Friction and Flow in a Dominican Tourist Town

BY

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THESIS
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To Paula “Puffin” Farley
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-DG
One winter afternoon I gathered at the local school in the center of Las Ballenas (a pseudonym) with some expat volunteers to paint a map of the world as part of a Peace Corps project. I was filling in the broad expanse of Greenland when the children of the village began to ask us to point to the places where their fathers *afuera* (outside) were spatially located. A young girl in braids whispered to me, “Alemania” (Germany), and when I distinguished her father’s home country with my fingertip among the painted expanse of orange, green, red, and yellow bordered by black, her eyes shone as if I had just performed a kind of magic trick. However, the scale of the map seemed to disturb them. The sheer immensity of Africa—the continent they were educated to
Preface (continued)

repress and mark as the home of Haitians who populated the town in ever-growing numbers and were capable of performing the most powerful voudou magic was daunting in comparison to their fragile looking tiny island, located squarely in the hurricane belt, and all that blue water in between.

Because of its geographical isolation, Las Ballenas had the reputation of a kind of “tropical Siberia” for decades until the construction of a road in 1970, which connected it to the rest of the country and opened it up for “rediscovery” by French expats. Since then national elites and their foreign partners have been appropriating the peninsula through tourism development schemes designed to commodify space, labor, and bodies. The commodification of space occurs through mapping in assigning land title or gathering census data; through labor in the professionalization of workers via vendor licenses, certificates of good worker conduct, and official uniforms; and through bodies in the medium of beauty contests and representations found in tourism marketing including those found in websites promoting sex tourism.

I asked the children what their map might look like if they used their own spatial markers. For this is what makes Las Ballenas an identifiable place and not just a tourist attraction; the imbuing of space with the daily social processes and imaginations of the bodies and minds that inhabit its territory. The boat captain of the whale sight-seeing boat I worked on navigated through the coral reefs and jagged rocks while searching for the telltale surface bubbles of a diving humpback whale using his memory and not a map. (Today these whale-watching boats, owned by local Dominican entrepreneurs who engage in their own contentious politics to maintain their precious permits must contend with transnational cruise ship traffic, which has increased exponentially since 2007 (Skoczen 2008)).
Preface (continued)

I scratched a rough outline in the dirt with a stick, drawing a book to mark the place of the school where we were standing. Soon the village children began to scratch out their own patterns, marking the blue house of Rosa’s grandmother, the mango tree that always provided shade and relief from the tropical heat, the galleria for cockfights with its regular staged performances of host machismo and cathartic violence, and the loma (hill) where the witch lived. While Protestant sects prohibit brujería (witchcraft), many hosts, in their historically syncretic fashion, continue to interweave a respect for magic and healing with their own “modern” views in the church or biomedicine. Villagers seek La Bruja’s advice and medicinal cures to help secure visas or address health, money, or relationship problems.1 Her credibility as a mediator in an area ripe with cultural conflict and negotiation rivals that of the lawyers who had arrived over the past five years to facilitate and litigate the burgeoning land title disputes. Despite defying the State and Church’s institutionalized notions of civilized modernity and faith, local officials from the ayuntamiento (town council) recently acknowledged La Bruja’s social status by sponsoring the construction of her new cement house.2 Acknowledging the power of the local witch was just one of many contradictions the Dominican State, with its mission of development and progress, conceded to the general population whose consent it needed in order to establish itself.3

1 Many healers reject the title of bruja (the Spanish word for “witch”) and instead describe how they “work” with los seres o misterios (the spirits) as caballos (horses) who are subir (“mounted”) or possessed by them. Healers may be parteras (midwives), botanistas (herbalists), and psychics, reading cups or cards.

2 Religious affiliation along the Samana peninsula consists of a shrinking Catholic population, associated with national elites and foreign priests, and a populist Evangelist-Protestant majority, inspired by the Pentecostal-fundamentalist style of worship in the Southern United States that was brought to Samana by freed slaves that emigrated from Philadelphia in 1824 during the Haitian Occupation.

3 Others concessions include various paralegal arrangements with squatters and sex workers, to be discussed in detail in Chapters II and VI.
Villagers know the most powerful magic comes from Haiti, and thus voudou remains one spatial tactic Haitians employ to expand their lifeworld and presence in Dominican space, despite their sociospatial incarceration as illegal migrants. An estimated four thousand Haitians live in Las Ballenas (as well as twenty-five thousand Dominicans, five thousand expats, and five to eight thousand tourists during the tourism high season months of August and December-April). They work chiefly in construction, as vendors, or as staff for the French-owned hotels or businesses. The female vendors sell an array of goods such as used clothing, sweets, perfumes, liquor, and DVDs. Despite the historical tension between Haitians—Haiti occupied the DR for twenty-two years beginning in 1821—and Dominicans (who nationally and racially defined
themselves in opposition to Haitians)—an enduring robust border trade sustains each country. Every Monday and Friday the border opens, and ten thousand Haitians moved in either direction, pointing to the porosity and the impossibility of any borders’ impenetrability.

“And what is new in town?” I asked the children. They began to talk excitedly amongst themselves and sketched in the signs of progress changing everyday life as their parents and grandparents knew it. Next to Supermercado Lindo, the air conditioned grocery that sells an entire aisle of imported pasta for the Italians, cheese and wine for the French, and chocolate for the Swiss, they sketched in a series of squares to mark the latest trendy clothing shops and cybercafés which had heightened villagers’ appetite for consumer goods and their competitive display. The majority of these did not exist when I began fieldwork in 2006. One boy drew a kind of monstrous looking car, and when I asked about it, he said, “It belongs to Vincente!” and the rest of the kids craned their necks to look.

Vincente, who was reputed to deal drugs and drove a bright yellow Hummer, was a thirty-something local celebrity. According to one horrified expat primary school teacher, the Dominican schoolchildren nominated Vincente as their local “role model” during a class exercise. Like the witch, Vincente was a tiguere (a tiger-like, clever, savvy, hustler) who, having been denied access to the material resources that created the conditions of a Dominican kind of middle class “respectability,” instead subverted such values and built his social standing on “reputation” (Wilson 1969). Villagers admire and fear tigueres who occupy the ambiguous spaces that make up power relationships. Their ability to create friction or sticky materiality in their practical encounters with others of a wealthier transnational class who would prefer to glide
over such “zones of awkward engagement” (Tsing 2005:6), such as contracts around labor and land, makes tigers and their tiger-like tactics key foci of my study.

I sketched an airplane to mark Portillo airport to the south and another to mark the ongoing construction of El Catey airport (completed in 2008) to the north, which combined would offer weekly flights to Europe and New York. This prompted another boy to draw a long snaky line that went off our map “all the way to Santo Domingo!” The children were excited now, and others penciled in stick figures reclining on patio furniture next to clusters of houses that lined this newly paved highway to the capital (completed in 2009), a telling detail. Most Dominican migrants prefer to live right next to la pista (the main highway), close to its transshipment potential and informal communication network and not isolated up in the lomas or close to the seashore like the foreigners.

Villagers did not understood how a perspective, a view, of miles of Jurassic Park-like nature or of the expansive sea, emptied of people, could translate into such a high monetary value on the capitalist tourist market. In fact, some villagers had been eager to sell the title to their land once the Dominican lawyers from the inland cities explained such a thing as “land title” existed, encouraging them to sign documents they often could not read. But villagers learned to envision their landscape through the eyes of foreigners, a way of seeing reproduced from colonial travel writing to modern day postcards. In this way, historical and contemporary representations influenced how inhabitants of Las Ballenas created social space, even as the

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4 La pista is akin to the plaza in Latin America in its spatial role as a social center, and proximity to it is an indicator of material wealth as well as social capital.
friction of their daily lives challenged such visions of space emptied of complex human interaction.\textsuperscript{5}

The new highway occasionally provided entrepreneurial opportunities, as when there were traffic accidents. When a truck spilled oil on the road, there were a half a dozen makeshift roadside stands selling the sticky stuff to passersby within a half-hour. Discarded plastic was recycled into kites or motorcycle tire splashguards. Others used the road to hitch a way to a better life, like the fifteen-year-old girl who had dragged her overstuffed suitcase through the countryside to the side of the road in her plastic yellow heels. She told me her parents instructed her to wait for the “first foreign license plate” that stopped, and when it did, to get in the car and not come home until she had made something of her life.\textsuperscript{6}

I looked at the children’s map with all its landmarks, signposts, and symbols. Transnational circuits crisscrossed their version of the island, and, unlike the older adults, their bright eyes saw only the potential adventures those circuits might bring. Lacking “papers”, fertile imaginations allowed Dominicans to travel to foreign places in their minds, drawing from a steady bank of images drawn from the pirated DVDs, Miami telenovelas (soap operas) and music videos. A Dominican sex worker once told me her ideal papi chulo (cool sugardaddy) was George Clooney, while her friend named Peter Ceterra of the now defunct band Chicago.

\textsuperscript{5} Anna Tsing uses the term “friction” to describe what she calls “the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference” (2005:4). This term is defined more fully on page ten.

\textsuperscript{6} She hoped to make it to New York City where her mother’s cousin worked as a hairdresser. She was proud that the Dominican president, Leonel Fernandez, who was educated in New York, was bringing the American symbol of modernity, an underground subway, to the island for the Dominican people. The fanfare surrounding its inauguration reminded me of another state-building project, the Columbus Lighthouse that President Balaguer erected in 1992, in terms of its elaborate expense and celebratory spectacle that distracts attention away from the state’s neglect of welfare spending around education and healthcare.
Haitian motoconcho (taxi driver, sometimes referred to as conchos), told me he saw the United States as a place with “clean streets, big skyscrapers, electricity, and white men in suits,” which he had gleaned from watching Patrick Swayze as a Wall Street stockbroker in the movie Ghost. However, he was mystified when he saw the incompatible images in news reports of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina revealing stark representations of “a country of poor, black people, just like us.” He also failed to see the humor in Whoopi Goldberg’s Ghost role and did not understand why she was not accorded the proper respect her position entailed.

It was the village witch, in fact, who encouraged Dominican mothers to name their children after the birthplaces of their foreign fathers. Perhaps by naming their children after these imagined faraway places, their dreams for mobility might come true. I watched these green-eyed, brown skinned, golden haired children of the world named after their fathers: Irelandia, Australia, Espanola, Romania, Estonia, Russia, Germany, Norway, Suissa, Albania, Italia, and Nueva York, as they vigorously mapped out their spatial boundaries in the dirt.
Figure 3. Map of Samana Peninsula

Figure 4. Map of Main Roads and Settlements in Las Ballenas

7Source: http://www.drparadise.xom/parques_las_terrenas.html
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Summary

My project is an extensive examination of the transnational intersectionality and spatialization of sociological concepts like “race,” “class,” “gender,” and “nation” in the context of a Dominican coastal town experiencing rapid development. In linking the “real” borders of bounded domains such as “nation” with the conceptual borders of social categories such as “class,” I emphasize the social construction of both. Both physical/national and social borders, policed by the empowered, invite transgression by the disempowered. Subjects who employ “tigueraje” (hustler-like strategies) successfully disrupt border logic, even if only temporarily, and are constituted at the intersection of multiple borders in specific local contexts. Policing (violence) and representation (discourse) produces a politics of inequality and manifests as material and immaterial borders. Borderwork is, then, the actual work of building up, or tearing down, the walls that protect inequality.
Fieldwork/Context:

My fieldwork took place over 24 months between 2005-2009 along the remote northeastern Samana peninsula in the Dominican Republic, approximately 170 miles away from the Haitian border. I was interested in conducting fieldwork here because I heard that this particular village had escaped the mass-resort (all-inclusive) model that dominated the rest of the country, yet the area was poised to become “rediscovered.” Because my field site, that I will call “Las Ballenas,” avoided being fully dominated and absorbed by state development and tourist-market forces until quite recently, my work identifies and establishes a significant historical moment in time and the kind of struggles and negotiations that accompany an important transition from a place imagined as “off the grid” and inhabited by outlaws to a hypercommodified and competitive society.

The earliest form of tourism in the area had been the Saint’s Days Festival that harkened back to the 1920s which drew hundreds along the peninsula to pledge loyalty to various saints in exchange for favors. After the 1960s, the ownership of land began to hold cache and wealthy elites, including the infamous repressive dictator President Trujillo, began to visit the peninsula to attend the Saint’s Days religious festivals and enjoy the area’s beauty. The fall of the Trujillo regime in 1961 opened the floodgates to internal migration and land reform as the government expropriated local landholdings, thus laying the foundation for today’s uneven and contentious land policy. In 1969, under the highway extension program, a two way road opened to traffic from Sanchez to Las Ballenas allowing local products to be sold to urban markets for cash for the first time. It was not until the 1970s under President Joaquin Balaguer that the state promoted tourism with the development of the Samana port and later the construction of a hotel for state
elites. Many older residents who worked on cocoa plantations migrated to town to seek jobs in construction and remember being paid around three pesos a day. By 1978, the last of the owners of the Saint’s Festivals had died, marking the death of the old form of tourism connected to folk Catholicism which reinforced reciprocal ties of residents with friends and kin. In its place came the new tourism based on mobility and class privilege which reinforced the commercialization of fishing and farming, generated construction, real estate, informal/illegal activities and accelerated the cash economy.

The developmental changes that occurred during my fieldwork were dizzying. Today Las Ballenas is promoted by several real estate websites as the “Monte Carlo” of the Caribbean. In 2010 the Mayor of Las Ballenas stated that Samana’s recent “stardom” was the direct result of its two airports, new highway, and other pending development projects such as the construction of
an aqueduct in 2008/2009. “What awaits Samana, for me, is the best,” he told reporters. The new toll road (which costs about $20 US round trip) reduces the trip duration from the capital of Santo Domingo from nine to four hours. This new super-modern highway extends north to the new international airport, El Catey, expected to be completed by 2012. El Catey airport is about forty-five minutes from Las Ballenas and offers weekly flights to and from Canada (Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, and Vancouver) and Europe (Milan, Paris, Madrid, Frankfurt, and Dusseldorf). There is also a small airport south of Las Ballenas called El Portillo which offers in-country flights to Santo Domingo and Punta Cana.

In addition, the nearby port became a prime location for cruise ship tours. While a handful of cruise ships sailed through the Samana bay in the 1980’s, their presence increased exponentially after 2007 when the port was revamped. Twenty ships per month were scheduled to go through Samana from October through December in 2010. Though their contribution to the local economy is minimal at best, and their environmental costs considerable, these ships represent the fastest growing market segment in Caribbean tourism and are themselves a prime


9 Boulevard Turistico del Atlántico (BTA), a project company established by a group of local and regional sponsors and led by Grupo Odinsa, (the number one toll road operator in Colombia), sponsored the highway construction. BTA was advised by Astris Finance in 2004 and construction began in 2008.

10 The 15 year maturity financing of $160 million was raised from four agencies: the IADB – Inter American Development Bank; the EIB – European Investment Bank, Proparco; Société de Promotion et de Participation Pour la Coopération Economique; and CAF – Corporación Andina de Fomento. (Diario Libre 3/16/2008).
example of deterritorialized flow.\textsuperscript{11} 

Figure 6. Cruise Ship.

At the same time the villagers, politicians, and developers were celebrating the promise of tourism, USAID (2007) cited a long list of challenges to the DR’s development, among them a litany of health, safety, and education factors which defined quality of life as much as access to commodities and markets. These challenges which have only heightened with tourism development in the village included “low levels of public expenditures allocated to education (2.9 percent of GDP, representing 44 percent less, on average, than other countries in the region), high interest rates, frequent electrical blackouts, institutional rigidity, shortage of qualified human capital, high maternal mortality rate (178 deaths for every 100,000 live births), corruption, lack of accountability, and limited citizen oversight of government expenditures.”

\textsuperscript{11} The term “flow” in the context of globalization is associated with variable currents of people and things regulated by political economic hierarchies that mark certain kinds of mobility “desirable” and certain others “undesirable.” It is used to describe globalized phenomena like the instantaneous stream of global capital or various group identities of deterritorialized subjects including tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, and guest workers. Flow also encompasses fields of technology, from jet planes to computers and image-centered media, providing seductive or disturbing visions of distant worlds and alternative life trajectories which often challenge conventional values, particularly around gender, race, or class or provide (counter) state ideologies.
And according to a survey from a local environmental group, tourism planning failed to take into account the devaluation of the national currency (enhancing competition to the tourist’s advantage), deterioration of natural resources, service sector incentives which increased economic dependency and external debt, and mechanisms that would allow villagers to access the tourist dollar while promising incentives to foreign investment—including one percent property taxes (CEBSE 1996).

My work then also critiques neoliberal principles that steer global political economic decision-making and consist of generating greater efficiency in market relations (free trade) through “liberating” private enterprise from the state, cutting public programs, reducing the safety net for the vulnerable, deregulating anything (including health and environmental regulations) that reduces profit, privatizing state owned goods (like highways and bridges) and concentrating wealth, and emphasizing individual responsibility over public welfare. Island economies are already dependent on foreign investment, and exports as competition with Asia has increased. Trade agreements emphasizing market efficiency impede developing countries’ ability to consume, produce, and redistribute on a local scale.

Through analyzing borderwork on all levels of what I term friction and flow, and in terms of spatial tactics, my project in the liminal borderlands of a Caribbean island critically examines globalization in terms of its promises and lived realities. In the context of asymmetrical power-laden practices that are as global as they are local, I examine the protective and prohibitive function of borderwork. In particular, I consider under what conditions borders (geographic, political, national, gendered, racial, economic, sexual, etc.) are constituted and under what conditions they dissolve.
Research Methodology

The primary ethnographic methods I used were participant observation, extended, open-ended interviews, and discourse/content analysis. My fieldwork project was divided into three central phases that corresponded with data collection and analysis. During the exploratory phase I established residence within the Dominican community and made contacts; trolled the beaches and hotels to speak with vendors, massage therapists, and sex workers, as well as their clients; and volunteered on a whale-watching tour boat and at a community library. I located potential informants and recorded host/guest interactions. I also conferred with my Dominican colleague Dr. Yolanda Leon and scoured various government, NGO, and university library archives for historical documents and images pertaining to borderwork conflicts in, and representations of, Las Ballenas.

I used the insights I gleaned in the exploratory phase to construct an index of potential themes of conflict, which I then used to structure open-ended interviews with select subjects. At the same time, I began to compile data on my subjects’ biographical histories. Many of these interviews were recorded and transcribed, but countless others were not, due the spontaneous nature of the encounter or because recording compromised the fluidity and ease of the conversation. Increasingly as I became a known fixture in the community, my conversations, which always asked subjects to be reflexive about their lives, were either welcomed or avoided, and I followed the lines of access that were cultivated. Those who kindly continued to allow me the privilege of asking them endless, repetitive questions about their worldview began to settle into a more comfortable rhythm with me, and formal interviews became a series of frequent, informal “check-ins” which required little prompting on my part.

I began to experience Las Ballenas less as a discrete, bounded place but rather as a site of shifting locations situated by interpersonal relationships—rich in dialogue, laughter, awkwardness, and shared memories and dreams—and affirmed connection, through deep listening or “witnessing”
(Scheper-Hughes 1992). In this way, I reframed fieldwork as taking place during a travel encounter that is contingent, not as taking place in a controlled research laboratory. Along these lines, even the sea and landscape of Las Ballenas was not viewed as a traditional or natural environment but a “contact zone” made up of global and local forces which includes my own research based travel (Pratt 1992). “Facts” were emplotted in these contact zones. I say emplotted, rather than collected, as our “habitus” (socially acquired subjectivity and embodied forms of practice) were read as a legitimate means of expression which revealed our—theirs and my own—mutual engagement.

Finally, as I synthesized my theoretical insights into my field notes over months of fieldwork, I was able to acquire and compare conceptual networks of meaning as I went through to code my texts. This distilling process which I used to generate the chapter hypotheses and chapter structure which follows adheres to the model of grounded theory, a procedure for constructing theory based on the different themes that emerge from the text (Bernard and Ryan 1998). My eclectic application of theory around space/place, globalization, borderwork, and power dynamics follows the creative approach of Anna Tsing who observes that “theory is situated as it engages with locally specified puzzles” (1993:32). I also consider this a “sensuous ethnography” that is feminist-driven in its value of everyday bodily forms of storytelling that privileges the experiential over the factual and blurs self/other, subjective/objective, and emotional/rational divides. Merleau-Ponty (1962) defines phenomenology as the direct description of human experiences and accepts that it never produces complete knowledge.

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12 Mary Louise Pratt (1992) uses the term “contact zone” to describe when peoples first meet under conditions of “coercion, radical inequality, and conflict” while still interacting in an improvisational way.


14 Here I am alluding to the notion of *habitus* from Pierre Bourdieu’s *The Logic of Practice* (1990).
This body-centered approach was particularly useful for attributing agency to even the most marginalized actors in Dominican tourist space, illegal Haitian migrants who might otherwise be reductively represented as passive victims of the constraining political economic circumstances that surround them. Yet in the Haitian cosmology, the body is “the fundamental synthesizing agency that weaves the world into meaning and the source of emerging knowledge, value, and signification” (Bakare-Yusef 2003:7). This cosmology shapes Haitian “lived space” as much as those political economic constraints.

I have changed the names of all of those I interviewed. The irony is that in many cases these pseudonyms were already invented, either because expats were "on the lam" or (in the case of hosts) because of the Dominican custom of using apodos (nicknames) instead of birth names to protect their identities from witches who might be contracted by competitive neighbors to conjure up spells against them. In each case, the common use of fake names to avoid both witches and national law is just one indicator of the general contentiousness of social relations in the transgressive space of Las Ballenas.

**Introduction**

The most radical position that can be adopted against globalization’s compression of time and space—its transience, its culture of consumption, its bottom-line ideology of efficiency—is one that strives to inhabit a particular place in a serious way. [Epp and Whitson 2001:318]

Las Ballenas can be seen as a place mystified by a scrim designed to conceal exploitive power relations and class struggle. This image of the scrim, a kind of gauzy screen used onstage during theatrical performances, provides a useful metaphor. We might think of the ethnographic project as the light directed upon this screen which allows images and colors as well as agendas
and strategies to become visible. When there is no light, no inquiry, these objects and agendas disappear.

From the moment I stepped off the truck-taxi with my suitcase, I stepped into the theatre of Las Ballenas and became part of the script. A nearby Dominican poised with his machete in one hand and a coconut in the other waved his hand on cue over the dazzling expanse of water. “Welcome to paradise!” he grinned, with a smile equally as radiant. Yet behind the scrim lies a dense, violently active network of host/guest strategies over labor, land, and bodies, as well as spatial disciplinary tactics involving stigmatizing gossip, magical thinking that enlarges even the most socio-spatially incarcerated subjects in tourist space—Haitian workers, poorly trained police squads with high national rates of extrajudicial killings, “zombie” guard dogs to mark off private property, and the gathering of witness testimony to challenge land title ownership or argue for the application of concubine laws.

Gradually I began to conceive of Las Ballenas as a bounded field or spatial cluster of embodied sociospatial dispositions and practices that is the setting for constant boundary production and maintenance among squatters, vendors, tourists, expats, illegal migrants, and sex workers. French sociologist Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) work on the production of “space” is useful in theorizing the dynamics of place-making in Las Ballenas.\(^{15}\) I use his ideas of the dialectical conflict between abstract space (how space is conceived through practices and forms that tend to fragment, homogenize, and create hierarchies following the hegemony of capitalism based on its grids of labor, market, bureaucracy, and private property) and differential space (how space is lived and experienced) to structure my ethnographic material. I also found Anna Tsing’s concept
of “friction,” what she calls “the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference” (2005:4), useful to describe the local process of interrelationship fraught with creative and destructive potential.

Since tourism is an “experience economy,” where experience as the “idea” of social relations and cultural exchange is desired, marketed, and purchased, this dissertation is also a story about how competing desires produce the lived space of Las Ballenas as much as it is a chronicle of how a social field is produced from the historical (Christian and civilizing missions) and contemporary (modernizing and neoliberal) global hegemonic conditions of political economy. Desire, as the idea of an appetite, is always rooted in the social imagination. It is often a desire to be recognized by another (or, more controversially, the “other”) and thereby involves a refashioning of the self against certain structural borders which constrain us along lines of difference (class, nation, race, and gender/sexuality, etc.). Accordingly, desire-as-engine motivates our actions and creates social dynamics fraught with conflict and interpersonal vulnerability. 16 Borderwork is the process that describes how boundaries around identity are constructed, maintained, and transgressed to reinforce notions of difference (in terms of culture, ethnicity, gender, class, or nationality) within this globalized context of tourism and migration.

In the Caribbean, tourism developers use certain tropes to whet the consumer appetite for pleasure: warmth; sun; happy (submissive) natives turned quasi-servants easing the burdens of life (particularly with regard to domestic service) all of which aim to stabilize unsettled

15 Henri Lefebvre was a neo-Marxist who coined the phrase “The Right to the City” during the late 1960s when Paris was becoming increasingly urbanized. Lefebvre developed his theory of space out of his concern over the omni-presence of urban space and planning.
16 This is saying I support Deleuze and Guattari’s (1983) notion of desire as the ever-present, interpenetrative matrix of “flows” that knit life together, similar to Michel Foucault’s (1975) conception of power, and in contrast to Jacques Lacan’s (1977) notion of desire as Lack.
masculine, feminine, or middle class selves that may have been compromised by socioeconomic challenges at “home.” But as soon as tourists become arrested by the politics of place, they become enmeshed in the organization of time and space known as “everyday life.” Lefebvre’s theory of everyday life goes beyond the spatial into an analysis of the complexities of contemporary society as envisaged through lived experience and grounded by the material organizational rhetoric of the market and its structures.\(^{17}\) In the *Critique of Everyday Life*, Lefebvre (2008:41) writes of the importance of deconstructing and theorizing daily life for it is, the “base” from which the mode of production endeavors to constitute itself as a system, by programming this base. Daily life replaces the colonies. Capitalist leaders treat daily life as they once treated the colonized territories: massive trading posts (supermarkets and shopping centres and tourism); absolute predominance of exchange over use; dual exploitation of the dominated in their capacity as producers and consumers. [emphasis mine]

Beyond providing a base for exploitation, the banalities and repetitions of everyday life are also the locus of human spontaneity and creativity. Lefebvre writes, “Yes, it is the humble and sordid side, but not only that. Simultaneously it is also the time and the place where the human either fulfills itself or fails” (2008:19). Lefebvre refers to lived space, which may be embodied or seen, as the most personal spatial production of everyday life because in it we produce who we are. It is a space of pure subjectivity derived from our senses, imaginations, and feelings, and therefore a space of resistance and possibility as much as it is a space of conditioned self-discipline. Lefebvre (1991) believed that “moments” of revelation, arising from a feeling of collective solidarity, could be experienced within the realm of lived space. Such an experience could counter the alienation produced under zones of high social and economic

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\(^{17}\)In this way, Lefebvre finds everyday life potentially redeeming, unlike other philosophers (Kant, Hegel, Sartre, etc.).
control. When we confront hegemonic forces and disrupt established borders, Lefebvre terms this affective, lived space *differential*. Differential space occurs when forces confront or critique the status-quo and disrupt established borders.

As much as I am interested in identifying hegemonic patterns of exploitation and control, I am also interested in these micromoments of imaginative and material appropriation, embodied sociability, and friction-filled self-making and unmaking in the context of this Caribbean village that is being subsumed under the logic of the market and capital accumulation. Today life in this former “off-the-grid Shangri-la” is being undeniably ordered under hierarchies of economic value that blend gift economies based on kinship with those based on commodities as objects of value or social importance. As Henri, a seventeen year old motoconcho taxi-driver, motivated by *chulo* (consumer style) and deeply in debt, succinctly put it, “If you do not have money here, you are no one.”

The global project of producing tourist space as a capitalist enterprise is bent on fusing the immediate realm of lived space with abstract space through tactics such as statecraft, commodity advertising, technocratic knowledge, and repetition such as linear time and mapping. Ultimately abstract space becomes hegemonic when it absorbs the daily aspirations, dreams, and desires of subaltern populations (their lived spaces). But friction and *tigueraje* (a Dominican term that indexes qualities associated with being a clever, strategic, charismatic hustler) occur in dialectical relation to this process. In a related vein, philosophers Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1972) describes the production of social space and life as the constant dialectical
tension between territorialization and deterritorialization;\textsuperscript{18} this tensions involves the imposing of rules and concepts of maintenance, control, surveillance, and tracking, and the dissipation or loosening of such concepts and rules.\textsuperscript{19}

In spatial terms, borderwork describes the dialectical imposing and dissolution of these systems of structure and surveillance around various borders resulting in the social spatialization of difference. For example, even as tourist police seek to create (abstract) spatial order that divides the criminal from the legitimate, they simultaneously subvert (differentialize) the law as they extort Haitian vendors. And even as evicted squatters are expelled from (abstract) privatized national park space as trespassers, they easily undermine (differentialize) state legitimacy by returning and planting (reterritorializing) their illegal \textit{conucos} (subsistence plots). This continuous process of spatial ordering and disruption which never leads to synthesis or resolution because of its complexity and contradictions is what makes Las Ballenas such a productive place to analyze in terms of its borderwork.

\textsuperscript{18} For more on Globalization’s deterritorializing effects, see Tomlinson (1999), Appadurai (1996), and Featherstone (1995).

\textsuperscript{19} In some representations, this dialectical process is shown taking place even under the most grim of sociospatial circumstances. I am reminded of the film \textit{Life is Beautiful} (Roberto Benigni, Director, 1997) in which a father and son imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp create a series of micro “moments” as they transform the spatial hell of their physical surroundings and psychological experience by turning daily life into a “game.”
The production of abstract space in Las Ballenas also has unintended consequences due to the state’s limited governmentality, as it is complicit in extralegal arrangements with those who fall outside of the nation-state legal boundaries and whose only means of connecting with translocal circuits are via the informal economy.20

As both hosts and guests try to build security in an unstable world, my attention to placemaking helps to ground the flows of people, capital, and information and locate actors as

20 By limited governmentality, I mean the state has limited ability to order space with legal or bureaucratic disciplinary tactics.
reflexive subjects within broader determining forces of information, media, and political economy. Theoretically then, my aim is to appropriate dialectical categories of space that constitute social life and apply them to sites of conflict such as those surrounding the village’s marketing, land ownership, labor contracts, intimate sexual relations, and nation-building.

In this introductory chapter I will weave together the dialectical terms, to be explained in more detail below, of abstract and differential space, of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, and of flow and friction into a spatial metaphor that speaks to how borders quarantine power differentials. In looking at how space is produced, I ask questions such as: How are place and place-making practices defined, and how do they define us? The answer lies within the recorded and unrecorded histories and told and untold stories people reveal about themselves as well as the continuous dialectic of deterritorialization and reterritorialization between state/capitalist and counter-hegemonic forces. “Place” is the physical focal point where social relations from both above (structure) and below (practice) intersect and are experienced as a fixed location, the place where we find tigueraje, those clever strategies designed to allow individuals and their families to socially advance. This is another way of saying that tigueraje, or the tiger-like contesting of borders (of race, sex, nation, etc.), marks the space where agency and structure meet.

**Lefebvre and Place as Practiced Space**

Lefebvre distinguishes between the impact of social practices on different kinds of space by creating the categories of “representational space” (lived space) and “representations of space” (imagined space). The latter, representations of space, can be either “perceived” where space is communicated through symbols and images such as labor, money, information flows, and bodily
gestures or “conceived” by daily routines. In their uniform homogeneity and as rational images, conceived spaces such as surveys, maps, rules, and real estate conceal state power or human lives. Both perceived and conceived spaces are instances of “abstract” space whereby hegemonic forces (such as capitalism, colonialism, racism, sexism, etc.) order and suppress differences of local culture, history, and natural landscape. Representations of space are “conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers…all of who identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived…this is the dominant space in any society (or mode of production)” (1991:38-39).

Figure 9. Measuring and Mapping Space

Michel de Certeau (1984) augments Lefebvre’s spatial theory by focusing on how practice (like walking) transforms spaces (like those designed by urban planners) in

21 Source: http://highdesertsurveying.com/default.aspx
unanticipated ways. Consider the Dominican female “streetwalker” who appropriates traditional male street space in order to perform her labor. This example points to the importance of evaluating how accessible space is to various kinds of social actors. Doreen Massey connects Lefebvre’s determinant structures with de Certeau’s practices by noting the importance of “access” within the mutability and multiplicity of “a progressive sense of place”:

Since social relations are inevitably and everywhere imbued with power and meaning and symbolism … the spatial is an ever-shifting social geometry of power and signification… Most evidently this is so because the social relations of space are experienced differently, and variously interpreted, by those holding different positions as part of it. [1993:3]

Though Lefebvre’s theory was born in reaction to the urbanization of Paris in the 1960’s, it is still useful to my work. In the context of a nonurban tropical island where spaces as “natural landscapes” predate humanity, I argue that we still come to know nature as a construction, for example, as a transnational commodity. In the process of being written, mapped, and named, empty natural spaces become places in textual representations like colonial travel writing or postcards. And, as I discuss in Chapter V, built environments from airports to cruise ships often dominate the land and seascape as NonPlaces where the material conditions and histories of the place and its inhabitants are muddied or erased. Resisting this erasure, places can be seen as ever emerging sites of transnational possibility by emphasizing their quotidian lived spaces. We can say then that the differential/ deterritorialized spatial presence and embodied practices of marginalized subjects—such as squatters, vendors, Haitians, and sex workers—who are produced by the conceived practices and representations of abstract space propel the ongoing contestation over meaning in Las Ballenas. Such a progressive sense of place contrasts with the
essentialist, nostalgic sense of dwelling espoused by Heidegger. Place is birthed from the intersection of social relations that relate to various borders of race, gender, sexuality, and class that are all synchronic and diachronic, simultaneously global and local. Lefebvre argues,

> It is not, therefore, as though one had global (or conceived) space to one side and fragmented (or directly experienced) space to the other—rather as one might have an intact glass here and broken glass or mirror over there. For space “is” whole and broken, global and fractured, at one and the same time. [1991: 355-56]

Abstract representational space-making begins in the constructing, branding, and selling of this Caribbean island as a picturesque, generic paradise—what Lefebvre (1991) refers to as reducing nature to an illusion of transparency. The Caribbean is constructed as a postcard to be passively looked at from a distance via cruise ship or ghettoized resort rather than to be experienced and lived in, a process where space becomes intelligible to the eye, and only the eye. This abstraction to two-dimensional space seeks to establish images of rational order and balance and conceals state/elite power. Colonial powers concealed contradictions or leakages by rendering social space abstract through means such as travel writing, miscegenation laws, Cartesian coordinates, advertising, mapping, issuing permits, surveys, land titles, uniforms, badges, diplomas, and signs. My aim, following Lefebvre, is to undermine this false transparency between space, as it is perceived or conceived, and lived experience to show the effects and processes of the state and otherwise concealed psychosocial experience of those living in these spaces.

When a range of migrating deterritorialized populations (migrants, tourists, expats, transnationals) inhabit the same space, a myriad of conflicts emerge over place claiming (reterritorialization) and borderwork. Borders marking difference emerge to impose order and power. Obsession with difference (racial, sexual, class, those demarking the “modern” from the
“primitive”) and ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating, and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose order on an inherently untidy experience. “It is only by exaggerating the differences between within and without, above and below, male and female, with and against that a semblance of order is created” (Douglas 1966:4).

This order, which creates hierarchical systems based on difference, also creates representations of space which are more than merely physical compositions of objects, bodies, or behavior. These hierarchical systems reveal arrangements of social action and routine, as well as historical conceptions of space and the world. Collectively these representations reveal a socio-spatial imaginary, habitus, and worldview, which manifests in every action and operates at all scales. Each representation of space that constitutes Las Ballenas is tied to broader relations of production and the hierarchies these relations impose. For instance, nineteenth century travel writing expressed the point of view of the civilizing mission while modern beauty contests champion a particular national creole ideal and aesthetic over blackness and its associations with slavery. Real estate developers motivated by a desire to exclude others through property rights, survey and measure out parcels of land, legitimizing and delegitimizing claims of ownership by different social actors and groups as part of a broader global process of “accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey 2003). Certificates of good conduct are awarded or denied to the professional worker while identity papers are denied to Haitian immigrants who are deemed perpetually “in transit” to mark spaces of good labor and citizenship. Meanwhile, counter-hegemonic forces produce a thriving underground market for forged abstract documents that certify land title, labor, and identity for those who cannot gain access to the formal economy. These are all among the everyday spatial practices that constitute borderwork in Las Ballenas.
In turn, and in reaction to this new, thriving informal economy and its pirate practices, state officials and their transnational partners crack down on “corruption.” In 2007, the entire police force was replaced for corruption by the President (See Chapter VII), and police began to routinely challenge informal workers in Las Ballenas by arresting them for “harassing” the tourists and not carrying the correct permits. Local officials, in order to “protect” the tourists, mandated motorcycle taxi drivers distinguish themselves from thieves by wearing official orange vests and carrying badges. As one taxi driver put it, “These vests show you that I will not rob or kill you.” And when two local thieves were shot for “resisting arrest,” several members of the community applauded the extreme measures taken in the name of security.

Figure 10. New National Police Lt. (left) and motoconcho with new “official” vest (right)

Yet power is far from hegemonic. As Foucault (1995) notes, power is relational and therefore requires resistance. It cannot exist without the active participation of its opposing condition. The practices of those with less power still demarcate edges to block flows thus
creating differential space. Therefore, to understand and theorize the social construction of boundaries requires recognition of their dual role as power markers that define, legitimate, and symbolize rules as well as recognition of how boundaries act as focal points for resistance to those rules. Any study of borderwork and borders must therefore consider the sociocultural and political-legal processes that produce space as well as resistance to those processes. In a place where the nature of modernization is hypercomplex and competitive, I use the conceptual tools of Lefebvre, DeLeuze, and Tsing to mark those friction-filled interconnections across difference that produce space and borderwork and examine to what ends this occurs.

**Five Factors that Produce Las Ballenas as a Space**

Five factors characterize the sociospatial production of Las Ballenas and determine its ongoing contentious borderwork, friction, and tigueraje. These factors, outlined in more detail below, overlap in dialectical circuits, as in a Cubist painting.\(^\text{22}\) They are that Las Ballenas is:

1. desired and imagined as a historical and contemporary “tropicalized” borderland or transgressive site;
2. constructed out of the “NonPlace” logic designed and marketed by tourism planners (state elites and their foreign partners) driven by the larger project of capital accumulation and land privatization (Auge 2005);
3. made up of micro-utopian moments or differential (counterhegemonic) practices;

\(^\text{22}\) In Lefebvre’s terms, space is produced through multiple perspectives which overlap and operate in dialectical tension.
4. governed by a state operating with limited governmentality which leads to a range of extra-legal and peripheral arrangements with squatters, illegal migrants, and informal workers that challenge modern notions of statecraft;

5. dominated by informal economies that blend the use of commodities and kinship networks as exchanges of value.

Las Ballenas as Borderland

In the first of the five factors, the borderland refers to those spaces on the frontiers of adjoining categories (identities, countries, etc.) where rigid differences sometimes blur or “creolize” into hybrid forms. As such, they are spaces of transition where different possibilities may be experimented with. Following the literature on the Mexican borderland, we can view the in between, liminal borderland that Haitian migrants inhabit as a kind of microfrontier or “interstice” (Alvarez 1995; Kearney 1991; Rosaldo 1988).\(^\text{23}\) These spaces are imagined as grim, dangerous, and constraining, a political border of predators, victims, and coyotes who arrange passage from south to north, or sometimes as a metaphorical and liberating border defined more by poets than police, a cultural zone “between stable places.” However, the borderlands are imagined, and in their material and ideological forms are threshold spaces that play an important part in spatial and social ordering as they quarantine power differentials and cast certain individuals as “other.”

Coerced compliance and everyday practice create the structures that support belief in boundaries as essential, unquestioned categories which help fix one in space and lend form,
substance, to what is otherwise unknown, nebulous, and uncomfortable. Boundaries, therefore, establish social rules and symbolize lines to be crossed as well as set limits to be extended. Borderzones are places where different regimes of rules merge and destabilize each other. For privileged tourists “on holiday,” social rules may soften. But for refugees, borderzones are experienced as far less emancipatory zones and more marginalizing in terms of their ability to spatially incarcerate. Within the threshold space of the borderland, actions of social participants both reproduce certain borders and rules and delegitimize them as existing social worlds are deconstructed, re-imagined, and reborn. From this new transitional, “in-between” territory, individuals may reconstitute their identity or experience stigma, social groups may change their self-definition, and spaces are either reaffirmed or reshaped outside of formerly strict barriers.

The border communities and borderland inhabitants of Las Ballenas are therefore ideally positioned to invoke liminality where transnational actions and policies transgress local politics and culture. Fleeing the social or legal prohibitions in their home countries, expats are encouraged by marketing schemes to transgress across race, gender, class, and moral lines in tropical island space (see discussion of the “Perpetual Traveler” literature in Chapter V). Yet travel itself, mediated by the powerful bodily senses of sight, touch, smell, taste, and sound, unmoors the groundedness of formerly self-constructed gender, national, and class identities in unexpected ways. Tourist space is characterized by marketing and performances which promise a kind of hedonistic paradise bound to implode as insiders/outsiders confront one another with competing desires. Those expats who decide to “stay” in paradise are quickly ensnared in the

23 Other names for the creation of these new in-between social spaces are parallel modernities (Larkin 1997) and imaginary diaspora territories (Swedenburg 2004).
web of the local production of space and villagers’ place-making strategies. Still, despite these strategies, borders remain exclusive determinants for the majority of villagers who try to transcend class barriers and entrenched power structures.

The Caribbean as a region has long been imagined as a kind of transgressive borderland space, both liberating and dangerous, where prohibitions were eased and social norms inverted: “a porno tropics for the European imagination—a fantastic magic lantern of the mind onto which Europe projected its forbidden sexual desires and fears” (McClintock 1995:21-22). Las Ballenas was produced as a borderland space through its historical representation as a contact zone where freed slaves and French buccaneers lived as “vagabonds.” Today the borderland representation persists through tourism branding Las Ballenas as a permeable site where traditions and cultures overlap (at least for the space of “the trip”) and through its association with extralegal activity such as immigration and smuggling that cannot be controlled by state government. While historically the Janus-faced desire/fear of being “tropicalized” (losing one’s smear of civilization through proximity to the other) was channeled into seventeenth to nineteenth century civilizing and colonizing missions, today the contemporary tourist experience is anxiety filled and suffused with the embodied vulnerability that is part and parcel of identity-making in a neoliberal, postcolonial context.

**Las Ballenas is constructed out of NonPlace logic driven by Capital Accumulation.**

Secondly, the built environment of Las Ballenas is planned, marketed, and constructed out of the NonPlace logic (Auge 1995) of tourism planners (state elites and their foreign partners) driven
by the larger project of capital accumulation and land privatization. NonPlaces are spaces severed from local contexts in which history and a sense of belonging are erased. They temporarily house modern travelers as they move through their fluid experience but never provide a home. We can say places, with their friction-filled politics, differentiated social meaning and historical context, are never completely erased, while NonPlaces, emptied of the signifiers of time and space (for relationship, history, and identity), are never completely written. Nonplaces are abstract spaces in Lefebvrian terms that reinforce hegemonic fluid categories—like freedom, prosperity, and progress—and thereby constitute the ideological inspiration I refer to in Chapter V as the cosmopolitan’s “fluid dream.” In Nonplace, outsiders pass through airports resembling sugar plantations constructed on the remains of actual sugar plantations or glide by on a cruiseliner called The World whose website encourages its guests to “explore the world in safety and luxury without leaving home.”

Figure 11. The World Cruise Ship

24 According to historical accounts, the peninsula was the site where Columbus and indigenous peoples first shed blood. See Cohen, JM. 1969 Christopher Columbus: the Four Voyages. London: Penguin Press.
25 Source: aboardtheworld.com/our_story
televised example of “Non-Placing” builds on old historical adventure writing tropes. An episode of *Survivor* was filmed in nearby Los Haitises National Park, an ecological protected zone along the peninsula. The series is a *Lord-of-the-Flies*-style reality television concept where the contestants, who have no idea where they are, must compete and survive in “the wild” as if they were shipwrecked, evoking tropes of the “Tarzan” and “Robinson Crusoe” adventurer so popular in colonial travel writing and fiction. But a park ranger explained another reality behind the reality (show), that is how the Spanish *Survivor* television crews and production companies, after bribing local officials, wreaked havoc in the park, destroying ancient trees and bamboo to build their lean-to shelters; building fires and fishing in protected zones; leaving piles of garbage, and damaging cave paintings with the strong lights of their cameras. *Dominican Today* editor Jorge Pineda noted:

> Production companies love Los Haitises because it looks so wild. But there are signs these shows cause damage. The rangers cannot really cope with the television crews. Clerks are bribed to allow all sorts of things. Preservation depends mostly on the ecological awareness of the production companies. If they harm nature, the authorities can do little about it. [Ilani and Ring 2000]

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Figures 12. Taino stone carving and mangrove forest in Haitises
Off camera, the lived experience between the state and the inhabitants of Los Haitises National Park reveals a contentious history. Since the 1990s, the Dominican state has evicted thousands of farmers who had lived in the area for decades, asserting their rights to the Commons. The deterritorialized façade of Survivor, however, obscures such violent borderwork and power relations.

Figure 13 Survivor Reality TV show and Robinson Crusoe

Friction through tigueraje practices asserts that the DR is a “real place” with a “real history.” But these NonPlace representations strive to create a new global relational space that repopulates a heteronormative world of flow with properly subordinate women and safely commodified relationships.
**Las Ballenas is made up of micro-utopian moments or differential practices.**

The disruption of NonPlace logic through sociospatial practices that inspire a kind of ethic for the social commons is the third of the five factors which produce Las Ballenas as a space. These practices that encourage social exchange and/or sharing of knowledge, resources, or social pleasures are often overlooked as significant because economic logic devalues what it cannot measure.¹⁶ The commons (re)produces identities and knowledges and reclaims social space in ways that sometimes run counter to the logic of capital and privatization. Performed, embodied practices that evoke the commons and Lefebvrian “moments” include the evicted squatters mentioned above who continue to “trespass” and plant their crops in national park spaces (Chapter II). Another example of achieving a “micro-moment” is when Haitians, as illegal migrant laborers, refuse the nature/culture divide and populate an otherwise alienating and even hostile social world with the *lwa*, or voudou spirits with their “magical” thinking (Chapter IV). And finally, sex workers differentialize space and enlarge their territory when they takeover masculine spaces of the street or achieve a kind of carnivalesque inversion of power and feeling of solidarity (albeit temporary) when they perform at the Disco (Chapter VI).²⁷ Regardless of whether such practices of spatial appropriation are intentional political acts or unconscious

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¹⁶ Although producers increasingly seek access to the commons including its social forms such as cultural circuits, information banks, and communication networks.

²⁷ In the context of this space and within sex work, the mechanics of manipulating sexual attraction through erotic emotionally-charged visual stimuli become a paradigm for all forms of desire (used commonly in advertising) and are therefore important social skills to embody in order to attain and hold onto social power.
“symptoms,” these practices also make up the differential “lived space” of Las Ballenas and constitute alternative “interstices” of possibility.28

The Dominican state has limited governmentality with which to order space.
The fourth of the five factors is the Dominican state’s limited governmentality which leads to a range of extralegal and peripheral arrangements with squatters, illegal migrants, and informal workers that challenge modern notions of statecraft. Incomplete disciplinary force is also reflected in the state’s own inside corruption as seen in the high number of robberies and regular bribes perpetrated by police-thieves and the land title fraud committed by government workers in the state registry which peaked into well publicized scandals during my fieldwork in 2007-2008.29 The National Coordinator of the Land Registry, for example, compared the office to a drug cartel due to the magnitude of false titles it issued and because of its insidious tentacles through which hundreds of millions of pesos moved with the complicity of lawyers and authorities.

