense of frustration at their loss of community, but rather than dwelling on regret and despair, the text indicates that unity is yet to be found.

Danticat’s alternative to a patriarchal national collectivity that supersedes other alliances is one defined by common struggle. The text indicates how community can be created through shared suffering. Amabelle does not align herself with Haiti until her ordeal in the massacre—after witnessing the atrocities committed by the Dominican soldiers and the mob at Dajabón and undergoing the loss of Sebastien as well as those with whom she and Yves traveled. It is the suffering she endures during the massacre that compels her to return to Haiti, and that joins her to Yves, to Man Rapadou, and to Man Denise. The novel also suggests that it is not some essential quality that binds her to other Haitians, or even a sense of obligation by birth as Sebastien demands of Amabelle, but rather the shared experience of persecution and loss arising from the massacre.

Throughout the novel, Danticat narrates moments in which alliances are formed through common struggle, yet are ultimately threatened because of national, class, gender, and racial differences. One instance of this is the relationship between Amabelle and Valencia, discussed above; this relationship is echoed in the tentative bond formed between Papi and Kongo, a cane worker whose son, Joël, is accidentally

killed by Pico in an automobile accident. But perhaps the most striking instance of the potential of community defined by shared struggle occurs in the brief interchange between Valencia and Kongo. Despite the seriousness of the accident and Pico's apparent unconcern over Joël's death, Kongo does not harbor any anger or vindictive feelings against Pico. His capacity for tremendous compassion is exemplified in his treatment of Valencia upon meeting her. Although a relationship never develops, Kongo and Valencia's encounter neatly encapsulates the collapsing of racial, class, gender, and national differences with the mutual experience of loss. When he and his fellow cane workers are invited by Valencia to share a *cafecito* with her, he gracefully extends his sympathy to Valencia at her loss of Rafi, advising her to appreciate Rosalinda who remains alive. Their grief over their sons joins them together, yet a world of prohibitions separates them from taking advantage of their common sorrow. There is no doubt that Kongo oversteps the boundaries of acceptability and breaks several taboos by walking over to Rosalinda, reaching to touch her, and then kissing Valencia's fingers. Their encounter seems to point to the insurmountable differences between the Haitian sugar cane worker and the wife of his Dominican boss. Yet the scene remains crucial exactly because it suggests what cannot be—a bond between two people with similar experiences. Valencia's seeming regret regarding her actions and Pico's subsequent destruction of the entire tea set used by the workers after he learns of Valencia's gesture indicate how nationalism as well as race and class-governed prejudices can destroy any potential kinship across established boundaries between Valencia and Kongo. However, their brief exchange serves to hint at the possibility of a community formed by shared loss. Although such a community built on shared trauma may not be realistically sustainable, this possibility is continually revisited throughout the text in the experiences of each character who undergoes suffering. Despite the fact that in the end, such a collectivity is never realized on a national scale, the text serves to disrupt the parameters of collectivity and demands that we question how community is formed and ultimately thwarted to the disadvantage of those involved.

Whereas *In the Time of the Butterflies* serves to reinstall the masculinized collective identity it seeks to dismantle by employing the same terms to redefine Dominican community, *The Farming of Bones* questions and critiques the very premises of national collective identity and offers as one possible alternative a community founded on shared experience. Both texts attest to the need not only to construct an identity independent of imperial influences but also to reformulate the parameters of communal identity in the process of historical rehabilitation. Yet Danticat's ambivalent redefinition of community suggests that perhaps what is needed in addition to the destabilization of history and the terms of peoplehood is the undermining of the very idea of collectivity. Because any community involves some form of exclusion, perhaps what is required of decolonizing recoveries is a new method of reading communal identity that in fact re-imagines geographic and psychic boundaries in ways that have yet to be explored. Although *In the Time of the Butterflies* and *The Farming of Bones* produce very different results in redefining collectivity, their efforts bring to the forefront the significance of their projects. That is, in their attempts to locate alternatives to national solidarity, both texts point to the need for multiple and fluid alliances to surmount differences of race, class, gender, nationality, and other subjectivities.

NOTES

1. Anderson identifies the nation as an "imagined political community" in which its members imagine themselves as part of a larger yet finite and sovereign community (6–7). In imagining such a community as a "fraternity," its participants reveal how nations are produced and maintained by male power.
2. Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias indicate the ways in which women have typically participated in nationalist/ethnic processes as follows:
 - (a) as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities; (b) as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups; (c) as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture; (d) as signifiers of ethnic/national difference—as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction, and transformation of ethnic/national categories; (e) as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles. (7)
3. Discussing Afro-Caribbean women writers, Carole Boyce Davies argues that notions of "home" are inextricably bound to the author's multiple positionalities. "Home" is not a singular narrative but multiple narratives infused with each author's identity and her process of negotiating with her gender, sexuality, heritage, and geographical location (113–29).
4. In his study of U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic, Bruce J. Calder writes that "[d]uring the eight years of occupation, a military government attempted to bring a number of fundamental changes to the republic in the hope that its reform by fiat would create a stable and friendly neighbor, and a reliable customer, to the south of the United States." The same proves true for Haiti, as a formal treaty "legalizing" the occupation would give Americans control over the nation's finances, its public works, and its constabulary in order to insure a strong and stable government according to the U.S.' guidelines (Calder, xii, and Heintz and Heintz).
5. For a helpful overview of Dominican–Haitian relations under the United States, see Michele Wucker, *Why the Cocks Fight: Dominicans, Haitians, and the Struggle for Hispaniola*.
6. J. Michael Dash argues that Haitian "historical and cultural self-consciousness" was in large part determined by the nation's interrelations with the United States. He contends that "national identity was a dynamic process intimately related in a tangled and, at times, traumatic relationship that existed from the very beginning with the U.S." Haiti served as a source of mystery, fantasy, and fear for the U.S. Danticat's and Alvarez's reconstruction of national collectivity represents a reversal of this very process (ix).
7. Reading the omissions and exclusions of early American literature, Toni Morrison asserts that Americanness as individualistic, masculine, and autonomous was created against a "dark, abiding, signing Africanist presence" (5), perceived as embodying "rawness and savagery" (44). Her argument ultimately points to the formation of an American cultural identity forged by race ideology.
8. Linking nationalism with gender politics, Cynthia Enloe describes "the postmobilization period of any nationalist movement" as a "time of lesson-fashioning and mythmaking." Such myths form the foundation of a national identity, and most are "fraught with gendered memories," primarily negatives ones like the "woman-as-traitor" icon commonly used to mobilize communities (237–8).
9. See McClintock's insightful study of South African nationalism and British imperialism. She demonstrates how the development of the nation is masculinized, as women are represented as "the atavistic and authentic body of national tradition (inert, backward-looking and natural)" and men as "the progressive agent of natural modernity (forward-thrusting, potent and historic)" (359).
10. Enloe argues that "men have used nationalism to silence women" and "nationalist ideologies, strategies, and structures have served to update and so perpetuate the privileging of masculinity" (129). R. Radhakrishnan raises an important question in asking why "the advent of the politics of nationalism signals the subordination if not the demise of women's politics." Instead of speaking of "one" politics in terms of an "other," we must recognize that gender enters into every aspect of reality and cannot be considered outside nationalist endeavors (80–81).

11. Women's roles in nationalist struggles vary, yet they are often perceived as being in a "supportive and nurturing relation to men even where they have taken the most risks" (Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 1–15).
12. An informative historical overview of the Dominican sugar cane industry deportations is provided by Juan O. Tamayo. See also Danticat and Diaz.

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