28For lived place is also “the dominated – and hence passively experienced- space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (Lefebvre 1991:39).
29 As Partha Chaterjee (2004) notes, “The paralegal ... despite its ambiguous and supplementary status in relation to the legal, is not some pathological condition or retarded modernity, but rather part of the very process of the historical constitution of modernity in most of the world”(74).
Las Ballenas is dominated by informal economies.

In the final of the five factors, Las Ballenas is produced by its informal economies. Despite the state-driven move toward professionalizing its workers in the tourism industry, the majority of landless poor have no access to formal tourist jobs and will, therefore, continue to access the informal economy through alternative social networks and practices (tigueraje) which challenge the goals of a modernized state. Corruption as a kind of benign clientelism, and “milking the gringo cow” practices to ensure patronage based relationships (Chapter III), are seen as extensions of the local values of privileging community (individual differential needs) over systems (bureaucratic, abstract needs). In other words, when rule-based, depersonalized welfare structures do not exist, informal dynamics based on negative reciprocity such as squatting, tigueraje, and corruption dominate social space.

30 Source: Diario Libre, July 9, 2009
These five factors then characterize the embodied spatial production of Las Ballenas: that it is conceived as a transgressive borderland, its abstract, NonPlace logic, differential practices, limited state control, and robust informal economy, also constitute the productive nature of its ongoing borderwork fraught with negotiations over meanings and identities. While differential tactics may disrupt hegemonic space or enlarge social worlds otherwise restricted by structural poverty and reveal the limits to state power, tigueraje strategies and arrangements around bodies, land, and labor are not necessarily adverse or unknown to the projects of capital accumulation, development, and state legality. Instead, modern tourism and increased individualized opportunism that seek to exploit tourism’s dominant structural forces “from below” are continuing to replace the traditional forms of reciprocity in which relations are as valued as the object or service being exchanged. In turn, this is creating conditions of negative reciprocity where each individual strives to minimize loss and maximize gains in terms of capital accumulation (Sahlins 1972). “Is it true,” I was often asked, “that where you live, the people no se pega?” (don’t “stick,” in other words, lack unity). Locals began to describe their own society in a similar fashion, as a product of the loss of confianza or social trust and reciprocity—the “glue” that binds neighbors.

Qualifications to neoliberal flows challenge the “globitarianism” (Trouillot 2003:50) of the flow metaphor that otherwise mimics a dominant ideology or metanarrative of Western modernity and the North Atlantic dream that both explains and hides reality. In a globalized age where successful moderns are viewed as decidedly mobile, this study will examine how some people flow across sociosymbolic boundaries with unimpeded ease while others encounter them as

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31 Traditional forms of exchange include cooperative farming efforts like the turnapeon.
friction-generating obstacles. But even as borders attempt to regulate "acceptable" or legal sociospatial movement, they also invite subversive strategies, all of which contribute to the complex dynamics of borderwork, a dense politics of friction and flow.

Lefebvre’s emphasis on the hypercomplexity of social space allows me to analyze the emerging friction filled borderwork and power relations of this Caribbean space because his analysis involves a multitude of social spaces that superimpose, nest, and interpenetrate in an assemblage of competing hegemonies. The contemporary complex entanglement of space is itself a product of contradictions and synergies between both. Friction then, as found within tigueraje practice, is a useful conceptual tool that uniquely acknowledges how hypercomplex spatialities can cohere at awkward intersections to normative concepts of legality and statehood.

**Borderwork and Space**

One of the central analytic concepts derived from my field research is the notion of borderwork. When “symbolic boundaries,” acting as the medium through which people acquire status and monopolize resources, gain wide consensus, they become “social borders” where social differences can be objectified and manifest in unequal access to resources and social opportunities (Lamont and Molnar 2002). Within this hierarchy of difference, the cultural practice of making and sustaining boundaries (borderwork) protects and fortifies borders around identity and place, even as it exploits or transgresses them. The concept of borderwork aims to capture the dynamic whereby social agents on different sides of specific boundaries of identity

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32 Following Stuart Hall, I see identity-work as constructing a temporary “meeting point” or point of suture that (re)forms the subject and enables them to act (Watts 1992). Following Michel de Certeau (1984), places here are both discursively mapped and corporeally practiced.
and place simultaneously fortify, undermine, and strategically manipulate those boundaries to their own social advantage. Boundaries mark gradients of power that limit or promote mobility and also invite transgressive strategizing on the part of those they intend to constrain. For example, the solid and arbitrary border with Haiti that marks racialized spaces of citizenship and “imagined community” also dissolves into “leaks” through the informal trade transactions that evade national accounts.33

Crossing borders, as tiguere do (the savvy cultural brokers of tourist space), disrupts sociospatial order and creates intermixed spaces of uncertainty. “All margins are dangerous…any structure of ideas is vulnerable at its margins” (Douglas 1966:121). Therefore, the notion of belonging—the social glue that Dominicans term confianza, is threatened when people cross borders, “leaving spaces where they 'belong' and entering those where they do not” (Torpey 2000:12). In the context of new ideals such as development, democracy, freedom, and prosperity which threaten to undermine certain social constructions of difference, boundaries, as forms of localized knowledge, must be constantly reworked and acted upon to establish difference anew.

Las Ballenas represents a borderland space where, today, hosts are experiencing the sweeping consequences of their home being mapped as a major Caribbean tourist destination, dense with transnational circuits and flows. Cosmopolitan guests such as European expats arrive with the desire to maximize material and social privileges and are seduced by the prospect of life beyond “Big Brother” on a tropical, primitive paradise.

33 Despite the Dominican government’s tax law amendments to regulate the retail sector operating out of small shops supplied by Haitian vendors, the majority of these transactions still go unrecorded.
And tourists, as temporary sojourners—whether lying on the beaches of all-inclusive resorts patrolled by armed guards, touring the Caribbean by cruise ship, or checking into a high-end boutique hotel—seek a more sheltered kind of leisure experience to rejuvenate their world weary souls. At the same time, migration motivated by economic need rather than the desire for leisure or pleasure continues to motivate other forms of travel for Dominicans and Haitians. Haitians, historically constructed as the Dominican national “other,” migrate across the island’s border or off isolated Dominican sugar plantations and are an increasingly visible and precarious presence as they physically construct tourism’s paradise as laborers in the burgeoning local construction industry. Young, migrant Dominican women are also traveling from rural to urban areas, many motivated by dreams of a more affluent life married to foreigners abroad. When different social groups such as these interact, and traditions and cultures overlap, borderland spaces are created.
The size of these borderland spaces depends on the geographic or conceptual reach of cross-boundary transactions such as claims upon bodies (sex tourism), land ownership, and nationhood. Boundaries always imply the existence of rules and often precede social reality. Boundaries can be located through identifications that map the edges of national, moral, or economic territories, simultaneously connecting and dividing various subjects and categories, masking how integrated and mutually defining these identifications really are. In so doing, they construct limits around what is called, for example, “wife” and “concubine,” “businessman” and “criminal,” “corruption” and “free market,” and the “formal” and “informal” economy in the Dominican Republic. Groups challenge categories of identification based on what material advantages they might gain or lose.

As I mentioned previously, the contentious social contracts that permeate this place are somewhat disguised by the force of tourism itself which, as an industry, seeks to package and sell leisure experience and thereby obscures the everyday (nonleisure) experience of class struggle. Retired expats and vacationing tourists are not familiar with the class structure of
Dominican society outside of the tourist zones where class barriers appear to be relaxed. Dominican elites are well aware and generally disapproving of those outsiders who connect socially or intimately with locals and bring them into what would otherwise be considered middle or upper class spaces (restaurants, hotels, cafes). Guests often therefore muddy the expectations around social contracts that have traditionally kept hosts “in their place” in the broader Dominican society. At the same time, guests, as hedonistic or cosmopolitan sojourners seeking their own kind of freedom from social structures back home, often resist long-term social contracts or binding obligations to hosts that limit their own fluidity.

Tensions arise when the nostalgic EuroAmerican guest who dreams of a “pre-modern” world discovers his ethnic fantasy woman wants to become a dynamic consumer of global commodities or when the Haitian migrant worker, socially excluded by his anxious Dominican neighbor, seeks to earn status by capitalizing on the Dominican fear of their perceived African-derived magical money-making abilities. These moments, when competing claims of identity or representations of bodies, places, or nationalisms surface among various social actors, exacerbating stereotypes and scapegoating practices that reinforce or diminish social inequality, track the perception of vulnerability and empowerment for various social actors. These moments demonstrate how borders around race, nation, gender, and citizenship strengthen and weaken in relation to experienced degrees of friction and flow.

Every negotiation or encounter, from bargaining over the price of an avocado to the police sweep of a disco to the eviction of Haitians, has the potential to reinforce notions of difference or produce new blended or “hybrid” cultural forms of belonging. Some theorists emphasize the local capacity for imagination in such processes of indigenization, such as when squatter settlements or informal labor practices occupy formal spaces whereby foreclosed
knowledge enters the public discourse and estranges the basis of authority (Bhabha 1994:114). Through “imagined worlds” villagers are able to “contest and subvert the imagined worlds of the official mind” (Appadurai 1996:32).

To summarize, my project is an extensive examination of the intersectionality and spatialization of sociological concepts like “race,” “class,” “gender,” and “nation.” In linking the “real” borders of bounded domains such as “nation” with the conceptual borders of social categories such as “class,” I emphasize the social construction of both. Both physical/national and social borders, policed by the empowered, invite transgression by the disempowered. Subjects who employ tigueraje successfully disrupt border logic, even if only temporarily, and are constituted at the intersection of multiple borders in specific local contexts. Policing (violence) and representation (discourse) produces a politics of inequality and manifests as material and immaterial borders. Borderwork is, then, the actual work of building up, or tearing down, the walls that protect inequality.

![Motoconcho buscone](image-url)
**Tigueraje (Tiger-ness) and Buscones**

In Las Ballenas, traditional village economics is based on the patronage model of relations which involves friction-filled, long-term mutual but unequal commitments. The modern contractual model that guest expats seek to exploit in their contracts with locals involves more flow and thus contradicts the traditional system of exchange. In relations of inequality, everyone strives to maximize flow, but for the subaltern that means inserting more friction into the relation through tigueraje tactics, including thieving as a way to redistribute wealth and squatting to usurp land. And when those tactics fail, more direct actions of violence may occur which I will discuss in the context of the increase in crime that spiked in 2006 (see Chapter VII).

Las Ballenas is dominated by informal economies which itself is indicative of the state’s limited governmentality, the failure of neoliberal ideals such as claims of progress through development schemes, and structural violence embedded in transnational capitalist flows. Because of these leakages from “above,” tigers (hustlers) emerge from “below” as mediators between villagers and authorities, deftly navigating networks of patronage to attain resources, extort various persons over property titles, organize public demonstrations or strikes for local political parties, inform police or INTERPOL, as well as bail out local thieves or prostitutes. Because tigers act as agents of both the state (police) and the subaltern (villagers), they are simultaneously inside and outside the state’s sphere of influence. Tigers are tricksters who are fundamentally ambiguous and therefore may subvert or support various hegemonies as they *aprovecharse de otros* (take advantage of others).

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34 Structural violence is a term coined by Johan Galtung and liberation theologians in the 1960’s to describe social structures that result in disparate access to resources, political power, education, health care, and legal standing. These structures seem so ordinary they often appear invisible (Farmer 2006).
Tigueraje, with its bricolage (making do with what is at hand) tactics, provides a rationale and a means for a disenfranchised population to oppose state and transnational development that excludes them. The term tiguere is believed to originate in association with those who resisted state oppression under the Dictator Trujillo (Turits 2003) as well as is attributed to the dictator himself for his ruthlessness and womanizing. Tigueraje describes the strategies of the Dominican antihero who acquires his reputation through subverting the respectable values and formal structures of the larger hegemonic society. He may do this by acting out lower class macho “street behavior” like fighting, drinking, womanizing, but also, the tiger indexes qualities like selfish opportunism, deception, and greed in a way that is both valorized and condemned.

Tigueraje is a good example of how residents in Las Ballenas disrupt space and contribute to the friction of borderwork. In producing counter-hegemonic space, tigueraje describes one way Dominicans seek to reject exploitive relationships with outsiders and advance themselves or their families.

Importantly, the experience of Dominican tigueres also captures the ambivalences and paradoxes within power relationships of borderwork, pushing the boundaries in terms of what is socially permissible without fear of being rejected by society. In fact, the tiger is eroticized by hosts (and many guests) because he/she contains these paradoxes. Tigueres, as tricksters, are important figures because they mediate difference, absorb contradictions, and draw away the dangers of inbetweenness producing social space in the transgressive borderland of Las Ballenas. Yet tigueres also unsettle, creating an environment of excitement and danger, like the Haitian shape-shifter with the ominous evil eye or the Dominican prostitute encroaching upon social spaces formerly reserved for upper class women.
In “playing” in the dangerous border zones between established power structures and moral codes of respectability that attempt to justify these hierarchies, tigueres negotiate borders that are both potentially dangerous and lucrative. Tigers point to where agency and structure meet because they identify what is at stake in the preservation of borders and are therefore able to manipulate those stakes to play competing interests off each other.

Las Ballenas is a place where tigueres tend to prosper and “legitimate” social actors flounder. As an informal worker who often seamlessly occupies several roles, the tiger relies on social networks, brokered knowledge, and availability of time and credit. He often adopts the role of the buscone, a kind of hustler-trader who delivers the desired goods after circumnavigating the state’s bureaucratic loopholes and incomplete governmentality. Buscones emerge within the competitive environment of Las Ballenas to translate and manipulate local mundane reality into the “stuff” that foreigners desire, brokering the exchange for drugs, children, sex, or beachfront property. Buscones then may be used by corrupt police or other resident thieves for information on the routines of the very same foreigners, which may later be used to organize a robbery.35 Buscones also may be paid to do mundane tasks such as stand in line for hours and then find the right official to bribe in order to hasten the process of securing papeles (documents like passports or national cedulas or birth certificates, land titles, certificates of good conduct to secure employment).

35 Thieves practiced their thieving openly in Las Ballenas but outside the barrio in which they resided so as to avoid self-contamination. In general, thieving was not stigmatized among the working class, although publicly derided when outsiders were present. Its widespread occurrence functioned to redistribute wealth, for “‘Loot’—or static wealth lying idle in the home of the bourgeoisie—is a stock, independent of current income flows, mobilized through theft into direct and indirect income for sub-proletarians” (Hart 1973:27).
In their role as translator, buscones are adept at absorbing and indigenizing a torrent of foreign images, ideas, and consumer items and are just one of many beneficiaries of a society with corrupt bureaucracies who learn to navigate its breaches and gaps when disenfranchised from social mobility via other avenues.36 Above all, these savvy cultural brokers must exhibit the desired tigueraje qualities of wit, charisma, and cleverness, and have enough command of both guest languages and needs and host inside knowledge and contacts of and within bureaucracies (such as the police), to get the job done. Struggles involving tigueraje at all levels are what make Las Ballenas such a productive place in terms of borderwork, resulting in friction.

Figure 18. Dominican DVD vendor

36 According to Transparency International’s Corruption Perception index for 2009, corruption in the DR is widespread and remains endemic in government, the private sector, and security forces despite recent reforms. The DR was ranked 99/180.
Friction

In her book *Friction*, Anna Tsing uses her title to describe “aspirations for global connection and how they come to life in ‘friction,’ the grip of worldly encounter” (2005:1). Her ethnography of environmental exploitation and resistance in Kalimantan emphasizes how universals are coproduced through frictional global/local interaction and thereby become engaged as they “travel across difference and are charged and changed by their travels” (8). In order to usurp land from previous claimants and feed foreign markets, capitalist entrepreneurs alter the Indonesian landscape through extralegal (rather than corporate) means. In response, an unpredictable geopolitics of place emerges in a social drama that involves a range of vested interests including international environmental scientists, UN funding agencies, students, and North American investors, to name a few.

In my own depiction of friction, I seek to spatialize the friction and flow metaphor to describe the relationships of different social groups and individuals to the “practiced space” that I call Las Ballenas. Too much friction means getting stuck, and too much flow means deterritorialization or the lack of cultural connection to the spatial localization of place.³⁷ So my central questions revolve around how locals use different tactics to increase flow in their experience of friction in order to enlarge their social spaces and avoid getting stuck. I also investigate how expats, tourists, developers, and local elites with hyperflow (capital, passports, agency) strategize to avoid getting stuck by the friction of locals who want to secure contracts around the selling of their land and labor that maximize their cosmopolitan interests. Friction

³⁷ Culture is the “historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic form by means of which men communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (Geertz 1973:89).
illuminates what flow effaces and allows for a processual approach to power, scale, agency, locality, and action.

As Tsing argues, while friction and the resulting zones of awkward engagement it produces “remind us that heterogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power,” friction is not always resistance (2005:5) “hegemony is made as well as unmade with friction…friction makes global connection powerful and effective” (6). Friction results from obstacles to supposed unimpeded movement, as various flows across borders are diverted, arrested, or stymied in daily life as power struggles around labor and citizenship express themselves on a local/global scale. While Appadurai (1996) introduced the useful notion of flow, other scholars have now situated flows, borders, and their intermixing (hybridities) more firmly in relation to political economies and struggles over meaning.38 If flow organizes our amnesia around place, agency, and perspective, Tsing’s friction allows for a corrective so we can analyze process and culture at multiple scales of power.

Situating Globalization Theory

To summarize then, through analyzing borderwork on all levels of what I term friction and flow, and in terms of spatial tactics, my project in the liminal borderlands of a Caribbean island critically examines globalization in terms of its promises and lived realities. In the context of asymmetrical border-making and power-laden practices that are as global as they are local, I examine the protective and prohibitive function of borderwork. In particular, I consider under

38 For example, Ulf Hannerz (1997) concedes asymmetries in “flows” in higher education and biomedicine. Flows allow for rivulets, confluences, whirlpools, “even leaks and viscosity in the flow of meaning” (6).
what conditions borders (geographic, political, national, gendered, racial, economic, sexual, etc.) are constituted and under what conditions they dissolve.

Globalization theorist Arjun Appadurai wrote that while mobility in general is not new—we have seen centuries of migration, trade, and political exile—what distinguishes our time is the “disjuncture between these social processes and the mass mediated discourses and practices (including those of economic liberalization, multiculturalism, human rights, and refugee claims) that now surround the nation-states” (1996:199). In this light, neoliberalism, the utopian ideal of the free market, can be understood not as simply a pregiven structural feature of an objective thing called "the global economy" but as a metanarrative or powerful story of meaning that naturalizes certain privileged cultural practices and needs collaborative agents. In tight, boundary-dense geographic spaces like the DR where discourses, bodies, desires, and informal/formal economies are bound to collide and expose their contradictions, fields of inquiry can open up and invite competing narratives of truth, reality, and value. Because flows can conceal a range of structural violence, often normalized by institutions and regular experience, which prevent vulnerable bodies and spaces from preserving their integrity and reaching their full potential, they need to be qualified. The concept of flow is worth preserving if it accounts for and distinguishes between the following:39

39 This breakdown of the “flow” metaphor was gleaned from my notes taken during a discussion led by Prof. Mary Pratt who spoke at the University of Illinois Humanities Institute, Chicago March 9, 2006.
In the anthropological literature on recent forces of globalization, as social relationships based on commodities (monetary transactions) increasingly began to replace those based on kinship and gifts, ethnographies began to classify flows into types of material and immaterial

Table I. Qualifying Flow

- Kinds of movements, as between the migration of domestic laborers from Santo Domingo to Washington Heights, New York, and the travels of sex tourists from Europe or Japan to the Caribbean.

- The issue of directionality of, say, money in the amount of $450 billion from poor countries to the rich, three quarters of which flows to the US in form of debt service payments. According to the Dominican Treasurer, the DR owes Venezuela US$1.9 billion; US$624 million to Brazil; US$395.3 million to Spain and US $315.5 million to the United States (“Treasurer calls Dominican Republic’s US$10.7B debt “sustainable” 2011)

- How flow naturalizes and obfuscates state policies, transnational arrangements, and structured institutions that create these possibilities and impossibilities of movement (from the World Bank and free market corporations to the lopsided dispersion of culture through Hollywood films). In the DR, both the tourism sector and its free trade zones are dominated by foreign investors who rely on cheap national labor.

- How flow, as an intransitive verb, can obliterate human intentionality and take existential dimensions of human movement off the table, from excruciating choices forced upon people to the emancipatory possibilities to which mobility gives rise; and

- The assumption that flow will reach a tranquil horizontal equilibrium so that the market is imagined as a leveler and

In the anthropological literature on recent forces of globalization, as social relationships based on commodities (monetary transactions) increasingly began to replace those based on kinship and gifts, ethnographies began to classify flows into types of material and immaterial
commodities. These studies tended to focus on the transfer of physical commodities (for example, gold, tin, body parts; migration or a commodified labor force such as rural Chinese women; and ideological diffusion or the moving of commodified cultural ideas such as New Age spiritualism). These ethnographies, ranging from structuralist to poststructuralist perspectives, analyzed the ways cultural content within these moving commodities was reinterpreted or erased by the transfer, the ways the flow created new social spaces, and often, the way vulnerable bodies were exploited. To generalize findings in these and other anthropological studies, globalization tends to multiply cultural boundaries creating new cultural others, accelerates the pace of development through time-space compression, and may threaten traditional identities or (conversely) renew past mythologies in order to ground an unstable present. My own analysis builds on these studies of space and vulnerable bodies as well as neo-Marxist views (as in Bourgois 1995) and post-structural theories that emphasize everyday forms of agency as spaces of resistance located inside historical and material structures, such as those espoused in Foucault’s circulation of power (as treated in Pun 2005).

40 This ethnographic shift from kinship to consumption within the field of anthropology was predicted by Miller (1995:153-7).

41 For ethnographic references on gold, see Aiyer (2004); for tin, Nash (1979), for body parts, Schepher-Hughes (2000); for rural Mexicans, Rouse (2002); for rural Chinese women, Pun (2005); for Indian movies, Larkin (1997); and for New Age spiritualism, Brown (1997).


43 The macrothematic structure of this dissertation also in many ways resembles Steven Gregory’s 2007 transnational ethnography The Devil behind the Mirror: Globalization and Politics in the Dominican Republic on spatial economies, structures of the imagination, sex tourism, and the politics of transnational capital in the Dominican tourist town of Boca Chica. But its microcontent and design makes it a completely unique work, attributable not just because of the difference in authorship but because of the uniqueness of the subjects interviewed and the particularities of their stories. I am also indebted to the previous economic ethnographic study entitled Tourism and the Development of Capitalism in a Dominican village conducted in 1994 by anthropologist William Jay Meltzer of the University of Michigan.
As a dominant taken-for-granted ideology, globalization can obscure the way different labor markets within and across nations, the increased flexibility of finance capital, and the variable integration of consumer markets worldwide are changing the spatialization of society as inequality increases within and across political boundaries. One theorist identifies these shifts in terms of “polarization” and “entanglement” that “create new ways of perceiving distance—spatial, temporal, social, and cultural—shaping a new horizon of historicity called ‘fragmented globality’” (Trouillot 2001:129).

In order to unpack these hidden assumptions around globalization, the metaphor of flow has to be critically analyzed and the social cultural processes that surround it problematized in processual terms. As flows tend to mark continuity and passage of cultural process in which sharp lines blur, boundaries also track discontinuities and obstacles, differentiating various zones of uncertainty. I aim, therefore, to critique flow theory by showing how unique local histories at the community, regional, and national level engage with global processes through bordermaking struggles.

**Dissertation layout**

This dissertation is divided into eight chapters which link my analysis and discussion of empirical material back to the core theoretical arguments around how people enact and spatialize their desires/appetites against various borders. Chapter I has laid out the conceptual framework

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44 Anthropologist Michel Trouillot has written on the “death of utopia” that accompanies today’s “fragmented globality” whereby the “urgency of the short-term,” the norm in finance, accompanies a “long-term future” that has ceased to captivate us. The importance of this shift, as Trouillot sees it, is that “Western claims to global legitimacy rest in part on the capacity to project North Atlantic dreams of possible futures as beneficial and necessary to the entire human species” (2003:69). And it is unclear what is filling this void following the death of the North Atlantic dream.
of the dissertation and serves as a comprehensive literature review by situating globalization theory in terms of “friction” and “flow” and defines my key theoretical terms around “borderwork” and space. Chapter II discusses the context of Las Ballenas and the history of land consolidation that follows developers’ “accumulation by dispossession” (Harvey 2003). This chapter also analyzes the resulting friction or tigueraje (savvy, opportunism) around land title disputes. Chapter III has two foci. I first focus on the feminization of labor in the context of tourism development; secondly, I assess informal workers’ perception of their daily risk/vulnerability in a confusing climate where workers’ rights diminish under neoliberal conditions at the same time democratic expectations of empowerment are growing. Villagers’ perception of these changes is gauged by discussing their attitudes and strategies around debt, price negotiations, and income generation. Chapter IV analyzes the Dominican state’s desire for cheap labor and nation-building. Haitians, who are labeled perpetually “in-transit” by the Dominican state, are the most sociospatially incarcerated subjects in tourist space. They are scapegoated as the Dominican racialized other, believed to have insatiable appetites themselves as cannibals who also possess money-making magic. Chapter V documents historical and contemporary flow strategies. First I describe several NonPlaces in which history and a sense of belonging are erased, from airports and cruise ships to televised film and reality shows. I argue that these NonPlaces represent an ominous illustration of deterritorialized capitalist flow logic which dominates tourist spaces. And then I examine how the management of difference and desire for the “Other” has transitioned over time by comparing historical methods of trying to manage colonial desire and fear around blending with difference, such as the obsession around being “tropicalized,” with contemporary representations found in postcards, photographs, beauty contests, expat narratives, and the “panoptic” cybergaze. Chapter VI describes the construction
of the “promiscuous, impure” native female subject in contemporary times and her responding tigueraje strategies to create friction and social contracts with guest males who are vulnerable in their desire to be seen as essential men. Chapter VII documents the tigueraje, corruption, and rising crime that result from the state’s limited governmentality. While some individual cultural brokers (such as hustlers, police-thieves, or developers) who take advantage of state gaps in security, materially advance, the village cohesion and community at large suffers from conditions of expanding “negative reciprocity” based on opportunism. The violent property crime that spiked in 2007 is a symptom, I argue, of the escalating anomie and marginalization among villagers—both Haitian and Dominican—who perceive they are unable to create friction and connect with global flows by any other means. I conclude Chapter VIII with some final thoughts about the ongoing dialectic of power relationships that constitute borderwork and sociospatial segregation.
Chapter II: Accumulation by Dispossession

What the World Bank, what the NGOs, what all the apostles of neoliberal self-help depend on is the availability of cheap, squattable land, and the existence of entrepreneurial opportunities in the informal sector. If you exhaust those two, people will be driven to the wall – and then the safety valves won’t work. [Davis 2006]

Development

If development is a kind of post-colonial contract between rich and poor countries, factors that contribute to a nation’s inequality pose significant challenges to the rhetoric of that promise. The implicit assumption behind development theory is that enhanced technology and telecommunications, as well as the commodification of space, will position a country particularly well for competition in the global economy. Historically in the colonies, development planning has been built on previous modernizing tactics like the imposing of clock time, cadastral and topographic mapping, cataloguing and privatization.45 Development then means standardizing various systems (accounting, regulatory, and legal) in order to attract foreign investment.46

Today, development continues under several distinct features that accompany globalized capitalism which are fundamentally spatial and deterritorialized. The first factor is intense time-space compression which has enabled transnational corporations to exploit cheap labor, resources, and tax breaks. Those who profit in this environment are clearly the owners of mobile capital who actualize and embody flow. A second key spatial tactic of globalized development entails eliminating any barriers to the movement of capital, such as transaction costs associated

45 Mimi Sheller (2003) and Maria Mies (1986:188) and others have researched how these tactics of modern science accompanied the destruction of subsistence economies in the colonies.

46 This definition is akin to Thomas Friedman’s “software” concept is his popular book The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-first Century (2006).
with transportation and communication. The importance of place then becomes based on local conditions such as taxes, government regulations, and labor costs rather than relative location or accessible markets. Such local differences are reproduced through the spatial segregation of reproduction, uneven capital investment, and the geographic distribution of labor which combine to catalyze a highly contentious and competitive politics of place. Today in the Caribbean, while global corporations and mobile tourists cherry-pick their location for a free trade zone factory or packaged holiday, in the fixity of place, workers resort to tigueraje tactics (Schep-Hughes 1992) or “weapons of the weak” (Scott 1985) to survive with resilience as they link to transnational circuits. Of course, counterstrategies are enacted by developers too. The distinction is that capitalist sabotage against worker is hierarchical or even “antisocial,” aimed at the benefit of few at the expense of the many.47

Capitalism in its current moment, then, increases inequality within and between nations because it continues to benefit capital over labor while promising a general increase in prosperity that materializes unevenly and fitfully. We can see this “globalized” moment of capitalist integration of markets, nation-states, and technologies as “a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware [through media] that they are receding” (Waters 1995:3).

As the ideology steering globalization and political economic decision-making, neoliberal principles consist of generating greater efficiency in market relations (free trade) through

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47 As Elizabeth Gurley Flynn writes in her 1916 pamphlet essay “Sabotage: Its Necessity in the Class War,” “There is the employer's sabotage as well as the worker's sabotage. Employers interfere with the quality of production, they interfere with the quantity of production, they interfere with the supply as well as with the kind of goods for the purpose of increasing their profit. But this form of sabotage, capitalist sabotage, is antisocial, for the reason that it is aimed at the benefit of the few at the expense of the many, whereas working-class sabotage is distinctly social, it is aimed at the benefit of the many, at the expense of the few.”
“liberating” private enterprise from the state, cutting public programs, reducing the safety net for the vulnerable, deregulating anything (including health and environmental regulations) that reduces profit, privatizing state owned goods (like highways and bridges) and concentrating wealth, and emphasizing individual responsibility over public welfare. Neoliberalism has unique impacts on island economies which are already dependent on foreign investment and exports as competition with Asia has increased. Trade agreements emphasizing market efficiency impede developing countries’ ability to consume, produce, and redistribute on a local scale.

As daily life becomes more commodified, and goods compete with matrifocal networks as objects of value, older residents note the rise in social costs of crime, violence, sexual exploitation, and diminished confianza. For the majority of working villagers, the impact of tourist development has resulted in contentious borderwork in which identities and social lives are being actively negotiated around sites of struggle over land and labor relations and along national and gender lines. 48 As wealth is accumulated and social relations grow more stratified, those without access to resources or capital grow more desperate to participate in the market economy by creating friction for guests, even as those guests with resources and capital seek to preserve and maximize their flow.

In this chapter I will discuss the history of land tenure in the Dominican Republic and then establish how tourism as a capitalist force inflated land prices in Las Ballenas as it also increased wage employment and entrepreneurial opportunities in the service sector, thereby amplifying local patterns of material differentiation. I will then turn to a discussion of modern day tigueraje around land, that is, acts of appropriation such as squatting or planting subsistence

48 Again, I am using the term borderwork to describe the dialectical imposing/deconstructing of rules and surveillance on society that results in the social spatialization of difference.
crops in privatized national parks and land title disputes. These tigueraje acts influence spatial formation and appropriate government authority as migrants encroach upon the state’s sole right to “found settlements, distribute residential rights, regulate property relations, authorize constructions, and the like… [leading to] a recurrent pattern of urban [tourism] development: those who lacked the rights to settle [organize] to usurp” (Holston 1989:270).49

This section also establishes a baseline historical reference point from which to explain and contextualize modern cultural phenomena (frictions and flows) in Las Ballenas described in subsequent chapters. The doctoral student that established this baseline data, William J. Meltzer of the University of Michigan, noted, with regard to land tenure, that two of the three largest land holders in the early 1980’s in Las Ballenas were locals. All three landowners were absentee and connected to commercial enterprises in the area. Therefore one of Meltzer’s conclusions around the development of capitalism through tourism at the time he conducted fieldwork (1984-1986), and one that is still useful to keep in mind with regard to more recent social changes in the village, was,

It is the organization of tourism enterprise as capitalist businesses – not their owners’ citizenship or their location of their bank accounts or other investments— that minimizes the distribution of the tourism industry’s benefits and its effectiveness as a general source of local material betterment. [1994:651]

**The Early Settlement of Las Ballenas**

Prior to 1911, land was abundant and underpopulated in the Dominican Republic. Dominicans relied on land for subsistence as well as for growing cash crops.50 This shifted when the DR’s

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49 James Holston is describing a pattern in urban Brazil.
50 See Appendix A for history timeline of land occupation by freed slaves during the Haitian occupation from 1822-1824 and up to 1910.
early capitalist class, made up of the five-thousand Cubans who had fled the first Cuban War of Independence (1868-1878), successful Dominican merchant financiers of European origins, and Curacaoans, established the nation’s first sugar plantations and produced other export crops of cacao, tobacco, and coffee (Hoetink 1982:77). These early capitalists helped finance the state budget in return for large commissions and exorbitant rates of interest (Cassa 1986:127). Private and foreign (mostly US) owned sugar mills compelled the state to convert large tracts of land into sugarcane fields, displacing many small farmers, squatters, sharecroppers, and small proprietors.51 As well as making legitimate purchases, sugar companies used intimidation, coerced sales, forceful seizures, and fraudulent land titles to drive small farmers off the land and establish legal possession (Cassa 1986:127; Clausner 1973:125). Eventually unsurveyed and unclaimed lands that had been de-facto communal for four hundred years were seen as an agricultural commodity.

Some villagers became semi-proletarian farmers, while those separated from the means of production (the land) worked on small and medium sized farms owned by merchant-capitalists from the Eastern Cibao (heartland) as tenant farmers and sharecroppers (Cassa 1986:123). Dependency and patronage characterized these productive relations between villagers and merchant-capitalists and merchant-capitalists and the state, which were supported by international credit and non enumerated (nonwage) labor.

To national elites at the turn of the century, much of the DR remained woefully underdeveloped. According to Vega, in 1880 the DR lacked

51 In 1907, three companies owned nine out of the fourteen mills and controlled 67 percent of the cultivated sugarcane land. Eight of these mills were owned by North American or Cuban families.
cities, paved roads or industries…secondary schools and universities, and its most developed institutions included a church that was devoid of priests; a caricature of an army plagued by generals and regional strongmen called caudillos who constantly competed for leadership; a bureaucracy that was extremely inefficient and ignorant of statistics and whose administrative practices had been inherited from parish colonial procedures. [in Moya Pons 1981:212]

Things did not improve when world sugar prices plummeted in 1884 causing the Dominican sugar cane industry to go into crisis for two decades. Dominicans began to retreat as a labor force on these sugar plantations—never to return—and resumed their subsistence farming while workers were imported from other countries. By 1910, despite the introduction of the telegraph and newspapers, the DR still had only two roads and 90 percent of the population was illiterate (Moya Pons 1981).

In comparison to the nation’s interior and urban capital, the Samana peninsula was more under-developed and neglected by the state, largely due to its hilly topography and geographic isolation; the same factors which made the area appealing to fugitives, runaway slaves, and others seeking to avoid colonial, national, or regional authorities. But then a railroad was built that linked the nearby port town of Samana to the interior. Los Cocolos (day laborers from the British West Indies) who had been imported as the labor force to supply the sugar and cocoa plantations also built and maintained the railroad through the 1940’s, adding to the racial mixture of the peninsula’s population which now spoke Afrohaitian, English, and Spanish dialects (Hoetink 1982). Another town northeast of Las Ballenas, Sanchez, became a thriving port opening up a new route by rail for exports of cacao and tobacco from the nation’s interior. Las

52 Host families described their ancestors as having had more contact with foreigners traveling by sea than with their own countrymen from the interior.

53 According to Pichardo, files from the Ministro del Interior y Policia documenting immigrants to the area in the final decades of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries are unfortunately missing for the district of Samana (Vega 2007:177).
Ballenas grew in relation to this boom. But the railroad and its surrounding settlements languished under Dictator Rafael Trujillo (groomed by US forces) who ruled from 1930 until his assassination in 1961 (Aracena 2000; Vega 2004).

The US occupation (1916-1924), which was enacted ostensibly to stabilize the Dominican economy and bring an end to internal revolutions in the region, helped consolidate US corporate influence in the DR. The US sold equipment, invested capital, and imported sugar to and from the Dominican sugar industry. By the time the US withdrew its troops and recognized Dominican sovereignty in 1924, the DR was left with “an improved transportation system, disarmed population, a centralized military, a sugar industry dominated by US corporations and controlling southern lands, and an economy linked to world prices and dependent on the US For much of its commerce” (Meltzer 1994:124)

Meanwhile, Las Ballenas continued to function as it had for centuries, in the periphery of the global capitalist system. According to census data, only 56 families lived in the village in 1935. In terms of social life, Meltzer’s study (1994) found that because of the availability of land and sea resources and the laissez-faire attitude of the state, locals (dark-skinned slave descendants and fairer skinned farmers from the Cibao, the Dominican heartland) intermarried without strong racial prejudice and were quite free to live and prosper without selling their wage labor. Virgin state land could be used or even claimed by any male or heir of a widow who owned land. A 1932 law permitted “poor Dominicans” to purchase state lands over a ten year period and set limits of 30 hectares for a single farmer plus 15 for each additional farming male with a limit of 120 hectares (Amiama 1982:343). In this manner locals continued to view the land as an agricultural resource.
As they continue to do today, Meltzer noted that villagers cleared land through slash and burn methods and planted subsistence tuber or root crops as natives did in pre-Columbian times, intermixing them with corn, okra, or beans, near fruit or (more recently) coconut trees which provided shade for more modern plantation crops such as coffee and cacao. The multiple uses of these lands ensured year-round food supplies keeping the land productive for four consecutive years. The plots were then abandoned and planted with grass for cattle grazing or re-used for crops after several years of being fallow. Villagers raised fowl, goats, and pigs, and used burros and horses for transport. They also continued the indigenous practice of fishing by net (for squid and octopi) or hook and line in their boats, which were similar to the dugout canoes made by the Taino of *ceiba* or *javilla* (types of local wood) (Vega 2007:19).

Meltzer (1994) observed the majority of villagers living in houses made of rough palm planks with palm bark roofs and dirt floors; many lacked medical care, electricity, and water. These conditions had changed little during my fieldwork in 2006, the significant exception being that I noted a majority of homes had concrete floors. Before the road, villagers told Meltzer they had to haul agricultural or seafood products for sale over the mountains by horse or mule, a difficult ten hour journey, in order to buy, usually on credit, manufactured goods such as machetes, fish hooks, or oil.

My own interviews with elder villagers support Meltzer’s findings that barter and reciprocal exchanges organized around family households continued to characterize most internal exchanges for subsistence needs. Prior to 1940, there were no employers or buyers of local produce to create a cash-based economy. When a pig or bull was to be butchered, local people recalled that the conch trumpet was blown from a hilltop the previous night, and the owner of the animal would distribute the meat for cash, barter trade, or disperse supplies to
families in need after taking their share. Male elders remember the way farmers supported each other, unlike the “laziness” of Dominican male youth today, in juntas and turnapeons (cooperative communities), participating in cambiar dia (the process of exchanging a day’s labor for neighbors). Midwives assisted during childbirth and, occasionally when there was an emergency or complication during birth, the conch trumpet would be blown again, and villagers would carry the woman on their shoulders in a hammock to Sanchez.

**History of Land consolidation (1920-1970)**

Nationwide between 1920 and 1960, 3 percent of the total number of farms owned 50 percent of latifundios (arable land of 33 plus hectares) while 85 percent of farms held 20 percent of land called minifundios (less than five hectares) (Vargas-Lundius 1991:161). After 1948, President Trujillo increased the consolidation of arable land when he intensified his involvement in this commercial sugarcane production, doubling its land use in a little over a decade. During this time, the dictator’s family and representatives seized 60 percent of the nation’s land through forced eviction, colonization schemes, and spurious purchases. As part of this land consolidation project along the Samana peninsula, Trujillo’s government enacted a formal process of recognizing land ownership by conducting a cadastral survey which produced two maps of the area showing the boundaries in which 218 parcels of land spanning 1606 hectares were claimed; 47 parcels were claimed by the State. Informal contracts that allowed for sharecropping were not noted on these maps but were a common practice at the time (Meltzer 1994:210).  

54 Today tenants are obliged to pay owner about one-fifth of harvest or its cash-equivalent unless the owner is a relative in which case the terms are more causal and flexible.
Based on 1980’s estimates by village farmers of the amount of land needed to provide subsistence for a household (at least four hectares), these maps reveal that over half the landowners had sufficient land for subsistence farming. According to Meltzer’s informants (sales were not officially recorded at this time), land was sold for 20 centavos per tarea in 1920 (3 pesos per hectare), and he interviewed one resident who claimed that in 1945 he bought 600 tareas for 250 pesos and sold them the next year for 375 pesos plus the next year’s cacao harvest worth an estimated 200 pesos (1994: 206-219).55

Between 1935 and 1950, according to the Dirección General de Estadística Nacional (DGEN), the population of Las Ballenas as a seccion (section) grew from 671 to 1,100 with five to six hundred people living in the “urban zone” by the mid-1940’s.

### Table II. Population growth in Las Ballenas56

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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But by 1955, the land pattern was established in which a minority of landholders controlled much of the land, although the amount of land was relatively small (under 75 hectares).

Table III. Comparative Land Distribution\(^\text{57}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit of land in acres</th>
<th>&lt;7</th>
<th>7&lt;15</th>
<th>15&lt;25</th>
<th>25&lt;50</th>
<th>50&lt;75</th>
<th>75+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Las Ballenas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Properties</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% area</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>31.3</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samana Prov.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% farms</td>
<td>77.8</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% area</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>34.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Vega Prov.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% farms</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% area</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>55.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Pedro Prov.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% farms</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% area</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>90.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% farms</td>
<td>83.9</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% area</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>47.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^\text{57}\) Sources: Direccion General (1955); Cadastral Maps (1947) in Meltzer (1994:218).
Throughout the 1960s, Dominicans purchased already claimed lands or carved out cultivated plots and established ownership in unclaimed state-owned territory by marking some boundary through techniques that often led to disputes among villagers, such as clearing land or trails, erecting fences, and digging trenches. The government gave one founder of Las Ballenas, a high-ranking regional political-military officer appointed during Heureaux’s presidency (1887-89), a large 500 hectare land grant (Meltzer 1994:178). Since the 1920s, the only “tourism” in Las Ballenas was centered around the Saint’s Days festival where “owners” of certain Catholic saint’s days pledged loyalty to various saints in exchange for favors and the ceremonies drew hundreds of villagers to the area.

After the 1960’s, as one Dominican historian noted, the ownership of land began to hold cache for the "urban classes, and especially the nouveau riche traders, professionals, and military, [who] invested their saving in the purchase of rural properties as a means of gaining economic security and social prestige” (Vega 2007:227). A privileged minority of wealthy Dominican elites began to visit the Samana peninsula by jeep, boat, or motorcycle to attend the Saint’s Days religious festivals and enjoy the unspoiled beauty of the peninsula. Senior villagers remember that President Trujillo’s yacht was often docked in the Samana Bay.

The national political economic situation was summarized by one Dominican historian in the following terms: “Trujillo inherited a traditional and backward society in 1930, and when he died he left behind an underdeveloped society in transit towards a capitalist economy that was distorted by his own monopolist industrial development” (Vega 2007:228). The fall of the Trujillo regime in 1961 opened the floodgates to internal migration. Between 1920 and 1981, the number of towns in the Dominican Republic with more than 5 thousand inhabitants rose from 7 to 60 (Oficina Nacional de Estadistica 1983).
It also opened up the issue of land reform as the government expropriated local landholdings by means of Decree 6988, thus laying the foundation for today’s uneven and contentious land policy. In 1962, liberal reformer Juan Bosch proposed land reform, but by 1975 only 17 thousand out of 400 thousand displaced families needing land were resettled. A year later Bosch won the election, but his policies threatened the church, landed elite, and military, so he was overthrown nine months later and exiled to Puerto Rico. US-backed candidate Joaquin Balaguer returned to power and was re-elected in 1966, initiating twelve years of brutal repression over oppositional parties.

In 1969, under the highway extension program, a two way road opened to traffic from Sanchez to Las Ballenas allowing local products (yams, plantains, citrus fruits, manioc, etc.) to be sold to urban markets for the first time and introducing cash into the local economy. It was not until the 1970s under President Joaquin Balaguer, that the state promoted tourism with the development of the Samana port and later the construction of a hotel for state elites. Many older residents who worked on cocoa plantations migrated to town to seek jobs in construction and remember being paid around three pesos a day. Although development in the northeastern Samana peninsula started in the early 1970s, infrastructure of the port, airport, and town was stalled because of the nation’s economic woes. For the next 30 years development was slow and erratic, but the seeds of tourism were planted.

58 Balaguer won elections repeatedly into his senility and almost always amidst rumors of fraud.
The Beginnings of Tourism in the Village (1970-present)

The first wave of expat-adventurers arrived in the late 1970s to enjoy what they described as a lost paradise. They were primarily a “boho” crowd (artists, exiles, hippies), uninterested in establishing capitalist ventures. Senior villagers recalled feeling curious about meeting foreigners during these early encounters, and also somewhat ashamed at recognizing their own “backwardness.” Foreign visitors recalled the warmth and hospitality they received before “everything was for sale.” The road that now existed was still quite treacherous to navigate. In the 1980s, Pedro Rubio Polanco, a wealthy landowner whose family was widely believed to be former “Trujillistas,” blamed the horrible condition of the roadways for the town’s lack of “life” and visitors (Reyes 1981). Elliot Barfield, one of the early foreign arrivals, described his nine hour drive into the pueblo on a road which he referred to as a “donkey trail.” He told me, “Driving is perhaps an exaggeration because we slid, careened, bumbled our way along. The road was full of rocks and mud…at one point in a rain storm we slid down the mountain. You have no idea how rough it was, impossible to imagine.”

In 1972, the first foreigner, a North American locals called El Loco (the crazy one), bought land and allegedly planted the first marijuana plants in the area. According to senior residents, in 1980, El Loco earned his name by pouring gasoline on himself and setting himself on fire in the pueblo streets after discovering his (white, North American) woman had been with a black man, a story told by expats as a kind of parable to the dangers of transgression and, by Dominicans, with a good deal of humor. Some Dominicans remember El Loco carried a “book

59 Among the families that owned the largest landholdings in the Samana province, Dominicans believed that several were friends of the Dictator. For example, one family, accused of stealing land by fencing it in and coercing locals to sell at low prices, started several local enterprises such as a sawmill, soap, and match factory, and were believed to be closely related to Trujillo who was part owner of the profitable match factory, the only one of its kind in the nation (Clausner 1973:273).
of secrets” (perhaps a Bible) around with him that gave him powers and amazing physical strength. After he burned himself, the book was singed to his corpse, and the locals had to keep the dogs away until US helicopters came to retrieve his body for burial.

In 1973, a French-American couple, Jean and his North American wife, arrived from the French Antilles. They both had experience in the ski resort business and, according to land registry documents, bought six tareas of land for 1000 pesos (Meltzer 1994:285). They constructed bungalows that they rented out at twenty pesos a night. Later they purchased twelve more hectares which they sold to European friends. The couple was remembered as being good guests, sleeping on the beach as their hotel was being constructed and bartering their daily catch of fish with locals for fruit or viveres (produce). They employed six Dominicans, sold local food, and kept the cash income in an unlocked cigar box on the hotel bar. According to Ricardo Conde, a Dominican developer from the capital who had invested in Samana from its early days, the couple was offered endless amounts of land for nothing but was not interested in speculating. “Jean could have been a rich man, Mayor of Las Ballenas, but that didn’t interest him,” Conde said, shrugging.

It did, however, interest many other urban Dominicans and foreigners whose investments were aided by Balaguer’s government and the economic crisis of the Dominican state in the early 1980’s.60 From 1970-1986, tourism expanded through the sale of (especially coastal) land, creating a significant class of landless poor, the erection of private vacation homes belonging to outsiders, the introduction of tourism businesses and the new wage-labor jobs they provided, and

60 The three largest land holders at this time were all absentee parties connected to commercial enterprises in the area, although two were locals. One of Meltzer’s (1994) conclusions around the development of capitalism in the region was therefore, “It is the organization of tourism enterprise as capitalist businesses—not their owners’ citizenship or their location of their bank accounts or other investments—that minimizes the distribution of the tourism industry’s benefits and its effectiveness as a general source of local material betterment” (651).
the settlement of a new class of elite foreigners. By the mid 1980s, twice as many tourism businesses were owned by outsiders as locals (Meltzer 1994:516-532).

The first abstract spatial institution, to use Lefebvre’s terms, of bureaucratic law and order was erected in 1975 when an army post was built in the village. Its officers, encouraged villagers to avoid guests, a prelude to today’s constant admonition by police to “stop harassing the tourists.” And, in abstract terms of time, one expat remembers how one hotel owner, frustrated at his employees’ chronic tardiness, bought wristwatches for his staff so they would start the workday at a proper hour. But they continued to arrive late. When he demanded why they just shrugged and pointed to the stone tower. “But jefe (boss), we set our watches to the clock tower.”

Figure 19. The town square clock, rusted by the salty, humid air to mark the start of the workday at 11:35am for perpetuity.

Imported commodities continued to create new desires and practices. Expats remember when the film Saturday Night Fever was projected on a wall, and it became the rage to strut around town in tight, flared jeans with a comb in the back pocket. A local entrepreneur with one
of the first TV antennas in town posted a sign outside his home advertising soap opera viewing for ten centavos. With access to markets and cash, Dominican villagers also developed consumer appetites for processed foods, many of them imported from the US whose goods had been granted tax-free duties ever since the US occupation. A half dozen colmados (small grocery stores) operated in town selling items like soup bullion, noodles, and tomato paste and carrying brand names like Colgate, Gillette razors, Band-Aids, Welche’s grape juice, Nestles Chocolate, Vics Vapor Rub, Alka-Seltzer, Ben Gay, Quaker Oats, and Carnation milk. This pattern continues today.

According to Meltzer’s (1994:361) data, from 1976 to 1977, fishing technologies improved from net, hook, and line fishing to masks, snorkels, and spears for snorkeling and spear fishing, and the state provided fishermen with 18 small outboard motors. Yet despite the increased demand for fish, boat owners did not significantly improve their standard of living because of over-fishing, high expenses, and the seasonality of fishing which did not coincide with tourist arrivals.


61In 2006, Fortune magazine contained an economic section focusing on the Central American-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) which emphasized the Dominican consumer appetite for US products (70 percent of consumer goods sold are imported from the U. S.) and the country’s thriving telecom industries. Established patterns of Dominican consumption continue to be a key obstacle to the growth of local industries (Vega 2007).
By 1978, the last of the owners of the Saint’s Festivals in Las Ballenas had died, marking the death of the old form of tourism connected to Folk Catholicism which reinforced reciprocal ties of residents with friends and kin. In its place came the new tourism based on mobility and class privilege which reinforced the commercialization of fishing and farming, generated construction, real estate, informal/illegal activities and accelerated the cash economy. Two thousand Dominicans visited the area’s beaches for the national celebration of Semana Santa (Saint Semana) in 1978, and those locals who set up stalls to sell fruit made a substantial ten-
peso profit in one day, well above a worker’s wage at the time. While some villagers were now able to access more cash, the commodification of social life also brought its predictable tensions as bartering through labor or viveres continued to diminish as cash and, more significantly, credit, became available (Meltzer 1994:291-296).

Eager to consume commodities that became available in the village (and a source for competition and envy as they are today), villagers began to sell their plots of land willingly, Meltzer notes, and not because they were alienated from the agricultural market. Yet they lacked an appreciation for the real commercial value of their land, especially near the coast, and often settled for a low price they thought los ricos (the rich outsiders) were “crazy” to pay (258). Other locals began to speculate and profit (265). Many local disputes over land ensued but were handled locally by El Junta (town council) for fear of harsh measures by outside state authorities during Trujillo’s extremely repressive regime.

Signs of wealth began to stratify the community as differences became more visible between the land-rich and land-poor. Status markers included having cement floors, metal roofing, clothing, furniture, TVs and radios. The former sense of equality among hosts was undermined by these emerging status markers that asserted class difference at the same time their collective labor processes diminished with the increase in wage labor.

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62 This period marks the Christian “Holy Week” preceding Easter.
Figures 22. *Casas típicos* (typical houses) today. Note washing machine in doorway above, left.
Figure 23. Dominican market featuring viveres

Figure 24. Upscale Grocery
Figure 25. cheeses and pastries

Figure 26 The extravagant interior of Balaguer’s hotel, now owned by Pinero.
**National Scene (1980-present)**

Despite some material improvements for a minority, challenges to the majority of the working poor have only increased under neoliberal reform and development of the Dominican economy. As the government sought foreign exchange through tourism and export manufacturing, living costs increased and real wages were reduced. Between 1983 and 1989, while foreign industrial investment was down, land consolidation, income concentration, and dependency on foreign imports were on the rise.63 In 1984, land consolidation increased further from 1960 as 2 percent of farmers on latifundios occupied 55 percent of land while the great majority of small farmers (82 percent) on minifundios occupied only 12 percent of land (Vargas-Lundius 1991:154).

This pattern of reform encouraged the fragmentation of the labor market whereby cheap labor merely sustained or increased poverty levels and further depressed internal demand. By January of 1983, austerity measures consisted of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) approving an Extended Fund Facility (EFF) arrangement which called for a large increase in controlled and subsidized prices, particularly petroleum and also foodstuffs.64 At this time, 40 percent of the DR’s import spending went to food from abroad. President Salvador Jorge Blanco who ruled from 1982-1986 asked, to no avail, that the Fund’s administrators to reconsider their terms, claiming the program was “excessive and …could not be absorbed in the short period of one year, without providing social shocks which would threaten the stability which it has cost the Dominican Republic so much effort and sacrifice to obtain and preserve” (Boughton 2001:691).

63 Foreigners controlled 34 percent of industrial investment in 1981, compared with 87 percent in 1941 (Vega 2007).

64 According to de Vries (1985:503-506), the EFF was established to help countries administer “comprehensive programs that include polices of the scope and character required to correct structural imbalances in production, trade, and prices” (in Boughton 2001:639). While support could extend three or more years through such credit, the interest rate would be the same market-related rate.)
As IMF restrictions created further devaluation of the peso and food prices increased, an estimated 80-100 Dominicans were killed by state police in riots that took place in the capital in 1984 as negotiations were coming to a close. Despite his commitment to the Fund’s administrators, Blanco promised his constituents not to raise oil prices.65

Balaguer again returned to power in 1986, in the thick of an economic depression and amidst further accusations of electoral fraud. IMF restrictions in 1987 resulted in a devaluation of the peso and a drop in real wages. As purchasing power plummeted, foreigners again took advantage of bargain tourism prices. Food prices soared under inflation, and imports increased. By 1988, the government employed half the work force. In 1989, the poorest 34.3 percent of families received only 8.8 percent of national income, whereas the richest 11.8 percent received 44.2 percent.

Balaguer was re-elected in 1990, and again, in 1994, even though he was rumored to be senile and almost blind.

In Las Ballenas by 1990, of 308 households, occupations in construction (34), services (35), commerce (32), and tourism (36) outnumbered those in fishing (29), although agriculture remained dominant (148) (Meltzer 1994:326). Nationwide, in 1992, 4.2 million Dominicans, more than half the population, were poor, and 2.5 million were living in absolute poverty (Azuela et al. 1998:91).
By 1995 seven million peasants had migrated to urban and tourist zones in search of a better life. By 2002 census data showed that the population of the Samana province had doubled since 1980 to 75,253. The area was now accessible by sea, air, and land, and Las Ballenas was well on its way to becoming a tourism destination spot.

The Dominican economy saw substantial growth in the 1990s as trade flourished in tourism and free trade zones. But the decline in tourism post 9/11 was accompanied by corruption scandals in 2000 as the state bailed out three major banks engaged in unauthorized lending of over $2 billion. With 42 percent inflation, the peso lost more than half its value, power shortages continued as government renationalized two power plants, and the price of consumer goods soared. Riots and political upheaval ensued again during 2003-2004 as FTZs struggled.
under increased pressure from Asian competitors and as NAFTA lowered the tariff barriers to Mexico.

According to the Office of the United State Trade Representative, on March 1, 2007, the Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) was enacted in the Dominican Republic, “creating new economic opportunities by eliminating tariffs, opening markets, reducing barriers to services, and promoting transparency.”\(^66\) However, USAID documented the serious challenges the DR would need to surmount in order to benefit from the trade agreement, such as “improve efficiency and transparency in customs procedures, the protection of intellectual property rights, the enforcement of environmental and labor standards, sanitary and phytosanitary [having to do with the health of plants] regulations, fair trade practices and dispute resolution, and government procurement of goods and services. In addition, small businesses, including farms and tourism enterprises, [would] have to become more competitive to survive and expand in an open global economy.”

With these contradictions around neoliberal development in mind, my dissertation builds on Meltzer’s ethnography of the development of tourism as a capitalist force by charting social political-economic change to the present day. My study shows a direct relationship between

\(^{66}\) CAFTA-DR consists of Costa Rica, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the DR. The U.S. export markets in CAFTA-DR for the Dominican Republic in 2009 were $5.3 billion, and the U.S. import suppliers were $3.3 billion. The top export categories (2-digit HS in 2009 were: Mineral Fuel ($2.9 billion), Electrical Machinery ($2.6 billion), Machinery ($1.7 billion), Special Other (low value and charity shipments) ($1.4 billion), and Cereals (corn, wheat, and rice) ($1.2 billion). U.S. exports of agricultural products to CAFTA-DR countries totaled $3.0 billion in 2009. As a group it would be the sixth largest U.S. Ag export market. Leading categories include: coarse grains ($580 million), wheat ($397 million), soybean meal ($382 million), and rice ($223 million). The five largest import categories in 2009 were: Knit Apparel ($4.8 billion), Machinery ($2.6 billion), Edible Fruit and Nuts (bananas and plantains) ($1.5 billion), Woven Apparel ($1.4 billion), and Optic and Medical Instruments ($1.3 billion). U.S. imports of agricultural products from CAFTA/DR countries totaled $3.6 billion in 2009. As a group it would be the 3rd largest supplier of Ag imports. Leading categories include: bananas and plantains ($831 million), coffee (unroasted) ($762 million) other fresh fruit ($630 million), raw beet and cane sugar ($231 million), processed fruit and vegetables ($183 million), and fresh vegetables ($180 million). See http://www.ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements/cafta-dr-dominican-republic-central-america-fta
increased commodification of values and deteriorating social cohesion, or increased competition between social actors and a rise in violence and crime. The acceleration of time and space that has quickened the pace of this latest phase of tourism development in the village has created a spike in social advancement expectations and desires among villagers that cannot be delivered to the majority who seek them. As we will see in the closing chapters, the Dominican state and its elites and their foreign partners, having reinvested their attention into the peninsula as a business enterprise, are addressing this instability of the area with strong abstract tactics in order to discipline this formerly known ‘Wild West’ and control any unruly subjects, expat or national, in the process.

**Summary of Land History Section**

This chapter has described a key site of borderwork processes, illuminating the dialectical relations between abstract and differential forces which characterize what geographer David Harvey has termed the larger capitalist process of “accumulation by dispossession” by developers (2008:34). It tracked the signs of progress and development, the history of settlement, the shift to wage labor, and the process of land accumulation along the peninsula from 1911 to the present decade as formerly public unoccupied land was mapped, measured, and commodified.

The next section explains the struggle over land and the incomplete state bureaucracy that allows corrupt developers to produce fraudulent legal documents to avoid taxes and earn kickbacks by state representatives and elite property owners. It also describes the cynical realism among the population and the exploitation by tigueres, asserting adjudication or squatter’s rights
and sanyanimieto (literally “cleaning up,” the process of putting a land title claim through court), and the precarious placement of female beach vendors in this environment.

**Tigueraje around land titles**

![The Luxury Boutique Hotel on land formerly belonging to Pablo’s family.](image)

Figure 27. The Luxury Boutique Hotel on land formerly belonging to Pablo’s family.

One dusty, hot October afternoon in 2008, Pablo, a trusted informant whose family is from Sanchez, is teasing me about my cheap $35 disposable cell phone. He brandishes his new one and tells me it cost him $300 (on credit) and has a video and sound recorder so he can conduct interviews “just like you.” Finally he says, “I will show you my latest video,” and pushes a button and hands the phone to me. I watch the tiny screen and listen as he narrates, walking across a construction site of a boutique hotel, one that will be mentioned as “the most luxurious place in the Caribbean” by the *Conde Nast Traveler’s Gold List* in 2011. I know this land used to belong to his family but has since changed hands at least twice among foreigners. The current owners, a French-American couple, flew in antiques from Paris to furnish the high-end cabanas that rent out for $700 a night. The hotel website describes how the property sits on 15 hillside
acres overlooking the Atlantic with exclusive guest rooms containing mahogany soaking tubs, Frette linens, and French doors with louvered shutters that open onto private terraces. “See how beautiful,” Pablo is saying to the camera, as if he is a news anchor. He waves his hand around the construction site vacant of people. “It will cost the gringos US$2400 a night to sleep here …but this is not too much if you are rich.” He winks and grins to his imagined audience.

At twenty-seven, Pablo has seen a lot in the last ten years in Las Ballenas. His family also used to own land just past Playa Linda, but a Frenchman bought it. Pablo warned me more than once, “These foreigners here, many of them, are bad people.” As it turns out, the Frenchman murdered an associate. Pablo recounted, “Two years ago they [INTERPOL] found out and came to get him, and now he has thirty years in jail. He will die there. He was old already. And another one, an Italian, he photographed all this land in the northern part of the peninsula that wasn’t his, but he said it was, and he made a website and sold condos over and over, and when the people arrived they found out they didn’t have anything!” Indeed stories like this of mafia tigueraje are commonplace in the pueblo.

Now Pablo takes back his phone, looks around, and lowers his voice. “The French think they own this land but, mira [look], a lawyer told us there is a signature missing from the title we originally signed. My grandmother never signed it! So we are going to try to get it back.” I am sure all this will come as some surprise to Pablo’s employer who brokered the sale, not to mention the current “owners.” This tactic is merely another tigueraje scheme to socially advance in the highly competitive arena of Las Ballenas which has become dominated by guests. “It will take a long time,” Pablo continues. “Maybe seven-eight years. But we Dominicans have patience.” He smiles confidently and places the camera-phone carefully back in his jacket pocket.
As the vignette above reveals, borderwork and tigueraje around land ownership in Las Ballenas has grown increasingly contentious as property values have skyrocketed. Newspaper reports from the 1970s documented tensions around land dispossession along the Samana peninsula. One account reported that sixty campesinos (farmers) occupied two fincas (farms) armed with machetes, sticks, and pickaxes after the Dominican owners Placido Castillo and Anselmo Pina, who lived in New York, sold the land (Roman 1974). An American expat remembered a German landowner who teamed up with a Dominican as the first (but by far not the only “unscrupulous one”) who brought in the first lawyer and began to buy up all the land for a song, “descending upon the campesinos …having them sign papers they couldn’t read, misrepresenting what they were doing.” But, the expat pointed out, “On the other hand I would not absolve the peasants themselves of responsibility because often times they were selling land that wasn’t theirs entirely or cheating their own brothers and sisters out of their part of what they were selling.”

According to national and regional Tribunal de Tierras land registry documents, from 1970 to 1975, 19 local people sold 66 hectares fronting the beach in 44 sales to outsiders including 43 elite Dominicans (comprised of national, military, intellectual, and religious

67 In a similar vein of being careful not to “romanticize the peasants,” Barfield, an American expat, mentions that in the early 70’s there were still acres of virgin forest (mahogany and ebony) lining the coast that the locals cut down in their slash and burn agriculture to plant tubers. This is also a common complaint of villagers by state representatives who want to preserve national park lands for eco-tourism as we saw in Chapter Three with regard to Los Haitises Park.
figures) and 7 foreigners (1 Cuban and 6 US nationals). The average price was 170 pesos per tarea. From 1976-99, over 90 hectares were sold to outsiders in 71 sales (to 5 foreigners and 46 Dominicans) for the median price of 333 pesos per tarea, 7 times what hosts themselves were paying for land. Meanwhile the Director of the Catastral Nacional reported that some foreigners were using Dominican figureheads to buy great quantities of land at derisory prices (Gomez 1977). “The worry of the authentic natives of ‘Las Ballenas,’” wrote one reporter, “is that one day, at daybreak, they will be thrown out” (Reyes 1981).

Native villagers Abraham Taveras and Elias Anderson accused two or three “ricos” of taking control of the land—little by little—while taking advantage of the “ignorance” of the peasants. One of the ricos, Juan el Frances, was described as a “species of man with a whip in the hands,” who owned six cabanas, a yacht, race car, and land in El Moron, El Estillero, Jaimito, and Los Manantiales. On his car, the reporter noted, El Frances had mounted the head of a cow beneath the lettered title: “the chief.” Another landowner was Enrique Jackson, a German who the reporter said kept a pistol hidden behind his knee. Many believe that the two control “all the machinery” of Las Ballenas and had obtained between the two, “for pesos,” dozens of tareas of the district’s land. In the article, a young man named Cabito Drullard, who was caretaking a property, claimed the wealthy foreigner took ownership of the property by introducing animals

This office is the Land Court which issues titles, adjudicates disputes, validates changes, and transfers ownership of land parcels. As explained to me by a Samanese lawyer and through examining titles themselves in the Samana regional headquarters, the titles themselves include the following: the date of sale (often inaccurate), names of sellers and buyers (often misspelled which can result in a single party being represented as two or more), their residence/nationality, cadastral parcel number, specific location of land (often measured inaccurately), its price (often falsely lowered so as to reduce sales tax), conditions (sometimes the seller retained right to harvest crops, for example), and basis of ownership. Ownership was established by referencing the 1947 Cadastral Maps, themselves suspect as they were produced by a dictatorial government, or through inheritance, prior purchase, and long-standing and unchallenged occupation and use (a rare situation).

Both of these characters and their reputations were corroborated in my interviews with Elliot Barfield.
onto the land and fencing them in. Another villager complained, “When we hear it’s for sale, he’s already bought it!”

The reporter closed his article by writing that the villagers were aware that foreigners were making Las Ballenas “their own.” He wrote, “It is lucky that until now the locals have not been prohibited to bathe at the beach, but already there is a private beach zone with restaurant and cabanas where someone mounted a sign ‘prohibited to pass.’” The representative from Prieto Tours, the outfit that operated the hotel, told the reporter that ‘anyone who portarse bien [behaves well] is welcome to come to our beaches.’” This sentiment—that implies villagers behave badly or inappropriately in tourist settings—still reveal the mindset of tour operators today.

While landowners benefited from private infrastructure, the reporter documented how the village lacked basic government initiatives for electricity, an aqueduct, medical care, or paved roads. To get water, hosts tapped into a shallowly buried six inch pipe that ran by gravity from the spring to the village and hauled laundry to the river to clean their clothes. The reporter concluded in a statement that could easily be made today, “Las Ballenas, the campo [countryside] of the little farms and Caribbean huts, remains alongside summer mansions where whiskey and champagne flows” (Reyes 1981).

By 1985, the population of Las Ballenas was 1431 in the urban zone which held more than half of the houses (207 out of 386) as well as the medical clinic, village school, town hall, justice of the peace, civil office, two out of three bars, and three out of five churches (Meltzer 1994:293). As of 2007, there still was no public electricity for villagers in the urban zone, and
the frail water system described above still forced women to use the river to clean their laundry. 

Today the land title system in Samana remains highly erratic. According to one Dominican lawyer, 90 percent of the land in Las Ballenas has titles, three quarters of which are in dispute; further down the coast, 90 percent of the lands in El Limon still lack title. Land measurements have been historically unreliable. In 2009, Bolivar Marte, the Director of the Dominican National Cadastre Agency (Land Registry Office), announced that his office was negotiating with two foreign companies, one Spanish and one Israeli, to conduct the first official mapping of the country’s real estate for about $25 million. In the latest phase of land accumulation, Marte estimated the entire country would be mapped in two years. He emphasized the importance of what Dominican citizens would gain, namely the knowledge of “how much the Dominican Republic is worth” as well as (for developers) how much land was actually available for tourism development. Yet this mapping has been slowed down by a number of differential (counterhegemonic) forces that the state refers to as corrupt, bureaucratic inefficiency.

Problems with Marte’s mapping project began almost immediately. The first stage of the national modernization plan involved entering 600,000 out of 5 million land titles into a central computerized database by May 31, 2004. Satellite technology would identify where every “house, building, or land claim” was located. But when a total figure of 72 thousand square meters of registered land was calculated in a country where the borders only allowed for 48

70 On July 26, 2011, the National Institute for Potable Water (INAPA) installed an aqueduct that now provides 260 liters a second to several communities along the peninsula (drparadise 2011). Source: http://drparadise.wordpress.com/category/dominican-republic-real-estate/

71 A Dominican professor told me an Argentine firm hired to “fix” such problems found the titles were based on an outdated and inaccurate Excel spreadsheet formula.
thousand, the discrepancy was found to be due to a duplication of documents, a bureaucratic miscommunication between government agencies. This kind of incomplete bureaucracy often creates glitches in modernization development schemes in the DR and allows for corruption by non-elites. This space of corruption points to the contested nature of borderwork between developers and the disenfranchised and the blurring, co-constitutive nature of legal/illegal zones that only exist in relation to each other. \(^{72}\) “Corruption” is, therefore, a key site upon which to examine the dynamics of differential space, weapons of the weak, and tigueraje practices.

As mentioned in Chapter II, my own visits to the Land Registry office in Samana revealed practices typical of other registry offices in the country. The office itself was Kafkaesque—steaming corridors filled with moldy files contained in cabinets swollen in the heat with decades old titles and officials who laughingly admitted selling titles more than once. In 2005 in Altagracia, an area besieged with scandal, one parcel of land (parcel 67) was sold more than a dozen times (Compres 2005).\(^{73}\) In fact, in 2005, the National Coordinator of the Registry of Titles Wilson Gomez compared the Registry to a drug cartel due to the magnitude of false titles it issued and resigned his post after five years, wearied by the corruption, and vowed to “write poetry” instead. In the Santo Domingo province alone, another official remarked there were “hundreds” of land title mafias. In addition to falsifying the amount of land or forging the notary’s seal or an owner’s signature, other corrupt practices include issuing titles of improvement to “whomever seeded a tree,” selling environmentally protected lands “for the

\(^{72}\) Encarta defines corruption thusly: Dishonesty for personal gain, extreme immorality or depravity, undesirable change in meaning, error introduced into a text during copying, or a phrase that has been altered from its original form. According to Transparency International (2009), the DR scored a 3 on their Corruption Perceptions Index in which 10 is “very clean” and 0 is “highly corrupt.”

\(^{73}\) On June 3, 1996 one parcel of land was sold three times on the same day. Other titles are registered under people who have passed away (Compres 2005).
price of a dead cow.”

A Land Registry law established an indemnity fund from which to settle claims made as a result of the Registrar’s error, but unfortunately no money was ever put into the fund. In 2007, the Stewart and First American title insurance companies filled this gap in provision.

Titles are further complicated by squatter’s rights which are awarded if one can prove a piece of land has been in the family for over twenty years, a tactic that contributes to a slowdown in land acquisition by elites. Samana, according to long-time expat, Elliot Barfield, “was infamous in the country for having the most land disputes because every square inch of it is homesteaded.” The process of going through land court to argue for a claim, known as sanyanimiento, involves gathering twenty witnesses who can verify or object to the land’s parameters and testify that the squatter has or has not always been there. Relatives often appear to claim their share, complicating the process. Barfield explains other issues contributing to land disputes:

After four or five years if you are lucky you can develop your ownership. But as you can see this process is fraught with difficulty. Also then you have the problem of unscrupulous lawyers and surveyors, going in, measuring things, having the peasants sign papers, promising them they are going to give them their title when in fact they have sold it for nothing…

The other process whereby squatters secure land is called adjudication. Barfield continued,

There is a whole mafia around this—in the whole country, in fact, but most strikingly here. A foreigner or Dominican living abroad buys some land here, builds a house even, but it’s a vacation place. The foreigner or the Dominican goes away. Things happen. Life gets complicated. Perhaps they don’t return for years even. Occasionally they call the caretaker. “How are things going?” “Everything is

74 See “Investigan presunta mafia que falsifica titulos” by Federico Mendez. November 4, 2007
under control, Senor.” Meanwhile the treacherous people come along and say to the caretaker, “Look, you can end up with a lot of money. Here’s 100,000 pesos if you sign this document that says if this property comes to you through adjudication or any other way you are legally obliged to hand it over to me. But you need this money, and I’m going to give it to you right now. It will probably never happen, but maybe these people will never come back” Or maybe he doesn’t explain what the paper says and the caretaker just signs it and later they have them sign another doc for another 50,000 pesos that says something like this: “I am the caretaker of this property and the owners of the land have not paid me in three years. And they owe me all these back wages and so therefore they have gone, they have no other property in this country, so this property is mine by adjudication.” And this can go through the courts secretly and the owners don’t know what is happening. If they stay away long enough and don’t do any investigation about their land and make sure its ok, this can happen. It’s happened in some notorious cases. One in La Romana is a property worth $2 million. Eventually they got it back but had to pay off the claimants. It’s all very interesting that is why you have to stay on your toes around here. You are very lucky if you have a good caretaker here.

According to a Dominican lawyer from Samana, the first lawyer (apparently the treacherous sort) arrived in Las Ballenas in 1970, but the “wave” of lawyers came in 2003. Some of these lawyers approached squatters (homesteaders) all over the peninsula and encouraged them to invade or sell. As Barfield (2007) noted, a “good” caretaker is, in fact, indispensable to outsiders seeking to obtain a foothold in paradise. “Good” generally means a caretaker with whom foreigners have confianza. The same could be said of service workers (maids, security guards, nannies) who might be conveniently absent during a robbery, and neighbors who might serve as potential witnesses against them for some future claim. The need for solid relationships with service workers based on confianza serves as a powerful check and balance to guest power and influence in the community.

Barfield himself was offered 100 acres for $40,000 in 1980 (a nearby house on that land sold in 2006 for $1.5 million). He declined but did buy 70 acres in the lomas seven years later. Barfield (2007) recalls that he,
didn’t want to at first but the local people were eager to sell me things, and since I was the only gringo they knew, they started asking me, “Could you buy this, could you buy that?” and I thought, well, it is so beautiful. I do love it here. Why should I not live here and have a more permanent residence? And that was when the crazy gringo fell into the temptation of getting involved in these very sticky, sometimes impossible things where homesteading had happened. Who, however, were the heirs of such and such a place? Yet over time this particular gringo and others managed to work their way through, sometimes with problems, enormous problems, sometimes there would be so many problems they’d just jettison the whole thing and take the loss. Other times they ended up with something. Also true with the Dominicans who came from the capital here to acquire land. And the big landowners had the same problem. Suddenly it was being questioned “Are you really the owner of this land or not?” and then you’d have to prove it, and someone would come forward, “No that land was taken from my father,” and then there would be disputes in the land courts.

Often these disputes take up to 20 years as the judge weighs the testimony of the campesinos and their witnesses.

In Barfield’s case, it took 11 years to secure his ownership of property. He points all around him to others who were not so fortunate. “The land on this side and on the other side are in disputes where there are 5-6 different claimants for the land, and these things will take 20-30 years in the courts, and during all of that time things will be stalled. See this ruin over here.” I gaze at the foundation of a house on a hill with vultures slowly flying through its empty concrete beams and archways. “These are the broken tropical dreams [laughs]. But anyway I have my house so the hell with everybody else!”

**Female Beach Vendors**

As Las Ballenas became absorbed into the capitalist grid, the formerly open beaches became more heavily policed to preserve their pristine (read: empty of host traces) image for guest pleasure and visual consumption. Even so, many Dominican women in tourist areas were permitted to set up simple kitchens to cook Dominican staples like *habichuela* (rice and beans),
sancocho (a seafood stew), moro con guandule (black beans and lentils), pollo (chicken), and grilled fresh fish for guests at about US $5-7 a plate. These vendors continue to live a precarious existence in which they are always vulnerable to eviction by hotel developers as the following examples illustrate.

In 1990, the only structure on a popular beach we shall call Playa Azul was a crude cabin belonging to a North American guest: Barfield. By 2010, the area had been privatized and was then undergoing construction by Playa Bonita Beach Residences, a consortium of French and Dominican developers. Before the development, Yanorma, forty-six, had a kitchen business that she had been tending since 1996 on a prime section of beach. Yanorma had worked briefly as a maid in Santo Domingo when she was sixteen but found this type of work “the worst thing in life” because of its servitude and low-status.75 “My mother always used to tell me that whenever one does something and one doesn’t want to do it again, just make a cross and draw a line,” she said. And so she drew her boundary in terms of what she would put up with as a maid and decided to move back to Las Ballenas.

![Figure 28. Yanorma](image)

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75 Dominicans are very cognizant of the stigma attached to low-status labor and strive to avoid it unless necessary, lest they be treated or perceived “as slaves.”
ike many Dominicans I interviewed, Yanorma supported “progress” as signifying all things modern and convenient but feared the implications of the growing lack of confianza or unity among her community. She explained that there was a lot of envy among villagers fueling the mediation of witches and lawyers, both equally popular in the pueblo (village/town). She remembered that before tourism, when the area was known for its production of coconuts, coffee, and cocoa, all the beachfront land belonged to poor people who sold it, starting in the 1980s, “for nothing, maybe 50-100,000 pesos [US$1500-3000].” They did not know that by 2007 Las Ballenas real estate would be valued for its 35 km of beach, each meter worth $250-350. “And now they are trying to find a way to reclaim their land. But if the buyers did everything ‘legal,’ [in other words there were no bureaucratic gaps that tiguerage might fill] those poor devils will not get anything,” she said. “And now they no longer produce the coffee and cocoa, so what can they do? Only work in the hotel,” she says, shaking her head. “Soon—maybe two years—it will be all foreigners here, and we Dominicans are going to live like slaves.”

Yanorma told me the beach plot where her kitchen is located used to belong to the Barcelo company. Barcelo then sold it to the bank, and the bank sold it to a Swiss man who, in 2008, was not asking Yanorma for rent. But by 2009, a Dominican consortium named Playa Bonita Beach Residences was buying up the beach, and the future of Yanorma’s business was uncertain. The consortium offered to pay Yanorma a salary to cook, but it was a fraction of what she currently earned as her own boss. She declined the offer, expressing the disdain that many chiriperos (independent workers) feel towards wage work for a public or private sector employer which they equate with a lower standard of living. By December 2010, her beach kitchen was gone without a trace. In its absence was a construction site dotted with colorful billboards.
advertising the new development which read: “Enjoy, Live, Relax… Playa Bonita Beach residences: the true essence of Caribbean living.”

Similarly, two other beach cooks, Elena and Maria, found themselves at odds with foreign developers in business with Dominican elites further down the peninsula. The pair had cooked at their coastline spot on Cayo Levantado (the beach favored by cruise ship tourists) for 20 years and were now faced with eviction. They told me their earnings helped put their kids through college, “to study modern languages so they can communicate with tourists.” Elena and Maria pointed out that they were merely asserting their homesteading rights as long-time vendors, that they “had to raise educated children, not delinquents,” and that “knew nothing else.” Also, like Yanorma, they refused to work in hotels, echoing a strong preference for freelanced labor over service to an employer which many equated as a kind of indentured servitude, as noted before, that is reminiscent of part of a national history (slavery) that is actively repressed.

In 2005, the Spanish owned Pinero group chain Bahia Principe, who also owns hotel properties in Mexico and Jamaica, bought two more hotels on Cayo Levantado, making their total acquisitions of hotel properties across the island up to seven (four in Samana alone) with a total of 3,600 rooms ("El grupo Piñero invierte 50 millones en cuatro resorts de lujo en República Dominicana"). On Cayo they constructed a five-star “all-inclusive” resort with 191 rooms (priced at $672 a night (Kugel 2006), four restaurants, two tennis courts, and a heliport.


Another Pinero hotel in Samana perched above the harbour (see photo below) expanded from 72 to 500 rooms. At night, when most of the town was submerged in darkness due to chronic electrical black outs, this hotel alone shines brightly from its cliffside perch. Armed guards patrol the hotel’s private beach, accessible now only by elevator, effectively excluding locals.

Figures 29 . The private elevator to the beach hotel

Figure 30 The exterior of the Pinero’s hotel, in 2008, after the expansion.
Figure 31. Local Samanese walking along the port

Figure 32. The new marina in Samana with tourist boutiques constructed in 2009

Figure 33. Haitians constructing the marina.
Pinero has been cited with numerous environmental violations (even as they were issued certificates of “no-objection” by the Ministry of Tourism who contracted with French businessman Francoise Fontes) including building over mangrove swamps and into national parks and overextending room limits as well as the 60 meter coastal limit. By law, no development is allowed within a 60 meter zone from the high tide mark on the coastline, but the government often issues hotel developers special permits. In 2007 citizen groups protested Pinero’s privatization of its beaches along with a failure to present environmental permits for the expansion on Cayo.

According to Elena and Maria, in the process of acquiring Cayo, the hotel initiated several tactics to have the vendors removed. First they paid around thirty vendors to leave the beach. But fifteen cooks who had made an excellent living there for years rotating every three days using five kitchens refused. However, the cooks agreed to retreat their kitchens further back away from the sea. Later these cooks were dissatisfied with the new location which was pushed back near the public restrooms. When they saw sub-contracted engineers measuring a new kitchen in their old location by the beach, the cooks decided to fight back. The hotel then threatened to shut down their kitchens due to violations of hygienic standards, but the cooks sought out a public health inspector and received approval. Elena and Maria reported to me that Pinero representatives accused them of blocking development and progress on the island, so as members of the Vendor’s Association, they took their grievance to the boat owners’ association. There, during a public meeting, the cooks punctuated their story on a defiant note. “They don’t understand that they are the guests here. I say 100 pesos a day [US$3] is better than 100,000
[US$3000] for the rest of your life!” Elena shouted. “No problems exist here that can’t be fixed with a can of gasoline.” Marta chimed in, raising her fist as the other men in the room nodded.

Later, away from the other neighbors, Elena shifted her tone and admitted, “some of the other vendors are afraid. We are a country where the poor are easily quashed and the rich rise. But the law says that we are equal, and they cannot tell us we are not in compliance with the law.” Maria nodded and continued, somewhat in contradiction to Elena’s claim, “We had a meeting with them [hotel management], and they explained that the government certifies them to be here. Even though we are residents, we don’t have a single document that tells them it is our land. So they treat us terribly, like we are nothing. We have tried to make them understand we can both share the land, but they don’t listen. We will continue to persevere in peace, without rocks, without sticks… But if we need them…” The women nodded at each other, folding their arms across their chests.

Figure 34. Defiant beach cooks Elena and Maria

78 Dominican protests or huelgas (strikes) in the street usually involve setting tires aflame in the streets. Associations in the port of Samana are more organized and anti-outsider than in Las Ballenas.
Conclusion

In order to reproduce itself, capitalism must destroy noncapitalist social relations, spaces, and subjects, and it has achieved this through its various colonialist articulations for the past five hundred years. “New World” slave plantation societies, for example, provided a restructuring of the flows of energy, value, and food (sugar, coffee, tobacco) for the “Old World,” fueling its industrialization. Capitalism continues to consolidate territory through enclosure and the privatization and commodification of the island’s natural resources—particularly land. Historically these lands were treated as a commons, but now they are marketed to foreigners and Dominican elites as part of their generic hedonistic paradise or restorative playground leisure experience. Still, villagers continue to ignore property rights and trespass onto formerly unclaimed lands to plant their subsistence crops and homestead as they have for centuries.

In the next chapter, I will show how capitalist forces divide the village economy into formal and informal sectors and attempt to disguise the illicit practices of the former and the legitimate practices of the latter. It continues to broaden the historical context from which to explain modern cultural phenomena in Las Ballenas in today’s moment of advanced capitalism by discussing the rapid pace of development (economic restructuring) through tourism between 2006-2009. Then it links development to the rise of informal economies which resulted in class conflict or what Dominicans refer to as diminished confianza.

Chapter III also discusses the friction-filled borderwork between outside landowners (los ricos) and villagers around informal debt and borrowing practices. The pressure on villagers to socially advance leads to various tigueraje strategies including “performing love,” thieving fraud, and “milking the gringo cow” which has contributed to violent borderwork. As outsiders (tourists, expats) pour in with their own consumer desires for exotic otherness, Las Ballenas
provides a window with which to view the two dominant forces that define market capitalism today: those forces are the unprecedented merging of markets and increasing polarization of rich and poor (Davis 2006). The resulting instability across lines of difference is the context for future chapters that analyze sites of borderwork confusion or antagonism around mutual roles and responsibilities between villagers and foreign guests.
Chapter III: The Feminization of Informal Labor

One afternoon Marco, who worked as a security guard protecting the extravagant, commodity-filled homes of foreign guests, pointed to a rock formation named after the whales it resembled out in the sea.

Let’s say you were stuck on the whale rock with two million dollars. Now you tell me, what good is that money going to do you? Or if you are old and sick? A lot of things money can do nothing for, Delia.  

As was often the case, I, as an anomaly—an unmarried, childless foreign white woman—was woven into the context of the discussion to make a point about the benefits and losses of modernity.

Look at you. You are as free as a bird, and freedom is a very important thing, but who will take care of you when you are old? [sighing] Still, “ahora el dinero mueve las montanas [now the money moves the mountains].”

This chapter is broken down into two sections. The first deals with Tourism Development and Informal economies, including gender dynamics and the commodification of love. And the second examines the kind of loan-sharing and tigueraje strategies villagers develop to create more friction with transnational guests in order to offset their vulnerability, such as the strategy of “milking the gringo cow.”

In Las Ballenas today, market forces based on capital and commodities have thoroughly blended and often times compete with reciprocal kinship ties and barter trade arrangements. Twenty years after Meltzer’s doctoral work on the rise of the capitalist economy and the modest

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79 This became my Spanish name since no one could pronounce “Deirdre” with its difficult placement of “r”s.
beginnings of tourism in the village twenty years ago, my own work focuses on the dynamic borderwork between hosts and guests between 2006-2009 at a time when competitive conditions intensified. My work chronicles the stage that led up to a unique period when the Dominican state reintegrated the region (beginning in 2007) using its police force in response to a spike in violent crime and rising real estate value. In Lefebvre’s terms, I document a new phase of how the space of a Dominican village, previously ignored by the state, was brought into the logic of the capitalist system as social relations and bodies were commodified, land re-mapped, and residents re-represented through tourism advertising and global media to establish modern day hierarchies.

I argue that tourism can be read as a reshuffled way for guests to consume exotic difference or, as bell hooks (1992) phrases it, “eat the other”, motivated by a desire for recognition and nostalgia for a mythic, pre-modern era. To the Dominican, to consume is healthy and indicates wealth and a vital appetite. Villagers use the term comer (to eat) in relation to sex and consumption in general. But in their observations of some guests who indulge in consumption without restraint, villagers remark, “ta bueno comer, pero comen demasiado [It is good to eat, but they eat too much].”

Post-Columbus, tourism acts as a kind of “new conqueror” whose beneficiaries are elite nationals along with their foreign partners. Meanwhile, residents who struggle in the wake of state and transnational flows may experience a kind of “national identity crisis” according to Ceara-Hatton (2005) and according to Dobral, a kind of “pessimism” (Vega 2007). Resident

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80 This metaphor of “eating” is used by global elites as well. In 1994 at a closed-door meeting of the Gorbachev foundation in San Francisco where participants agreed that only two-tenths of the world’s active population was needed to sustain the twenty-first century’s world economy, John Gage and Scott McNealy of Sun Microsystems suggested their future motto as “to have lunch or be lunch” (Trouillot 2003:56)
identifications do not conform to romantic notions that go along with a nostalgic primitivism of guests, nor are they comfortable with the Dominican class-based system of old which relegates them to immobile servitude. They instead see themselves as dynamic consumers eager to socially advance and move to tourist areas knowing these areas are suffused with linkages abroad.

But the construction of tourist space itself, in its creation and marketing of generic NonPlaces (discussed in Chapter V) tends to restrict flow for locals and thereby increases their incentive to create friction as villagers are pushed out of spaces designated for tourists, such as on privatized beaches. The emerging sociospatial segregation that results along the peninsula helps create state zoned and regulated spaces for the elite, emptied of the people (particularly Haitians) whose labor produces those spaces.

**Tourism**

The DR has modernized its economy beyond agriculture through its fastest growing export sectors: free trade zones, telecommunications, and its tourism industry which accounts for nearly 1.5 billion in annual earnings, the same amount Dominicans in the US remit back to their home country each year. In 2005, the tourism sector became the largest national employer (Ribando 2005), although formal jobs in tourism such as animation director, hotel reception, and management are reserved for educated, urban Dominicans, pushing the majority of migrant workers into the informal economy.\(^8\) Despite these economic advancements, within the DR,

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\(^8\) Over 171,000 workers are employed in *zona francas* (free trade zones), 70 percent in textile manufacturing (Human Rights Watch 2005). While wages are low, they are twice that paid in the public sector. Forty percent of the population were internet users in 2010, according to INDOTEL, and despite the economic downturn in 2009, telecommunications investment in the island’s economy continued to strengthen (Baker and Jones 2011). Recent economic challenges faced by the government include reduced demand for its exports due to the global recession and competition with China, poor tax-collection rates, and high real interest rates.
which has a Gini index of 51.6, there is considerable inequality in terms of how income is distributed among the national population. The DR is rated 19 among 30 nations cited for having the greatest inequality within its borders (World Bank World Development Index 2007).

From its inception, there were warnings about the pace and scale of tourism development in the Caribbean. In November 1971, the Caribbean Conference of Churches and the Joint Commission on Justice and Peace of the World Council of Churches met in Trinidad to form a report on the Role of Tourism in Caribbean Development. Cuthbert (1971) reported that the commissions was that “tourism has often become an end in itself rather than a means of achieving a society that will benefit all of its members as they strive for human fulfillment and dignity in the framework of social justice and self reliance” (5). They acknowledged that:

the Caribbean as a region has just emerged from centuries of a colonial history and is now striving for a future that will be the true expression of the dignity and cultural identity of her peoples. A constant confrontation of the Caribbean peoples by the affluent white visitors from the Northern Hemisphere might seriously slow down the process of building the future in such a way as will best express the aspirations of the Caribbean peoples. [6]

The Commission report alluded to the positive potential of tourism for its capacity to “foster a sense of common responsibility for a world with finite resources and a nonrenewable environmental system.” From a “theological perspective” the report noted, “…tourism can become the witness to man’s love for and admiration of creation.” But the risks were also

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82 A Gini index value of 0 represents absolute equality, and a value of 100 indicates absolute inequality. Source: http://www.infoplease.com/world/statistics/inequality-income-expenditure.html#ixzz1ZIIXsClZ2

83 Participants of this Christian Action for Development in the Caribbean (CADEC) organization spoke Dutch, English, French, and Spanish.

84 The commission (significantly) quoted documents from the Catholic Church justifying foreign ownership of said creation “He is thus brought into the possession of the world as having nothing yet possessing everything. All things are yours and you are Christ’s and Christ is God’s” (1 Cor 3:22-23). Source: Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Pastoral Constitution Gaudium et Spes, 1966: 1055, emphas mine.
noted: dubious employment opportunities that recreated the “master-slave” dynamic of the colonial era, increased consumption by tourists who required more imports, foreign exchange earnings lost when the economy did not produce what it consumed, and gross inequities in the distribution of profits because of current ownership patterns dominated by national elite and overseas investors.85

Forty years later, all the negative consequences the Commission predicted have come to pass, and the critique continues that Las Ballenas has suffered from improper planning and unchecked growth. Its lack of basic services has resulted in serious problems such as “contamination, including solid waste that flows into the river that crosses town and flows out to the sea” (CEBSE 1996)—that same Caribbean-blue sea that guests swim and snorkel in during their holiday. This water contamination leads to many parasitic skin infections among the village inhabitants. The local expat newspaper in Las Ballenas which prints articles in Spanish, Italian, French, and English, regularly discusses other growing concerns among the community: environmental and noise pollution, lack of safe public transport, and citizen insecurity due to an increase in crime. The church leaders and state representatives who gathered to establish the report in 1971 also suggested the Caribbean states seek out a more respectable tourist.

While it is true that people coming from predominately urban environments have a great longing for the beauties of nature, it is equally true that today many people are longing for more than just some beaches and entertainment. . . They long to leap over the walls of their own cultural, intellectual, and spiritual ghettos, and this is why they set out to travel abroad. It is this type of tourist to which many Caribbean countries have failed to address themselves so far. [Cuthbert 1971:9]

85 The DR is the largest importer among the 21 countries in the Central American and Caribbean region at $14.53 billion in imported goods in 2010. Exports in 2010 were $6 billion (CIA Worldbook 2010).
These warnings went unheeded. By 1998, an investigator evaluating the status of tourism in the DR concluded it was still "necessary to wait for the Dominican State to issue a policy that promotes the country and its inhabitants with its own identity, and not whichever anonymous beach of the Caribbean" (Girault 1998:426). The consequences of branding the Caribbean in the global marketplace are even more significant now that tourism has replaced agriculture as the most important source of economic development in the DR, largely due to structural adjustment program stipulations and neoliberal economic policies.\(^\text{86}\)

According to Tourism Minister Feliz Jiménez, just over half a million people visited the country in 1986; ten years later the number reached over 1.5 million. That growth, according to a national report, continued from 2005 to 2008 from 2.8 million visitors in 2005 to 3.1 million in 2008.\(^\text{87}\) With regard to the Samana peninsula, hotel occupancy increased 8.7 percent from 2007 to 2008, and the new El Catey international airport had 53,601 visitors in 2007 and 54,758 in 2008. As compared with Meltzer’s survey in 1985 where he counted four restaurants, four small enterprises that rented motorcycles, and seven hotels (1994: 529, 532, 681), a state inventory counted 4 Jeep Safari tour operators, 6 Rent-a-car offices, 22 land vehicles, 22 marine transport vehicles, 109 eateries and bars, and 73 places of lodging in 2005.

But the DR is easily exploited (and very profitably so) by outside developers and their Dominican elite partners. Scott Berman, a Pricewaterhouse Coopers partner in the Hospitality and Leisure Advisory Group based in Miami, expands upon this theme. In the property section of the \textit{New York Times} in an article entitled “Hispaniola: Unlikely Place for Luxury,” he tells the

\(^\text{86}\) A 1972 law made investing in tourism a nearly tax-free endeavor, and the government backed the first beach resort Playa Dorada on the north coast which opened simultaneously with the Puerto Plata airport in 1980.

\(^\text{87}\) See 2008 Asociacion Nacional de Hoteles y Restaurantes report, Santo Domingo.
reporter, “The good news is that the Dominican Republic is, from purely a cost perspective, easier to develop and traverse than the French Alps.” Developers such as Pierre Schnebelen, known for transforming the French Alps into a ski destination in the 1960’s, explains why most developers choose the Dominican Republic: its tropical climate (86 degrees year-round) is conducive to year-round sailing, and also because of its developer-friendly incentives. These he puts into stark, quantifiable terms: “The spread between the construction costs and the market price is among the largest existing anywhere” (Kalosh 2005).

The kind of tourist who vacations in the DR has traditionally been the budget oriented all-inclusive tourist with his plastic bracelet and a penchant for the quarantined holiday experience. But in recent years, the state has been trying to rebrand Dominican spaces with the “high-end tourist” (eco-friendly, boutique-oriented, “sophisticated”) in mind as well as its own cosmopolitan national elites. The Dominican office of the Secretary of Tourism and private advertisers sponsored a special advertising section in *Fortune* magazine in 2006 identifying the country as “the new Caribbean chic” and highlighted the development of boutique hotels catering to the upscale tourist and celebrities like Brad Pitt, Shakira, and Susan Sarandon. *Luxury Living International* also mentioned a Las Ballenas beach on its list for the “Top 10 Beaches to Live on in Paradise” for 2010.

88 All inclusive hotels provide a range of amenities on-site such as unlimited food, beverages, sport activities and entertainment led by young, attractive “animation directors.” Las Ballenas is unique in having had a minority of all-inclusives and thereby supporting the local economy by purchasing local fish, lobster, pork, beef, and citrus through its intermediaries or suppliers from nearby Nagua or Sanchez. Still, the restaurant and hotel demand for food created rising prices and food shortages for villagers.

Another Las Ballenas tourism project Balcones Del Atlantico, with an anticipated completion date of 2014 and an investment value of over US$220 million, emphasizes the widening class gap between workers and developers in this late stage of advanced capitalism. It is being touted as an eco-friendly resort equipped with beach spa, restaurant, and helipad, targeting national elites with its $650,000 apartments and $449-$598 a night short-term accommodations. Its founder, upscale developer Maximo Bisono, who publicly thanked the Dominican government for its investment in the area, says that preserving the environment is “nonnegotiable.” Bisono hired marine biologist Ruben Torres to assure the beach ecosystem is protected and supports the organization of community beach clean-ups (Villegas 2009). At the same time, the residential hotel’s literature promotes Balcones as “a dreamlike community boasting a collection of over 300 exquisite one to five bedroom units, consisting of apartments, penthouses, townhomes and villas that offer breathtaking rooftop terraces with solariums, Jacuzzis and pools.”

Photos on the Balcones resort website are devoid of Dominicans and instead showcase empty white-sand beaches and white people wearing plush robes gazing from their balconies out onto the blue water. Prospective clients read that they will have exclusive access to 700 meters of endless beach. “You can walk all day and your feet will never leave the sand.” What the website does not include are details on how Dominicans painstakingly raked up the previous night’s washed-up basura (garbage) of seaweed and kelp daily, scavenging out the plastic or other valuables to preserve this aesthetic of endless, pure, white sand.

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90 Balcones recently merged with RockResorts, an outfit whose luxury brand was originally created in 1956 by Laurence Rockefeller, with a strong focus on the Caribbean market.
Figure 35. Scavenging among the beach garbage.

Such emphasis on beach-access also reveals a phenomenon sweeping the country’s beaches, namely their increasing privatization. In November of 2009, with the insertion of the words “respecting the rights of private property,” the 1968 article section in the Dominican constitution (Law 305) which guaranteed all beaches, rivers, and water sources as part of the national patrimony belonging to the people was repealed. The law had established a 60-meter maritime zone along the coastline from the high tide mark inland. The move to amend the protected beaches law, a direct concession to tourism developers, drew civil protest all over the island’s major cities from citizen groups representing workers, women, students, and health organizations, to no avail.91

Beyond the miles of empty white sand, there is the sea. To guests who travel by yacht, cruise ship, or airplane, the sea is a fluid symbol of liberty and watery space to gain distance away from their mundane lives as confirmed by scores of tourist brochures which inevitably feature the

wide expanse of blue against a pink horizon. A 2006 promotional brochure for Atlantica, another Dominican luxury resort that was never completed due to a “change in ownership,” advertised this fantasyland of unlimited mobility without ever alluding to an actual spatial location or a Dominican culture:

There are no yachts too large. There are no dreams too big. You are never far, either physically or mentally from the watery world of ATLANTICA. You can come by air in your own private jet, as many of our residents will, or by sea, in your own super-yacht. Imagine your own home on a particularly scenic stretch of the Atlantic Ocean...a mere three hours from New York City, serving as a wonderfully easy escape when you simply want to get away from the bustle.

The construction and selling of this fluid dreamscape brands or represents the Caribbean as a succession of generic NonPlaces. Ethnographic examples of NonPlaces are discussed in Chapter V. NonPlaces are waystations that foreclose a sense of common history or sense of belonging. While places are determined by factors that are relational, historical, and concerned with identity, NonPlaces are those which cannot be defined by these factors. These NonPlaces are deterritorialized or severed from local sociocultural contexts. They temporarily house modern travelers as they move through their fluid experience but never provide a home.

Tourism as a force of capitalism creates NonPlaces, which in turn organize informal economies. Following Lefebvre, space is not an empty backdrop or a neutral abstraction but underpins livelihood comprised of daily activities. Space, therefore, reinforces power hierarchies, inequities in resource distribution, and formation of subjectivities. Therefore, in it creation of NonPlaces, tourist space restricts mobility for villagers and thereby plays a role in the increasing

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92 See Ch. 3 in Krista A. Thompson’s book *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque* (2006) for a history of visualizing the sea as icon.

93 Like many ambitious development mega-projects in the Caribbean, this project was stalled in 2007 over environmental issues related to the destruction of mangrove forests. Its financing was taken over by the Carlton Hospitality Group, a New York based real estate investment banking firm, and remains stalled today.
informalization of their labor. This, in turn, shapes the parameters for their exercise of power, collective organizing, and governance. As one scholar notes with regard to the democratic state, “governance is more than the equitable provision of services and resources. It is also about institutional accountability and the incorporation of citizen needs and aspirations into policy” (Beneria 2001). One implication of perpetual job insecurity and horizontal mobility is that the possibility of establishing a social and political presence is diminished, and with it any hope for democratic participation in civic life (Kruse 2000).

While rural, resource-poor Dominicans have never experienced strong representation or state protection as workers, their dreams for social advancement are nonetheless couched in a desire for a kind of hybrid social contract that mixes patronage-based relationships that ensure some level of security with a new kind of “freedom” promised in contemporary discourse promoting individual agency and political empowerment. All of these contradictory conditions set the stage for the emergence of an array of informal opportunists—whether they be the local village tiguere or the expat-outlaw.

**Informal economies**

The increase of informal labor in Las Ballenas is part of a larger global phenomena in which labor in general has been weakened and feminized (made invisible or devalued) over the past three decades. This increase is often attributable to market deregulation, weakening of public employment due to privatization and budget cuts, and structural adjustment effects (Pérez Sainz 2000). Rather than focusing on service work in more formal settings like free trade zones, village informal work represents the most precarious of survival activities at the household level with no links to formal processes and no possibility to accumulate capital (Beneria 2001). Often such
work combines wage labor and free-lance work with temporary migration (domestic and international) in what one Bolivian sociologist terms a pattern of “nomad labour” (Garcia-Linera 1999).

By increasing efficiency, flexible, cheap, informal labor increases flow for the owners of labor and capital and provides the engine for individual initiative, competition, and capitalist economic growth. At the same time the flexibility (or weakness) of modern labor contracts offer little to no security for informal workers in the village. As a consequence, their perception of their own vulnerability is high and points to the inequality of the labor/capital exchange which is often ignored in neoliberal rhetoric around free trade. In the end, the vulnerability, disaffection, and anomie, particularly among youth, that accompanies rapid tourism development exacerbates existing divisions such as anti-Haitianism, creates a national “identity crisis” (to be explained below), strengthens burgeoning localized Evangelist movements, and makes violence more likely by intensifying conditions of structural poverty.

Villagers within informal economies adapt to modern conditions where expectations to advance socially are rising as part of the larger post-industrial context (represented by formal institutions like the World Bank) that demands greater personal identification with self-worth, autonomy, rationality, and productivity in economic terms. This section evaluates development discourse then, with its promise of enhanced individual freedom (democracy), in terms of its lived realities in Las Ballenas.

To understand the contentious category of the informal more fully, we need to understand how informal economies are organized in the vacuum of the formal economy’s rationalization of labor. Most villagers in Las Ballenas have never experienced the formal, as it is described here:
the rule, an idea of what ought to be universal in social life; and for most of the twentieth century the dominant forms have been those of bureaucracy, particularly of national bureaucracy, since society has become identified to a large extent with nation-states. The formal economy is a world of salaries or grants, payments of rent or a mortgage, clean credit ratings, fear of the tax authorities, regular meals, moderate use of stimulants, good health coverage and so on...what makes this lifestyle "formal" is the regularity of its order, a predictable rhythm and sense of control that we often take for granted. [Hart 1973:14]

The informal economy flourishes under "free" market conditions and provides, according to one study, half of the household income for two-thirds of Dominican households (Deere et al. 1990) and ninety percent of new jobs in the 1990s (Safa 2002). Quite simply, Dominicans who cannot access the formal economy or only qualify for lower-paying positions they perceive as exploitive diversify their sources of income and also pursue informal jobs found within the self-employment sector such as construction, out-of-home micro enterprise, vending, house-cleaning, caretaking, taxi service, and security. At the same time, informality rarely generates vertical mobility on the job ladder and serves little more than a survival strategy (Davis 2006).

Informal labor is accessible to villagers because its success is not dependent on abstract, bureaucratic experience or having capital or storage space. Trade mediums include everything from roadside booths to merchandise belts looped around a waist or neck. Informal labor also involves illicit trade that includes money laundering, drugs, arms, sex trafficking, and the sale of counterfeit good and pirated brands.

94 Worldwide, it is estimated that 60 percent of women workers do informal work outside of agriculture (Chen 2005:34). But it is important to note that informal labor often evades statistical analysis because individuals change their status (migratory laborers), have multiple statuses from hired wage labor to self-employment, and are made invisible by employers who want to avoid paying benefits and insurance or, if illegal, by workers themselves. Furthermore, data on informal economies is often suspect because questions, such as those concerning household budgets, do not take into account irregular wages such as remittances, unbounded or transient households, and street economies marked more by flux than stable income.
Informal economies include “the sum total of income producing activities in which members of a household engage, excluding income from contractual and legally regulated employment” (Portes 1987:217). It also includes strategies and practices that may not comply with official regulations, but its ends (attaining or providing goods and providing services) are legitimate. In fact the line between formal and informal has grown increasingly blurry as the legal/illegal divide associated with state monitoring has been deregulated and large formal firms have increased their production through subcontracting and outsourcing (Portes, Castells, and Benton 1989).

The International Labor Organization has expanded the notion of informal labor to account for informalization as a process that includes “both enterprise and employment relations—as manifested in industrialized, transition, and developing economies” in order to capture “the real world dynamics in labor markets today, particularly the employment arrangements of low-income workers” (ILO 2002:11) who have little security under short-term contracts that are vulnerable to market fluctuation. While informal labor has created new jobs and opportunities, women working in free trade zones in the DR, in particular, also help “feminize labor” by serving as the cheap, flexible labor needed to fuel capitalist growth. Meanwhile, capital is protected and cushioned by flexible state labor laws.

My analysis of informality, borderwork, differential space, and tigueraje is situated in a state where there is uneven development and a lack of welfare support. The most recent World Bank Poverty assessment report notes that 43 percent of the DR’s population lives in poverty; 16 percent live in abject poverty. The richest 10 percent of the population receives 40 percent of the national income, while the poorest half of the population receives less than one-fifth of the
Despite the official unemployment rate of 14.2 percent, the general consensus about employment conditions in the Dominican Republic is that they are terrible… and unemployment affects between 20 percent and 60 percent of the labor force” (Gregory 1997:33, emphasis added). Despite minimum wages set by the government, only 4.1 percent of those employed receive the minimum wage, according to the Ministry of Labor. The vast majority of unskilled workers, therefore, end up working in the informal economy.

It is somewhat confusing to attempt to assess “progress” in tourist zones dominated by informal economies because measurements of “the good life” vary. When I commenced fieldwork in 2006, over half the Dominican nation lived below the poverty line. Yet in 2007, many residents of Come Pan, one of the poorest neighborhoods in Las Ballenas, found temporary job positions as hotel maids, working construction or masonry, selling drugs, pedaling prostitution, working in restaurants and colmados, or fishing. In fact, residents have reported earning more than national averages of income since the late 1970’s.

In general then, the Northeastern peninsula was a place where chances were higher than other areas to earn more cash income, but still highly variable and insecure, for informal laborers involved mostly in agriculture and fishing. According to Meltzer’s survey, during “the lost

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95 See 2010 CIA Factbook https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/dr.html In the US, the gap is even more dramatic. The elite 1 percent owns 35 percent of total net worth and 43 percent of financial wealth. And the top 20 percent in the US own 85 percent of total net worth and 93 percent of financial wealth. See http://sociology.uesc.edu/whorulesamerica/ power/wealth.html

96 From 2004-05 the minimum wage in FTZs was RD$4900/month; outside FTZs, between RD $4485-7360/month; in the public sector RD$2600; and for farm workers RD$150 a ten-hour day, RD$95 a day for sugar cane workers. On June 1, 2011 the minimum wage increased 17 percent so that farm workers now receive RD$175 a day and watchmen RD$279 a day or RD$8356 per month.

97 See the National Planning Office General Report on Poverty sponsored by several international bodies such as the UN and World Bank in Prensa Latina December 22, 2006. The increase in poverty since 2002 was blamed on loss of income, high unemployment, deterioration of public services, high cost of transport, and collapse of health services, as well as the general economic crisis.
A decade” when regional unemployment was around 20 percent, (Oficina Nacional de Estadística 1981 and 1985), unemployment in Las Ballenas was much less, around 12.5 percent in 1981 and 13 percent in 1985. In terms of income during the late 1970’s to the early 1980’s, Meltzer documented the following:

- Villagers were making around 64-80RD/month, slightly above the national poverty line of 60RD a month, although this income fluctuated and varied widely.
- The highest income reported was 141RD a month.
- Other residents reported making: between 50-200RD a month as property caretakers, also receiving gifts such as watches, sunglasses, clothes which created significant display value, 150-300 a month as domestics, 10-20 pesos a night for romantic liaisons, and 175 pesos a day as ayudantes al turistas (guides or tourist helpers)

In comparison, by 2006, a Peace Corps survey documented that 28 percent of residents in Come Pan reported earning 4-6000 pesos ($104-156) monthly, and 37 percent said they earned 10,000 pesos ($260) a month (Holley 2006:5). There has also been significant progress in the kinds of housing materials available for locals. According to Meltzer’s housing data from 1986, a slight majority lacked cement foundations or half-walls with metal sheets and yagua-wooden roofs (315). By 2006 a majority (85 percent) of homes in the poorest barrio (Come Pan) had cement floors and 56 percent of the houses were constructed of wood, 42 percent cement

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98 This period was characterized by large fiscal deficits, inflation, distorted price controls, over-valued domestic currency, multiple exchange rates combined with extensive foreign exchange surrender requirements and high trade barriers that stifled foreign investment and export growth while protecting inefficient domestic industries (Cardoso and Young 2002).

99 RD is equivalent to “peso.”


101 He counted one-eighth (12.5%) of 386 households which had cement block and metal roofs, and half 50 percent of these had TVs.
block, 11 percent zinc (Holley 2006:8). This data all seems to point to some degree of material advancement. Villagers themselves, who would often refer to themselves as *pobre* (poor), distinguish their humble life conditions which include adequate shelter and food, from true poverty which they term *miseria* (misery), associated more with the life circumstances of their Haitian neighbors.

Even though average household income did not fall into poverty levels, the degree of variability and stability in work contracts, most of which were on a day-to-day basis, was so high it caused a lot of anxiety around borrowing and debt. While tourism had increased locals’ access to wage work, because this work was sporadic, 35 percent of Come Pan’s population was constantly in debt, borrowing money on a monthly basis to make ends meet (Holley 2006:7). Credit was often used to smooth consumption rather than for productive investment.

In general, during the late 1980’s a minority of micro-entrepreneurs had become mini-entrepreneurs through the capitalist forces of tourism (Meltzer 1994). And this remains true today. But the overall effect in the village has merely been to deepen the subdivision of poverty and increase competition amongst villagers who continue to try to pursue the same survival strategies in the same tight spaces. The “winners” of the market dream in Las Ballenas, while advancing more than their urban ghetto or rural counterparts, still earn their supplemental income through decidedly precarious, informal means that are difficult to measure. Indeed, the Peace Corps worker who conducted the study of household income in Come Pan admitted her data was inconclusive because her respondents did not use a budget to measure their monthly income and expenditures.  

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102 This is one of Max Weber’s two types of rational economic accounting systems.
of livelihood were for Come Pan residents whose chronic debt was only partially mitigated by local micro-credit systems and the generosity of kinfolk.

Also, beyond income and housing, there are other indicators to consider when measuring quality of life. Other measures of progress include access to education, healthcare, and levels of crime and safety. According to a study by a Peace Corps worker, the majority of residents in Come Pan were young (31 percent of the population is under 11 years of age, 18.5 percent is between 11-20 years of age, and 16 percent is between 21-25 years), but there were no schools, public spaces for recreation, or even running water in the neighborhood. The closest public school was on the Calle Principal (main street), but many young people in Come Pan could not afford to pay for books or uniforms or missed school because they needed to help their parents work. Meanwhile, there were 7 private schools in Las Ballenas for foreigners. While 43 percent of homes had indoor bathrooms, there was no clean water source in Come Pan. People bathed in the river close to where the butcher emptied out the entrails of the animals he killed. In an interview, a local doctor disclosed that many health problems from the contaminated water plagued hosts: headaches, gripe (flu-like symptoms), fevers, kidney problems, and gastritis, stomach ulcers, and skin rashes caused by parasites like amoebas or bacteria.

One useful outcome measure is to compare the vulnerability experienced by workers, defined as “the ability to deal with risk and hence their attitude towards it” (Beneria 2001:18). Unstable labor contracts feed concerns over:

particular functionings including being nourished, sheltered, educated, and cared for in times of illness. This translates into such commonplace concerns as being able to afford school fees for children, to seek medical assistance when ill, and even to pay for marriages and funerals…Vulnerability relates to the claims or rights over resources in dealing with risk, shocks, and economic stresses. The lesser claims or rights over resources a household or an individual has, greater is her or his vulnerability. The mere existence of employment does not define the
economic status and ability of the worker to function in the capability space. It needs to be seen as acting together with a number of other factors, the most crucial being access to and control over resources—mutual support networks, credit, savings, and physical assets—in the face of income shortfalls and consumption expenditure shocks. [Beneria 2001:18-19]

The important relationship between capability and income has been studied by researchers extensively (Beneria 2001; Sen 1992; Nussbaum 2003). Perception of one’s capability is influenced by gender ascribed roles and social norms that influence ownership of assets, level of education, and type of chosen occupation (Antonopoulos and Floro 2004). “Some of these social factors are not clearly tangible such as self-esteem, ability to be assertive, and consciousness about one’s own interests” (Beneria and Floro 2005:18).

In closing, I want to emphasize the role gender plays in informal economies and the feminization of labor. In the DR, the increase in informal work has been a decidedly gendered phenomenon. For the first time in national history women were offered nondomestic wage labor working in hotels, but—significantly—this labor remained underpaid. As men were displaced from agriculture, Dominican women profited more from the transition to a service sector and free trade zone (FTZ) economy. The male dominated agricultural sector employed 73 percent of the Dominican labor pool in 1950 and only 35 percent by the end of the 1980s, replaced by industry currently accounting for 20 percent of employment and services which accounts currently for 45 percent (Haggerty 1989). In 1950, women in the labor force represented 17.9 percent of the population. By 2000, women represented 27.5 percent. In the late 1980’s, the rate of employment for women in FTZs more than doubled that of males as women began to make up to 70-85 percent of that labor force and were paid fifty-five cents an hour.103

103 By the end of 2001, the FTZs employed 200,000 Dominicans (Safa 2002).
By 2000, while the unemployment rate for women was still higher than that of men, women constituted 38 percent of the labor force at large (Safa 1995). While labor market participation for women advanced, their social power in terms of gender equality did not (Fernandez-Kelly 2005; Grasmuck and Espinal 2000). Instead, women were often chosen for certain jobs because of their second class status and perceived gendered qualities (dexterity, patience, docility) and were paid inferior wages because of the (sexist and outdated) assumption they supplemented a male breadwinner. In Samana, President Balaguer’s hotel project, El Portillo, owned by a Dominican consortium and generously assisted by the state, employed twenty-two villagers but only paid sixty pesos a month plus a meal when average wages were ninety pesos a month (Meltzer 1994:285).  

By 2004, over 30 percent of Dominican households were headed by women (Safa 2008). For women, then, the real challenge to social advancement in the informal economy of the village is that Dominican paternalistic social ideology, combined with economic practices from the state that emphasize women’s role as housewives and devalue their labor which can be defined as non-income-generating, thereby making this work “invisible.” These practices and the insecurity associated with informality is clearly evident in the rise of “home-based work” which shifts market risk and volatility into the home where women are forced to combine income-generating activities with their domestic responsibilities. 

As feminist have pointed out, at the fundamental level, the worker’s role in the labour market is linked to their role in household labour and social reproduction. Home based work in particular, enables women to resolve the contradictions between women’s socially defined role as wives and mothers and the demand for cheap, flexible labor needs of capitalist economic growth. [Beneria 2007:18]

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104 According to Meltzer, the Dominican state loaned out RD200,000 toward the hotel’s RD588,400 investment.

By reconciling her reproductive social expectations with her productive neoliberal ones, the distortion that the laborer is “free” to choose her own employment, and survival is perpetuated while structural inequities are ignored (Foley and Michl 1999). This pattern of informality, transferrable to any situation where workers of both genders are made powerless, invisible, and unreal, is a denigration of labor at large where the role of women is generalized to all laborers, particularly those in the informal economy. Based on my fieldwork in Las Ballenas, I concur with Harstock that in this way globalization can be re-theorized as a moment of primitive accumulation in which the labor force at large is being feminized or “housewifed” (Castree and Gregory 2008:167-190).

Locally, this gendered labor pattern translated into the creation of a new breed of female tiger. Though traditionally associated with the male gender in the past, the tiguere today is often evoked to describe a mobile, moneyed female, often a cunning sex-worker or a Haitian money-lender, though, as noted earlier, this does not spare her from the stigma of a woman of ill repute. Older male workers and former breadwinners displaced by younger female workers often express resentment over the independence of female tigueres who gain substantial earnings and disrupt the gender hierarchy which traditionally places men on the island in a position of authority.106

Javier, twenty-seven, was born in nearby Sanchez and thought one of the persistent corrupting effects of the tourist economy was the breaking down of confianza, the trust and unity among the people, particularly between men and women. While pre-supposing a kind of

106 Helen Safa (2002: 11-31) found a similar pattern among older sugarcane workers in Villa Altagracia where a free trade zone replaced an older sugar mill. “The older workers accused women of ‘having fun with men,’ of spending their money in bars and beauty salons and contributing little to the household economy.”
romantic gender equilibrium in former days, he and his father described how women began to
dominate the local economy—in both its formal and informal sectors—at the same time
subsistence farmers and fishermen became more dependent on foreign exchange and migrants
poured in from other areas or across the border from Haiti.

Javier: There exists a problem in this country today with the women who
work…First the man and the woman are together, and they are poor. Then the
man finds work and everything is good. He brings money to the house. Later the
woman finds good work and possibly earns the same as the man or even more,
because always women earn more money than the man here, always they have
better jobs, in offices, in houses, while the man has to work with his hands or on
the mountain, [clearing fields, doing hard labor, agricultural work]. . . then starts
the difficulties because she can do with the money what she wants, go to the
beauty salon, spend it…because already she is taking money for herself… this is
different… before only the man brought money into the house.

DG: It’s not possible to earn money together?

J: Well, it’s the best thing to be united, but it’s the money that comes between
people in a couple. Look, if he [points to Luis, a successful fish vendor] is earning
money, and I’m not, he is going to separate from me because I am poor. He is not
going to want to speak with me because he thinks I’m going to always ask him for
money. The money comes between friends, the people. And this is the reason men
don’t like women to work…because the women always buy the cellular, the car.
The man leaves for here, the woman leaves for there … the best is to work and
save together, united, but this is not how it is anymore.

Dominican women, while acknowledging the breakdown of confianza, saw the role of
women somewhat differently. Ramona, forty-six, operated her own successful beach kitchen and
was referred to by some men in the village as an avion (literally “airplane” but meant to convey a
woman who “flies” from man to man, in other words,, a promiscuous woman).107 She explained:

Before, everybody had unity. For example, if at midnight there was a neighbor
that was ill, everyone ran to them and whether they healed or died, everyone was
there… a neighbor came with firewood, another dried a bunch of plantains,

107 In the past a woman living alone was described as abandoned by a man, now the woman who chooses to live
alone is judged as being a tiguere or avion.
another dried a little bit of yucca, and that family wasn’t in need of anything. Even today I believe there isn’t anyone who would die of hunger in their home. But another change is that women have fewer children. My mother had ten. The women of the past were too saintly. The poor women from before used to always be suffering, attending to their husband, to their children, cleaning house.

Without a history of land ownership or money in the bank, most Dominicans in Las Ballenas are not accustomed to financial security. Rather they survive through a combination of extended family, faith, suerte (luck), and relations with patrons or foreigners. Still, the rapid pace of change is confusing for villagers who often expressed contradictions about whether their contemporary situation, while materially better for some, constituted social progress.

Henri, eighty-eight, remembered the past as more “boring,” involving more work por mano (by hand) in subsistence agriculture. If locals wanted to go “shopping” (in the early 1980s), they took a small boat to Nagua or Sanchez where one could buy a box of matches or two pounds of meat for ten centavos and “many fish” or a “very large lobster” for one peso. His wife saved many pregnant women through her skill as a midwife even though “she didn’t know her letters.” In general, Henri felt that in the past his people “lived better. There was more peace. Now everything is more dangerous, and they kill you for 100 pesos [$3].”
Frida (forty-four years old), a domestic and massage therapist I interviewed, said:

In a sense, it was better because before the people dedicated themselves to working, not to robbery. Now the young rob, take drugs, and before nothing like this was done. Now nobody wants to work, everybody wants the easy life of the tourist, to have fun. On Saturday their money is spent on alcohol and tobacco. So because of this it was better before, but the people didn’t care so much about money because there really wasn’t much that could be done with it. For example, in my house we had pigs, goats, chickens. Everything we needed to eat, we had and people didn’t think of having anything else except to eat and to give to a neighbor in need. That’s how it was…

The older residents saw the peace and reciprocity of village life as they had experienced and remembered it in the past as compromised by the influx of cash and waged-based labor which had replaced barter-based relationships that had been possible when residents owned subsistence plots of land.

Younger residents tended to be more diplomatic and less fatalistic, though they also expressed sentiments that revealed the social costs of living in a society where everyone was potentially reduced to their saleable capital. Why, they asked me, are foreigners always so
stressed and unhappy when they have so much? While hosts fantasized about life in the Miami telenovelas, many also emphasized that life was easier when it was tranquilo (calm). Rather than be rich, it was better to be without enemies. “I would like to manage a little colmado or hair salon but not be too rich, because with more money, brings more problems,” said Cherie, a seventeen year old shop worker.

Rudy, a concho driver and part-time Evangelical Protestant, explained his perspective on the effects of the commodification of social life in the village in a post-democratic Dominican Republic.108 “The truth is, I know it’s important to think of manana [tomorrow], but when I have money in my pocket, it’s como fuego [like fire], and I just want to spend it, to let it go,” he said, ignoring the latest text message he had just received from his wife asking for more money for new clothes for the children. He explained that the demands from family had increased since he opened up a savings account. He said his family did not understand its purpose or value but considered it a bottomless family fund. “Sometimes I just want to get away and escape, maybe to Constanza,” he sighed dreamily, referencing el campo, the conceptual countryside location for all things traditionally Dominican and nostalgic.109

You know, like you gringos; just enjoy the life. Maybe one day I can buy a little house and go away on holiday where no one knows me. Because this stress is bad here and la gente dicen [“the people say. . .” indicating he is quoting a refran or popular saying] “When you die, you no longer eat or make love.” So it’s important to disfruta la vida [enjoy the life] now.

108 By “part-time,” I mean that young men I interviewed often expressed their desire to “one day” become Evangelist’s like their wives, mothers, and girlfriends but often stalled, knowing that the church’s path was pure but duro (harsh, strict, no drinking, dancing, etc). In the mean time they occasionally went to church.

109 The Dominican heartland, much romanticized among Dominicans, is the place of Dominican authenticity marked with the noble values of the peasant. Most upper class homes I visited had a framed painting of a campo or country scene displayed prominently in the home depicting, for example, a flamboyant tree in bloom and a peasant leading a donkey among the fields.
This commentary by Rudy demonstrated a pattern among young villagers, the majority of whom worked temporarily as service workers to more affluent foreign guests. That pattern was an expressive desire to emulate the mobile lifestyle of the guest, to “aspire to be another.” This next section describes villagers’ perceptions about their capabilities as measured from within informal localities where labor and livelihood networks are enmeshed. It also documents how the identities of those who long to socially advance but are unable to generate upward mobility are mediated through consumption. The extensive borrowing strategies villagers enact to support their consumption create considerable tension between them and their foreign employers who want to minimize commitments in their labor contracts with locals. Ultimately this balm of consuming distracts from, but does not change, the failure of neoliberal’s promise of democratic development.

“*Aspiring to be Another*”

I think it was easier for my parents because the old people with burro or horse didn’t know what things were in other places. They never thought, "My life is bad or small and I am poor." [Dominican-Haitian motoconcho driver]

The only security you have is con tu hijos y con Dios [with your children and God].\(^1\) [Javi, Dominican shoe-shiner, seventeen years old]

This section focuses on the psychosocial factors that create friction between haves/have-nots in the village as social relations become strained with increased competition. These include the villagers’ identity to “aspire to be another,” ambivalent attitude towards money, the importance of material commodities as positional goods that connote status and mediate identity, aggressive

\(^1\)This sentiment was echoed with the common retort “*Si Dios quieres.*” If you said “see you tomorrow” the smiling reply would be “if God wills.” If God wills, I will be here tomorrow, through dictatorship, hurricanes, foreign invasion, and government corruption.
debt/borrowing to accumulate these goods, and the practice with foreign employers known as “milking the gringo cow.” Because of the Caribbean’s historical and modern role as a global crossroads, my aim in interviewing locals about their attitudes around money, social advancement, debt, and consumer identity was focused around trying to understand the ways intimate relations were formed within commodified relations. As a study of shifting local and global patterns, social processes, and intimate relations in a tourist town, this approach refines previous critiques of binary models of intimate and impersonal, material and emotional, money and love, and public and private (Zelizer 2000; Liechty 2003; Padilla 2007). In certain contexts, the commodification of social relations in Las Ballenas was celebrated as progress even as it introduced new kinds of anxieties and desires.

My discussion of marginalized actors creating differential space in informal economies does not seek to critique the commodified borderwork of host-guest relations through a social justice lens. Instead, I focus on the failure of neoliberal’s promise of democratic development that consumption—because this is a global phenomena—may distract us from. It is important to resist the Western idea that commodification will be resisted by intimate relations that can be defined against it, such as love and marriage. In the DR, these areas adapt rather easily to commodification. Hosts contextualize their intimate relations within their cultural economy which traditionally relies on concubinage, informal networks, and barter—practices that tend to blur lines between commodity and gift. Therefore, my discussion of power dynamics is

111 The field of anthropology itself was born through the reaction to industrialization where “pure” society was defined against commodities.
presented as embedded within a commodified matrix of intimate relations suffused with tigueraje.

As commodification of social life intensified in the village, the process of acquiring goods, while still mediated by social relationships, began to compete with the process of maintaining strong kinship ties. Aggressive debt and borrowing practices increased villagers’ dependency on their local lenders and foreign guests. Borderwork negotiations around labor and land grew more contentious.

While the ethnographic details of these negotiations around land and labor are found in Chapters II and VI, this chapter describes the ways villagers are trying to adapt amidst conditions of rapid social changes as they aspire to progressar in a way that emulates western affluence. This aspiration, what one national report termed a Dominican “identity crisis” due to its “forced externalization” (Ceara-Hatton 2005), is to emulate a lifestyle based on a dynamic, complex composite idea of Western modernity culled from media, tourists, expats, and stories from returnees.

The struggling identities of Dominican youth emerge in a context where the social recognition of work is increasingly expressed in lifestyle achieved through wages earned. The result of being denied access to such a lifestyle, as we see in Chapter VII, is anomic and violent behavior from young men in particular who are under or unemployed and often seduced by tiguere routes to gain entry into the culture of consumerism that surrounds them. Such transgressive, tigueraje behavior challenges the formation of a stable, democratic society based on cooperation and rewards opportunistic individualism and competitiveness.
The national report shows the pervasive influence of foreign guest culture has actually led to a crisis in national identity.\textsuperscript{112} This crisis been exacerbated by the recent shift from goods to services production based on goods manufactured in free trade zones, tourist demand, and remittances in the DR economy. The report described how Dominican national identity was formed around agriculture before 1990. But with the shift to a service economy, two forces emerged to challenge modern Dominican identity. The authors named these forces “externalization” and “forced cosmopolitanism.” This shift, has strengthened the perception that Dominican society has of itself and which is marked by uncertainty, instability and externality, the perception that the behavior of the people, and the events that occur to them, are determined by external elements. [Ceara-Hatton 2005:6-7]

The report further stated that, despite the growth of free zones and tourism, the collective national perception remained that free zones were risky sectors and remittances were unreliable, a host perception which, as I have established earlier, is an accurate reading of the instability of these informal sources of income. Due to external dependencies, life circumstances can change quickly for inhabitants of this island located in the hurricane belt. For example, in light of the current global recession, the amount of money sent home by Latin/Caribbean expatriates declined 11 percent in 2009, according to a study by the Inter-American Development Bank (Jordan 2009). Furthermore, exports to the US fell 20.8 percent (from US$585 million in 2008 to US$464 million in 2009).\textsuperscript{113}

\textsuperscript{112} The report promotes the “human development model” of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and emphasizes developing human resources over “the neo-liberal notion according to which economic growth is the sole source of welfare in our societies.”

The authors of the national report connect this Dominican “identity crisis” to national roles being subsumed by a “modern” consumer identity.

[the] solution to the dilemmas of externality is to aspire to be “another” or at least to “seem to be another.” Certain currents of globalization contributed to these aspirations by generalizing consumption patterns and lifestyles around the notion of “being developed.” [Ceara-Hatton 2005:6-7]

In terms of a collective imaginary, “Aspiring to be another” was drawn less from aging tourist and expat models and more from the idealized other as perceived in Hollywood movies, Miami and Spanish soap operas, Columbian music videos, or even the exaggerated success narratives from returnees of life afuera (which literally means “outside” but commonly referring to New York City or Madrid). Dominican returnees, for example, rent gold chains from New York City merchandisers solely for the length of their trip back home in order to display their assumed wealth and success around their necks to family members.114 Local youth also demonstrate their aesthetic capital weekly in fashion and beauty contests sponsored by foreigners at discotecas (dance clubs) and beach restaurants. Retail clothing stores (often selling donated clothing from the US that Haitian vendors brought across the border) and beauty salons proliferated in town to supply this fashion market.

The pressure to succeed and emulate these idealized others contributed to aggressive borrowing/debt-incurring practices and competitive, tigueraje strategies in Las Ballenas including style-making practices that I refer to as constructing chulo.

114 Dominicans living in New York City are referred to as cadenus or gold chains.
Constructing Chulo and Indigenizing the Other

The reduction of culture to consumption patterns or the more elevated category of “style,” as described below, has been decried by many modern philosophers as bringing with it class alienation, cultural homogenization, and commodity fetishism. In *The Society of the Spectacle*, critical theorist Guy Debord (1967) writes on how images, or rather the social relationship between people that is mediated by images, has replaced authentic human interaction. As the commodity colonizes social life, its actors move from “having” to “appearing.” While Debord argues that critical thought is obstructed by this process and knowledge is degraded in such a “spectacular society,” other theorists argue that the blurring line between artificiality and reality
will lead to alternative modes of interpretation where sensation instead of meaning is the focus (Deleuze 1994).115

As applied to the ongoing commodification of social life in Las Ballenas, I argue that social actors immersed in contentious borderwork brought on by their collective desire to consume has not created “false consciousness” over the changes taking place. A twenty-two year old Dominican cleaning woman explained how she wanted many material things but also believed this led to the disruption of tranquilidad (contentment). Her mother echoed, “We Dominicans say when you want things, it’s like the river…tu sabe, sin fin [you know, without end].” Javier, a concho driver, explained as he shared his attitude toward money in a post-democratic and developed Dominican Republic. “We Dominicans understand that wars, greed, and hunger are as old as the Bible. Of course, all people can’t be rich. The majority of us are poor; we are a poor country. Still, money isn’t everything.”

Neither has consumption replaced authentic human interaction in the village, although it certainly has blended with kinship networks and employer contracts in ways that create its own set of class-based challenges. This is simply because while the awareness of and/or access to material goods has increased exponentially in the village for laborers since 1970, the infrastructure (education and healthcare) to support sustainable social advancement has not.

But this lack of sustainable wealth has only increased the importance of material “things” and patterns of consumption among villagers. The energy put behind strategies to consume are

115 This “naïve” perspective is voiced by the character played by Juliet Binoche in the film Certified Copy, a 2011 film by Iranian filmmaker Abbas Kiarostami that explores the possibilities of authenticity in art and life. We are left with what Plato condemned, a philosophy in which the viewer and his manipulation or subjectivity overrides any underlying universal truth. We have what French sociologist Jean Baudrillard (1988) calls a world of simulacrum in which empty signs refer to themselves, and meaning and value are absent (e.g. icons are substituted for the pure idea of God and even as production increases “labor” has become something else).
significant and continue to be pursued even though household incomes may fluctuate widely due to informal employment. The literature documenting how household members make use of informal credit via pawnbrokers, moneylenders, traders, and employers to soothe consumption is extensive (Boril and Prugl 1996; Abreu and Sorj 1996; Bardhan and Udry 1999; Morduch 1992).

In a place like Las Ballenas, where material possessions carry significant symbolic capital around class mobility and where signification can be even more important than the objects themselves or even the duration of their ownership, goods do begin to compete directly with people (kinship) as key mediums for the objectification of value. When my neighbor Nanci, a concubine to a German man in his sixties, promenades nightly in her four wheel drive vehicle dressed in her white linen dress and two-tone weave with her granddaughter similarly coiffed at her side, this is a display of genuine “cargo” and ritual status derived from the social gaze and the marketplace, and hence a source of her power. It should be noted, however, that Nanci herself believed her success was precarious and attributable to voudou as much as her relationship to her German boyfriend’s consumer power.

The contrast between the poverty a villager might live in and his or her appearance was striking for guest tourists who might glimpse a young woman stepping outside her wooden shack with its dirt floor, corrugated metal roof, and lack of electricity or running water, looking fabulous in blinding white, spray-on “Tommy Hilfiger” jeans and Rabinz sunglasses, with perfectly coiffed hair hold a cell phone pressed to the ear, possibly pushing a shiny new thousand dollar motorbike. Occasionally I would glimpse other valuable objects inside those shacks that spoke to the contradictions of modern Dominican life in which a cosmopolitan consumer sensibility arose from a material environment that lacked basic infrastructure: portable washers
in which the water had to be hauled in from the polluted river or computers sitting on the floor using jerry-rigged electricity.

Dominicans adapt, as they always have, to the globalizing forces around them, and while open to “externalization,” indigenize cultural products in creative ways that mark their unique brand of style as originally “Dominican.” This includes music exported abroad such as *reggaeton* (a style of music which is itself a heady stew of *bachata*, *plena*, hiphop, and dancehall, also mixed and spun in local clubs with *cumbia*, *batucada*, and European electronic dance music).\(^{116}\) At the same time, its original chulo style reinterprets class-based claims of prestige (being able to buy “the label”) and thereby creates alternate routes of access to these signs/labels that confer social status. “Tu sabe [fake it until you make it]” says one Dominican student. In the absence of

\(^{116}\) Bachata is a form of popular music played with guitar and percussion and known for having bitter lyrics around the themes of betrayal, jealousy, and obsessive love. Both *Plena*, a metered responsorial work song, and *Cumbia*, a courtship dance, are of African heritage.
access to sustainable wealth or secure social position, the ability to recognize and then design “cool” from an assemblage of signs, co-opting status markers (like items from brand names such as Izod, with its crocodile icon blown up twenty times) and inserting them into a new context, parodying this value, in effect, marked one as chulo which was also a necessary component of being tiguere.

Sex workers, for example, co-opted the “look” of the University student: they sport eye glasses without the lenses, books, satchels, blazers, and often they attend, but likely never graduated from, “University.” Illiteracy was not necessarily a problem. The ever-savvy buscones would find entrepreneurs who charged a fee to do homework, or, if necessary, forged a diploma. Ana told her foreign boyfriends she was “Pre-law” and travelled two hours each way by guagua (public taxi) to attend a class once a week, a journey that earned her prestige among her neighbors. She said she enrolled in classes because she wanted gringo patrons to know she was not a puta (unrespectable woman or whore) but a “good girl,” looking to better herself.

Similarly, in a world where “island time” prevailed and no one “reads” time, the Rolex bound to the wrist was another “fake” sign. In Lefebvre’s terms, chulo differentialized the abstract components of space. Re-contextualized as pastiche, the fake Rolex parodied (intentionally or not) the clock and calendar-bound world that signified development as a State or God-driven discipline of labor or morality.

Chulo is also attitude. It is knowing you can dazzle in the most superficial but powerful of ways through your appearance (I will explore this further with regard to village women in Chapter VI by describing the Disco as a performative, differential space). The amount of time

117 Lest we assume this is only a concern of the developing world, the Chronicle of Higher Education has featured articles on how doctoral students in the US can essentially hire someone to write their dissertation for them.
and effort Dominicans put into tweezing eyebrows, ironing clothes, straightening hair, etc., is extensive and impressive. Even the hippie chic of the beach SankyPanky (a male gigalo), drawn from sloppy gringos with their flip flops and long hair, was Dominicanized into something much more metrosexual: strategic rips with neat hems, bleached dreadlocks tightly twisted and trimmed, painted toes shimmering from spotless sandals. Gringos admire the Dominican capacity to look fabulous in skin tight clothing, with nary a bead of sweat on their brow or hair out of place in the dusty, rainy, humid town where there was no infrastructure for electricity or sewage. Chulo also capitalized on another Dominican valued trait embodied and performed among themselves and for outsiders: the state of being caliente (emanating heat, passion, sexiness).

But, of course, being cool did not erase the many social and material constraints impeding advancement for local youth. Those who failed in their “aspiration to be another” to accumulate the other’s lifestyle and transcend class barriers were often treated as outcasts and disappeared beyond the critical social gaze. Abandoned sex workers returned to their mother’s houses in the countryside. Haitian laborers were deported across the border. And those suffering with SIDA (AIDS) returned to the capital’s slums to die. Residents redoubled their efforts in seeking protection from such a fate and prayed they would not become victims to such black magic. Debt and borrowing strategies were, therefore, widespread to perpetuate the illusion of social prestige through the display of commodities.

**Debt, Borrowing Practices, and “Milking the Gringo Cow”**

It is the reason why the majority of gringo/Dominican relationships don’t work, especially the romantic ones. The foreigners who become romantically involved with locals have no clue they are expected to support not just their novio(a) but
the entire extended family of that person. And even with employees, they see you as their *patron*, and it’s only a matter of time when the request for loans begins, and then another, and another. It’s known as milking the gringo cow. [Canadian tour operator]

In observing the daily survival strategies of my neighbors, I noticed how the debt cycle that sustained the village’s web of informal economies served, in political economic terms, to perpetuate poverty conditions and increase competition. Motoconcho drivers I interviewed, for example, paid 1000 pesos a day (US$30) to rent motorcycles (which cost around RD37000 or US$1210) meaning that even during high tourism season, few drivers earned enough to cover the rent, let alone make a profit. At the same time, the psychosocial benefits of displaying commodities outweighed this political economic reality. Every week I witnessed the repo man’s circular pilgrimage through the village, kicking up dust as he loaded up furniture, vehicles, and appliances as neighbors chatted with each other and cheerfully plotted how they would secure their possessions once again the following week.

This process of cheerful repossession, in and of itself, was significant. There was no shame associated with repossession as long as borrowing was still feasible. In other words, borrowing allowed for migrant laborers to access goods, and that access trumped the fear of being in debt because most villagers had nothing to lose and no history of accumulated wealth to compare to their present day conditions. The exception to this was with the minority of nonmigrant residents who had formerly been landowners and were now in debt and without the security of their land.

On payday, Dominicans typically paid off what debts they could, and then the cycle of borrowing began anew. It worked until there was a costly emergency such as a family sickness or traffic accident. But overall, incurring debt was not a concern given the options. A real
earning potential in the formal economy has never been within control of the Dominican underclass. Many believed that the formal marketplace was a magical sphere beyond their control and influence, a place where certain powerful Haitian moneylenders hold power. And so, rather than rely on the security of a bank, many of my neighbors stuffed mattresses and pillowcases with pesos and visited the local Haitian bruja for love and prosperity potions meant to secure fortune by sealing one’s fate with a foreigner.

Despite the rampant practice of loan-sharing, the practice of borrowing created a great deal of tension between Dominicans and their foreign employers. The fact that debt was a way of life in the expats’ home countries meant foreigners expressed dismay towards the widespread micro-credit system among Dominican villagers. They, who were looking to enjoy the simplicity of “island life” on holiday (although such simplicity involved a lot of creature comforts) decried that the borrowed money was used merely to engage in conspicuous consumption for positional goods that satisfied a longing for status versus need and only perpetuated the local cycle of debt. A North American woman described the foolishness, in her view, of a Dominican neighbor who bought a new dining room set for 40,000 pesos on credit. “Yesterday they [re-possessed it],” she shrugged, “Why can’t she take that money and pay towards her children’s schooling instead of buying furniture she can’t afford?” She also claimed the woman’s husband bought an eight thousand peso (US$240) fax machine that “just sits there gathering dust . . . He doesn’t have anyone to fax!” she said, rolling her eyes, an assumption that may have been inaccurate considering the extensive transnational ties Dominicans have in other countries.

Some expats learned to accept the Dominican habit of borrowing which often cast them in the colonial role of the patron. A French architect described the “challenge” in working with Dominicans in these terms:
Dominicans do not plan for anything; they do not have the vision of the future. So I had to organize my accountancy and financial management keeping in mind that salaries are not paid at the end of the month. It is necessary to give advances, to lend, to offer…in a word to answer to their needs. In a way, yes, they are my family. [Leperre 2008:35]¹¹⁸

But perhaps unsurprisingly, the majority of North American expats I interviewed resented the process of hosts seeking some form of patronage from them and termed it “milking the gringo cow.” They resisted the role of patron that carried with it social obligations such as providing regular loans to their hired help, and preferred a more contractual relationship that did not extend beyond what the minimum wage or law required. Because these employer/employed negotiations were so contested, both worker and employer were well versed on the local regulations that surrounded the procedures of hiring, firing, and compensation in Las Ballenas.

An interesting example is that of labor contracts with domestics. In Las Ballenas, the majority of informal work available to women, other than sex work, is as domestics, and Dominican labor laws do not protect many of their rights. According to the provisions of the Labor Code (Art. 4), domestics are defined as workers dedicated to household chores, such as cooking and cleaning, when carried out outside of a business (Art. 258). Condominium employees are not considered domestics. Domestics are not subject to any regular work hours, although every domestic must have a minimum of nine hours per day of uninterrupted rest and a weekly rest of 36 hours without interruption (Arts. 261 and 262). Domestics do not have the right to receive “liquidation” or severance pay when dismissed. However, domestics do have the right to two weeks of paid vacation a year after their first year at work and to receive a Christmas salary, as regular workers do, which often amounts to a month’s salary. I interviewed Dominican

¹¹⁸ He also claimed that the Dominicans lacked an “aesthetic.”
families who paid their domestics who often doubled as nannies anywhere from RD$2900-RD$5000 (US$76-$130) a month. Expats in Las Ballenas often paid more (from RD$8000-RD$12000 a month; US$208-$313) but on a shorter-term, part-time basis.

Because of these low, unstable wages, domestic employee, who are often mothers who head their households and many other women resist exploitation by exercising tigueraje strategies. Usually this involves making a complaint to the labor department that they have been underpaid. Expats, in turn, have a variety of tactics to counter such strategies such as having domestics sign their paychecks or keeping a record of direct-deposit at a bank to pre-empt such moves. The anxiety expats have around what is appropriate, ethical, or warranted in terms of paying their employees is reflected in a discussion of domestic employee resistance on an English-speaking internet forum for expats at DR.1.com.119

I know people who've had employees go to the labor department and claim salaries they were never paid, length of employment that wasn't real, etc., etc. & end up being awarded as much as 30-40,000 ($782-1042) pesos more than they rightfully deserve.

And another stated:

A friend of mine had a maid for several years who constantly asked for loans. After the 4th or the 5th loan they said 'no,' after which she refused to come to work. A few weeks later they got notice that they were being sued, she claimed she was fired, and claimed severance pay and all kinds of overtime and lost wages. She won, partly because the gringo never wins, but also because the villa was in a company name, they had 'rented' the house to some friends and she was therefore not a 'domestic' but an employee of a corporation. So, for everybody who has their house in a company name, be careful!

In a culture where local caudillos (strongmen) always played a strong social role in lieu of a government that only responded to elite concerns, it is not obvious who or what is filling the

void now that foreigners dominate tourist areas and Dominicans find themselves
democratized.\textsuperscript{120} Class norms within Dominican society have established hierarchies where
resource-poor migrants “know their place” as servants (maids, nannies, cooks, security workers,
caretakers, and even \textit{queridas} (concubines)) but are also afforded some measure of security
within the social contract. Often they and their descendants work for elite families for
generations.\textsuperscript{121}

But in tourist zones, elite Dominicans often observe foreign guests leave home and ignore
Dominican social norms and the contracts they foster to create a sense of social stability and
structure in Dominican society (as well as preserve certain class hierarchies). In particular, the
open way that guests “enjoy” Dominican and Haitian women, taking them to public spaces
normally reserved for the upper class, is seen as vulgar and obscene.

To further confuse host/guest labor relations and boundaries of the social contract, North
American guests, less accustomed to a rigid class system than their European expat counterparts,
sometimes make efforts to treat their employees, on selective occasions, as “equals.” I remember
one awkward meal where the hostess asked the cook to “come sit with us for dinner” which she
did, after repeated protests that she did not want to. After the hostess led a group prayer where
we all held hands in a circle, the family proceeded to talk in English for the entire meal. The
cook picked at her food, kept her eyes down, and seemed genuinely relieved when she was
finally “excused” from the table.

\textsuperscript{120} Trujillo, \textit{el benefactor}, who included the peasants in his construct of nation for the first time in Dominican history,
was one exception.

\textsuperscript{121} Sometimes, as was the case with my host family in Moca, adopted and raised with elite privileges as “hijas de
crianza” or god-children.
On another occasion, a maid who worked for a Canadian tour operator for over a decade was upset and confused when she was “let go” because her employer had grown uneasy with the unspoken and perpetual obligations she discovered were inherent in their arrangement. The maid was perplexed by this abrupt end to their social contract. She explained to me she had helped her employer when she first arrived on the island “because she didn’t know anything, or how to avoid the tigueres,” and then sold the employer some of her land. “Y ahora cuando yo pase, ella supe la ventana [And now when I walk by she rolls up the window]” she complained, using an expression indicating rejection which revealed the betrayal she felt at having been excused from her position. Another sixty-something North American said he disliked it when his long time security guard referred to him as mi padre (my father), for it reminded him of another hierarchical relationship. “It reminds me of my visits to Atlanta where my old nanny always insists on reminding me how she wet nursed me,” he said, rolling his eyes. “And I just respond, ‘Yes, dear, how much do you need?’”

Expats are often very critical and/or mock the perceived Dominican inability to save or manage money, although they acknowledge the locals are surrounded by bad examples set by foreigners hiding from the taxman, laundering their money, or outright committing fraud (particularly in real estate). Indeed in 2008, Dominican officials deported 72 foreigners for various crimes, and the Samana Peninsula and nearby Nagua were named “preferred hideout towns for criminals looking to evade the law.”

At a cocktail party attended by French and English speaking expats, the conversation predictably veered towards the “pathetic” lack of work ethic among the Dominicans and their inability to budget. The party’s host explained he no longer gave advances to his employees because they were never paid back. A woman theorized that these Dominican character flaws were derived from living in the tropics where it is the “easy, disposable life,” and the “bananas literally fall off the trees,” so there was no need to save for tomorrow. “Instead on payday, why not get your friends drunk, or buy a motorcycle on credit, and then someone else makes a living off of the debt?” she quipped.

“It’s the same with their relationships,” said another man, a former Peace Corps worker who had made a profitable income as one of the first real estate agents in the area and was married to a Dominican woman who boasted she was descended from Taino royalty. “The men spread their seed, and if one woman dies, they just get another because the supply never ends,” he grinned. “Well, plenty of gringos fall into that pattern,” dryly quipped a French woman whose husband had left her for a host woman, ostensibly succumbing to the tropicalization of the islands.

Some foreigners lamented that the Dominican propensity to “milk the gringo cow” made trusting locals impossible. Others opined it was a holdover attitude of a “pirate culture.” A seventy-something French woman described a maid who “stole” the oranges off her tree when she was very ill. Someone else shared a story about four bottles of wine that went missing after a party. And still another reported of a babysitter bold enough to go into the safe and, little by little, pilfer close to $1000. They all expressed their disappointment at the shortsightedness of these Dominicans who stole and risked losing good jobs for such small, short-term gain.
Foreigners may be accurate in assessing a Dominican reluctance towards manual low-status labor, particularly among the younger generation. Young male security guards often boasted their work was *suave* (soft, easy), not *duro* (difficult), which was associated with undesirable manual labor, like the “slave labor” of Haitians who used to work predominately on the sugar plantations and now have expanded their labor working in the field of construction. The Dictator Trujillo tried to raise the status of the Dominican farmer to that of the noble worker as a kind of national ideal with some success in the late twentieth century, but a wide-reaching disdain for manual labor endures. The famously popular merengue song “El negrito del batey [The black industrial town]” by Johnny Ventura imagines the perspective of the cane cutter who dreams of living well. In a decidedly un-Calvinist vein, he croons, “God created work as punishment.”

Yet the fact of Dominican exposure to the very different and seemingly “easy” lifestyle enjoyed by the foreign guests all around them (the majority of who were retired and therefore not working, living off their pensions or the interest on their Dominican savings accounts) was conveniently overlooked. In my interviews with European expats, it was quite clear that their own motivation for resettling in Las Ballenas was to maximize their First World privileges and trade their small condos for large tropical palaces where advanced age would not make them invisible and undervalued. When the same strategies to improve one’s quality of life, embraced as tigueraje by Dominicans, were undertaken by locals to maximize their situation, the Dominican’s tactics and practices were reframed by expats in terms of a lack of exhibiting middle class “respectable” values such as honor, integrity, and a strong work ethic which, not surprisingly, Dominicans found to be hypocritical.
Blaming the poor for their own conditions of poverty is a common political strategy of more advantaged groups in order to absolve them of class-based guilt or responsibility. But for expats who either desired to be in positions of authority or, conversely, were uncomfortable with power imbalances, host-guest labor contracts also provided fertile territory to be exploited by opportunistic villagers. In general, however, it led to a lot of confusion around what the appropriate expectations should be from either party.

**Conclusion**

In Chapters II and III I have laid out some of the ways in which the transfer of wealth (means of production) from the poor to the rich has occurred in Las Ballenas over the past few decades. As developers accumulate through dispossession and create a built environment for tourists, economically marginalized villagers attempt to reclaim wealth including through criminal illicit/informal means. This, in turn, prompts heightened repressive security measures by state police. It is my contention therefore that tourism development, as a market niche within the larger political economic process of globalization, contributes to a way of life in which collective forms of social citizenship and participation (what hosts call confianza) are undermined in favor of a celebration of consumer culture and possessive individual rights such as ownership of private property.

In the next two chapters, I describe the conditions of Flow as they function at two extremes of spatial deterritorialization for both privileged “perpetual travelers” and those marginalized members of society marked “perpetually in-transit” (illegal Haitian migrants). The former seek to avoid the sticky entanglements (friction) of local politics while the state denies the latter the kind of important social traction that accompanies
citizenship rights in space/place. In a photo collage produced by Haitian taxi drivers to document their daily life, a spatial perspective with a focus on landscape rather than people seems to speak to a sense of spatial incarceration as illegal guest workers. Yet, as a conversation (spanning three years) with one taxi driver reveals, despite the national, evangelical, and transnational economic forces conspiring to constrain them, some Haitians also enlarge their spatial constructions of self, body, and world through their magical practices.
Chapter IV: Haitians in Dominican Tourist Space

Anti-Haitianism as Patriotism

Figure 39. Haitian vendors

Table VI. Comparative data on land area, population, life expectancy, and Gross Domestic Product between the DR and Haiti for 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HISPANIOLA NEIGHBORS</th>
<th>POP</th>
<th>LIFE EXP</th>
<th>GDP</th>
<th>LAND AREA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haiti</td>
<td>8.3 million</td>
<td>52 years</td>
<td>$3.4 billion</td>
<td>27,560 sq. km</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DR</td>
<td>8.6 million</td>
<td>67.2 years</td>
<td>$21.7 billion</td>
<td>48,730 sq. km</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


123
In the DR today, anti-Haitianism is conflated with nationalism and therefore considered a patriotic rather than a racist sentiment. Many Dominicans will invoke the 22 years of Haitian occupation (1822-1824) as the seed of their mistrust of their neighbors. Unlike most other colonies, the DR celebrates its Independence Day by recognizing its break, not from Spain, but from Haiti. The birth of its nation is defined through its rejection of Haiti and all that Haiti implies. Alejandro, a Dominican shopkeeper claims, “Without Dominican Independence, the whole island would be a chaos, just like Haiti is today, if Dominicans had not become free from Haitian rulers.”

The Caribbean middle class appropriates this fear. As one Guadeloupean woman puts it,

There is a fear of Haiti. People see it and they think it is like Africa. It can make us regress—that is peoples fear. ‘We have already been emancipated from Africa, from savagery, and we should continue to move towards France [or Spain],’ this is peoples attitude. [Brodwin 2003:399]

Such work of historical forgetting or (re)membering reifies Dominican norms. Haitian occupation obscures the reality that the invasion led by President Boyer was actually supported by many Dominicans: slaves who welcomed the unequivocal abolition of slavery, Dominicans in the borderzones who regarded Haiti in its heyday as their primary market, campesinos who were encouraged by promises of land, and the majority of elites who had been considering whether to become part of the Gran Colombia federation or join with Haiti to secure independence from Spain (Wucker 1999:23-50).

Others invoke ethnic difference between Dominican and Haitians in order to reassert the imagined existence of a modern, national character reinforced by myths that evoke “Dominican” norms of separate culture, values, and race. These differences set up the concept of contagion,
which is then used to justify the use of deportations to strengthen the borders and prevent a Haitian “invasion.” Karina, another Dominican national, explains,

Those that are creating public opinion in the DR and internationally of our alleged mistreatment of Haitians, are not seeing (do not want to?) the daily life problems growing between Dominicans and Haitians provoked by an uncontrolled immigration. And the denial that we are two very different cultural, social, economic and religious people been forced more and more to live together now, and the tensions evolving from all of this.

De la Oz’s sentiments are reproduced collectively in political rhetoric, especially around elections. Anti-Haitian policies and sentiment continued under President Balaguer who officially governed for 25 years until 1996.

The 1996 presidential elections were marked by racist attacks against black Dominican candidate Jose Francisco Peña Gomez. Competitors claimed that Peña Gomez was going to unify the island of Hispaniola and that over 100,000 Haitian nationals were illegally registered to vote him into power. The automatic association of the black presidential candidate with Haiti was a clear manifestation of the norm of biological blackness in the Dominican political discourse. [Reynos and Roberts 2006]

Despite the genocide that followed Columbus’s wake, Dominican scholars have emphasized the nation’s origins as indigenous and European as opposed to African. To this day, Dominicans celebrate their Independence Day from Haiti, not Spain. In primary school, children are conditioned into a nationalist Hispanicidad as well as negrophobia as they read the story of Enriquillo.124 The story involves the Indian rebel chief who fled the Spanish encomienda (slave camp) system and was joined by runaway slaves.125 The Dominican preference for a Creole

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124 Franco states that this is required reading for high school graduates who read it at least four times in the curriculum (Candelario 2007:59).

125 Under the encomienda system, the Indians worked fourteen hour days in the Spanish gold mines living off of cassava bread and water. According to Bartolome de las Casas, who lived in Santo Domingo from 1502-1512 and eventually joined the Dominican order to champion indigenous rights, the native’s hands were cut off if they did not pay proper tribute to their new master. Many committed mass suicide by drinking bitter yucca juice or hanging themselves. Native women performed abortions rather than raise their children under such conditions. Eventually witnessing the massacre of Indians, Las Casas wrote, "Who of those born in future centuries will believe this? I
identity that emphasizes its native origins over its black, enslaved ones was also fashioned due to the particular historical experience of the freed peasantry with their more flexible master-slave power relations. “By the late 18th century, when the French slaves of San Domingue were revolting, three-quarters of the population of the Spanish part of Santo Domingo was composed of free people of color who sustained themselves independently of the master class through subsistence agriculture” (Candelario 2007:99).

Thereby a “white supremacist model of mestizaje [mixed race]” rhetorically displaced blackness onto Haitians and created a “native” alternative to both foreign whiteness and blackness through the creation of the lo indio (Indian) category (Candelario 2007).126 This phenotype is celebrated as the ideal projection of beauty in its national and local pageants. Flora, a local woman with golden-hued skin, dyed-blond hair, green eyes, and a tribal tattoo claimed she was descended from Taino royalty.

126Race or ethnicity in the DR continues to be a construct that sometimes defies racial binaries common in the US, and may also be fashioned through class, accent, and hair. At the same time skin color is still noted and its categories can be dizzying to the outsider and contain the following sub-categories: White (rubio, blanco, pelirrojo, blanco jipato); white-mulatto range (blanco jojoto, indio lavado, indio claro, trigueno claro, trigueno); mulatto (pinto, pinto jovero, joabao, indio canelo), mulato-black range (trigueno oscuro, indio quemao) and black (moreno, mulato, prieto, negro, cenizo, coco) (Guzman 2008:17).
Figures 40. Various representations of the ideal beauty type: “Lo Indio” as seen at local beauty pageants and carnival.

Figure 41. Taino Princess

Haitians still find themselves trapped in between this contradictory need for labor and nationalism that dictates their marginalization and even expulsion. On December 15, 2005 when Haitians were expelled from Villa Trina, Dominican reliance upon cheap Haitian labor was exposed. DR1.com reported

The shortage of Haitian workers for the coffee harvest in the municipality of Villa Trina, as a result of them fleeing after local neighborhood associations gave them a deadline to leave, has led to the loss of almost 40% of this year's harvest. According to Diario Libre, the Haitians were forced to leave Villa Trina after the murder of a Dominican, which was blamed on a Haitian. The president of the Villa Trina Association of Coffee Farmers, Hugo Gonzalez, explained that they only have 140 of the 300 workers they need to pick the crop, and they are expecting financial a loss of over RD$3 million.  

127 Source: damnthefreshman15.wordpress.com

128 Diario Libre
2005 Haitians flee, coffee crop lost. December 15,
Yet the border continues to leak. Twice weekly the border opens up for trade allowing free passage to all, despite the mounting crisis of illegal migration. The border town of Dajabon is described as a “beehive of trade.” It is located along the Massacre River, named for a seventeenth century battle between the Spanish and French, but more often associated with a time when the river was said to have run red with blood, called El Corte. I visited the border on March 13, 2007, and one Spanish soldier stationed by the UN estimated thousands of Haitians crossed the bridge or waded through the shallow water to the market at Dajabon. Another claimed there were an estimated 55,000 border-crossings from the Haitian town of Ouanaminthe in one day.

In an article in the Miami Herald, Attorney General Francisco Dominguez Brito commented, “It must be the only place in the world with a border like that, where thousands of people rush by without anybody checking their papers… What border? I say we don’t have one.” Luis Cabrera who makes the five-hour round trip from the Dominican town of Santiago twice a week to sell clothes at a blue tarp-covered booth was profiled. “Haitians are a huge part of his $725 market-day take, but he said the market gives too many an opportunity to cross deeper into Dominican territory. “They are invading the country, sometimes without papers,” Cabrera said, (Katz: 2006). These accounts conflict with other reports of increased militarization of the border. In December 2005, the head of the Dominican armed forces, Sigfrido Pared Perez, announced that Dominican Army, Navy, and Air force soldiers would form a unit to guard the 243 mile frontier. Since the disastrous earthquake on Jan 12, 2010, these immigration restrictions have not changed, though the DR has authorized nearly 300 flights carrying aid and donated $11 million, some say, because it sees economic
opportunity (as well as social altruistic ones) in rebuilding Haiti (Romero and Lacey 2010).

**Historical NationBuilding**

However, the most dramatic case of violent borderwork in the name of nationbuilding came under the Dictator Rafael Trujillo, who ruled from 1930-1961, when he decided to nationalize the porous, leaky border that separated the DR from Haiti. For decades, tens of thousands of Haitians migrated to the Dominican Republic each year to cut cane for the November-May harvest. In the late nineteenth century, as sugar corporate plantations sought West Indian and Haitian labor, it was the association of Haitians with this form of undesirable, servile labor that devolved into sentiments of Dominican racial superiority. “Previous to this, anti-Haitianism was essentially a defensive fear of Haitian potency—military as well as religious and economic,” (Derby 2003:9). Prior to the Trujillo dictatorship, the border was a porous and a semi-autonomous region beyond control of the crown or subsequent national governments in Santo Domingo. A vibrant trade market economy sprang up along its edges, one in which Haiti’s markets were considered superior in their commercial vitality and, as noted previously, Haitian market women played particularly dominant roles as money-lenders.

This eighteenth century intra-island trade laid the parameters of what would later be defined as Dominican and Haitian national alterity, essentializing notions of race or ethnic difference, providing hierarchy and thus stability.

At a time when sugar was one of the greatest sources of global wealth, Haiti blossomed into the paramount sugar producer in the French colonial world, and the Dominican Republic became its foremost supplier of livestock products- meat, hides, cattle, mules, and oxen. Just as Haiti came to be seen as embodying the cash nexus- which in the eighteenth century meant gold and silver, and sugar and
slaves—Creole identity in the East was imagined through cattle, cacao, and tobacco. [Derby 2003:12]

The contraband economy between the two nations formed “the nexus not only of competing colonial powers and their maritime mercenary representatives, but also the site of competing regimes of value of various kinds—African paganism vied with Christianity, and feudalism sparred with mercantilism and emergent capitalism,” (Derby 2003:13). But in the border regions, where people had intermarried and mixed for four hundred years, race was not marked primarily by skin color or territory of birth. Like foreign travel writers, Dominicans and Haitians also identified boundaries of difference “in their eating, procreating, washing, walking, sitting, and speaking (accent),” (Derby 1994:521). Differences could be socialized, however, and Haitian and Dominican communities were often collaborative in their relationships.

But in the eyes of the Dominican state, extended exposure to Haitian influence had eroded the “traditional” Hispanic culture and Dominican national identity through intermarriage, the speaking of creole, and the practice of voudou, a cultural practice associated with the dangerous and suppressed energies of Africa. Haitians became racialized; the boundaries of their bodies dangerously fertile and open; they were capable of “flying” or being “mounted”—that is, possessed, by the lwa or voudoun spirits—in contrast to the more civilized, sealed body of the Dominican (Derby 1994:517-521). Only Haitians could be authentic brujos. Even today Dominicans still consider the Dominican spiritual healer (curandero) weaker than the Haitian houngan. Dominicans stories of Haitian bodysnatchers, zombies, and bloodsuckers that persist

129 Derby notes that it is the European imagination that makes a fetish of skin color (1994:521).
recall “fears that Haitian value and procreative power were sucking the very blood of life from the Dominican nation” (Derby 1994:526).  

A lack of political control reduced the border province “to centers of lawlessness where contraband moved unmolested and bandit raids were frequent” (Augelli 1980:24). Because Dominicans in their cattle/tobacco economy lacked the markers of modernity of the day, primarily slaves and sugar, they feared the competition, spiritual potency, and risks of the marketplace dominated by Haitian women. The Dominican state began a series of measures that appropriated these anxieties and justified a “cleansing” of the public sphere, “bathing it in the light of modernity, and enshrining it in clean whitewashed schools and post offices; the new public sphere was also one defined as purely Dominican,” (Derby 1994:524). 

In any case, partly through the construction of such essentialized racial difference, Trujillo was able to seduce his populace into becoming citizens and successfully transformed a debtor colony into a modern nation. In 1935 *Listin Diario* editors praised Dominicanization of the frontier for it,  

not only elevates production and re-educates inhabitants who used to wander aimlessly, without God or law, marauding about the region, without work, without producing, and by robbing other peoples’ efforts. It also raises a wall with

130 For contrast, see the European colonist preoccupation with “the cannibal” in early travel writing or the more recent figure of the “chupacabra” who sucks the blood from goats and other means of subsistence for farmers all over Latin America, and has been analyzed as a metaphor or symbol for US neoliberal policies driving small farmers out of the means to make a living. Also, of interest is Karl Marx description of industrial capitalism as vampiristic, parasitically living off the blood of workers. Commodities are fetishised materialisations of alienated labor—literally the living flesh turned into a dead object (zombified,) in the consuming of which the producers life force (blood) is sucked dry (or absorbed/neutralized). Hegel, Marx, and Nietzsche all studied the Master-slave relation as a parasitic one in which the master feeds, and becomes dependent upon, the slave. Patterson stated, “Master, you eated me when I was meat, and now you must pick me when I am bone,” (Sheller 2003:151). Other theorists such as Sydney Mintz and Harry Hoetink (year? This is not in reference list) have considered the ways in which economic relations of production after 1870 have shaped emergent notions of race. For example, they observed how boom periods in the sugar business were accompanied by sharper patterns of increased social distance and racial distinction.
distinctive features of an authentic Dominicanism in the sites that are closest to the neighboring Haitian state. [Turits 2003:156]

![Dictator Rafael Trujillo](http://argeliatejada.blogspot.com/2010/11/el-concordato-trujillista-y-sus.html)

In 1936, after 250 years of conflict, Haiti and the DR agreed on a demarcation of the contested border. In 1937, Trujillo ordered the Haitian massacre known as “El Corte” (the cutting) as part of a nationalization campaign to fortify the border. An estimated 15,000 Haitian and Dominican Haitian men, women, and children were killed by Dominican hands (Turits 2003:161). The 1937 Haitian massacre organized under Trujillo was a rare case of ethnic cleansing in which the ideology of hate followed the killing.

Unlike other cases of ethnic cleansing in the twentieth century, no prior state policy, local tension, international conflict, official ideology, or escalating attacks has signaled the possibility of such state-directed carnage. [Turits 2003: 167]

After Trujillo was assassinated, a revisionist scholarship reduced the genocide to a historical footnote of the dictatorship.[^132] Full scale “Dominicanization” of the border followed with the building of schools (an estimated 180 were built in the border provinces alone between


[^132]: Some argue there has still not been a “cathartic process in which Dominicans commemorate and look back at this horrific event,” (Edward Paulino, CUNY professor).
1936-1960), colonies, churches, and military posts. Jewish, Chinese, and other “white” immigrants were sought after to “lighten” the population (Augelli 1980:26; Turits 2003:170). Literacy campaigns for both children and adult campesinos aimed to wipe away any stains of Haitian influence and foster a strong sense of Dominican nationalism in the population…Major emphasis was given to the study of the Spanish language; many schools were equipped with radios to receive propaganda broadcasts from the capital; and every aspect of education, from the flag-raising ceremony in the morning, through pictures of Dominican heroes in the classroom, to sports and music, emphasized patriotic themes. [Augelli 1980:27].

As Turits notes, the effects of the massacre were more obvious than its causes: “the murder of thousands of people, the decimation of a once vibrantly bicultural and transnational Dominican borderland, and the reconfiguration of local constructs of ethnicity, race, and nation” (Year:146).

…Only following the massacre did the Trujillo regime sponsor virulent anti-Haitian rhetoric decrying supposed Haitian backwardness and savagery; effectively prohibiting Haitian migration through the 500 peso immigration fee (1939); and frequently and bitterly condemning the history of a “Pacific invasion” by Haitian migrants in culturally racist rather than simply territorial and political terms. The regime took traditional elite prejudices against popular Haitian culture, excoriating its “African”-ness, Creolized French, and above all, the “superstitions” and “fetishism” of Voudou, and circulated them as official ideology. [Turits 2003:172]

Trujillo imbued anti-Haitianism with a fear of ethnic-racial contamination. What had been seen as difference was now marginalized as “other.” Seeking to rationalize the need for the massacre, Percivio Diaz from Santiago lamented the killings as an act of barbarism but believed el corte was necessary. “Because if we didn’t do this, we would be Haitians…Already in the frontier we had become Haitians,” (Turits 2003:176). Strikingly, many Dominican (and Haitian) peasants interviewed by the authors remember the era of Trujillo with fond nostalgia as a time

133 The exception being the freed slaves from Philadelphia who migrated to Samana who were still favored for their civilizing capital potential (again exposing the different ways race is perceived in the DR).
when there was order, peace, and the promise of prosperity through hard work cultivating the land. 134

Trujillo needed to consolidate the nationstate, and in so doing, reify his position as dictator.

The slaughter—and the memories of the slaughter—established for the first time a profound social division, clear hierarchy, and increasing cultural distance between the populations in the Dominican and Haitian frontiers. And over time this rendered official anti-Haitianism plausible at the popular level, which in turn legitimated as “protection” state control over the frontier and an impermeable border with Haiti. [Turits 2003:175]

Trujillo proceeded to centralize state power by extending the nation’s road and telegraph system and establishing a national police force, assisted by US trained military (Calder 1984:61-62) which was to become the most powerful in the Caribbean basin (Betances 1995:97). The Guardia Nacional (national guard), according to Baud, “made policing the movements of Afro-Caribbean immigrants a practical possibility for the first time…Only after the US occupation were Dominican police officers reported to be rounding up Haitian immigrants in non-sugar producing areas of the Dominican Republic” (Martinez 1999:69). Trujillo continued, however, to recognize the importance of Haitians as a labor force by maintaining a quota with Haiti that allowed a fixed number of Haitians to enter for each annual harvest. During his reign and the formation of the DR as a state, the recruitment and employment of harvest labor “changed from something resembling free wage labor into a government-managed systems of semi-coerced exploitation” (Martinez 1999:7).

134 And recently in Las Ballenas, Dominican sentiment regarding the increase in crime-related violence which has been blamed, in part, on Haitian outsiders has been mollified due to the Trujillo-esque tactics (shoot first, ask questions later) of the new police commander.
The production of social space: spatial incarceration and magical thinking

Liliana, a popular beach cook, and I are shelling guandule (lentils) when she points to the bird staring down at us from the branch of a mango tree. “A Zancu!” she hisses, and waves it away with her hands, identifying it as a spy sent by a jealous Haitian rival to steal her cooking recipes and lure away the tourists.

In the Dominican Republic today, where the markers of modernity are not sugar and slaves but free trade zones and tourism based on cheap labor and the “unseen” forces of the market, the anxiety over bodies degraded by hyper-competitive conditions under “vampirish” neoliberal policies that sustain themselves off the blood of workers is displaced and scapegoated onto the imagined “monstrous” appetites of Haitians. In a Foucauldian sense, the stigma Haitians bear as magical and “savage” beings associated with Africa is “productive” in that it reifies a Dominican nationalism and reveals the Janus faced nature (desire/fear) of othering. Magical narratives often reveal the pressure of increased competition in Las Ballenas as a tourist economy, where Haitian and Dominican migrants vie for service-sector and informal labor jobs, including the selling of their own bodies (sex tourism). In this context the “zombie” figure, a living body robbed of agency, can be read as a kind of monstrous symbol of exploited labor.

Figure 43. Haitian construction workers walking to work at daybreak
Haitians have been *materially* constructing the tourist’s “world of paradise” through their labor in Las Ballenas since the early 1990’s as construction workers. As previously mentioned, Haitians are estimated to number around 4 thousand in this village of 35 to 38 thousand inhabitants. They are paid half of what Dominicans are paid, although Dominican contractors will often document they were paid full wages and split the difference with government officials. The policing of Haitians is arbitrary and inconsistent. It is not unusual for Haitians to be deported a few days before payday, escorted by police who sell their belongings and charge them for the bus ride home. It is also widely believed that local police pay Haitians to rob tourist homes and then make bogus arrests to satisfy the victims (See Chapter VII). Whatever the case, Haitians live an undoubtedly precarious existence both socially and materially in the Dominican Republic, squatting without electricity or water in the shells of the buildings they construct, up in the lomas or in little wooden houses. Even though Dominicans deal with Haitians in a friendly manner in a myriad of ways in their daily life, they generally live as unsteady neighbors, and in my interviews, Dominicans routinely stigmatized Haitians as untrustworthy, criminal, carriers of HIV, and “cannibalistic.”
In 2008 I asked twelve motoconcho taxi-drivers (six Haitian, six Dominican) to take disposable cameras and take snapshots of their daily life as conchos.\textsuperscript{135} The results revealed a stark contrast between their sociospatial life-worlds. While the Dominican photos revealed a vibrant life “backstage” in which family, lovers, and other male friends featured an active part, and where the photographers seemed to establish ownership over public spaces, the Haitian photos featured mainly landscapes and rarely other bodies, unless they were blurry or partial. Several of the Haitian photos were taken from one side of an actual material barrier: a fence, wall of shrubs, or stone wall. In general the Haitian photos, shot as if the photographer never left his motorcycle seat, seemed to establish precariousness, a sense of passing through rather than of being integrated in the environment.

\textsuperscript{135}The cameras each contained 24 shots, and I asked participants to: “Please show me, through your photos, what your daily life is like.”
Figure 45. Photos taken by Haitian Conchos
Figure 46. Photos taken by Dominican Conchos
Georgie, a twenty-seven year old Haitian concho, would stare at the road that lined the beach called Playa Rosada and mutter to me, “This can’t be all I will ever know. This one road, going back and forth, back and forth, all day long…” But he used his memories of home to shake off the melancholy of his current circumstances. He told me the beaches in Haiti were more beautiful than the Dominican beaches and that back home he had lived under the castle of Henri Christophe, itself a spatial monument to the Haitian revolution. Christophe was a general in the French and then Haitian revolution and became ruler of Haiti in 1806 after Haiti’s military ruler Jean Jacques Dessalines was assassinated. Christophe was a fan of enlightenment philosophy and corresponded regularly with Thomas Clarkson, the English abolitionist. His marble-floored grand castle, the Citadelle la Ferrière, is impressive, built by 20 thousand slave-laborers and sitting on a bluff 3 thousand feet high. In it, Christophe crowned himself king and reproduced a nobility consisting of 4 princes, 8 dukes, 22 counts, 37 barons, and 14 knights (Vandercook 1928). Georgie gave tours of Christophe’s fort, once acting as a guide to a group of American Baptists who invited him to their church and influenced his faith.136 “Just think of the kind of imagination that could build such a castle where you can see the whole world!” he exclaimed.137

136 Like many Haitians and Dominicans, Georgie practiced a syncretic mix of religion. Though fluent in voudou practice, he often peppered his speech with biblical references. For example, in remarking on the drug-sex addictions of foreigners, Georgie commented, “The last name of Satan is temptation.” And when I asked him about how he established a feeling of security, he responded, “Only the devil has security because he knows there is God.”

137 Georgie’s role as tour guide was similar to the former king’s position in his pre-revolutionary days. Christophe became adept at dealing with the “grand blancs” or wealthy white French planters while working in and managing a hotel in Le Cap, a major city of northern Saint-Domingue. But as King, Christophe’s people turned against him when he resisted the populist agrarian reform of the south. He ended up committing suicide, shooting himself with a silver bullet in 1820.
Unlike a biotech scientific model in which metaphysics is split, Henri Lefebvre’s theory of spatial production (his acknowledgement of “lived space”) allows experience to contain both material and immaterial domains, uniting the relations of production with poetics (such as Georgie’s memories and unconscious habits). Lived experience is “empirical” in that we translate knowledge through our bodies. We dwell in our bodies, which are mapped with experience and inhabit lived social spaces. People conceive spaces through both internal and external forces, self-consciously and unconsciously, from what we think and do. Subjectivity formation or the way we come to know who we are occurs in dialectical relationship with the place we inhabit. “In constructing our world, we construct ourselves” (Walter 1988), and vice-versa.

Another way Georgie and other Haitians expanded their socialspatial lived worlds was through their identification with magic. A Dominican shopkeeper, for example, admitted he was afraid to fire his Haitian janitor who was often drinking on the job lest the man cast his “evil eye”

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139 *Transladar* in Spanish literally means “to move, change places.”
against him. The example of an expansive Haitian cosmology as a form of social power is an important reminder that the production of lived social space is “embodied” and grounded in agentive human practice rather than strictly generated from abstract forces like the market economy.

While Haitian men in the village often worked in construction or as taxi-drivers, Haitian women were skilled traders and moneylenders in the region’s thriving informal economy. Some worked as vendors, braiding tourists’ hair as they sunbathed on the sand, or sold sweets that mistrustful Dominicans told me not to eat. I discovered this my first week in the village when I ran into a Dominican security guard one afternoon, who, I thought was coveting my delicious coconut snack. Having learned quickly that sharing is expected in any social situation involving food, I asked if he wanted a taste. He grimaced and told me I should be careful because it was likely poisoned.140 “Why do you think that?” I asked. He shrugged and then explained Haitians were “like animals” and you never knew what they were up to. “You know,” he said, “they even eat people.” He pointed to a cow placidly grazing in the distance. “Sometimes they even turn the bodies that are not-quite-dead into cows and then eat them.”

While Dominicans admired Haitians perceived ability to manipulate the unseen and mysterious powers of love/desire and the market, they simultaneously feared Haitians for their uncivilized appetites (cannibalism) and ability to shapeshift and steal the life-force of others. Another story told by a Dominican policeman described Haitian violence.141 Allegedly, a Haitian

140 Rumors and actual incidents of poisoning documented by colonial governors persist today in the form of expat anxiety that island women will poison their men, and island thieves will poison their security dogs.

141 Even a Peace Corps worker I met who lived in a Haitian community near the border for two years said, “The difference between the displays of violence of a Dominican and a Haitian is that the Dominican is quick-tempered
co-worker fell in love with the policeman’s friend’s wife, but she rejected him. So when the Dominican was away, the Haitian man allegedly broke in, violated the woman, and then brutally hacked her up with a machete so that her husband found her in pieces in a large cooking pot.\textsuperscript{142} As in most stories recounting Haitian monstrosity, the Haitian conveniently shape-shifts into a dog and flees. Thus the practice of shape-shifting, while allowing Haitian bodies to enlarge their social space by escaping containment, also provided a convenient way for Dominicans to stigmatize Haitians by placing them in the criminal scene. Similarly, a Dominican maid explained how the local witch (who, interestingly, was not Haitian but earned credibility as a witch for her knowledge of Haitian magic) remained recognizable to her (and thus culpable), even in her animal form.

\begin{quote}
Sometimes she’s up on the house in the form of a dog, or cat, or bird, but I know it is her because I have the goose skin as if I were cold. Other times she’s up in the tree, but if you know the right prayers, the “Our Father,” the tree will shake and a dead bird might fall out. Or maybe you will see her the next day, leaning against the tree, complaining, “Oh, I feel sick.”
\end{quote}

However, the witch’s perceived insatiable appetite was cause for concern among local Evangelical neighbors to the extent that her husband “cut her” one night with a machete (she showed me the scabby nicks on her scalp) to “let the blood” and the “demons” from her head so she would stop “flying” at night and “sucking the breath of children.” Despite this indictment, La Bruja kept an active practice among both her foreign and local clientele. She learned her craft from Haiti, where she continued to procure her medicines: quassia to expel the intestinal worms, red sage to induce menstrual bleeding, sarsaparilla to purge the liver. Her situation had improved and his “display” is mostly bluff- a lot shouting, and waving the arms about or shooting his gun in the air. But Haitians, in my observations, they are patient and guarded and do not anger easily but when they do…watch out.”

\textsuperscript{142} This detail was interesting because it actually copied the colonial “eye-witness accounts” of early travel writers who recorded the “aftermath” of the cannibal scene which often consisted of merely a few bones in a cooking pot.
over the years, and she eventually moved out of her sparse wooden hut with its dirt floor and smoky hearth in the center and into a concrete house, sponsored by the local government. But she still slept on the same ash-stained mattress and wore her purple satin skirt and flowered blouse until they were in tatters and reeked of smoke and rum. Her powers involved pretty standard brujeria, mixing love potions and neutralizing the effects of evil eyes, reading coffee grounds in the cup, saying prayers for visas, and laying on hands to cure aches and pains.\textsuperscript{143}

But powerful magic that is respected/feared must also be managed. Youth in particular had to be protected. Babies were immediately anointed with an \textit{apodo} (nickname) and a charm of a black-fist known as an \textit{asabache} attached by a red cord to their wrists to thwart wayward witches and their “evil eyes.” If young people died suddenly of mysterious complications, witchcraft was suspected. A Dominican pilot told me he believed his cousin’s Haitian boyfriend had “sucked” the life out of her as she was convalescing following a motorcycle taxi accident. She had been on the mend when suddenly, after his visit, she mysteriously died. When I asked what the motive would be for such a crime, the pilot explained, “to steal her youth and sell it” in order to pay off an outstanding debt.

As described earlier, increasing debt, built on an increased desire for positional goods to acquire status (or among the youth, chulo) and worsened by rising costs of living, added to the strain of contentious relationships in Las Ballenas. Traditional mechanisms of kinship or patronage networks based on reciprocity and communal exchange were weakening and sources of income for landless migrants were limited. Some Dominicans took desperate measures. One

\textsuperscript{143} She did not have a cell phone but proudly recited the list she had of foreigner’s cell phone numbers to emphasize her status. She also recited from memory lengthy herbal prescriptions in a kind of stream of consciousness fashion of rhyming verse. She often drew from the cell phone numbers of foreigners, as well as imagery from her dreams, to play the lottery.
week a Dominican security guard consumed liquid Drano after his North American employers, whom he considered patrons, denied him another loan, “to teach him self-sufficiency.” His neighbors shook their heads and prayed they did not become the victims of such “bad luck.” Amidst these unknown magical forces of the market, female Haitian moneylenders found themselves in a lucrative but delicate role.

Figures 48. Popular mass-produced Haitian art sold to tourists of market women
Haitian market women have long been noted for their magical money-making abilities which enabled them to revive “the object” or commodity. Among Haitian women “consumption, like kinship, [is] simply a domain through which diverse projects of value are objectified” (Miller 1995:156). Miranda, a forty-seven year old Haitian woman, told me she started loaning money three years ago to Dominican free trade zone workers (at the FTZ known as Grupo M that assembled clothing) in exchange for their ATM cards as collateral. She began with a starter sum of RD$50,000. Every payday she would go to the ATM machines after employees had been paid direct deposit and withdraw the weekly pay of each person who had a loan, giving the balance to the employee. Eventually she had up to forty cards in her hands every payday.

One of her Dominican clients asked her for a loan of RD$50,000, and, after two years, (she smiled, shaking her head) was still paying 5000 pesos a month and still owed the original RD$50,000. Eventually Miranda was so successful she was able to buy a concrete house outside the capital and a used SUV. At the time I met her, she was loaning money to the hotel workers and said she was careful to work with the hotel’s HR department to make sure the employees had passed the three month probationary period and earned enough money to cover the loan payments. She also secured promises from hotel management that she would be contacted first in case the employee was fired so that she could collect any debt through their compensation. In her

144 At a 1972 conference among Dominican academics on “the black woman,” speakers acknowledged that Haitian women were continuing to play their historical role as prestamistas or moneylenders, “who many times are the intermediaries between the strong capitalist and the workers that take the loaned money” (Hernandez 1972:7). An early twentieth century American traveler noted the “exception to moral decay of tropicalized whites and black males is the Haitian woman who presides over business, and is the custodian of money. The trade of the interior is almost exclusively in the hands of women” (Bonsal 1912:116).

145 In contrast, money, abstract and neutral because it bears no sign of the giver, is usually read by anthropologists as disruptive of kin and gift exchange.
tigueraje manipulation of market dynamics within informal economies, Miranda was an opportunist who, in the spirit of the tiguere, was using the shortfalls in state regulation and exploitation of laborers in general to her personal advantage. However, this was part of the larger pattern of tigueraje that dominated village politics and created a transient population and climate of negative reciprocity and diminished confianza (social trust) among neighbors. Miranda eventually incurred enough resentment that she decided to move to the capital in 2009.

Figure 49. The changing expressions of Georgie

I will close this section with excerpts from my conversations with Georgie whose perspective, I think, illuminates the range of lived experience that Haitians occupy as marginalized subjects in Dominican tourist space; from feeling an ambiguous belonging at its
most benign, to exclusion from full participation in social life and forced dependency in its extreme. But also, through magical thinking, Georgie seemed able to create “micro-moments” in which his subjective worldview was expanded. By refusing the nature/culture divide, Georgie populated an otherwise alienating and even hostile social world with the lwa, or voudou spirits.146

**Georgie (March, 2007)**

Georgie tells me he is well-liked in Las Ballenas and that he has no enemies. As with most things I later learn that this is partially true. Like many young migrants, Georgie stresses the positive and is eager to appear well-connected and positioned for advancement. He, like the witch, recites the cell phone numbers of foreigners he has met as evidence of his popularity: Ray from Miami who owns a fabric shop and his Chinese boss at the free trade zone who introduced him to his first eggroll. But these connections were back in Santiago where Georgie says he made more money—$180/month or 6 million pesos—driving a forklift at a clothing factory (Grupo M) than he does in Las Ballenas working with tourists. Here he is still struggling to pay off his concho which cost $1210 (37,000 pesos). In one year he has only paid off $180 towards his debt.

His eyes well up when he speaks of home and family. Georgie returns home at least three times a year (crossing and re-crossing the porous border). He tells me that while the politics are corrupt in Haiti, the people are united. “Is it true in your country ‘la gente afuera no se pega’ [the people don’t ‘stick,’ are not united, connected]. “Is it true that no one has time to speak to one

146 In other words, while Haitians are stigmatized through their association with voudou, they also experience “moments” of revelation, arising from a feeling of collective solidarity beyond the human realm, yet experienced within lived space.
other?” he asks, even though his own displacement as a migrant is one in which cultivating social “stickiness” proves challenging.

We are sitting on the beach watching the twenty-something Europeans kite-sail in the distance, enjoying their leisure playground. I notice Georgie’s eyes trailing over to the cliffside in the distance where I first met him in 2006. Back then, Georgie had noticed me walking to the village center and tried to convince me he knew a shortcut on the beach that required scaling a hill bordering the sea. “But there is no path,” I had said, squinting my eyes in that direction. He just smiled and motioned for me to follow. I hesitated, but I was short on time, the sky was darkening with rain, and, I reasoned, there were other people present nearby, decreasing the likelihood of some kind of ambush. We bushwacked our way to the top of the hill and, sure enough, Georgie uncovered an old trail. I noted the remains of a fire and discarded coconut shells and wondered if Georgie might be living up there. Then I looked below, and all I saw was a steep climb down through thorny bush and the crashing waves of the sea below. Despite Georgie’s protestations, I announced I was going back and reversed my direction. He followed me back to the road, muttering all the while that I should have more faith in him. When we reached the beach, I asked him if he could take me on his motorbike to town. He would not accept payment and looked frustrated with me when I set 20 pesos on his seat and waved goodbye. Now, he chides me again for not trusting him that day. I repeat it was the cliff and not his credibility that made me turn back. Then he says,

That day I proved to you I was a gentleman. Even when you thought we were lost on that path. Many people would say a man and a woman alone together in the woods…But nothing happened.” He pauses, then adds, “because I didn’t want you to be afraid.
It is a strange comment, I think, with the hint of a threat of what might have been, and say out loud, sifting sand through my fingers, “I wasn’t afraid of you, Georgie.” And then his face changes and he seems almost disappointed. “When you are in front of a person that you respect, tu subre sus ojos [you lower your eyes]. Fear is a form of respect.”

Fear and respect through magic, money-making, reputation, and the threat of violence—these qualities expand one’s social space in Las Ballenas.

As usual, Georgie quickly recovers from his dark mood and spies Ricardo, a well-known 22 year old Sanky-Panky (a term for the male host gigolos that trawl the beaches and discos looking to romance foreign females) in the distance and waves with a wide grin. Ricardo is coming out of the surf and waves back. His current 40-something Spanish girlfriend, a pilates teacher, is at his side, holding a towel out to dry him as he shakes the salty water out of his dreadlocks while she laughs. “I should have such luck,” Georgie smiles.

Georgie says the life of the Sanky is “poco linda, poco fea” [a little beautiful, and a little ugly], beautiful when the man can share an experience with the woman of his dreams, but ugly when the sanky is a tiguere only looking to exploit the “loose” woman who likes to dance and party and has addiction problems. He tells me that he recently met someone that could be the woman of his dreams. She is from Russia and is in town to rendezvous with an older French man she met online. “Amor para negocios [Love for business]?” I ask, referencing the omnipresent romance/sex/desire economy, and Georgie nods. Apparently the woman is very interested in mysticism and voudou, but she will leave after tomorrow, another lost opportunity.

I am not surprised she wanted to talk with Georgie about voudou. He is well-versed in the medicinal and magical properties of plants which he learned from his grandmother who had the cerebro abierto (open mind) to experience the corriente (current) upon which the seres traveled,
enabling her work as a healer. Several times when I fell ill with gripe (a flu-like cold), Georgie left a little bundle of roots, bark, leaves, and herbs on my porch. I used gin or red wine as a base, as he had instructed, added the plants, and made a tea from it, despite the loud protests of my Dominican neighbors who were sure I was going to turn into a zombie. Within the hour, I invariably broke a sweat, slept for hours, and then woke up feeling greatly relieved.

Through Georgie, I learned to appreciate how a voudou sensibility enabled Haitians to infuse their space with a magical way of dwelling in which subjects always exist in a crossroads between the soul and the flesh. In many rituals, the crossroads or threshold between humans and the lwa (spirit)—life and death, materiality and spirit, consciousness and unconsciousness—is symbolized by the surface of a mirror or water. Tree roots are also spaces where the lwa dwell. This unique sense of self constructs the body as expansive, as multi-dimensional, and as a conduit to experience this liminal space and “the invisibles” or lwa. Even as Haitians are uprooted and displaced, as voudouissants (voudou specialists), the earth is experienced as being full of organic connectors to the spirits, such as the lwa racine (tree root spirits), as well as rocks, spiders, waterfalls, and the sky. In the light of a voudou cosmology, the preference for Haitians to take photos that focused on landscapes might have an alternative meaning since land is imbued with the supernatural and therefore not a sign of alienation.

Yet it was also clear that while Georgie believed in a fecund, spirit-saturated plane of existence, he also knew Haitian bodies on earth required protection. I once asked him what the most powerful medicine was that he had ingested. He paused and gave me a long look, as if assessing if I was ready to absorb this new piece of information. Then, he said, “A medicine you drink which will protect your life if you are shot at or stabbed with a machete.”
“Oh,” I said, taken aback. “Um, what plants do you use..?” But Georgie shook his head solemnly. “No, it’s better you don’t know,” he said, “because even though the medicine is powerful, when you are old and in your bed you will suffer a lot, and you will not be able to die peacefully because the spirit which is here [he points to his belly] is still alive and only a bokor [sorcerer] can call in Legba who can remove it.”

He told me that, despite the risk, he knew Haitians in town who had taken this protective medicine. Others made petro loa (pacts with the devil) in which they pledged “blood for money,” a practice not generally condoned by voudou practitioners like his grandmother, Georgie added. When I asked why some requests for money were associated with the devil, Georgie said it was because such pacts required stronger blood sacrifices in exchange for the lwa’s gift. Instead of chickens, pigs, or goats, the lwa might demand more. He quickly moved on to another topic. Perhaps the prohibition of this kind of practice served as a social critique on money’s power to neutralize the social obligations that motivated reciprocal exchange and therefore created a society in which the people no se pega (didn’t stick).

Unfortunately by 2008, life circumstances seemed to have soured for Georgie. A concho dealer shared that Georgie was behind in his motorcycle payments and his concho would likely be repossessed at the end of the month. Politur (police) had recently jailed Georgie for “bothering a gringa,” though Georgie insisted the woman called him over, and he was only giving her directions to a waterfall, a site he visited often to leave offerings for the lwa. Then, after accusing him of stealing his own motorcycle, police confiscated his passport. Georgie told

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147 The lwa or guardian of the crossroads. Every ceremony opens by greeting Legba and closes by saluting Gede who is Master of the Dead.

148 In a similar vein, Colombian peasants and Bolivian miners associated the accumulation of money with the devil, due to the friction and inequality it introduced, which threatened social cohesion (Taussig 1980).
me he was able to avoid jail by paying a $30 bribe to the police but was upset about losing his documentation. In 2009 I tried to locate Georgie but his shack was torn down, no one had heard of him, and he seemed to have vanished.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided historical context to explain the Dominican state’s appetite for Haitian cheap labor and the origins of how Haitians became the Dominican national Other. I then analyzed the contemporary experience of Haitians who are labeled perpetually “in-transit” by the Dominican state and are the most spatially incarcerated subjects in Dominican tourist space. In contrast to more mobile subjects, the collective identity of Haitians emerges less from possibilities of disasporic subjectivity that circulate in transnational space and more from the Haitian daily experience of marginalization on the Dominican streets and in the minds of their Dominican neighbors. Magical practices allow Haitians to create friction and expand their sociospatial worlds even as they require management and stigmatize Haitians as the racial other. The witch who has loyal clients across the village is still pressured to bleed, to discipline her body so she stops flying, to empty herself of her magic, and yet she keeps practicing. Miranda is successful in manipulating the new market economy through moneylending but must leave town. And Georgie, who populates his world by leaving regular offerings to the lwa at tree roots and waterfalls, disappears without a trace.

I emphasize the magical thinking practices of Haitians because these practices allow Haitians to draw upon their own cultural spiritual traditions and narratives to create a sense of

149 Getting forged papers is very expensive. A full set of papeles can cost up to 100,000 pesos ($3000 US).
belonging and some degree of friction/traction amongst very difficult circumstances. Again, I see “friction-filled tigueraje” as the productive place where agency and structure meet. Following Lefebvre, differential space occurs when forces confront or critique the status-quo and disrupt established borders. I argue magical thinking creates differential space and disrupts abstract logic by inspiring a kind of ethic of the social commons which inspires a “right to occupy” as opposed to private property’s “right to exclude.” Magical practices need not be read as “heroic resistance” nor “false consciousness” but as one of many human strategies for psychosocial survival.150

150 In contrast to a Dominican nationalism which, as an ideology, fosters a collective repression of slave history, Haitians who practice magic understand their political situation and the operating modes of oppression within the socialspatial hierarchies within which they live.
Chapter V. Flow Strategies

Deterritorialized NonPlaces of Tourist Space

This chapter explores how Las Ballenas, as a place and tourist commodity, is packaged and sold through mass-produced forms of representation that reproduce a kind of deterritorialized flow that appeals to nostalgic guests. I will describe how modern tourist NonPlaces and televised representations (*Survivor, The World, Dream World*, cruise ships) on and of the island obliterate local difference either by relegating islanders to a frozen if exotic/picturesque background or by erasing them completely. While tigueraje practices assert that the DR is a real place with a real history, these NonPlace representations strive to create a new global relational space that repopulates a man’s world (heteronormative vision) with properly subordinate women and safely commodified relationships.

**The World**

One day the Captain of the whale sight-seeing boat I worked on pointed to a huge ship in the distance that had appeared suddenly and docked in the bay. He described it as looking like “something from outer space.” Indeed its immensity was jarring, particularly juxtaposed with the small yolas of nearby fishermen. This foreign ship was named *The World*, and the fishermen whispered that important businessmen flew to the helipad to hold secret meetings on board. A local bruja predicted its disappearance the following day, and as it slid away on cue, many of my awestruck neighbors seemed relieved. I later read of the magical ship and its residents’ “lifestyle” on its promotional website. The “largest privately owned yacht on the planet,” *The World* launched in 2002, and it continues to circumnavigate the globe with its 165 private
apartments and offices, “allowing us—the Residents—to wake up in a new destination every few days.” Its Mission Statement, as cited in employee contracts, is “to preserve the lifestyle” of its resident members and “explore the world in safety and luxury without leaving home.”

Disembarking *The World* is effortless--we simply walk off and on at our leisure, seamlessly transitioning into a new culture. We sample the local delicacies, wander down beckoning streets and explore the nightlife. We’re on no timetable except our own.\(^{151}\)

In its fantasies of effortless belonging and total control beyond the constraints of time and space, *The World* exemplifies the cosmopolitan’s dream of fluid freedom but remains mystifying to local villagers, as inaccessible as “outer space.” While in the Samana port, *The World* residents sidestep unpleasant scenes of poverty and instead are whisked away on private boats to a nearby national park to observe “caves decorated with petroglyphs of the indigenous Taino people” (the same cave paintings compromised by film crews I will describe shortly) and a wide variety of bird species. What appears key in selling this brand of fluid travel is the notion of being simultaneously “at home” while being away, which requires that the traveler be stimulated by exotic difference yet not threatened. To this end, “cultural experts” are brought on board to prepare guests for each port as part of the ship’s “Enrichment program.” *The World* peddles a fantasy of perfect control and safety that claims the world as home. This fantasy can be sustained through the construction of what French anthropologist Mark Auge (1995) describes as NonPlaces or waystations that foreclose a sense of common history or sense of belonging.

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\(^{151}\)Source: aboardtheworld.com
The Airport and Cruise Ship

A classic example of NonPlace as a waystation for modern travelers is the airport. One such Dominican airport provides a useful Lefebvrian example of how abstract symbols are reshuffled and absorbed into modern tourist contexts that empty them of their place-based meaning. The luxurious resort Altos de Chavon was designed by a cinematographer to resemble a sixteenth century Mediterranean village. Its airport, Caso de Campo, was made to resemble a sugar plantation and literally constructed over the grounds and remains of a former sugar plantation (depicted on the book jacket below). But despite its historical façade, the airport has the interior of a shopping mall, reducing plantation history in which so much violence and power is embedded, into a scenic backdrop of consumerism.

Figure 50. Caso de campo plantation that served as model for airport depicted on book jacket

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152 As exemplified in George Clooney’s character, a hatchet-man, in the 2010 film *Up in the Air*. In Clooney’s case, such subjectivity was affirmed through occupying seat 12A on the airplane and deriving a concrete sense of pleasure out of maintaining brand name loyalty to Hilton.

153 The website for the airport states: “Fashioned in the style of an old sugar mill, the single terminal international airport opened in December 2000. Inside the terminal, guests waiting to take off will find food & beverage outlets, duty free shops, an international bank, a Premium Passenger VIP Lounge and more.” Outside the terminal, Altos de Chavon featuring “old world” metal work and stone carvings and was designed by Italian cinematographer Roberto Coppa and was inaugurated in 1982 with a concert by Frank Sinatra (Premier World Marketing and Premier Resorts and Hotels n.d.).

154 Source: Moya Pons 2010
Taking in a reproduction of colonial history in airport-scenery, post-colonial tourists superficially consume the history of Dominican slave culture as they glide by with their suitcases, reducing slave culture to the picturesque. At the same time, as sugar plantations—themselves “factories” that ushered in early capitalism—are reshuffled into airports made to resemble sugar plantations, the nation’s extensive web of transnational flows is embedded into a kind of cultural aesthetic and thus tamed. This process is representative of the kind of inauthentic cultural life reduced to a commodity-fetishized spectacle described by Guy Debord (1967) and media theorist Jean Baudrillard (1988) where social relations and direct experience are mediated by images or simulacra (surface imitation).

Another example of the deterritorialized NonPlace that obscured local differential spatial and lived dynamics and dominated Samana’s tourist space, shaping islander’s perceptions of developed nations, is the cruise ship. An impressive symbol of modern fluidity physically detached from Dominican space, cruise ships are destinations unto themselves. While a handful of cruise ships sailed through the DR’s northeastern bay in the 1980’s, their presence increased exponentially in 2007 after the Samana port was completed. And these ships have been met with a mix of excitement and awe from hosts who describe them as “floating cities.” As cruise ship critic Robert Wood writes,

If economic globalization means the increased mobility of capital and its spatial disembeddedness, cruise ships represent the ultimate in globalization: physically mobile; massive chunks of multinational capital; capable of being “repositioned” anywhere in the world at any time; crewed with labor migrants from up to 50 countries on a single ship, essentially unfettered by national or international regulations. [Wood 2000:353]

For example, Woodspeaks of the cruise sector’s use of “flags of convenience” to circumvent home country labor laws, taxes, and maritime regulations as a long standing, “globalized practice” (2000:351).
Other questionable characteristics of these ships, in terms of their sustainability, include their need for deep port access, their abundant generated waste that hosts must dispose of, and their meager contributions to local economies. Ordinarily, cruise ship visitors were directed by cruise ship directors and their Dominican business partners to the beach resort of Spanish-owned Cayo Levantado (translated from Spanish, this means Elevated Key), the nearby island known for its snorkeling and manicured beaches patrolled by armed guards.

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156 In constructing deep ports, local coral reefs are destroyed. Also, the ships themselves have an unknown impact upon the humpback whales that use the bay to breed.
I surveyed ten cruise ship tourists in November of 2008 who dared to venture off the ship and explore the Dominican port town. Cruise ship tourist complaints, unsurprisingly, catalogued the assault to the senses that disturbed their holiday experience: the dusty, dirty air from unpaved streets, the incessant roar of generators and constant blackouts, the smoking motors or cars without mufflers, music from stereos, uneven or gaping concrete, foul smelling latrines with improper sewage infrastructure, and mangy dogs. As one American tourist I surveyed complained,

We docked and wandered a little in town, but there was really nothing to do, only a few restaurants with mediocre menus…And walking around was quite rough, with all the mangy dogs, the dirt flying in your face from all those motorcycles, and the holes in the pavement. Worst of all, we were unable to find a single public bathroom.

There is something potentially subversive in these disturbances or ruptures to the cosmopolitan’s fluid dream, particularly when they occur through sensory stimulation such as scent (the smell of raw sewage in the crystalline water exposes the dumping of waste from a cruise ship) or sound (the blaring pimped up sound system spilling out into the streets from a colmado (grocery) that causes one’s internal organs to vibrate.) These stimuli enter the nervous system and brain in ways that cannot be blocked as effectively as sight; many tourists simply retreated in disgust back to the ship.

The majority of participants who posted on a forum called cruisecritic.com in December of 2007 concurred with the statements above, also expressing preference for the spatially restricted environment of Cayo Levantado. One post on cruisecritic.com served to reify the

157 Cruise Critic
author’s national superiority and, consequently, a kind of Dominican backwardness. A writer with the handle “Lovelights” wrote,

Just got back from our cruise where we visited Samana in the Dominican Republic. If I ever went back, I wouldn’t even bother to get off the ship. We nicknamed it “appreciation island.” Told my husband that I’d like to take my children there so they can realize how much they should appreciate our country and what they have here. We figured since we were there, we might as well get off the ship. As we strolled along the shoreline…we were bombarded by children that were trying to sell us seashells for $1.00 each. It was 12:30pm in the afternoon and it made me wonder why these children weren’t in school in the middle of the week. It was impossible to sit down on a bench to rest our feet without children that appeared to be between the ages of 7-10 coming over us to sell us shells. “One dollar” seemed to be the only English word they understood. My heart went out to this one particular child and I handed him a dollar and tried to explain to him that I didn’t want the shell.

Here, “appreciation” seems to be serving mainly to reaffirm the speaker’s position of privilege. This disavowal of the underpinnings that create difference is easier to maintain when the traveler is accustomed to encounters confined to NonPlace beaches and policed with armed guards. We see traces of Auge’s modern tourist who travels through the current moment of capitalism characterized by excess, an expanded desire to consume experience and images (window shopping). Yet unlike the Victorian traveler (or flaneur) who walked the streets of the city defining himself against a succession of others, this kind of modern tourist judges others from a place of detachment, floating on the NonPlace of the cruise ship, without reference to a common history or similar experience nor awareness of the impact his or her presence on these ships may have upon local residents.

Lovelights later added, “That is the reason we took the boat over to Cayo Levantado and had the best part of the cruise swimming in the pristine water and away from the hawkers.” This focus on pristine waters combined with being repelled by garbage on land shows the lack of knowledge about the everyday life of islanders who are disenfranchised from the state with its
powers to create infrastructure that could transport and process such waste, offer children access to schools, or provide business incentives to locals in town. Other comments from the website affirm that “there is nothing to do in town” and “Samana is not a place to be wandering around. It is hot and dirty with no decent shops.”

One positive post on cruistcritic.com on April 3, 2008, came from a cruise ship tourist who, significantly, ventured off the cruise ship and, acting independently, venturing into town on a bicycle taxi. A person using the name "theramseranfamily" wrote in 2008 of his experience beyond the confines of the packaged holiday to the local church and market (reproduced here as it appeared):

As a retired couple me and my wife love traveling. Thanks to my penny-pinching I have been able to apply all the luxeries of life to my retirement. I have 3 kids all of whom are in college. I recently took a carribean cruise to samana and to my pleasant surprise I had a great time. When I got of the boat I was greatet with a fleet of horses and carriages, I believe they were called "los tres amigos" me and the family decided to rent 2 carriages out for a tour of the city, at 10 dollars a per person it was not a bad deal. The tour lasted for about 30 minutes, it takes you through some of the local inside of the iland and tourist attractions. You will surely be taken to one of the oldest active churches in the carribean, they take you to the local market where you can find fresh fruits ranging from mangoes to some that I can even pronounce. It shows part of the "local living". Once I finished the tour I went and ate at the local burger joint, I met a local there that later explained that there really is a lot to do you just have to look for it. I later went to el rincon its about a 30 or more minute ride but it was a very pretty beach. I really enjoyed it.

This traveler, through the help of a cultural broker (the bicycle taxi-driver) who led him beyond the tourist scrim, was able to experience the “place” of the port town as it was territorialized or inscribed by host social processes and thereby perceived it as more than a generic brand of “sun, sea, and sand” or a nowhere place with “nothing to do.” He represents the desirable kind of tourist that the World Council of Churches representatives who gathered in 1971 to discuss tourism development in the Caribbean were arguing for, one who longed for
more than just “beaches and entertainment,” someone who wanted to “leap over the walls of their own cultural, intellectual, and spiritual ghettos” (Cuthbert 1971:9). However, this cruise ship tourist response was clearly the exception among a majority of dissatisfied tourists, which indicates the Dominican state continues to package and sell a kind of unsustainable postcard of paradise as it tries to segregate the experience of cruise ship and all-inclusive or upscale “boutique” tourists who are vacationing in such close proximity to poverty.

**Televised NonPlaces: Dream Hotel**

An example of constructing the fluid dreamscape that fortifies borders which benefit guests is represented in the popularity of filming commercials and television series in Samana to be exported abroad. Dream Hotel, a German soap opera featuring a luxury hotel owner who perpetually travels the world with his sophisticated family, uses various developing countries and their citizens as fodder for colorful backdrops and characters. For the 2008-09 season, the series filmed in Bali, Cape Town, Chiang Mai, China, the United Emirates, India, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Seychelles, South Africa, Sri Lanka, and Thailand, and then made its way to the Northeastern coast of the Dominican Republic in 2008. The company hired Dominicans to pan Dominicandad (Dominican-ness) as background for the camera but with exaggerated happiness and in technicolor costume.

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158 According to a Dominican professional I met who worked in advertising, Las Ballenas was also known for the filming of Spanish porn films, which contributes to exporting the representation of Dominican women as commodities to be traded among men.
During one chilly afternoon, and despite it being siesta, the pace of life quickened as the cameras rolled. While the scene focused on a conversation between a German grandmother and her granddaughter as they walked along the sand, behind them the natives performed: Dominican boys shimmied up coco trees, a couple danced a merengue, and a vendor hummed to himself as he sold a colorful bunch of balloons. Islanders recognize that foreigners value them for their vitality; qualities they self-identify as “Somos amable, caliente [We are friendly, hot/passionate]”. A coveted tourism job is “animation director,” a position literally charged with animating tourist bodies, administering a kind of psychic mouth to mouth through limbo contests, oral jello relays, and an ever-flowing stream of rum because, as one local put it, “in your country la gente no se pegan y ‘ta frio [the people don’t stick, aren’t united, are cold].”

In sum, all of these modern ways of “seeing” from outsiders passing through airports resembling sugar plantations to those gliding by on cruise ships, representations of the Dominican spaces and its peoples are emptied of authenticity and actual sociocultural processes (such as poverty or evictions) so they can be consumed more readily as deterritorialized NonPlaces. Place is reduced to a sanitized, safe, superficial backdrop through which the cosmopolitan’s mobility is privileged whether it be on deck of The World, through the family drama of an international German hotel developer, or through a cast of good-looking Crusoe-wannabes pretending to battle wild nature on Survivor.

Next I want to augment the discussion of NonPlace with an analysis of active place-making, representational strategies from colonial travel writing to tourism marketing that are forced to contend with various friction-filled histories, identities, and relationships. As a place,

159 Siesta is the noon-3pm time span allotted for eating with family and resting from the heat.
Las Ballenas exists as both a defined locus and imagined realm constituted by experience, memory, expectations, and dreams of those trying to escape global capitalist flows and of villagers trying to connect to them. The romance outsiders have with Las Ballenas and its people frames their decision to relocate to paradise. This process of branding paradise spreads by word of mouth, and now through the unprecedented forum of the internet, and attracts others with a shared idea of paradise. Such notions of Caribbean paradise its antithesis have changed over time but usually involve constructing a framework to manage difference in a way that bolsters a preferred identity.

For example, nostalgic representations of Utopia are predicated upon the preservation of borders which secure difference and allow privileged subjects to be soothed by the passage of time with concepts based on a fabricated, recent past. This nostalgia for a pre-modern era is seen when Las Ballenas is depicted by expats as a forgotten Eden where inhabitants still live like the native Taino in “picturesque” poverty as seen in the popular image of innocent nudes on the beach found on postcards, etc. Or we can see this nostalgia when Alec, a French expat, describes his journey to the New World as one in search of a (dark-skinned) “roots girl” who indexes an authentic sexuality as far removed from upper class Parisian society as he can imagine.

Titillating dystopic representations arise from the imagined prospect of the collapse of established borders and hierarchies (difference). Undesirable or feared qualities are displaced upon others in order to manage anxieties around different kinds of perceived threats to selfhood. Monster myths of cannibals are transferred to Haitians. Haitians displace the loss of namn (life

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160 For similar reasons, the living rooms of upper class Dominicans invariably feature a portrait of los campesinos in El Cibao, the Dominican heartland.
force) onto the zombie. And sex workers are referred to as siren-like spirits who seduce and “tropicalize” wayward male travelers. Colonists and gentleman travelers who held the power to represent, both feared and desired being tropicalized as a condition of enervation they imagined stemmed from the tropical climate, disease, and proximity to “blackness,” a “dis-ease” similar in its symptoms to what Mary Pratt (1992) calls “transculturation” in contact zones.

Representing or naming people and places is an active aspect of borderwork which marks both the repeated inculcation of a norm and the setting of a boundary around which certain structures of space and power are ordered and maintained. Naming is also an anxious search for recognition, a desire to be the object of the Other’s desire in order to stabilize power hierarchies and reassert the dominance of a kind of fading hegemony amidst a “fragmented globality” (Zizek 1989; Trouillot 2003). Representations in tourist areas are also important because they create the cultural symbols that inform the scripts upon which native villagers are expected to perform their identities and upon which places are “branded” in the guest imagination. Following Sheller (2003), the Caribbean is consumed both through traveling representations (texts, images, signs) that bring the Caribbean to the consumer and by traveling consumers who organize their perceptions and experience through existing visual regimes.

Naming should, therefore, be interrogated as a social process in order to understand what is actually at stake. With regard to accounts of cannibalism, for example, though rarely seen by eye-witnesses, travel writers described detailed scenes of cannibalistic feasts. A pile of (stolen) bones, it seems, was enough to set the stage for the first primal scene of native degeneracy in the New World when Dr. Diego Alvarez Chanca, who sailed with Columbus on his second voyage

161 See Footnote 44 for Trouillot’s definition of “fragmented globality.”
to the Caribbean, penned what is regarded as the first modern account of cannibalism. He wrote that the Captain, upon entering some native houses,

…brought away a little of everything; especially he brought away four or five bones of the arms and legs of men. When we saw this we suspected that the islands were those islands of Caribe, which are inhabited by people who eat human flesh. [Hulme 1998:16]

Some historians argue that, historically, the function of Columbus’ depiction of the native “Caribs” as savage cannibals (versus the Arcadian Arawaks) was to justify their taming, to confirm white supremacy, and to create a screen on which guilt of self-knowledge as colonial exploiters/torturers/killers feeding off human bodies for profit (the true cannibals) might be projected (Sheller 2003:143). Such justification could also explain why Dominicans workers accuse illegal migrant Haitian laborers of cannibalism today.

History aside, this chapter will focus primarily on the representations of local females in Las Ballenas in order to contextualize contemporary borderwork and emphasize its underpinnings predicated on preserving an untenable autonomous masculine subject bent on avoiding friction and maximizing deterritorialized flow. By way of a disclaimer, I am alert to the sensitivity of reproducing sexist and racist images and content, which is why I have opted to reduce the images in size so the reader may contextualize them appropriately rather than risk reproducing this limited and violent way of seeing. This does not derive from a kind of moralistic critique against sexuality or even against objectification which is part of being sexual human beings (we all at times gaze and like to be gazed upon). Instead, I seek to bring attention to the limited scripts that are evoked and the asymmetrical power dynamics invested in their re-invoking which results in hostile, untenable borderwork exacerbated by modern global-economic conditions. In order to consider the always present emerging possibility of an alternative approach, I challenge this
practice of borderwork as scapegoating using a theory of relational dynamics that hinges upon feminist Luce Irigaray’s concept of “porosity” which counters phallocentric logic (See Chapter VIII).

I have organized this chapter in sections that correspond to underlying modes of repression. The first mode is slavery, accompanied by ideologies of racial superiority and the expression of anxiety through miscegenation law. The second is the ideology of the civilizing mission that accompanied colonial/neocolonial domination and the expression of conflicted desire in travel writing. And finally, the commodification of the Dominican experience through liberal/market development which accompanies an increasing commodification and fragmentation of the village into highly stratified, competitive identity blocks expressed through mythologized demonizations of alternative groups is the subject of the third section of this chapter. Together, these modes of representation, identity, and desire constitute the making of Las Ballenas as a place.

**Dis-ease: Tropicalization and Creolization**

In her discussion of how “ethnosexuality” has remained a key feature in the marketing of tour destinations and products, Joane Nagel (2003) recounts centuries of travel narratives that depicted distant locales as libidinous— from Columbus and Lewis and Clark to Vespucci. In fact, colonial outsiders have always looked at the Caribbean from two contradictory perspectives. On the one hand, the Caribbean was viewed as an “Eden before the fall,” a microcosm of earthly paradise with its fruits that flowered year round and the “primitive innocence” of its inhabitants. On the other, it was the site of moral and physical danger, and colonial explorers risked succumbing to tropicalization. Europeans imagined that exposure to tropical fecundity would lead down a slippery moral slope to corruption. At the same time, the idea of excessiveness of
Caribbean nature and its bounty was central to normalizing relations of (neo)colonial domination. In fact, ever since Columbus's “discovery,” with the ensuing piracy and native genocide, relations between the North Atlantic and its (re)inventions of the Caribbean have been about “the interplay of changing possibilities for consumption and social struggles over mobility and immobility” in which anxieties over colonial wealth based on the slave trade and its plantation societies, and now under tourism, prefigure (Sheller 2003:22). Tropicalization along with Creolization are sources of both degeneracy and cultural creativity and their modes of management pointed to the unstable relationship that has always existed between Europe and the Caribbean.

As (post)colonial outsiders impose their social-spatial boundaries and privileges, they record and order scenes and bodies into abstract (hegemonic) spaces. These forms of cultural ordering seek to reify the postcolonial “anti-conquest” gaze (Pratt 1992) which passively looks out to possess that which falls within its frame. Early travel writing and miscegenation law marked difference in starkly racial and gendered terms, reflecting the period’s anxiety and desire around racial intermixing. Such discourse set the preconditions for modern postcolonial discourse on sex tourism. However, expats, who literally deterritorialize their bodies to relocate to paradise, actively seek out rather than fear tropicalization or a loosening of cultural baggage or bureaucratic responsibility as they explicitly seek out relationships involving racial transgression. They still build on historical tropes in naming place and subjects as they experience tropical “freedom” from the social norms they were forced to deal with back home.

Yet this imagined freedom from civilizing culture that expats seek is short-lived as they experience the inevitable friction that accompanies “staying in place.” Freedom from first-world women, for example, is also expressed with considerable ambivalence, contextualized in today’s
postmodern period in which totalizing truth claims pertaining to gender and its essential embodiment under patriarchy have eroded (Lyotard 1979). Some outsiders blamed their diseased condition of compromised selfhood as “contracted” by dark-skinned peoples—particularly women—and hot tropical climates or wild jungle landscapes.

But the majority of expats I spoke with acknowledged their anxiety over social rules arose more from destabilized metanarratives and economic challenges to hegemonic masculinity from their own developed societies where women were now competing with men in the economic market and challenging male hegemony. In both (post)colonial cases, the contemporary construction of masculinity still depended on notions of an autonomous self. But for expats, the source of destabilization was emasculating conditions back home (that is, until they grappled with a local woman’s tigueraje), whereas, for colonial travelers, vulnerability to selfhood was ostensibly accrued through creolization (i.e. racial mixture).

In colonial Caribbean society, creolization meant that racial boundaries were continually under threat from the perils of miscegenation incurred through intimate social relations—such as when domestic workers played “double roles” as concubines.162 Previous research on Caribbean sexuality focused on the plantation-era Caribbean women’s “promiscuity” as a result of the “high demand for their sexual services” due to scarcity of women on the island (Patterson

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162 As an indication of national attitudes on this theme, at a 1972 conference among Dominican academics entitled “Some Reflections on the Black Woman in the Dominican Republic,” one conference panelist argued the Dominican slave-owner or upper class male shared a preference for the domestic black female worker over the prostitute because she was believed to have sex for pleasure, was “not being paid” for her affection, and did not spread venereal disease. The panelist asserted that the “double exploitation” of the black female domestic continues today: “Many times the first sexual relations of the teenage sons are practiced with the young cooks and servants of the house. Indeed since the black woman has arrived in the new world she has played a double role: black woman and woman of white men” (Hernandez 1972:2-10, esp. 2).
More recent scholarship has acknowledged sexual practices, performances, and identity-making are always embedded within structures of political economy. In this light, the motivation of the sexual behavior of former slave or mulatta women is understood in terms of the socioeconomic benefits they and their offspring incurred in these exploitive relationships with former masters rather than as arising from an imagined insatiable libido.

Libidinous and unruly subjects are central to the romance and marketing of Las Ballenas as a place and index its appeal to contemporary expats fleeing the laws and bureaucracies of their home countries. Indeed, the popular and documented history of the Samana peninsula expats shared with me tells the story of an area that existed for centuries beyond state or government boundaries with a creolized, nomadic population of uncivilized male subjects: runaway slaves, cannibal heathens, and blood-thirsty pirates. As noted in the preface, because master/slave relations were never so clearly demarcated in sixteenth century Hispaniola as in other plantation societies due to poverty, the failure of commercial agriculture, long history of neglect by the Spanish, the nonexistence of legal private property, and the effects of the Haitian revolution and occupation, the murkiness of these borders led to anxiety. Later, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the underpopulated free lands on the north coast of Hispaniola, ignored by Spain and impervious to the State, provided a fertile breeding ground “for white, black, and mulatto cowboys, or for French buccaneers, whose daily life was almost that of the cimarron

163 Another panelist from the Dominican conference mentioned above emphasized the “strong inclination” black women had to become lovers with soldiers, police, and men of all classes Hernandez (1972: 10-11). The themes of the conference seemed to indicate a continued preoccupation with the role of “libidinous” black women and miscegenation in the nation’s plantation-era history, although modern practices of concubinage were now termed as “double exploitation.” (See previous footnote).
[fused slave], the same tramp or vagrant-life,” (Moya Pons 1994). When the Spanish tried to oust these natives from lands the Spanish had been squatting upon, these mixed race cowboys turned to piracy. For sixteenth and seventeenth century governors and eighteenth and nineteenth century plantation owners and colonial subjects then, the Caribbean and the Samana peninsula in particular, presented a place ripe with potential degeneracy that needed to be managed.

**Managing Difference under slavery through miscegenation law**

Neglected by the Spanish crown for centuries, the Samana region was inhabited by natives, then freed slaves escaping Haiti, and finally French pirates turned buccaneers from the island of Tortuga, all swimming in an ethnic pot that has been steadily bubbling through the ages. Back in the sixteenth century, colonial governors and, later, travel writers responded to this Caribbean “vital, independent peasantry” and world of transgression with an obsessive attentiveness to detail that marked difference such as gait, skin tone, gesture, etc. Laws were passed to manage racial and class tensions that revolved around the Atlantic Slave trade, the emerging political economy of the times. Because of the flexibility and loose structure of master-slave relations in Hispaniola, many Spanish landowners began to fear the black rebels might conquer the entire island. As early as 1542, an Italian traveler estimated there were as many at 7,000 runaway

164 Cimmarones were polygamous and lived nomadically across open lands with their animals. The French that traveled from Tortuga to Hispaniola to join them lived in small huts in the woods and savannas, smoking animal hides for up to two years before they returned to Tortuga for supplies. The buccaneers of Hispaniola originally got their name from boucan, the practice of smoking meat they learned from the native Arawak Indians.

165 “Eventually, groups of buccaneers organized massive raids on the capitals of the Spanish empire in America, and then the term lost all trace of its first meaning of cattle hunters of Hispaniola and became nearly synonymous with pirate or freebooter” (Exquemelin 1992:13).
blacks on the island. By 1546, Melchor de Castro, a plantation owner, estimated the black population to be 12,000 and white population to be 5,000.

When the new governor, Alonso de Cerrato, arrived in Hispaniola in 1543, he found the fear among the Spanish to be such that very few would dare to go out into the countryside if they were not in groups of fifteen or twenty armed men. [Moya Pons 2007:19]  

By the mid-sixteenth century, the unremitting importation of slaves had created a surplus population which resulted in continuous slave rebellions and the formation of runaway communities. During these volatile times, slave laws were passed by both the French and the Spanish to manage racial transgression, however futile. In 1685, Louise XIV passed the Code Noir trying to forestall “French degeneracy” presumed to follow racial intermixing. Whites were fined two thousand pounds of sugar if they bore children from slaves (Hazard 1873:109). Another sixteenth century Spanish law prescribed one hundred lashes and a fine of 20 pesos if a slave or Indian left the house of her owner. The owner was fined a token three pesos if he raped his slave (Hernandez 1972:72). Despite these disciplinary laws, a race of mulattoes and “affranchised” or freedmen arose who were capable of buying their freedom or achieving it through “irregular marriage” or as illegitimate offspring. Spanish laws were more “lenient” in that they facilitated the freedom of slaves who could ransom themselves by reimbursing their master for his original outlay and by fixing a maximum price at which liberty could be purchased and which the master was compelled to accept (Hazard 1873:103).

According to a surgeon who served on the ship of many buccaneer captains and published his account of their adventures, the Spanish were “extremely fond of Negro women”

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166 In 1526, the Spanish Crown ordered that one third of each slave shipment to the Antilles consist of women to reproduce for the labor force (Moya Pons 2007:17).
This desire was offensive and dangerous in the eyes of colonial authorities, as colonists were... “more fond of their dusky female slaves, or Indian neighbors, than they were of their lighter-coloured spouses; and though many had left legitimate wives in Spain, they appeared not at all reluctant to take temporary ones from such dusky maidens as were nothing loth” (Hazard 1873:103). In 1766, Prince de Rohan was brought to the DR from Paris to restore a colony reported to be in “open revolt” and “depraved as a country can be, having attained the apogee of demoralization” which included “orgies that these voluptuous colonists had given themselves up to in midnight balls, in the midst of which, the lights extinguished, each man used the woman he had seized at random” (Hazard 1873:112).

The stakes of such depravity were apparently high. By 1760, a French commissioner was sent out to the DR to investigate the high number of planter deaths by poison. The commissioner concluded:

It arises from the too intimate intercourse that most of the masters have with their woman slaves, is the origin of the attack. A legitimate wife, seeing the intercourse of her husband with her servant, in the absence of the husbands has her punished severely. If the master is not married, and that is mostly the case (marriage not being popular, and libertinage more tolerated), the inconstancy natural to the men of this climate makes them change or multiply their concubines, from whence arise innumerable jealousies and distinctions; and in the first, as in the second case, are the causes of the taking vengeance now upon the fortunes of the master, in poisoning his negroes, or taking his life, or that of his wife, or even their children. [Hazard 1873: 107]

Meanwhile in France, a mulatto class of middle-upper class planters returned to Paris “rich as a creole” and a series of laws were passed to restrict their social mobility and manage Parisian class anxiety.167 Reflecting this fear of native poisoning, a fear that continues to harvest rumors

167Similarly, the Dominican upper class and their foreign transnational business partners are currently seeking to restore their privilege through heightened state security measures (See Chapter VII).
among expats in Las Ballenas today, these creoles were denied work as pharmacists or doctors because “the white colonists feared that the mulattoes would use their medical knowledge to kill them and inherit their property” (Moya Pons 2007:149). Other laws prohibited mulattoes from carrying arms (1758), denied mulattoes the right of selling arms and munitions (1767), denied marriage between mulatto women and white men (1768), and declared mulattos unfit to hold high ranking appointments in the court or militia (1771). Mulattos were also forbidden to accept the title of “monsieur” or “madame” and could not assemble in public after nine at night nor accept the name of their fathers or former masters (Moya Pons 2007:149). This anxiety persisted into the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as seen in travel writing as a genre (as well as anthropological accounts), along with scientific list and map-making aimed at territorial surveillance, appropriation of resources, and administrative control. These forms of representation also served to not only record but order scenes into abstract spaces depicting a world ripe for development.

**Managing Difference through the civilizing mission in Travel Writing**

Historically, Caribbean travel writing reflected the fantasy and desire in the transgression of boundaries around “bodily indulgence and moral decay, consumer luxury and producer exploitation, natural acquisitiveness and moral restraint” (Sheller 2003:73). The seductiveness of such possibilities required redoubled efforts to stabilize boundaries of difference that put whiteness and colonial power at risk. Anxious borderwork resulted, as seen in the following examples, beginning at the most basic level, the body. Colonial authorities racialized differences in terms that attempted to preserve the “white bourgeois body” (Stoler 1995). To travel writer Harry Foster, Dominican women walked with a “jaunty little swing, so feminine and so
intriguing that the commonwealth of Boston would probably have banned it as indecent, as compared to Haitians whose gait was ‘flat-footed,’ with women wearing turbans instead of ‘Parisian chapue and dainty parasols’” (1929:282). Still, Dominican women were suspect: “a trifle dark and a few had hair that curled betrayingly.” In contrast to the women, island men were most disparaged for their “sloth” (Harris 1860:71), that is, their unproductive labor, also a common complaint by pro-tourism development guests in contemporary Las Ballenas. An exception to native “sloth” was the depiction of Haitian market women. Yet colonial representations of Haitian women sought to “tame” these powerful abilities by rendering female figures into popular subjects for postcards and tourist art with “picturesque” backdrops.

Figure 52. A seller of Bananas at Port-au-Prince

168Source: http://www.postcardman.net/haiti/251390.jpg
The spatial tactics used in these forms of representation constructed the scene in terms of a colonial author’s movement through it, freezing local inhabitants in the process. Therefore, as in abstract practices today,

> By moving through, across, and about “the islands” the travelers establish measures of similarity and difference, proximity and distance, progress and stasis, by which they mark both their own “home” position (as modern, liberal, dynamic) and the differences between various strange others (as more or less backward, uncivilized, primitive). [Sheller 2003:136]

Another description by travel writer Frederick Treves (1908), an English medical scientist, described locals as both degenerate and picturesque.

> They are, on the whole, a picturesque people, not always of pleasing countenance, it is true but with a certain theatrical air about them which is encouraged by the broad-brimmed sombreros… the men slouch about the streets with a lethargic insolence and serve to demonstrate to what depths even loafing may sink when the loafer is degenerate. [247, emphasis added]

Since the fear of being tropicalized, that is, succumbing to the “degeneration” of this transgressive Caribbean space and its people, was ever present, the baser instincts of the native transcended even his intellectual or class position, making it all too easy to “relapse...to the degraded conditions of which he was born” (Treves 1980:114). Even after independence, the natives, in this case Haitians, were viewed as having achieved only the faintest smear of civilization. Treves quoted the English Victorian historian James Anthony Froude on Haiti’s independence and the precarious civilization of her people:

> They speak French still; they are nominally catholic still; and the tags and rags of the gold lace of French civilization continue to climb about their institutions. But in the heart is the idolatry of the gold coast, and in the villages of the interior, when they are out of sight and can follow their instincts, they sacrifice children in the serpent’s honour after the manner of their forefathers. [1908:243]
Such tropicalized instincts were contagious, as noted by Bonsal (1912:116), who also noted the dodgy behavior of the French priests on the island who, due to the “ennui of their situation,” are “little superior to Haitian peasants… surrounded by debauchery, sensuality.”

Figure 53. Vintage postcard of French priests in Haiti

Bonsal traveled to the DR in 1908, a year after President Ramon Caceres signed a convention authorizing the US to guarantee repayment of the DR’s external debt. His travelogue also reflected the interventionist thinking of the time. “It is evident that wherever in the West Indies the black population is largely in the majority, the task of civilization has only been half accomplished” (1912:113). And in a discussion on “the truth about voodoo,” he writes:

… [we] never seem to forget that in these vile excesses there should perhaps be found excuse enough for the interference of the civilized world to save the people of the black republic from the future degradation which awaits them.” [102]

169 Source: http://postcardman.net/haiti/251427.jpg
In short, Bonsal warns, “should the future resemble the past… and the conditions of competition remain unchanged, the Caribbean archipelago must either be absorbed by the economic system of the US or lapse into barbarism” (1912:20, emphasis added). The colonial argument for the development of plantation economies would ironically be displaced by the modern promotion of tourism which sells the illusion of timeless un-developed “wild” landscapes and peoples.

**Perpetual Travelers (Modern Day Pirates)**

Contemporary expats I interviewed in tourist space were not motivated by the manifest destiny of the North Atlantic dream. Quite the opposite, they had often failed to live up to some imagined masculine ideal at work or in relationships with women back home and sought out the imagined role of the “modern day pirate” to avoid state labor and marital contracts. They likened

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170 http://postcardman.net/haiti/251425.jpg
themselves to (illicit) pirate free-traders above state discipline.\textsuperscript{171} They celebrated the region’s historical role as a port for more than two hundred years serving various \textit{contrabandistas} (contraband goods) “for whom trading such illegal commerce was neither illegitimate nor immoral but the only guarantee for survival” (Moya Pons 1994:27).\textsuperscript{172}

In some cases, expat-pirates I interviewed directly resembled such “global outlaws” (Nordstrom 2007) including Russian mobsters; French, Dominican, and North American drug dealers; an Italian bank robber; a target of repeated assassination attempts (a Frenchman whose wife had ordered the hit); a Romanian political refugee; and an Israeli doctor/restaurant owner who was quietly escorted off the island one night by INTERPOL agents on mysterious grounds of “terrorism.”\textsuperscript{173} In other cases, expats were simply temporary sojourners (cruise ship or sex tourists, for example) who sought a kind of seamless transition into (and, importantly, out of) a new culture.

Whatever the impetus for their journey to the islands, the Samana peninsula invariably appealed to the expat imagination because of its history as a popular locale for pirates who found protection in its bay and stored their bounty in its caves. Several expats cited an account

\textsuperscript{171}The DR has a thriving shadow economy and is a major transshipment site of cocaine to the US and money-laundering operations.

\textsuperscript{172} In 1503, the Spanish monarchs created La Casa de Contratacion (House of Trade) in Seville which administered the Crown’s properties, collected taxes, organized early colonizing expeditions, and enforced law governing the Spanish monopoly in the Indies which prohibited direct trade with foreigners at the same time Spain was unable to provide enough agricultural and manufactured products (perfume, nails, shoes, medicine, paper, dried fruit, grain, cereal, iron, steel, knives, soap, wine, flour, fabric) to its colonies. Spain’s imported products cost up to six times the original price, and this set the stage for the extended commerce in contraband by pirates and privateers. Between 1513-1559, the French were the first privateers to move into the Spanish Antilles. Francis I, King of France, encouraged French hijacking of cargo from ships returning from Espanola. The island of Mona became their first base of operations (Moya Pons 2007: 27).

\textsuperscript{173} All of these people supported a variety of host economies and households through their informal economic networks. But because of the sensitivity (illegality) of their roles and work, I have chosen not to include the global outlaw expat narratives.
published in 1678 believed to be written by a French indentured servant, A. O. Exquemelin, which documented the romantic pirate lore and founding mythology of the region. This document describes how, by 1664, the French West India Company had established a colony on Tortuga which then had exclusive control over the trade in the French Antilles and included planters of Hispaniola. The author describes how these early settlers from Tortuga resented being under governor’s rule “in a land which belonged neither to the King nor the Company, and resolved not to work rather than be dominated” (Exquemelin 1992:52).  

The pirate then as original “free trader” is an apt metaphor for the modern day subject described in more detail below as the “Perpetual Traveler” who refuses loyalty to any nation. However, as expat narratives reveal, expats who literally deterritorialize themselves in order to transgress social norms, are inevitably ensnared by tigueraje practices and must negotiate with certain friction-filled realities of living in the everyday world among and with local villagers. 

Regardless of the length and scope of his trip, the expat-pirate, like the transnational migrant laborer (who is equally cosmopolitan but structurally disenfranchised), represents a subject associated with the opening up of nation-state borders. Instead of being loyal to his country, he is an “opportunistic patriot” whose nationalism is echoed, in Joffee, only in the sentiment: “My fatherland is where I am doing well” (Greve and Zoller 2009:27). He uses his privilege as a first-world citizen afforded a certain degree of citizenship rights (among them, human rights guaranteed by laws) but then seeks to avoid the obligations that accompany them.

With his portable occupation, pension, or other assets (legitimate or illegitimate) that sustain his standard of living in the host country, the expat as modern-day pirate often seeks to

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174 Similarly today, Dominican males as well as foreign expats, resist engaging in wage labor perceived as alienating or duro (physically arduous), the former refusing to work “as slaves,” the latter under “Big Brother.”
live out his desire to escape social rules back home. These rules include certain state and legal obligations that bind the lives of his non-cosmopolitan countrymen. The popular name coined by “financial consultant” Harry Schultz is “perpetual traveler” (PT), and he (for he is gendered male) is accorded all kinds of advice and support on how to maximize his transnational existence through social media.¹⁷⁵

![Figure 55. from “PT Club” website](http://ptclub.com/aboutus.html)

The goal of this PT subject—as I discovered in my interviews— involves avoiding taxes, military service, lawsuits (particularly related to divorce or child support), and “innocent but forbidden pursuits or pleasures” (Schultz 2005).¹⁷⁷ His methods involve having more than one

¹⁷⁵ PT meanings also extend to Permanent Tourist, Prior taxpayer, Possibility Thinker, Post Tyranny, and Privacy Tactician. Take, for example, such content is found on the newsletter “Harry Schultz Life Strategies” billed as “the world’s #1 financial, economic, global, privacy, sociological, and philosophical newsletter.” See [www.321gold.com](http://www.321gold.com). Schultz published his book “How to Keep your Money and your Freedom” in 1967.

¹⁷⁶See: [http://ptclub.com/aboutus.html](http://ptclub.com/aboutus.html)

¹⁷⁷ Of course, it should be noted that host tigueres also desire to be transnational PTs abroad and, while embracing their Dominican-ness, bear little loyalty to the Dominican state that relegates them to the lower classes.
passport and identifying places where one’s “diversions or perversions are socially acceptable” to avoid going to jail.\textsuperscript{178} On a more benign note, the consequences of adopting such a lifestyle promise to “release creative souls from the many burdens of coping with Big Brother” (posted by Adam Starchild on “cooltools4men” forum entitled “PT Philosophy and Practice” on May 30, 2005 on invasionplus.net)

The lifestyle of a PT therefore closely resembles that of the expat-pirate in the
deterritorialized space of Las Ballenas in that it is:

- essentially a divorce from the system. It’s an annulment from the old country’s bureaucrats (government employees), lawyers (officers of the court) and accountants (IRS collection agents). It should cut you off physically from any litigants, especially alimony seeking women. [PTClub: 1997]

With regard to this last reference to alimony, the PT lifestyle can be read as part of a broader attempt by men to reclaim their masculine selves in an era of women’s equality. In fact, responses posted to Schultz’s advertisement of the PT philosophy are explicit on this point: “If men adapt this lifestyle plus form brotherhoods plus fight back against feminism (like Richard ford says) – then feminism is history in a very short time” (posted by Ragnar May 30, 2005, 8:53pm.) However, expat-pirates find themselves forced to negotiate with the friction they experience in commodified relationships with local women as we will see in a discussion of pricing for sex acts and tigueraje over concubine law in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{178} I am focusing on male expats in this work, but there was also a (much) smaller number of female expats who relocated to Las Ballenas and were seeking erotic relationships with hosts but they were seeking “romance” rather than “freedom.”
Tropicalized Expats on Freedom and Structure

In their transition to island life, I wondered how expats experienced tropicalization today. How did expats, as they rode the margins of cultural boundaries between “home” and “away,” experience and manage the dis-ease of a blurring selfhood? Here I focus on a few narratives among the exiles, artist-eccentrics, and sailors who were among the first-wave of expats to settle in Shangri-la before there was electricity.179 These guests who more firmly situated themselves in place and became more mired in the contentious process of borderwork experienced friction with hosts. Therefore, they found it more difficult to experience the PT’s imagined fluid freedom. While being “tropicalized” and seeking to shed certain conditioned behavior from home, guest expats also experienced their fair share of “culture shock” around host tigueraje practices which often created a crisis (and proved that “culture” as social rules both protects and censures). Compromises had to then be made to address the gap between their desires and lived experience.

Peter, a divorced forty-something German carpenter who had sailed his way around most of the islands of the Lesser Antilles, had a habit of staring hard at people and forgetting they could feel his gaze burning into them. I first met him under these circumstances as I was sitting at a local colmado visiting with its owner. When I asked if I had something on my face, he seemed to awaken, apologized, and muttered he had lost all his “manners,” particularly around “white women.” One day I joined him at a bar with a group of his friends who were visiting from Berlin. I was curious as to Peter’s backstory, seeing as he was kind of a loner and knowing he had been in the islands for over three years. One of his friends said he was a doctor, and the other

179 In terms of exile, Dr. Enrique Ricardo, the town’s first Dominican doctor, was himself sent to Las Ballenas in 1983 as punishment for speaking out against corruption within hospital administration in the capital
an unemployed engineer. They were interested in the subject I broached around the themes of tropicalization. But when I asked Peter whether he considered himself tropicalized or worried about a lack of “structure” in his day to day life, he appeared visibly annoyed.

“Why be obsessed with plans? I live in the moment,” he growled. But his doctor-friend pressed on. “But don’t you ever get bored Peter? What about having goals or a family?” 180 Peter was chain smoking and staring hard again, so in an effort to lighten the conversation, I glanced down at the book one of them was reading, *Narcissus and Goldman* by Herman Hesse. Hesse’s story centers around two good friends who go on separate spiritual journeys as one chooses the life of the world and the other the life of a priest.

I remarked, “Well, Hesse seems to share Peter’s view. Doesn’t the story end with the ferryboatman who acquires meaning or wisdom by living simply, taking people from one side of the river to the other?”

The doctor scoffed. “Well yes, but Hesse’s novel works only because the structure of the plot is so tight and elegant. Peter’s life, old boy, has no such structure!” Peter glowered, and I bid a hasty retreat.

A year later when I saw Peter again, he wanted to talk. He said he had thought about our conversation that night in the bar for a long time. He had experienced the fall of paradise (that is, the death of the dream of fluid mobility and unfettered freedom) recently and admitted that, looking back, his sense of who he was, or who he thought he was, had indeed blurred in the tropical heat.

180 Although the doctor admitted that sometimes he fantasized about escape from the drudgery of his daily work schedule and domestic responsibilities, he explained he had a new girlfriend and believed he was now obligated to act as a kind of role model to her son.
It started as a rash of “bad luck.” Peter experienced in rapid succession: stormy weather at sea that badly damaged his boat and an armed robbery that left him destitute, and he was finally jailed by border police in Trinidad for not having a return ticket (and, he says, for being white and looking like a hippie). Three dark-skinned policemen laughed at his claustrophobia, he said, pretending to release him by opening the door of his dirty jail cell and then slamming it back in his face. He was kept there for three weeks, forced to wear his urine-stained trousers without knowing if he was going to be released at all. “Everyone has their breaking point,” he said, “and I came close to mine.” He was making plans to pack up and move his carpentry business to Mallorca which he hoped would be an ideal compromise between the imagined structure of Europe and the imagined freedom of island life.

Likewise, Philippe, a forty-something Frenchman who arrived in Las Ballenas in 1995 with his wife and children, was also a sailor who placed high importance on his definition of personal freedom that included the ability to “be a man,” an ability which he believed Dominican men embodied. When I asked him to elaborate, he described the Dominican male ability “to work if and when they feel like it” and an unflinching “support from their sisters, mothers, and wives.” He also embraced a kind of pseudo-Zen existence in which he saw himself embodying a sailor. When I met Phillippe, he was living on his small sailboat and slept with a flare gun under his pillow for protection against local thieves. “Thieves, meaning the police,” he explained.181 A

181 My correspondence with Philippe was strained due to his perception of local police. One night a local police lieutenant insisted on “escorting” me home in his tinted window sedan even after I insisted walking. When Philippe (knowing the police to be dangerous) intervened, the lieutenant, after establishing Philippe was not my husband or relative, had him literally escorted away by four officers for showing signs of “public intoxication.” After the police lieutenant had driven me home (in a roundabout way that lasted two hours) Philippe was waiting on my porch and scolded me for drawing police attention to him. “Believe me, you do not want the police here to know who you are” he said, “and that goes for both of us.”
worn magazine with a cover-story on France’s modern sailing hero Eric Tabarly was pinned to his cabin wall. When I asked if he saw himself as tropicalized, Philippe rolled his eyes at the notion that he might lack any kind of necessary socio-spatial structures in cutting his homeland ties. “The ocean is my structure. She forces me to be present and attend to her every mood.”

Philippe considered himself an authentic transplant rather than a tourist or Crusoe-wannabe exile. “When I came here, I left everything behind in France to build a new life here on the island. Not like people today who come here on holiday just to escape winter back home,” he said. But he also experienced a rude awakening to the power dynamics of paradise when he bought a restaurant in the pueblo from a man he later discovered was a hitman. When he tried to back out of the deal, he was threatened and had to approach some local French mafia on the island for protection. He says he became a fast and accurate judge of human nature during those early years. He eventually would build many structures in town including the disco, a sex worker hotspot. But in 2008, he was separated from his wife and estranged from his children, a situation of obvious strain.

I found Philippe’s story to be like many other male expats on the island who had the aura of the freedom-loving pirate but also communicated ambivalence with regard to responsibilities (work schedules) and women (marriage contracts). As a parting gift, Philippe gave me his children’s copy of *Le Petit Prince* (The Little Prince) by Antoine de Saint Exupéry, the pilot author/adventurer. I thought it was significant that Philippe marked and told me to read his favorite passages which seemed to indicate the importance of commitment which he had consciously avoided in tourist space. In one passage, a fox pleads with the boy-prince to tame

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182 Tabarly sailed eight-man yachts solo, won the Transatlantic against Britain, and finally, on a trip to Ireland, was struck by the boom and thrown overboard, disappearing into the sea. “It is as he would have wanted,” Philippe says admiringly.
him: “If you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world.” And later the fox tells the boy a secret, about the nature of forming ties, of the importance of “wasting precious time” on his flower-bride from his home planet. The prince had forsaken her because he realized after having seen field upon field of roses just like her on other planets, that she is ordinary.

In effect, the fox tells the prince about the value-creating importance of social contracts, secured through “taming” (ordering, naming): “Men have forgotten this truth. But you must not forget it. You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed. You are responsible for your rose.” The fox was telling the prince that what had made his rose “back home” so unique had not been her appearance, but the social contract that the Prince had honored between them, and his commitment to her.\(^{183}\)

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\(^{183}\) As evidence of his commitment the boy would dutifully place a glass globe around her petals when she was coming down with a cold, for example.

Perhaps the expat whose life appeared to change the most in the period I was there (2005-2009) in this domain of freedom/structure narrative was Alec who was a self-professed “beach bum” when we first met; when I left, Alec was preaching sermons and teaching Sunday school at the local charismatic Dominican Baptist church. Seemingly inspired by his Dominican wife’s recent Evangelical conversion, Alec had come full circle and embraced a new identity and structure as an active member of church. This new role seemed to allow him to more fully integrate into island society.

When I first met Alec in 2005, he was often witty and sarcastic and often described himself as a “cultural bastard” in contemplating his persistent Eurocentric habits while married to a Dominican and living in the barrio-slum.

I find myself in the morning reading Le Monde, listening to Bach, and drinking my Italian coffee. I live in the barrio, but I will not do business with Dominican people because I have learned you cannot trust them. Yet when I do leave here I miss the filth, the stench, the clamor.

Alec’s mother told me there was a definite trade-off in the decision her son made to gain the “freedom” by leaving his culture behind, particularly, in his case, one of considerable class privilege. She said:

If you think of it, the nonstop routine of work and marriage prevents you from actually thinking about your life. I’ve followed my son through his misadventures, if you will, and have seen he really did break the pattern, and there’s a certain freedom in that. But this is also the bad news because he has given up a lot and burned many bridges.

But Alec said he was not interested in the upper class Parisian society he was born into, and early on as a teen began to explore “ghetto culture” in Paris. At 19 he set sail for the Caribbean to find a “roots girl” in Jamaica. He laughs now at his attempt to imitate Rousseau. He had vague plans, he said, when he sailed off on his boat, of writing a novel and living in
primitive, soulful conditions. But there was trouble in Jamaica, a live-in girlfriend claimed she was pregnant and wanted half of his possessions when they broke up. He went to court and ended up giving her the house and its furniture.185

One day we sat chatting in his garage, which doubled as an internet café in 2008, about Alec’s motivations for leaving home and experience on the island thus far. He surmised that the majority of expats living in Las Ballenas had experienced some crisis of meaning or identity back in their home cultures that prompted their search for Shangri-la. With his usual irreverence, he yelled over the barrio cacophony, “I just as easily could have studied Arabic and ended up in the hands of Homeland security.” A large Presidente beer truck was trying to squeeze through the narrow dirt road, sending up clouds of dust and causing the nearby girls who were enjoying yet another school recess to squint their eyes as they filed by in their crisp, blue blouses, white skirts, and knee socks. Alec removed his wire-rimmed glasses and rubbed them with the corner of his shirt. “It just so happens that my passion went in the direction of becoming a tropical beach bum and not a soldier for the Taliban,” he grinned.

He eventually married Albania who he met while she was waitressing in a café in Santiago, and they had three children. On the other side of the wall, I caught a glimpse of Albania through the pane-less window carefully penciling her eyebrows in a dramatic arc in the little mirror on the wall. At the time she was studying Psychology and traveled to the capital every Saturday. By 2009, Alec was still living in the noisy chaos of the barrio but began to show signs of wavering from “ghetto” life. One day he asked what I thought about a complicated set of blueprints he had drawn up that revealed plans to soundproof his walls. He eventually gave up

185 This common tigueraje practice of exploiting concubine law will be explored in Chapter VI.
that idea and moved into a condo near the beach in 2010, near a development project his father was involved in.\textsuperscript{186} “I learned that I had pushed myself to my cultural limits and had to admit my bounds,” he shrugged.

By 2010, Albania, now dressed in modest clothing and without jewelry or make-up, seemed content with her new role in the church and its associated respectability. Meanwhile, Alec’s mother kept a close watch on how much Alec was asked to donate to Church activities. The couple invited me to a spartan dinner of habichuela one evening, and Alec spoke to me at length of his belief in this new world of moral redemption that positioned itself in alliance with respectability and “honest work” and against all things tiguere (drinking, womanizing, thieving) and gave Dominican women leadership roles. He told me, smiling, “Time is our own human construct. It is like a river. So there is no reason to be impatient for the Second Coming. And when it happens, I will have my parachute.”

**Conclusion**

In this section I have demonstrated how tourist and cultural representations, based on historical tropes around tropicalization and creolization, support spatial and bodily hierarchies and “flow” strategies that favor guest male experience. I have also listed some of the constraints which limit the reality of Las Ballenas as a place of celebratory transgression. In sum, I found that the impulse to leave home for the majority of expats I interviewed was motivated by contemporary anxieties or crises in their home-country lives in which subjects felt cultural constraints to be more stifling than empowering. Sometimes the move was motivated by a need for recognition, a

\textsuperscript{186} His father was a successful businessman who had substantial property holdings both in the DR and in Haiti.
nostalgia for timeless ideals and stabilized meanings such as those that surrounded patriarchy, 
and a longing to return to a time and place “where men could be men.” Other times it arose from 
a desire to cross boundaries and acquire freedoms that were believed to accompany transgression 
such as finding a “roots girl.”

But those expats who were able to “tropicalize” successfully, that is, navigate the transition into their new environment with less distress, found themselves anchored, as Alec did, by a local structure and series of commitments. In other words, they networked within Las Ballenas as a socially vibrant field, a place. Their transition was not at all the seamless 
deterritorialized fantasy of the fluid cosmopolitan aboard *The World* or on a reality TV show. If they did not find such an inroad and continued to sail around the fringes of place, they found that riding the cultural margins (without the benefit of a tiguere broker) was messy, tiring, often dangerous, and involved defensive borderwork with villagers and also local mafia, police, and women.

The next chapter demonstrates how representations of female bodies and feminized places continue to structure modern spatial practice and daily social routines of villagers in ways that are intensified with the growth of internet sex tourism. The deterritorialization of bodies from context and place results in more dangerous flow in terms of a more disassociated, disposable form of host/guest relationship. Chapter VI also describes how village women who have been historically represented as libidinous continue to engage and perform with those limited scripts using tigueraje strategies designed to create friction with outsiders. While historical representations based on desire/fear of being tropicalized support hegemonic power structures and drive the desire for the sexualized, racialized other, the daily lived experience of hosts and guests in tourist space fall outside these totalizing representations. Tigueraje, as the
friction-based borderwork between hosts and guests that differentializes space in local contexts; furthermore, tiguearje, encapsulates how hosts in particular resist being consumed or “eaten as the other” (hooks 1992).
Chapter VI. Female Tigers

In this section I will demonstrate how the bodily and environmental space of sex workers is policed and how negotiation tactics around pricing sexual transactions are disguised to make the mutually symbiotic and exploitive encounter more palatable to both parties. I thus seek to highlight power dynamics embedded within this tigueraje game of intimate relations rather than critique the commodified nature of host/guest relations through a social justice lens. The field of anthropology itself was born through the reaction to industrialization where “pure” society was defined against commodities. In the West, we tend to assume commodification will be resisted by intimate relations that can be defined against it, such as love and marriage. But areas like this in the DR adapt rather easily to commodification. Hosts contextualize their intimate relations within their cultural economy which traditionally relies on concubinage, informal networks, and barter, all practices that tend to blur lines between commodity and gift. But even though the Dominican historical/cultural context allows for a broad range of commodified sexual relations, this current moment of globalized democracy is unique and places the transgressive strategies of both upward-mobility seeking hosts and masculinity-reaffirming guests at odds. Villagers strive to enter development and modernity as consumers, while guests seek an imagined authenticity (for example, a “roots” woman who has not been corrupted by feminism) to reaffirm their own compromised masculine privileges. When neither expectation nor desire is fulfilled, the fabric of social trust in the village diminishes as violence escalates, in ways to be described in Chapter VII.
Constructing the “Promiscuous, Impure” Subject

As we have seen in the previous chapter, to slave owners, “intercourse with a black woman raised troubling but intriguing questions of difference and sameness, of the boundaries of the Self” (Dearborn 1986:134). These conflicted yearnings produced an interest in the “sentimental fiction” genre of the early eighteenth century featuring transracial love plots in which sex replaced slavery and therefore mystified the continued exploitation of labor and bodies in a way that also occurs under contemporary tourism.187 Stallybrass and White explain:

The bourgeois subject continuously defined and redefined itself through the exclusion of what is marked out as ‘low’ – as dirty, repulsive, nosiy, contaminating. Yet that very act of exclusion was constitutive of its identity. The low was internalized under the sign of negation and disgust...But disgust always bears the imprint of desire. [Hulme 1998:6]

Miscegenation laws in the colonies and back home, as well as travel writing in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were designed to manage the threats that creolization and tropicalization posed to the symbolic order.

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Through these historical discursive representations, the dark-skinned woman and the prostitute eventually became mutually reinforced categories of deviance that still inform contemporary representations and laws. Eventually nineteenth century images and narratives of the black female within medicine, literature, and art merged with the perception of the prostitute through stigmatized labels of uncontrolled sexuality and primitiveness, seen as scientifically determined through observable physical differences (Gilman 1986). For example, Freud could supposedly see a body marked with an “aptitude for prostitution,” and women deemed over-sexed were given hysterectomies (Gilman 1986:185; Porter 1997:364). According to Gilman’s (1986) research, association of violent acts (rape, abuse, harassment) with what becomes defined as a prostitute body or behavior make it less likely that a claim of violence will be viewed by state authorities as legitimate. When the prostitute body is racialized, the claims diminish further.

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188 Source: (Sheller 2006: pgs. 117 and 120)
This continues to have grim implications for inhabitants of certain areas of the world marketed as “international sex destinations.”

Racial hierarchies remain a site of active borderwork reproduced among sex workers themselves. Dominican sex workers that were interviewed by researchers regularly constructed themselves as superior to Haitian sex workers while at the same time the state marketed to tourists a “mirage” of racial harmony and tropical paradise (Sagas 2000:2). Haitian sex workers are derided by Dominican workers for “charging their customers less” (thus lowering their value), for “going with anybody,” and as carriers of AIDS (Brennan 2004:180). In state sponsored beauty contests, the honey-colored “hybrid mulatto” is the preferred national ideal phenotype. Winners are praised for their mixed race features, even as African origins continue to be suppressed.

Within sex tourist discourse on internet forums, the mulatta is also highly desired except by those seeking more extremes in racial transgression. In a typical example from a site in which sex tourists to the DR share tips and advice on how to most effectively navigate the terrain of sexual exploitation, one author writes that 90% of his fellow sex tourists are European and that “Europeans (particularly Germans) are well known for traversing the globe in search of the

189 Brennan, however, found Haitians charged the same as Dominicans, between 500-800 pesos. My findings, in which the price range was 500-2000 pesos, revealed more flexibility but was drawn from a relatively small sample (17 women, 5 who identified as Haitian). With regard to HIV, rumors abound of increasing contagious disease in Las Ballenas, and not without reason, though it was difficult to obtain accurate statistics of diagnosed cases due to inaccurate record keeping at the local hospital. One Cuban doctor said he diagnosed people with AIDS, both foreign and Dominican, every week for one year from 2007-2008. Another doctor (the village’s first) said syphilis was “normal” in addition to gastrointestinal problems like amoebas and that “90% of the AIDS cases were Haitian.” However, this last claim is suspect for he did exaggerate Haitian’s presence in town, claiming that “for every 10 Dominicans there were 100 Haitians.”

190 Though this may be changing through the influence of civil-rights politicized Dominican Yorkers, Dominicans who live in the US (Candelario 2007).
blackest skin they can find.” Many guests are equally racist in their assessment of Haitian prostitutes as inferior in “quality” and as too “aggressive,” as seen in this post from worldsex.com:

> If your preference is light skinned Hispanic girls, stay away from Boca Chica. Try Santo Domingo (the capital), or preferably, another latin country as black girls definitely represent the majority of the female population in this town. As mentioned previously, the number of available girls has diminished over the years, evidently, so too, has the quality. Avoid Haitian girls—they are to much aggressive and lie.

In a classic example of borderwork then, of the way social power is constituted through social space and embodied practice, the racialized prostitute and mulatta and her lighter-skinned non-prostitute counterpart emerged as contingent conditions and mutually defining terms. In order for society and law to recognize the redeemed citizen, it had to create and identify the unworthy citizen. The historical patriarchal structure celebrates the sainted Catholic mother who only comes into being through her opposite; the puta, stigmatizes the Dominican sex worker and polices her contaminating presence. Dominican women often represent themselves as the sacrificing mother, the pillar of social life and family stability, reinforced by such a strong nineteenth century Catholic and capitalist ideology (Weyland 2004:164). Previous researchers have shown how this ideology constrains sex worker social and subjective space by noting how women temper their spending so as not to compromise their image as sacrificing mothers, even as

191 He continues, “so it wasn't a big surprise seeing them there and in those numbers (I guess Africa was closed that week). Anyway, what was surprising was the number of people from New York; most notably, NYC's finest” (referring to the New York City police department).

192 In Victorian times, if women refused to conform to the demands of chastity, they ran the risk of entering the category of prostitute with its signifiers of uncontrolled sexuality that needed to be managed (Walkowitz 1980).

193 Mother’s Day is the most celebrated (and commercially lucrative) family holiday in the DR.
their tiguere boyfriends are able to publicly flaunt their unemployment and dependency on women and recast it as macho (Brennan 2004).

Similarly in Las Ballenas, once a body is labeled “prostitute” it operates to maintain both social subordination and preferred categories, which is why the transgression of outsiders bringing “whores” into the spaces of the Dominican elite (more upscale restaurants, hotels, etc) is so abhorrent. The fact that many young girls are rejecting la casa (the home) for la calle (the street) is cause for social concern in Dominican society as reflected in a litany of popular bachata lyrics lamenting the Dominican woman who pega los cuernos (literally “gives the horns,” meaning is unfaithful and promiscuous). “Prostitute” however is too essentializing of a term to explain the range of sexual relationships that local women engage in today with both locals and foreigners in tourist space. Importantly, the expansion of this category makes la avion a more difficult subject to regulate by the state, introducing further anxious borderwork.

While I found ample evidence of tiguere practices by host women in Las Ballenas, it was true that, unlike their male “hustler” or sanky (gigolo) counterparts, female tigueres were condemned more than eroticized for their money-making savvy and, therefore, made some effort to distance themselves from the stigmatizing aspects of their work.194 The reproduction of patriarchal structures occurred through social practices such as stigmatizing chisme (gossip), usually perpetrated by other Dominican women. Indeed, due to the competitive, stigmatized nature of their work, sex workers I interviewed often lamented they had few authentic friends in the village and had strained relationships back home that had prompted their migration in the first

194 However, it is also true that male sex workers called sanky-pankies received some criticism too, though not nearly as much as female sex workers. As one salsa teacher who was financially supported by several older French female benefactors put it, “Sankies are not men because they do not work. They spend their time on the beach, at parties, looking for a foreign woman. Still, the sanky life is not easy because he is rarely successful. I would probably be a sanky if it were not for my dancing school. But I work. Soy professional [I am professional].”
place. Several also complained of having to change their housing many times due to
disapproving landlords or neighbors. These factors contributed to a sense of spatial dislocation
and subjective isolation.

In addition to gossip, the power of normative discourse and ideology to produce the kinds
of hegemonic representations of inclusion and exclusion (moral versus deviant) I have been
discussing gets mapped onto the actual prostitute body, which then becomes a site of
contestation over social space. For example, the Contagious Diseases Act in England in the mid-
nineteenth century enacted to “control the spread of venereal disease among enlisted men in
garrison towns and port” (Walkowitz 1982:1) created a prostitute body out of working class
women who were a source of contamination that needed to be managed and controlled.
Prostitutes spatially transgressed from private to public spaces, and such women who dared to
walk the public streets unescorted left a trail of contamination that needed to be regularly
“swept.”¹⁹⁵ As a parallel in the Caribbean, Kempadoo (2004) has discussed the governmental
tactic of forced “public health” internal examinations that take place in island brothels.

In Las Ballenas, where bureaucratic and legal structures are less institutionalized, state
tactics are more relaxed and arbitrary but are strengthening with the growing presence of foreign-
elite stakeholders. A common stigmatizing practice is for hotel security to secure the cedula of a
prostitute when she goes up to a guest’s room, essentially holding her official identity hostage in
order to protect the tourist from theft. One guest described how one hotel handled this. “When
the girls leave, you must bring them to the Security to tell them that everything is O.K. and
nothing is stolen…. Then they get the Card back. This is for your own safety.” Police are free to

¹⁹⁵ In France the connection between “public” and “prostitute” was reinforced through the vernacular term for a
prostitute, femme publique, and, in Britain by the term ‘streetwalker.’
make arrests for any woman walking on the street who “appears to be a prostitute.” Police do not harass girls who are escorted in the street by a male, thus reinscribing the street as a male space. Knowing this spatial restriction, girls ask their clients to accompany them or take conchos to destination areas to avoid arrest and harassment.

The stigmatized role of sex workers also affects the way female sex workers speak about their work to guests. In accordance with guest desire, sex workers distinguished themselves from putas —usually marked as Haitian—by emphasizing their “natural” enjoyment of sex along with a sincere desire for a better life. Rather than describe their sex acts with foreigners as a kind of straight business transaction, “johns” were referred to as “amigos” who offered “regalitos” (little presents) when they learned of a woman’s abject circumstances. This was a more appealing situation to many guests as well who want to distinguish Dominican women from “red light district” prostitutes on the basis of constructing them as naturally sexual (not immoral sluts) and structurally in need of support which bolstered their role as masculine providers.

These intimate relations were then contextualized within the host cultural economy which, as we have seen, traditionally relied on informal networks and barter, practices that tended to blur lines between commodity and gift. Once a connection was made, “there are gringos that give you something because you explain to them your life situation, that your parents work, that you are not rich, and then they pay for your house, and they say they want to help you...it’s like a little gift,” and not merely renumeration for sex, explained one sex worker. “Gifting” (e.g. pampers for the baby, cement for the house) makes the transaction more palatable. And indeed the kinds of intimate economies being brokered in Las Ballenas involved a range of exchanges. Even so, the fact remains that success, in terms of achieving upward class mobility through marriage, the kind so coveted in Miami soap opera episodes hosts watched, is
extremely precarious in Las Ballenas. According to the Justice of the Peace, there were no legal marriages with foreigners in 1982, and by 2006 there were only 29. Most marriages remain common law unions and, therefore, are not recorded.

The female migrants who were successful in marrying a gringo were the object of much envy. This woman without any formal education runs a successful computer store in town and communicates with clients in five languages. She approached her German husband with the idea of marriage and of launching the business after she saw he'd been taken for a ride by several other tigueraje Dominican women. She decided perhaps now he was ready to live “serious.”

One afternoon I witnessed Estrella, the live-in girlfriend of my German neighbor, effectively resist being stigmatized by a thrity-something Spaniard. I had visited with him earlier that day when he invited me to share a coffee. He had told me he had a wife back home with a two month old baby. He was here, as he put it, “probando la sabor de este lugar [trying out the

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196She tells me she approached her current German husband after she witnessed his been outsmarted by a tiguere who won the house they were living in with all the furnishings. She told me she offered him a deal. “I said, look, you are good with computers and this town needs a store. I see you fixing those laptops in the street but you should have a store. I will take care of you and we will start a business together. You take care of me and my two children.” He agreed. Their store became one of the most successful businesses in town, and Leticia, who by her own description, grew up “barefoot and unable to read in the campo” manages to run it and speak five languages—including computer-speak. Her husband repairs computers in the back of the store.
different tastes or flavors of this place].” He complained that in Madrid the women expected a man to be “perfect,” but here they were much more accepting. Unlike others, he did not claim Dominican women were more beautiful or caliente than in other parts of the world, but he did admit that life on a tropical island simply offered more sensual living. “In the ‘first world’ we are too busy working and sublimating to take time for sexual/sensual adventures,” he sighed. He admitted though that one of the complications of paradise was that even though it was not the “real world,” men were seduced by the notion that it could provide an “endless summer.” “It’s best to experience this place on holiday or else, you know…the dream vanishes!” As he finished his coffee, he suddenly grew wistful and commented that he thought he had never been in love. “How do you know?” I asked. “Because I think if I ever had been, I would be satisfied with just one woman.”

Towards the end of his stay two weeks later, I witnessed the charged interaction between him and Estrella. The Spaniard joked to Marta that she must be quite the tiguere for positioning herself so well as the German’s mistress. I raised an eyebrow, accustomed to what I had come to know as Estrella’s gruff personality, particularly with nosy strangers. He clearly did not know who he was dealing with. Estrella flew over to him, thumped her chest, and declared “Yo soy una mujer serio! [I am a serious woman]”. She told him in a flurry of Spanish that she had a relationship of the corazon (heart) and was not a woman “of the street!” The Spaniard shrank under Estrella’s fierce glare and mumbled a meek pardon. She drew back, began to walk away, and then spun around, lurching forward at him and snapping her teeth. He flinched, his face drained of color, and she let out a big laugh, patting him on the arm good naturedly before she strode away. He looked over at me breathless. “Que mujer! [What a woman!]” he gasped. It did not matter, of course, that Marta had told me that she had migrated to the village
expressly “buscando para un gringo [looking for a gringo]”. Her strong response to the Spaniard’s assumption pointed to the precariousness of her position in tourist space and her simultaneous refusal to be labeled an expendable woman by an outsider.

**Sex/Romance Tourists**

As described in Chapter V, in my interviews and interactions with expats, men often described themselves, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, as “modern day pirates” who sought the “wild west” of the Caribbean after becoming fed up with the bureaucracy and institutional constraints in the Big Brother domain of EuroAmerica. Others evoked a Robinson Crusoe adventurer or Paul Gauguin artistic-fantasy narrative. As impossible as it is to totalize any identity, a pattern of compromised masculinity did emerge in the background narratives of the male expats who were actively seeking out sexual/romantic adventures with local women. Many expats referenced failures, either in business or relationships with “first world” women, as precipitating their move overseas.

Claus, a German technician, told me he lost his confidence after he lost his job and that he envied “great men” like Ted Turner who knew at a very young age that they were destined for greatness. Claus said he was not sure what German women wanted in contemporary society. He was a good cook, but it was not enough; he was expected to buy women champagne. He said German women were usurping the “man’s world.” “And perhaps now they have some regret about being the ‘head’ as they now know how relentless it is to always push, be aggressive, and constantly engaged in competition…,” he added.

Their sense of emasculation was thereby associated with present-day global socioeconomic conditions such as experiencing a divorce, feeling placed in exploitive work
environments in which they had little control, or being situated among Western women whom they saw as being in a powerful position to limit or deny a vital resource (their bodies). One French man even connected the rising rate of homosexuality in EuroAmerica to the “castrating woman’s liberation movement.” Local women repeatedly affirmed that foreign men constructed them as desirable caliente females in opposition to EuroAmerican women who were frio (cold) and too much “like men.”

The Caribbean, with its “third world” cheap prices, also created an environment where foreign guests reaffirmed their masculinity as providers or “big men.” “I’m not rich,” said one man, “but in the DR, I’m a millionaire.” Another man, a popular English teacher to many teenage girls, explained that compared to their Western counterparts, host women were grateful and satisfied for the efforts and attentions of EuroAmerican men.

These girls are happy if you buy them a little plastic jewelry. You don’t need to put diamonds on their fingers. And they have an expression I like that describes relationships. You say he or she is my "media de naranja" (half of orange). I can handle that, being someone’s half-piece of fruit. But back home, not only are they not satisfied with a dozen red roses, they want a soul mate—that’s asking for a lot.

Other expats admitted aging and its accompanying “invisibility” was a factor in their seeking out island women. “In Europe,” a sixty-something German remarked, “the people are all old. And when I walked the streets of Germany, those who were young did not see me. I felt invisible. Here, dozens of young pretty ladies smile and call out to me every day.”

The critique of masculinity that arises out of this chapter is directed towards the explicit sex tourist who seeks a fluid transaction with village women that seeks to make NonSubjects out of real people, just as NonSpaces are created from Places. In this more recent wave of tourist, a

197 I take his meaning to be that men turn gay through socioeconomic competition with females.
temporary guest often visits because of the area’s online reputation as a kind of hedonistic paradise and uses the space of travel as a medium to live out fantasies in which his sustainable presence was not required. These desires for open sexual adventure, inspired by what was perceived as a naturally sexual and permissive Caribbean culture, are driven by a wish to escape social rules and “first world” selves and responsibilities back home, release repressed, “dangerous emotions” such as lust (Lingus 2000), or find validation as temporary male “rescuers” of host women in response to fading privileges back home. In the border zone of Las Ballenas, this promise of transgression assigned young migrant-villagers the role of performing this fantasized “Other” who would guide foreign subjects into their hedonistic dream.

Of course during any travel encounter, even within sex work, power remains ever-shifting in an interdependent web of relations that constitute social actors. Everyone has agency because everyone is in the game. Las Ballenas, as a borderland space in which borders are malleable, continually reproduces patterns that shift in time and space as power dynamics shift. Because hosts and guests in Las Ballenas have such different expectations of each other, their borderwork struggles often escalate and combine to create immense, dynamic friction. These colliding expectations along with the broader process of development and commodification of space in this tourist town contribute to the social confusion of norms and destabilization of established hierarchies.

Even privileged travelers are vulnerable in tourist space as they operate from a decidedly insecure, visible position, removed from their own cultural contexts and comfortable frames of reference, immersed in a different language, and, as outsiders, show marked behavioral and phenotypical differences. It is the role of tigueres as crafty local agents and brokers to control how the travelers’ destination and experience is received and interpreted. Through transmission
of their knowledge and competence, brokers and guides determine not only what the tourist will see but also what they should not see. All in all, the tourist-traveler who may have considerable comparative advantage is still “power-bound not by the [or in the same manner as] the mental clinic or prison, but by the trip” (Cheong and Miller 2000:380), however long its duration.

Figure 59. Sexually explicit signs in the village

**Embodied Assets: Disco Performance and Police Allies**

One way sex workers “own” social space is through occupying the public streets with more assertiveness and visibility than their more “respectable” non-prostitute counterparts. Their visibility increases in the evenings where, in the local discotecas, migrant girls are transformed, if only for a few hours, into disco queens as hierarchies are briefly inverted on the dance floor. In the performance arena of the local disco La Selva (meaning the jungle), a sexworker hotspot, scantily clad young male/female migrants are disco queens and kings who display their physical charms and assets with confidence. Several nights a week young Dominicans and Haitians dance, positioning themselves within arm’s reach of seated, world-weary gringos, gyrating and swiveling their hips in rapid-fire figure eights, pumping their buttocks or simulating fellatio with
male friends, dancing *peera* (or “doggie style”) to the aggressive rap beat of reggaeton. As the night wears on and the bartender pours an endless fountain of *cuba libres* (rum drinks), the disco ball sprays rainbows upon exposed, glistening host male and female bodies, moving together, dressed in shimmering beads of metallic-gold and orange fabric hugging every curve and voluptuous bulge, revealing faces with smiling, open lips and glimpses of smoky eyes accented by electric eye shadow. As a disorienting, seductive space, the disco serves as a site of *tiguere* friction. As in colonial times, rumors circulate among expat wives that village women poison their men by slipping mickies in their drinks so that they come home with “bulging eyes.”

![Image](image1)

**Figure 60. “Bulging Eyes” at the Disco**

Its visceral appeal to those existential exiles from a bureaucratized, alienating, cold EuroAmerica is significant. It is not difficult to understand why the Swiss banker, German computer technician, or American manager is seduced by the bold gesture of the unabashed, pretty Dominicana who grabs his fingers and inserts them in her mouth or the Haitian woman who squirms and giggles on his lap, steaming up his bifocals. Or why the French divorcee would
not feel slightly flush as her dance partner presses his hand against the small of her back and
 gyrates his groin into her pelvis.

In this domain, the performance of sexuality allows migrant sex workers to gain control
 over foreign men and women as they dance and pose, manipulating guest appetite and
 stimulating guest desire. This is a prime time for tigueraje plans to be hatched. Whispering in
 Spanish under the protection of the booming speakers, young women and men divvy up targets
 among themselves. They parody, make fun of, and tease foreigners who are trying their best to
dance to the percussive beat and fast-paced rhythm of the music. Entranced, foreign men are
 willing to pay higher fees for a local woman after seeing her display her body and skills dancing.

Enrique, twenty-five, who accompanied me to the disco one night, took in the scene and
 was quick to explain with a grin that the sexual performance and display before us was
 quintessential tigueraje par excellance. “These girls have the snake eyes,” he laughed. “Look at
 that one.” He motioned to a girl who was edging her way over to an obese Italian. “She has
 found her next victim!” Guest males often interpret the dance club scene differently,
 essentializing villagers into a hackneyed kind of sexual primitivism. “These people—it’s their
culture. They have sex on the brain 24-7! It’s we, the Puritans that have the hang-ups. We are so
 repressed that we’ve forgotten to enjoy sensual pleasure!” said one Spaniard. This attitude was
 also expressed by some homosexual guests who tended to emphasize host sexuality in terms of
 its embodying a kind of latent, bisexual freedom. “What is the difference between a gay
 Dominican and a straight Dominican?” an English guest quipped. “About three beers!”

Hosts are assumed to be “naturally” lustful, rather than performing a prescribed role
 which oftentimes held the only possibility for social advancement. By naturalizing host
 sexuality, guests males sought to reaffirm their colonial identity in terms that ranged from
overtly racist and aggressive to a kind of imagined benign reciprocity. Meanwhile host women, while gaining certain advantages through their physical powers of seduction—through the space of the disco as well as other outlets such as beauty contests or modeling for guest amateur photographers, etc.—often reified (even as they consciously parodied, creatively interpreted, and exaggerated) stereotypes of themselves as tropicalized “wild” women. While such host displays were read by guests as proof of host hypersexuality, due to the commercialization and its perceived pollution of intimate relationships, increasingly, foreigners often conflated villagers’ sexuality with that of the racialized prostitute.

“The sex is great, often free,” posts one sex tourist on worldsex.com, “and even when you pay, not only is it a bargain, it just doesn't feel like you're paying for it.” But when it begins to “feel” like a commercial transaction the women are degraded. “These women here are now all putas,” said an Italian seated at the café bar, disgusted at his bleak prospects of finding a good companion in the village. “All they want is money. To find yourself a decent whore, you have to go to the countryside, and even there, it’s only a matter of time…”

Because of this dilemma where sex workers must perpetuate the illusion that they desire sex with foreign men outside of their own needs or desire for income, sex workers must employ tigueraje in most of their transactions and seek out “legitimate” allies. They often find allies in police, who are, in this borderzone, often involved in enforcing social codes that support informal structures over formal laws. While the threat of the police-discipline of sex workers is ever-present, arrests are arbitrarily enforced, and attempts to marginalize workers spatially, off the public streets/cafes, continue to be short-lived. In fact, the police (known to be underpaid) were routinely involved in sex work arrangements as well as other criminal activity such as robberies and blackmailing (as will be discussed in the next chapter).
Host women routinely create differential space in engaging in tigueraje with police allies. One day I was helping two sex workers shell gandules as they bickered about an outstanding debt between them. Suddenly, and in full view of a policeman, Daniella, who had spotted a way out of her financial debt, whispered, “Watch this.” Adjusting her tasseled brassiere, she strode toward an incoming gringo with her long legs in a tight skirt, a counterfeit thousand peso bill in her hand. We watched her ask for change, which the gringo promptly gave her, appearing slightly stunned by her presence and attention. Five minutes later she turned with a wink and strode back toward our table.

Clari laughed as she accepted Daniella’s repayment using the gringo’s cash and shared her latest scam. “Yesterday I saw a German sleeping on the beach so I joined him and ordered up a nice meal of beer and grilled shrimp. When the waiter arrived with the check, I explained that the sleeping German was my novio [boyfriend].” At some point the German, awakened and puzzled, protested, yelling for the police. On cue, a policeman (and Clari’s lover) arrived to demand that the feckless gringo pay his due or else risk dishonoring both this woman and the Republica Dominicana itself, of which, need he be reminded, he was only a temporary visitor.

We laughed as the policeman, who had been watching the whole scene with Daniella and the gringo, joined us to ask what we were going to cook for dinner with all those beans. As they chatted, Clari, feeling generous, slipped 300RD (US$9) on behalf of Daniella, into his fingers, which he promptly placed in his pocket before he strode away.

Within the matrix of shifting power relations and intimate economies in Las Ballenas, sex workers emerge as tigueres who, with the help of other cultural brokers, strategize to seduce guests by occupying certain spaces and using their sexual assets and bodily charms to disarm desire-filled guests.
Negotiating Price

Despite having some success with police allies, sex work in the DR usually involves little recourse in terms of abstract, legal, contractual, or institutional definitions of protection. This lack of protection serves to preserve guest hierarchies. Borderwork to determine the value of a romance-related service includes negotiating the fee. One sex worker explained her position.

“Hoy puedes comer cinco veces al día y manana, una…entonces por eso uno nunca puede exagerar demasiado la necesidad por dinero [Today you can eat five times a day and tomorrow, once. For this reason you can never exaggerate too much to foreigners the need for money].”

Some male tourists felt it was best for host women to be explicit about their material needs. As one man said, “It’s awkward and demeaning to ask ‘how much? So after a while you say, ‘What do you need this week?’ And they tell you. And we both feel better about it’” Another man said he preferred spending the night with a woman in a hotel “where she can stay the night and have breakfast with you. So you feel better about yourself.”

However, the majority of expats seemed to prefer to engage in performances that masked the reality of their exploitation. Indeed guests, in expressing what Zizek refers to as cynical reason, "know very well how things are, but still they are doing it as if they don’t know…For example, they know that their idea of freedom is masking a particular kind of exploitation, but they still continue to follow this idea of freedom” (1994:316). Indeed sex tourists on internet forums and in groups that I encountered at nightspots in town often openly admitted to each other the commodified tigueraje nature of the transaction, as well as the staged nature of the performance. Often their overt sexist and racist attitudes were applied evenly to women across the DR, Philippines, Thailand, Brazil, or Cuba, suggesting that the more deterritorialized the transaction, the easier it is to impose violent abstractions upon host subjects. Instead of denying
the exploitative nature of their acts, sex tourists on discussion forums inform each other of how to best manipulate the situation and avoid being conned in ways that bolster solidarity among men seeking to assert this level of masculinity based on sexual prowess. But their aggressive, adversarial obsession around being cheated again points to the instability of the masculine romance-seeking subject in tourist space.

This post from the “World Sex Guide” featuring “travel reports from a different perspective” instructs other men on price bargaining, which the author says is based on variables including:

- the type of girl (ie, bar/street girl vs bar/restaurant worker), the prevailing supply and demand situation, how late it is, your looks, her looks, your attitude, her attitude, your accommodations, her accommodations, your generosity, her expenses/available cash, the length of your stay and how much she thinks she can get out of you over that time period. Keep in mind that whatever the initial figure is, it’s always subject to negotiation. Remember, you’re not in the US, Canada, etc, anymore where the girls set the prices, you tell them what the price is. If they don’t like it, chances are that the next girl will, and they damn well know it.
- Generally speaking, bar/street girls will shoot for at least 500 pesos ($32.00USD) for a one shot deal (or "short time" if you prefer), and 1000 pesos ($63.00USD) for the entire night… How low will they go? Who knows? On one occasion, a very black, but fairly decent Haitian offered me (without negotiation) "everything" for just 200 peso's ($12.50USD)! [emphasis mine]

This man’s advice is predicated on keeping the upper hand and controlling the sexual encounter in virtually every aspect of the so-called negotiation, reducing the sex worker’s agency to complete submission. Another post suggests that fellow sex tourists should “see how far you can get before you have to pay them,” effectively forcing the sex worker to extend her performance (flirting, dancing, touching, sweet talk) and denying her compensation for as long as possible.

198 The dollar amounts of these transactions are double what they should be: RD500= $15 US.

The trick is knowing who's who before you shut the hotel room door. It's not easy. They will often do a 180—flirt, dance, touch, sweet talk to you beforehand and then totally bitch out on you behind closed doors: complain, rush you, try to get more money, tell you that you can't do this or that. Take your time. See how far you can get before you have to pay them. (I often pay after the fact.) Ask them if they like to go to the beach? Which one? Are they free tomorrow? They think they're practically married at that point. Tell 'em all about yourself. Make friends with them. That goes a long way. Take them out of one club and bring them to another—like a date. Totally throw them off. 200

These posts make clear that the interaction guest men have with host women is regarded not as a type of reciprocal exchange, money for sex, but rather an adversarial exchange. The borderwork in which men are trying to affirm their masculinity is a sadistic game in which the sex workers are not deserving of compensation for their labor. These types of sex tourists represent the Fluid (perpetual) traveler (PT) subject I have previously described. The PT desires a seamless transition in and out of cultural spaces and bodies, unlike the expat who settles in place and engages in local relationships with their mundane politics and messy borderwork.

But even for sex tourists, the encounter or transaction is sexual and, therefore, intimate increasing the risk of unsettling exposure of “interpersonal rituals, bodily information, awareness of personal vulnerability, shared memory of embarrassing situations and attentions such as terms of endearment, bodily services, or emotional support” (Zelizer 2005:14). When expectations inevitably clash during the friction of intimate relations, the destabilization to masculine identity such intimacy fosters may provoke a kind of violent, defensive response. 201 This is especially true since the travel encounter is motivated by a kind of colonial nostalgia, a desire to reassert a fading imperial privilege.

200 Source: http://www.worldsexarchives.com/worldsexguide/dr_expert.htm

201 An example of clashing narratives occurs when male guests understand that host women do not see them as essential men but solely as vehicles from which to gain upward mobility through their pension or passport.
In order to minimize friction, many sex tourists preserve their fantasies by limiting relationships to “vacation-time” when hedonism is indulged in and mundane reality forestalled. Men on vacation essentially see host women who meet their aesthetic preferences as interchangeable, existing solely for their pleasure. The guaranteed impermanence of the encounter reduces the risk of emotional contamination but does not erase it. However, even within the managed world of cyberspace or the manicured pleasure zone of the beach, intimate relations get messy, and relations are rife with borderwork. As the dichotomies of gaze/touch and desire/contamination collapse, vulnerable guests become emotionally attached to the objects of their fantasy, or conversely, experience revulsion at their mundane ordinariness (Rojek and Urry 1997:7). Guest women, conscious of the transience of the fantasy role they are performing, sometimes consciously take a risk and orchestrate such emotional attachments, as when they bring lovers to see their homes and the poverty conditions under which they toil, because, as one woman said, many foreign men “have soft hearts, and after they see your small house of wood, feel sorry for you and want to help you.”

Recognizing the fragility of guest masculinity as an opportunity to create friction, sex workers in Las Ballenas also acknowledge the trickiness of the price negotiation, the need to mask the centrality of the commercial motivation in order to preserve male fantasy. Ironically the need to disguise a request for payment for services rendered underscores the contradiction embedded in sex work in which “women are allowed to give free sex but not to negotiate for payment without breaking the law” (Zelizer 2005:107). Clari, the same from the Daniella story, a 26 year old Dominican who migrated to the village from the capital in 2003, expressed her frustration around this dilemma of needing to ask for payment but wanting to avoid being stigmatized as “of the street.”
Sometimes it’s best not to say it (the price) …but others ask you, and I don’t like it because the reality is I don’t know how much money they have in their pocket. If you ask too much, they say forget it, or if you ask too little, they say “Ah, so easy!” and take your number but don’t call. Or there are others—Dominicans too—who say “if you had not asked, I would have given you double or more!” Sometimes I think about that…because it’s so stupid that they don’t give it to you. But if you ask, you are “of the street” and hateful. So I don’t ask. I spend the night, and what they give me, they give me from the heart.

This conscious decision not to ask for money is part of the performance of romance that sex workers enact to secure more stable or profitable relationships with foreigners. “Performing love” often involves “the charade that sex workers desire their clients and enjoy the sex” (Brennan 2004:21). In practice, a lot of energy is needed to sustain this performance to keep transnational channels open. Exercising a kind of “transnationalism from below” host women visit local internet cafés and moneywire offices daily to chat with foreigners, to post suggestive photos of themselves on websites, send and receive “love letters,” or see if there is a fax from a client announcing a return visit, wired money, or the ultimate reward—an invitation of marriage and life abroad (Smith and Guarnizo 1988).

But often these interactions, mediated by technology, involve a fair amount of miscommunication. On several awkward occasions I was asked to assist host women in translating their messages of love online to guest males. On one occasion, Yvette, a teenage waitress whom I was tutoring in English, pulled me over and handed me her cell phone mouthing the words “Help me, I don’t understand him.” I found myself on the phone with a man from Chicago who was apparently smitten but needed confirmation Yvette was a “good girl.” Yvette watched me intently as I told him she was a bright, hardworking woman. “Yes, but is she a prostitute?” he asked. In the end he wired her 5000 pesos (US$150) and I had to politely refuse when Yvette stopped by to give me my “take” of 500 pesos(!). Another area that exposes the
power relations within ongoing borderwork between hosts and guests is the disputes around
gaining material entitlements through the application of concubine law.

Figure 61. *Buscando para un gringo* (Looking for a Gringo)

**Expanding Concubine Law**

I know I am too mean to be your queen
and yet too good to be your concubine.
(Lady Grey to King Edward IV)

(Shakespeare, 1623, King Henry VI Part III. III.i.95-96)

While the opportunity to socially advance through relationships with foreigners existed, the
status gained through eating in cafes, riding in SUVs, or sleeping in hotels was temporary,
dependent upon the preference of fickle foreigners. For the most part, guest males I interviewed
did not understand the historical context that many migrant women were drawing upon as they
aspired to become concubines to guest-males. In the DR, Dominican men (and women) are often
polygamous, and, if they can afford them, keep mistresses (“kept women”) who live elsewhere,
often in separate households. Known more casually as amantes or queridas (dear ones) these women may participate in monogamous, long-term, and publicly acknowledged relationships and bear children with their male companions. A long-time American expat shared his observation of local concubinage.

…for example, just yesterday. A Dominican who grew up poor in the countryside and has made a lot of money here in construction came to my house …and he came with a woman who was much younger. And I said “this is your wife,” and he said, “no, no this is my querida,” so matter-of-fact. And it was so different than the US where you go to the bar to hide away with your mistress…And she accepted the title, and he started joking “oh, no, my wife, I wouldn’t want to spend any more time with her than I have to, whereas I like this person” and the girl was sort of basking in that. And it was funny to me because he said, “of course when I get tired of her I’ll just throw her away and get a new one,” and she just laughed. She thought it was funny. So I think it is very difficult for us gringos to grasp exactly the attitudes that people here have. Because one problem I think the foreigners have, the skuzzy ones that engage in all this stuff down there in town, I think that they don’t understand the register on which it is happening. In the Dominican world, in most cases, you acquire a certain kind of responsibility when you have such a person…This couple at my house had a social contract, however transitory, understood on both sides. So there was no friction either. She knew how far she could take things and that he had an official family, and yet she didn’t feel demeaned by being a common hooker. And I think the problem is these foreigners don’t have this middle range. The locals are perhaps drawing on a very old tradition, and the foreigners don’t understand where it’s all coming from.

Within the distorted, confused borderland of tourist space, migrating women seek to reproduce this familiar structure and attain the more secure role of concubine or mistress rather than be treated as a more expendable prostitute. Recently in the DR, state concubine laws have been enforced, albeit unevenly, to the advantage of host women. My neighbor Penelope, for example, complained to us one day at the local colmado that a host she was temporarily living with had the nerve to think he could control her just because he had bought everything in their

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202 The Dominican Press estimates that 40% of Dominican couples live in a state of concubinage (Dominican Today 2006).
shared apartment. She rolled her eyes. “He doesn’t understand that here, when the woman lives with the man and something happens, everything goes to the woman.” The other women nodded in support. “The woman takes the bed, TV… and the man is left with nothing but the radio!” she exclaimed with a jubilant smile. The possibility that host women might be attaining some leverage in these unequal transactions instills a great deal of anxiety among guest males. On a newspaper internet forum one expat asked for specific legal advice around this issue of concubine entitlement to household property.

I have heard horror stories of guys that live with a girl for a 6 months to a year, and then they split up and when the girl leaves, up comes the truck and they take almost everything, including many assets that were purchased long before they were together, like computers, TVs, stereos, and most of the furniture, etc.\(^\text{203}\)

Dominican attorney Fabio Guzman assured him that the host woman had no legal rights over the gringo’s property but underscored, “You cannot guarantee that courts will not adopt in the future a doctrine allowing division of ‘companionship’ assets… or that Congress will not pass new legislation providing for division of assets.” In fact in 2006, an important socio-legal precedent was made when the Supreme Court recognized the concubine rights of a woman and her two children. The children were fathered by the mother’s companion who died after being struck by a truck owned by the Dominican mining company, Falconbridge. Falconbridge was found liable and although the concubine, Fidelina Maria Suazo Duarte, had already died, her children were awarded minimal damages.

\(^\text{203}\) Guzman, Fabio
This was a significant ruling that recognized the rights of concubines and their children in a country that denied rights to women in general, including legal wives. For example, until 2001, legal Dominican wives were not allowed to dispose of their own property, let alone communal assets, without the husband’s consent. This situation changed with the passing of Law 189-01 of 22 November 2001, which amended several articles of the Civil Code, granting both spouses the joint administration of common property (Pellerano and Herrera 2005:86).

The result in Las Ballenas is that concubines or live-in girlfriends are now aware of ways to materially gain by living with foreigners who are just as keen to find a kind of fantasy concubine. However, as in many other areas, the expectations of both parties often collide. Several guests admitted arriving to Las Ballenas naïve, not speaking the language and enamored by some tiguere who, after the “break-up,” garnered witnesses to testify they were living with said guest male as a legitimate concubine and therefore were accorded property rights.204

“We are all fools when we first come here,” says Peter, a retired German architect in his late 60s, and recites a long list of names of other men who felt the sting of Cupid’s arrow. He explains how before he moved in with Nanci, a 38 year old grandmother, he fell in love with “the queen of tigers” named Estonia. Peter supported Estonia and her four children while she was cheating on him with other gringos, in addition to her Dominican boyfriend (introduced as a “cousin” when he slept over). When Peter finally broke things off with her, Estonia flew into a rage and smashed all the windows of his truck. “El amor ‘ta ciego” [Love is blind]”, he shrugs. Guzman (2008) clarified that the concubine law is currently ambiguous.205

204 A similar process works, depending on ones’ alliances and clout, with regard to land title around squatter’s rights
205 This was posted by Atty Fabio Guzman, a forum “expert,” on the DR1.com forum used primarily by English-speaking expats in a thread called “concubine law marriage” on 5/9/2008 at 8:51am.
Living together with a woman is never equivalent to a normal marriage. However, certain provisions in the Labor Code, the Minors Code and the Criminal Code acknowledge that living together has legal consequences. For example: a worker has the right to a few days off work if his concubine gives birth to his child; domestic violence to a concubine is treated the same as domestic violence to a wife. On October 17, 2001, a Supreme Court decision gave a surviving concubine the right to sue for the wrongful death of her companion in an automobile accident under very restricted conditions: a) the couple must have lived as if they were husband and wife, in a public relationship, not hidden or secret; b) the relationship must be stable and long-lasting; c) the relationship must be monogamous and non-adulterous since its origins; and d) the couple should be of different sexes. The ruling went on to say expressly that “Marriage and extra matrimonial companionship are not…equivalent realities.”

However, given that the Supreme Court has overturned virtually all of the lower court rulings that treat live-in girlfriends as wives, Guzman cited other tactics that concubines use to garner “significant amounts of money.”

What I have seen happen is the woman files a complaint against her companion or threatens to file a complaint alleging she has been beaten, etc., goes to the “fiscal” (district attorney), and then, as a kind of irregular “settlement” the man is forced to give money in exchange for the withdrawal of the complaint.

Despite these settlements, attaining communal witness testimony to back such claims requires substantial local contacts and often the promise of compensation, which many female migrants (particularly Haitians) lack. Guest men are also becoming savvy. As one wary expat, apparently interested in forestalling social contracts with local women, wrote in response to Guzman’s legal advice above:

Although our resident lawyer is right, I would recommend to our junkies to be wary of long term concubine relationships, specially longer than 3 years. Although it isn’t a law, the recent case by the Supreme court raised many eyebrows and with the legal profession beginning to get smart about presenting new challenging cases to the Supreme Court, no one is safe anymore. Yours could be the next test case. With the feminists getting a foothold in politics and government I predict the concubine law is not very far away and in my opinion they will put a three year limit. That means that if you were not married with another woman and you live happily ever after for three years or more with a live-
in girlfriend in a monogamous relationship and in addition commit the mortal sin of having children, be prepared. Might as well get married. [TW 2002]

Leaky, Monstrous Women and Compromised Masculine Autonomy

In the embrace of a stranger one is no longer… a virile and self-determined agent… (Lingus 2004:198).

Figures 62. German photographer-expat reproduces “monstrous” cannibal tropes of the Caribbean woman as a dangerous seducer that reveal the terrain of host fantasies: “Maneater,” “the black magic woman,” and the image of a woman holding a fork and knife reads: “Tengo hambre [I have hunger].”

Under contemporary capitalist forces of tourism, historical tropes of the exotic island female, whether she is romanticized, eroticized, or condemned, persist to reaffirm the representer and to justify a certain kind of “taming” which makes feminine subjects more palatable for consumption. It is no coincidence that monstrous, contaminating personal qualities are assigned to “undisciplined” bodies such as migrant sex workers believed to carry disease or Haitian market women stigmatized among villagers as shape-shifters, able to fly at night. Female tigueres and aviones, stigmatized for their “promiscuity,” are unruly subjects for the postcolonial

guest who desires them to reaffirm his own desirability as a stable man. “Exotic” village women defy laws of bodily morality and coherence, invite friction-filled interconnection, and thereby ironically foreclose expat-pirate recognition of the stable masculine self they seek through the encounter. The only way the interaction is successful in preserving a masculine economy that bolsters the guest’s autonomy is if guest males are able to maintain the fluid encounter and sidestep messy entanglements that would keep them in place. As with other forms of domestic labor, they prefer to pay for a short-term contract in which love/sex is performed. But those whose labor and bodies are being consumed strive to not be swallowed whole but rather to “stick in the throat” so to speak of various consumers.

Along with political and economic reasons, there are psychological theories that seek to explain what motivates “othering” in humans, and in this case, the managing of female sexuality. This is important to address because one can think and imagine, as well as practice, in capitalist terms. In Freudian psychological (i.e. Oedipal) terms, certain Western subjects, who speak and are spoken through by discourse, law, and culture unconsciously associate their desire to merge with the Other (Mother) with a negation of self.207 As applied then to the travel encounter where guests seek to experience exotic others and other-ness, particularly through island women, “…this fear of falling back into the mother’s body, metaphorically at least, of losing one’s identity, is what Freud identifies as the ultimate source of the feeling of uncanniness…a deep

207 This Lacanian notion of the subject is explained in Grosz’ work Jacques Lacan: a feminist introduction (1990).
anxiety over losing one’s subjectivity” (McAfee 2004:48). This anxiety further motivates (post)colonial male subjects to design the symbolic order (as modes of representation and social laws) in an attempt to define ways of relating to the other that re-secure their selfhood while ordering, disciplining, and regulating chaotic “feminine” spaces or bodies. But this process of imposing social law is never complete and, therefore, always potentially threatening. As Julia Kristeva says in reference to the abject, “the symbolic harnesses libidinal flows” (McAfee 2004:153). In other words, the messy, friction-filled borderwork that surrounds the semiotic is always erupting through the symbolic order which tries to control and repress it through the repetitive “performance” of various roles that support moral economies (Butler 2004).

The anxiety colonizers held around the impure and unruly feminine Other can be read in the kinds of monsters they imagined as haunting Caribbean places. From zombies to cannibals to seductive female spirits, these monsters embodied the tropics and its associations of unbridled excess and creolized embodiment. Medieval maps depicted oceans teeming with sea serpents and man-eating sirens who seduced, engulfed, and emasculated. Bienbienes (the spirits of runaway slaves) were believed to taunt their old masters. Liminal, monstrous figures continue to serve as sites of excess representing irrational primitivism and engulfing, primal emotion. Women, cannibals, and blackness (as Haitians) mark the boundaries of the unknown. Dominicans still speak of the Ciguapa, a beautiful, naked, long-haired woman with dark brown or blue skin whose

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208 According to Freud’s theories of development, the infant is sexually aroused by his caretaker via breastfeeding, cleansing of the genitals etc. The time of separation is intimately associated with separation from the mother’s body and awareness of one’s own bodily desires vis-a-vis the mother. The archetypal trauma, according to Freud, is this impossible desire to merge with the Mother which would also mean losing one’s autonomy; a kind of death of the Self.

209 These “women” were possibly placed at borders to mark out borders and establish trade route monopolies (Cohen 1996).
father, a Taino chief, turned her feet backward so that the Spanish conquistadores could not follow her tracks. Her Taino spirit sisters the Opias are small, furry, golden, wild women who wander the mountains at night, mute except for their birdsongs which they sing to lure men into their caves. Today these creatures continue their siren role, but—expats joke—in modern drag, wearing hot pants and braided extensions, luring wayward travelers off their paths and into seductive, disorienting spaces like the disco.

Such representations and discourse reveal that whether she be the perceived “civilized” emasculator or the “primitive” tiguere, feminine subjects, within and against various hierarchies of race and class, are potentially threatening to an unstable masculine subject because of what feminist Luce Irigaray describes as her “leakiness” or “porosity.”


211 “Porosity” refers to the bodily metaphor Luce Irigaray (1985) uses as a counterforce to phallocentric psychoanalytic norms that emphasize Woman as “lacking.” This will be explained further in the conclusion (237).
distinction between self and other” (1985:106). Her embodied “insatiable” appetite seduces an unstable masculine subject even as the danger of her “otherness” threatens “to deform, propagate, evaporate, consume him, to flow out of him and into another who cannot be easily held onto” (237). Leakiness triggers an uncanny sense that one’s identity has become unmoored. This fear of an unstable identity prompts more anxious borderwork as certain males must reaffirm their autonomy against this destabilizing desire by engaging in increasingly antagonistic and misogynistic borderwork.

The Panoptic Cyber-gaze

The Panopticon is a machine for dissociating the see/being seen dyad: in the peripheric ring, one is totally seen, without ever seeing; in the central tower, one sees everything without ever being seen. [Foucault 1995: 202]

When host women who perform as exotic others deviate from the (post)colonial script and the transgressive disco space of a hedonistic utopia fades with the sober dawn, sex tourists, by definition, balk at forming binding social contracts with local women. Their former dream of embarking upon a sexual adventure-seeking odyssey is reduced to a comparison with the most banal and constraining of institutions: marriage. Frustrated expectations result in considerable friction on both sides and tigueraje practices demand counter-tigueraje, just as differential spaces demanded a heightened control of space. When social contracts lack an agreement of terms, negotiations degenerate into defensive, hostile interactions. For example, one resentful German showed me the hidden cameras he had placed in virtually every room of his cabana in a paranoid attempt to establish control and surveillance over the women he hired for sex whom he had decided were all predatory thieves.
From what I witnessed during fieldwork, the unprecedented introduction of sex tourism via the internet promises only to exacerbate such violent borderwork. Like Foucault’s panopticon, the cyber gaze represents a culmination of what I have been describing as “violent” representation, meaning it is reductive (abstracting) to female bodies. It produces a Panopticon like effect in its disciplinary gaze that documents, visualizes, and controls through the blunt instrument of the internet. With the advent of cyber cafes in the village that mushroomed in 2008-2009, the development of internet sex tourism intensified the deterritorialized dynamic between sex tourists and host women, mediated by cyberspace, with disturbing consequences.

For example, Mandy, a Dominican teen who routinely posted provocative photos of herself with her friends for an unknown foreign male audience reported a man she had met online, seemed more enchanted with her disembodied cyborg persona than her actual self. “When he met me, he said I was nothing like I was online,” she said, confused. “He wasn’t anything like I thought he would be either! But it was strange. He even spoke Spanish but we had nothing to say to each other. He just wanted me to dance with the other girls on the beach, but it was cold. And he was filming me. He was always putting that camera on me, making his little movies.”

One example of the intensity of this male cyber-gaze on female “exotic” bodies severed from locale struck me one afternoon as I passed an internet cafe. A German sex tourist I had seen at the disco the previous night was staring at a woman’s body on a computer screen, placing his mouse upon her throat to magnify her image. Hours later, upon my return, I noted he was still inside moving his mouse over the same image, now enlarging her thigh. I wondered if his control of digitized fragments onscreen was more satisfying than the prospect of relating to live, whole-
bodied women waiting outside the café doors. Building on centuries of racist, sexist imagery and representation of island women, the cyber gaze disciplines with panoptic effects.

Like the self-regulating prisoner, native women are hyper-aware of being observed by men in the public streets and places of tourist space. In the new internet cafes it was commonplace for discarded erotic photos (from suggestive to explicit) to be left on the desktop of public computers. In my daily contact with local youth who frequented these cafes it became clear that they were sending these photos through a variety of websites or to sex tourists abroad without any regard to privacy or safety precautions.

While local women resist domination by using their erotic powers to seduce, the impact of sex tourism through the unprecedented, unregulated power of the World Wide Web conforms to the disciplinary power of the Panoptic gaze in that it is, as the architect of the prison prescribed, visible and unverifiable. Tiguereja allows villagers to reverse the gaze and resist being consumed. But with his cyber-gaze, this new brand of deterritorialized sex tourist gazes upon host bodies without himself being seen, protected by his anonymity and flow. In place, this gaze is fractured, and thus the spell of such an absolute form of power broken. Still, the implications of this new fragmented subject, the cyborg prostitute, and this new form of the abstract male gaze, detached from the organic messiness and differentializing practices grounded in place, deserve more attention.

212 “Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so.”
**Conclusion**

This Chapter has continued to explain the ongoing, dialectical borderwork to manage anxiety and establish difference between guests and hosts in terms of the abstract tactics of the former (constructing visual and textual representations of hosts and host space, imposing laws around racial mixing and labor, measuring and absorbing land, and, creating police squads) and the tigueraje response of the latter (sex workers and Haitians becoming “monstrous” and “magical,” using concubine law, and resisting eviction.)

While the construction of the “promiscuous, impure” native female subject endures, contemporary female “tigers” create friction through strategies which include seduction at the disco, performing love and romance, finding police allies, and using concubine law. However, the recent arrival of the sex tourist who first encounters the other in the deterritorialized NonPlace of cyberspace presents a new kind of disciplinary gaze shaping the sociospatial subjectivities of village youth in ways that remain to be seen.
Chapter VII. The Price of Paradise

The Tainos were the only pure hearts on this island. When the Spanish established the encomiendas it was sanctioned corruption by the King and Queen themselves. That’s 500 years of learning how to do it. The Europeans did it to us. [Dominican candidate for village mayor, speaking “tongue-in-cheek”]

During my fieldwork Las Ballenas continued to transition from a subsistence economy (where households produced the basic necessities) dominated by traditional paternalism to a market economy (where workers produced quantities to exchange for necessities they did not produce) governed by a broader international liberal moral philosophy and its very different notion of what constituted “freedom.” This transition was accompanied by contentious borderwork and tigueraje that (de)volved into a trade pattern characterized by "negative reciprocity" (Sahlins 1972) or self-seeking behavior where the social goal became trying to procure the desired good or commodified act (like sex) at minimal cost.

In this final chapter, I will describe how development forces which conspired to create the place known as Las Ballenas today, predicated on a brand of the “good life,” have resulted in a place teeming with borderwork based on the socially unstable tenets of negative reciprocity. These conditions, in turn, create a situation that one researcher describes as a “brown zone,” where, because of historical uneven democratization and a negligible state presence, the state is unable to enforce its legality (O’Donnell 1993:1359).

The Dominican state has never had a strong record of redistribution equity or institutionalized welfare. Its incomplete state governmentality is what provides the opening for tigueres and mafias who mediate between villagers and authorities. When the state cannot provide for a moral economy beyond the free market, for basic needs like housing or neighborhood safety, cultural brokers like buscones help fill in the gaps.
Systemic corruption within Dominican bureaucracies has the very practical function of creating income for these otherwise marginalized subjects. As described earlier, buscones know the best way to maximize life in Las Ballenas. William, 34, is one such buscone who spent time in prison and knows the ins and outs of bureaucratic offices. William knows how, for example, to bribe the right officials and retrieve the necessary stamps and signatures for a range of documents that are needed to negotiate daily life in the DR. This kind of corruption is seen by most Dominicans as a kind of benign clientelism, an extension of the local values of privileging community (individual differential needs) over systems (bureaucratic, abstract needs). When rule-based, depersonalized welfare structures do not exist, informal dynamics based on negative reciprocity such as squatting, tigueraje, and corruption dominate social space.

**Corruption as Institutionalized Politics**

Transparency International defines corruption as “the abuse of entrusted power for private gain. It hurts everyone whose life, livelihood, or happiness depends on the integrity of people in a position of authority.”\(^{213}\) In 2006, the DR was ranked 99 out of 163 in Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index. In terms of perception, the Dominican propensity for *aguantando y sobrellevando* (putting up with and enduring) corruption was surveyed in 2005. That year 72 percent of Dominicans surveyed said corruption of police and political parties in particular had increased “a lot” in the previous three years, and 34 percent said they expected it to increase “a lot” in the next three. At the same time, 30 percent said that some progress had

\(^{213}\) Indeed, corruption has many definitions. When used as an adjective it literally translates from the Latin *rumpere* (to break). When used in reference to politics it refers to an abuse of power, and with regard to philosophy, the deviation from some moral or spiritual ideal. Source: http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2010/in_detail.
been made against corruption in the last year, but only 39 percent said that corruption would ever be solved (Latinobarómetro 2005).

According to one economist, when corruption increases by 10%, productivity falls by 4% of GDP and capital flows fall by .5% of GDP, whereas economies grow when corruption lessens (Lambsdorff 2005:11).\(^{214}\) Others statistics cite that official extortion is as damaging to foreign direct investment as a 50% increase in corporate taxes (Wei: 2003).\(^{215}\) But in the DR, which is just two generations away from the Trujillo dictatorship that so influenced the nation, corruption is simply business as usual. Party loyalty that used to ensure physical survival now ensures access to the coveted *la bola* (free ride). Most barrios elect their leaders based on their ability to “provide” and, thus, around Christmas and election time the masses are enriched with sacks of rice, mattresses, gas tanks, stoves and washing machines, and free bus and train rides, in exchange for party loyalty. It was rumored that the Las Ballenas mayor spent three million pesos handing out money to try to get elected in his party’s convention in 2008, although he was unsuccessful. Josse, who also ran for mayor, describes how the mayor-elect:

> manages one million pesos a month for city hall and maintains about 300 families in town who basically do nothing for the town but it is great for inter-relations. Everybody does it, everybody knows it, they just wait for the next election when, hopefully, it will be the turn of the next party. In that way wealth is redistributed over time.

But this form of redistributing wealth gets problematic, as when land confiscated from drug dealers is doled out to party loyals, as it was under President Mejia. Or when the Baninter Bank and two others registered overdraft losses amounting to US$2.1 million and had to be

\(^{214}\) Source: http://www.wiwi.unipassau.de/fileadmin/dokumente/lehrstuehle/lambsdorff/Papers/C_Development.pdf

bailed out using 21% of the country’s GDP in 2003, leading to serious inflation and loss of income while no bank officials were held accountable and convicted of fraud (World Bank Report 2007). A prime concern, too, in Caribbean tourist zones is that organized crime elements exploit corruption (extortion, kickbacks, direct embezzlement of public funds) within border control and law enforcement agencies. According to the US State Department, drug trafficking fuels systematic corruption of officers within these agencies and is correlated to a spike in homicide.

The share of the US cocaine supply that transited Hispaniola dropped from 8% in 2000 to 2% in 2004 before rising again to 4% in 2005 and 9% in 2007.\textsuperscript{216} Around this time, the murder rate in the DR doubled from 13 per 100,000 in 2001 to 26 per 100,000 in 2005.

Dominican traffickers have grown in importance in Europe since 2005 and today are second only to the Colombians among foreign cocaine traffickers arrested in Spain, the primary point of entry.\textsuperscript{217} According to my Dominican INTERPOL informant, once in the DR tourist zones, the currency exchange houses, the money remitters, the real estate and housing construction companies, and the casinos are commonly used to facilitate the laundering of illicit funds. According to a 2009 US State Departments Dominican State Report,

Improvements in domestic law enforcement capabilities and cooperation between the Dominican National Police (DNP) and the National Directorate for the Control of Drugs (DNCD) were evident during 2009 with an increased focus on fighting corruption and money laundering activities. However, endemic corruption at all levels of the GODR and throughout private sector special interest

\textsuperscript{216} A substantial number of illicit drug flights from Venezuela to Hispaniola drop their loads bound for North America and Europe over the DR and its territorial waters. In 2009, for the first time, the Government of the Dominican Republic (GODR) made several large seizures of pseudoephedrine, a methamphetamine precursor, transiting from Asia to Central America (INTERPOL informant).

groups still hinders efforts to counternarcotics smuggling, money laundering, migrant smuggling and a wide variety of other criminal activities.218

Lines of legality/illegality blur if we compare the actions of the Dominican government’s support of drug trafficking and Wall Street banks laundering gangster money through offshore island accounts. I have been making the case throughout this work that distinctions between formal and informal are interwoven since the very concept of informal or underground economy is predicated on the institutional will to organize society formally. Carolyn Nordstrom (2007), who works on transcrime and piracy, splinters these definitions even further within the categories of legal, illegal, and extra-legal.219 For example, extra-legal is when Dominicans barter trading food or other non-monetary items for services in ways that are not illegal but violate taxation laws.

To what extent these extra-legal economies affect power relations in Dominican social space is hard to quantitatively measure. But certainly in this unchartered territory lies immense profiteering that threatens state bureaucratic structures and formal institutions of the world

218 http://photos.state.gov/libraries/dominicanrepublic/5/AnnualReport/incsr_001.pdf. Also see story involving official corruption in the infamous Figueroa Agosto case which involved one of the biggest drug smuggling operations in the Caribbean. Figueroa famously called into a Dominican radio show in December of 2009 to announce he had paid off police $1 million to ensure his escape and then called again in February to offer $800,000 to anyone who would assassinate a top police official. Source: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-latin-america-10675333

These extra-state alliances and networks might supplant the state in authority, should they “become more adept at controlling resource extraction, capital accumulation, and a justification of violence… if they prove less adept they will wither and be supplanted by new and emergent forms of political and economic relations” (Nordstrom 2007). Indeed the legitimate controlling factions in Las Ballenas which are reabsorbing the town now that tourism has increased its real estate value are built on host/guest extra-state alliances suggesting a crisis of statelessness, a kind of “brown zone” in which state forces like the police remain in place but are accessible to the highest bidder.

A senior resident told me that the Dominican hotels used to supplant the meager police salaries and even send food to their families in the capital or the interior. But the Europeans developers refused to subsidize corruption. As violence escalated and confianza deteriorated, Dominicans expressed alarm. A 62 year old maid explained, “When someone is robbed here, everyone knows who did it, and no one tells. The police do nothing and are often the robbers. The safest is to have nothing.” Similarly, Griselda, twenty-six, a massage therapist and beach vendor qualified her dream of progressando (social advancement).

The people are not equal here. If you have money you are a person, and if not, you are nobody. One day I would like to own my own house, concrete (with a cement foundation) near the colmado. But I do not want to have too much money because then the people se mata [will kill] me. I don’t know why, but money changes people. The rich here live in fear.

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220At its extreme, Mike Davis (2006), author of Planet of Slums, writes of how these off-the-grid zones lacking clear hierarchies or planning can mutate into informal zones that are quasi-criminal mini-states, autonomous slums governed by transnational crime and breeding grounds for terrorism. From the point of government intelligence, “They therefore become the equivalent of rain forest, or jungle: difficult to penetrate, impossible to control.” See: Gibson’s interview with Davis at http://www.williamgibsonbooks.com/blog/2006_05_01_archive.asp#114861248455125020
A concho driver tells me how last month while he and a friend were talking, a Dominican York (a returnee from New York City often thought to be a deported criminal) asked another taxi driver for a ride up in the hills. Later his wife came looking for him and it was discovered he had been shot up in the hills, his motorcycle stolen. “Por nada [for nothing],” the young man said, visibly shaken. Several taxi drivers who also picked up and delivered drugs for local runners, described increased violence among Dominicans associated with drug use including crack, still new to this pueblo. Reports of armed robberies against foreigners (using machetes and in some instances automatic weapons) occurred several times a month during my field stay in 2007. An American woman who had described the old days in Las Ballenas as “charming” said they were now putting bars on their windows following a midnight robbery in which their guests had been awakened with semi-automatic weapons put to their head. “We now call this place our little gulag,” she said sadly.

**Rising Crime**

Long-time resident and North American expat Elliot Barfield remembers the way paradise became corrupted, insidiously and innocently enough at first. He recalls how those first pioneer tourists would visit Jean’s hotel- later to be known as the Tropical Papaya—and leave all their trappings on the beach to take a swim. In particular, he recalls an important event, the first “crime” in the village, which occurred in the mid-80s:

Gradually little boys would hide behind trees and watch what the gringos left behind and think ‘Oh, I need some sunglasses.’ I think that was the article that originally started the whole thing. It was sheik and cool to have sunglasses- a city thing. So sunglasses were sought after and that led to bags being lifted. Then it got into cameras and this and that. And then, one day, according to beach legend, a German couple came and decided whatever the problems were the place was so
paradisical and a few other foreigners had managed to acquire land and they brought along $30,000 in cash in their bag and got here – went to the beach, went swimming, and left the bag on the sand, and it was taken by some boys who were after sunglasses. The boys took the bag home to their parents’ house. And this is legend, it cultivates the idea of how honest the people were here and how dumb the tourists were, and what the parents did was saw there was a lot of money in the bag and they were horrified that their boys had taken it away and of course the boys said, ‘Well, they just left it there, they didn’t want it anymore,’ and of course the parents knew better and the Germans were in a panic because all this money had disappeared and they returned it to the Germans… Well that was then and this is now!

Barfield said that began “something of a crime wave,” and still there were no police patrols until around 2000. According to French expats and Dominican disco bartenders, one major change was the introduction to drug trafficking in Las Ballenas which began when French expat-hippies brought in their coke and marijuana and increased with the development of tourism to include crack, heroine, and ecstasy. The trafficking in drugs was particularly corrupting to local communities because it produced local habits when couriers were paid in product, required carrying guns, introduced gangs, increased male homicides, involved the collusion of local law enforcement and civil servants, and laundered proceeds which undermined legitimate activity.221 Crime was not officially recorded in Las Ballenas except through international developer and real estate businesses who wanted to downplay any advertising of the area as dangerous in order to protect their investments. As crime spiked in 2007, there were some warnings that went out on an English-speaking Dominican list-serv such as this one:

For those traveling to LB area please be very careful as their is a lot of robberies taking place here and i’m talking a lot also machettes and guns are involved...little or no help from the local police so it is like open season on tourists here...i really

221 In 2002 Dominican males ages 15-29 had a homicide rate of 19.7%. By 2005 it was 49.9%, more than three times the global average (World Bank 2007:63).
hope someone from some government reads this and gives someone a kick in the pants to get something done. I really agonized over sending a message like this because of all the good people here and the negative effect it could have on peoples business but peoples safety comes first.

Several expats decided to form their own community policing patrols, and many shot their guns off at night to let others know they were armed. The “English-speaking Ladies club” also decided to be proactive and hosted a tea on the theme of self-defense. A Dominican-American woman who had a black belt in karate demonstrated what to do if held up for a robbery. She stood in front of us and acted out and narrated the following scene: “You are confronted by thieves. You pretend to be scared. You reach for the ‘money’ in your purse, but then [at this her husband who was acting as if he were in the line of fire gamely hit the floor] you draw your gun and shoot the robbers dead!” The ladies were open mouthed but recovered quickly to applaud. One woman suggested they put an ad out in the local paper for a Dominican male to “beat up on” for practice and the group laughed.

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222 A previous topic in the group surrounded the topic of health, that is, how to airlift yourself to the nearest safe hospital since everyone feared the local hospital where reputedly one man went in for a routine operation and was still in a coma because of an overdose of anesthesia.

223 Several of the English speaking ladies present had lost their husbands to Dominican or Haitian women. The Englishwoman who suggested beating up local males had come to Las Ballenas with a man fifteen years her senior whom she had served as a secretary to for many years. He was currently living in a palapa covered hut with their former Haitian maid. Since she had never legally married him she had no income or pension.
At one point, eight armed robberies occurred over just a few days, including an incident in which tourists were shot at and injured which prompted the following announcement in the local expat newspaper called L7:

The Samana Tourist Services Business Alliance reported that eight armed robberies have taken place in Las Ballenas over the last few days including one incident in which a female tourist was injured. Hotel owners showed copies of photographs to the authorities and announced rewards for information leading to the capture of the criminals. Because of the increase in crime, Police Chief General Bernardo Santana Paez has ordered the transfer of the local police commander, but the local business community is considering taking things into their own hands by reinforcing security around their properties. The local citizen security program is being guided by Fernando Tapia, a retired general and an expert in the field, as well as a former defense minister of Colombia.

This message was sent out to local expats, including me, via email in March of 2007 following an incident which eventually led to the entire police force in Las Ballenas being transferred and replaced under the order of President Leonel Fernandez. The email bore the subject line: Crime: “Fort Ballenas:”

A series of robberies has led people to believe that the beautiful haven known as Las Ballenas, on the northern side of the Samana Peninsula, might be turning into something more like the well-known Fort Apache in the south Bronx. Diario Libre reports that two men dressed as policemen were captured by security cameras as they robbed the Pinos de Austria Hotel.

A former Peace Corps worker turned real estate agent from New Jersey told me that six months earlier an American couple who had been in one of his $800/month villas were robbed at gunpoint and shot at as they fled the scene. The male tourist, a writer from New York, became obsessed about investigating crime in the village, particularly as the expats denied there was a
problem. He found five victims of home invasion within twelve days of their robbery. According to his article which chronicled his experience,

the police simply turn a blind eye in exchange for a few thousand pesos. Others set up phony drug deals to extort foreigners. Still others pay Haitians to do the job then make bogus arrests to satisfy victims. Some cops just put on a mask, rob a house in their uniform, and go back to work.” [Fox 2010:4]

![Mugshots of alleged criminal thieves. The author declined to serve as an eye-witness after studying the historical exploitation of Haitians in tourist paradise](image)

Figure 65.

Dominican security guards, who were paid very little to protect the homes of wealthy Dominicans and foreigners, were often suspected of being complicit with home invasions. But word traveled fast in the barrio when an older man who worked as a guard was shot and killed trying to stop two thieves believed to be police. His gun was so poorly built it fell apart in his

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224 Source: (Fox 2011)
hands. The long-time French expat and hotel owner witnessed the guard dying in the bushes in front of his hotel. Meanwhile, Dominicans shook their heads and muttered it was a tragedy to lose one’s life protecting a gringo, especially on a security guard’s salary.

My neighbor Pablo, who was a second generation security guard, avoided violence (he was disgusted by cockfights). One day he arrived at my house to return a camera he had borrowed but looked agitated, so I told him to sit down while I made some coffee. When I returned, he told me he had just delivered two thieves to the local jail. His brother had called him when he discovered a neighbor’s house, a wealthy, absentee Puerto Rican, had been wiped clean of all its interior trappings. Two men were still there, and his brother needed help transporting them. The police were not forthcoming and claimed the road was too rough for their vehicles. By the time Pablo arrived with his truck and gun, the police had arrived and “beaten one of them so badly he was vomiting up blood and just crying and screaming.” Pablo insisted the police stop continuing to beat the thief in his truck and argued that the thief looked like he should be taken to the hospital. The police told him the thief had killed people and lived in Sanchez. But Pablo said the thief was young and sobbing and shook his head “no.” At the station, the youth told him that he only killed one man in his life and that was only because he was beating his mother. Pablo said he felt sorry for him. “When a man cries it is a big thing,” he says. “It means the pain is deep. Not like a woman, who cries for nothing.” Mysteriously, the stolen items confiscated by the police were never recovered.

Las Ballenas is a highly desirable location for police because of the high level of bribes and fringe benefits available, like robbing people. I commonly witnessed the police demanding “fines” from vendors without papers, women selling bread or empanadas, men selling clothes, hats, essentially other poor people who cannot afford the process that would register them as
legal vendors, or, being Haitian, are illegal citizens. Sex workers told me they avoided being fined or imprisoned through offering police free sex and, as I discussed in Chapter VI, sometimes they cooperated with police in tigueraje scams to entrap tourists. Tourists were often susceptible to being forced to pay a “fee” to get out of trouble. Like an American woman who claimed she was the “victim” in a car accident but had to pay the police $300 when suddenly a group of Dominican witnesses testified against her. Other police were tipped off by drug dealers to arrest tourists buying drugs or sex. One politur officer told me a tourist signed over $3000 in traveler’s checks to him to avoid being jailed for purchasing cocaine on the beach.

In 2006, the police were paid approximately US$113-200/month (less than workers make in the free trade zone), which explains the desire to seek added income. Poorly trained new police recruits reportedly fired only one round of ammunition before they were sent out into the streets, having had to purchase their own firearm, and often had criminal records and less than an eighth grade education. Importantly, these young officers were also known for committing over 250 extrajudicial killings in 2001, in undocumented circumstances written off as “exchanges of gunfire” with civilians. The fact that Dominican police were so often implicated in village crime and prone to making arbitrary arrests and indiscriminate sweeps of, particularly, poor, marginalized people caused them to be seen as little more than uniformed vigilantes. However, the police play a key role in enforcing spatial boundaries between various groups in tourist space.

The older residents told me fighting corruption was futile. “Like fighting the ocean,” said the maid. “This is why some people miss Trujillo,” she added, lowering her voice the way people tend to do when they reference El Benefactor. “There was less crime. No one robbed anyone.” This penchant for authoritarianism and order was not surprising. Dominicans repeatedly
expressed an affinity for order via repressive measures if not the rule of law. But I was greatly disturbed, when I returned to Las Ballenas in 2008 to find the new commander in charge with his ethic of mano dura (a strong hand). A concho I knew was allegedly shot in the back running away from the scene of a robbery. The public consensus appeared to be that it was an inevitable tragedy, needed to restore order to the pueblo during these chaotic times.

On May 14, 2007, foreign business interests met with the ambassadress of France to discuss security. Two possibilities were offered “to fill the lacks of means of the government.” One was to create a privatized security force for the tourist zone for about US$50 a month to “help with the needs of the National police force of Las Ballenas which has to date only one small Jeep and a motor bike for 24 men, and no financial assistance on behalf of the government.” After some debate, the majority of the French, German, and Italian residents agreed to take part financially, and if the vehicles could be provided by the Dominican government, the Association would ensure vehicle maintenance provide the necessary fuel. Three days later the first meeting between local business-owners and villagers with the new police authorities was held on May 17, 2007, and demonstrated the tense climate and police pledge to restore order.

The meeting opened with a Sgt. General announcing that “The corruption and the delinquency are the responsibility of everybody.” This comment seemed to be a pledge for

225 This often was expressed by women to explain the domestic abuse they incurred by Dominican men. Estrella, who was frustrated by her German boyfriend’s lax control over her whereabouts, complained, “We women need to be controlled. I tell Eric that he needs to call me throughout the day to see where I am. He cannot just let me run all over town without checking on me.” “But maybe he trusts you?” I suggest. She laughs and asserts a claim I will hear countless more times from both Dominican men and women. “You cannot trust Dominican people. We are too hot blooded! You must control what is yours. This is why you gringos become victims here.” In another example of female unruly sexuality, a Dominican maid once told me Trujillo, who “castrated” men who were spreading venereal disease, would never have tolerated the promiscuity of modern women today.
donations for the local police due to a lack of radio operator equipment and existence of only one 
Jeep in current disrepair. A Dominican storekeeper protested police “maltreatment” of “honest 
people” and the “elderly” but emphasized the need for order because the village did not produce 
vegetables or fruit but tourism. A Dominican woman who was introduced as “representing all 
mothers” said, “We will rely on our new Captain, but what we would like is a little of quietness, 
especially when our children are going out in the evening. A police officer can work and ask 
somebody for his identification forms but in a decent and respectful way.” A pregnant 
Dominican woman testified she was taken to the police station without being asked for her 
papers and without being authorized to make a phone call. The officials had no response. A 
French hotel owner testified,

My hotel was victim of an attack of robbers and one of my security employees 
was killed. To date, I still do not have a follow-up regarding this case which 
ocurred in front of several witnesses. Everyone knows that the Police work with 
the robbers, the dealers, and the proof is the story of the robber who was released. 
Now the words are not useful anymore, we need acts!”

There was no response from police officials but the new district attorney explained that 
once the thieves were sent to Samana, nobody went to trial because the witnesses received death 
threats and were afraid to testify. At last the moderator concluded the meeting with these words:

Today we made progress toward preserving what makes the beautiful reputation 
of Las Ballenas, what creates its great cultural value, which is its mixing of people 
from all cultures and races. And we must preserve these values by stabilizing and 
tranquillizing the criminal disorder.
On left, a Beachfront Hotel which sold out in five months, another nearby 60 villa development starting at 50-60k and two years later a one bedroom went for $250k; and right, a street scene example of what lies just behind the tourist scrim, invisible to tourists, who see what they want to see.

The longer I stayed in Las Ballenas, the more surreal my daily routine began to feel due to the stark contrasts I experienced while navigating through my day, interviewing and socializing with a range of social actors from Haitians squatting in coco fields to expats catered cocktail parties from their hilltop gated mansions. In particular, I was amazed at how effectively the tourist facade appeared to erase, in the minds of visitors, the immense physical poverty-stricken spaces and subjects that surrounded them.

Las Ballenas existed primarily, in the minds of most temporary sojourners, as the strip of bars, cafes, restaurants, and hotels that lined the beach or were gated in on the hilltops. Inside cafes, new visitors arrived and talked incessantly about the escalation in land prices and the new airport and highway. They seemed giddy about the prospects for the “good life” in a tropical paradise that included servants for less than $50 a week and apartments for the equivalent of a Volkswagon. Times were good. As the Euro spiked, foreign direct investment jumped 84% from
According to one real estate agent who was “raking it in,” beachfront property had jumped 300% since 1998, supported by the Dominican government which allowed tourism business investment to be tax-exempt for ten years and foreigners to purchase all the land they wanted.

Some of my French contacts admitted life was increasingly dangerous for foreigners in Las Ballenas. Philippe (from Chapter V) would not give details yet acknowledged he knew about the violent crimes but that the majority of French would not talk because they had invested too much in Las Ballenas becoming the promised “Monte Carlo” of the future. They and the Italian mafias were investing in the high-end developments and selling to the “new moneyed” Americans and the Russians, the latter of which, Philippe noted, tended to pay in cash. At the bar one night I overheard several French and Russian expats sat exchanging war stories and laughing off the violence. The Russian couple said they were going to stay even though the husband had been shot in the foot as thieves fled their home. The Frenchman spoke of someone who rigged a guillotine like contraption with a machete for a persistent burglar. The next day everyone saw the policeman trying to hide his hurt hand. They laughed in unison and ordered another round of rum.

Cason, the son of an important Dominican family (a main street in the Colonial Zone was named after his family, and his father’s sister married into a Trujillista family now “well-situated” in the Virgin Islands) was ambivalent about the changes. “It’s hard to stop progress,” he shrugged. Still he did have one complaint. The new government under Leonel Fernandez was tightening up the rules. He now, for the first time, had to pay taxes.

226 http://www.laht.com/article.asp?ArticleId=328909&CategoryId=14092
We used to just pay off people. You would say that a $250,000 lot was actually just RD 250,000 (pesos), but now they say, wait, this is located in Coson, that’s impossible. Last year I paid off someone to declare my property “agricultural, non-development” to avoid the taxes, but this year, I don’t know….I’ll be soon working for the government.

Cason had some nostalgia about the bohemian days of the place. He remembered ushering in those early French expats and entering a bar as the only white men.

There were all these black men sitting at the bar, and slowly they turned around, unsmiling, and stood up. I thought “Uh-oh.” But do you know what they were doing? They were standing up to offer us their seats- which were coco cola crates turned upside down.

Cason’s son was born in the village under the care of an *india bruja* (Indian witch), and she gave his son the “black hand,” an amulet to ward off the evil eye of jealous evil spirits. But the evil eyes and jealously had proliferated in town. Still, he was not a romantic. There had been a fair share of tragedy over the years that had sobered him up: fatal accidents, deals gone bad, broken hearts. “Do you know the first foreigner here was known as “El Loco?” he asked me. But in his account, the man who set himself on fire was a Russian, not an American. “And now the Russians are buying up the island!” he laughed. On another occasion, one of his associates, all of whom appeared to be prominent Dominican developers, leaned in to whisper, “As for the French, tell them we’re coming to take our land back.” It seemed the time was ripe for the Dominican upper class to reclaim paradise as their national patrimony.

“Yes, all the beachfront property is for sale” said Catherine, a French innkeeper, as she mixed the coco oil that her husband, who was napping nearby with an empty bottle of Brugal rum at his side, hand-pressed with essential oils: lavender, vanilla, aloe, patchouli. Catherine arrived in 1983 with her two infant children who in 2007 were in their twenties and living in Madrid. She was also selling her 45,000 square meters beachfront boutique hotel. “The
Americans have made an offer and will convert this land into a condo settlement with many villas and pool,” she said sadly.

When we arrived we had $3000. We literally could not spend. There were no shops or restaurants. We rented a bungalow for 45 pesos a day. Water was pumped, and we used gas lamps, horses. The road was so bad, but there was one man with a car who would occasionally bring back ice, and we would all chip away at it. There were three CB radios, like the kind used in boats or planes, in town where you could contact people. I home-schooled my children and received the materials—sometimes—by mail. Eventually the foreigners started a French and German school…But now we have to pay high taxes, and the local government expects us to take care of the roads, sewers, electricity…It’s too much. After the last hurricane, I went to the local town council asking for help with the road - the mud was all the way up to the door. They told me “build a wall to close off your property.” The last local official we gave money to fix the road pocketed it and did nothing. This is typical and we’re fed up.

Catherine said the modern conveniences had not made up for the escalation in drug use and violence and that “for sure” Las Ballenas would explode. She believed there was an enduring “darkness” in Las Ballenas and pressed two candles into my hand and told me that I could light them for “protection.” “From what?” I asked. Catherine just smiled and told me that the French do not like to talk to strangers (especially Americans), but that foreign people tended to die violently in Las Ballenas by gunshot, noose, poison, amoeba, AIDS. She then described the trance-dances of local Haitian women she had seen in states of ecstatic possession when she passed a certain vacant field outside the pueblo. “Light your candles,” she said.

The foreigners trained guard dogs to further protect their paradise. When I visited Cason for an interview, I was greeted by a Rottweiler and two Australian Ridgebacks. As they encircled me, I asked if they were friendly, and he replied they were “pussycats.” It was until the next day that villagers told me they had grown wild roaming the desolate northern beach in packs, and one had recently been euthanized for killing and eating a burro, cow, and horse! Locals are amazed at
the attention foreigners lavish on their animals. My neighbor’s eyes widened in amazement when she saw a half-page eulogy dedicated in the expat newspaper to a St. Bernard named Paco. I was well acquainted with the bark and growl of guard dogs during my wandering up and through the town in pursuit of interviews. My Dominican and Haitian neighbors feared the animals and believed they could sniff out the color of dark skin and were trained to attack non-white people. A group of conchos told me a disturbing story about one such “zombie” dog who had killed its Dominican keeper and been “resurrected” only to kill again.

The story went that there was a wealthy French man who lived up in the lomas, and he had a Rottweiler. One day the guard opened the gate of his cage to feed him and it lunged at his throat and cut him and he bled to death. The police ordered that the dog be euthanized, but the French man paid the vet a lot of money to spare him. Instead, the vet gave the dog a kind of zombie medicine which kept him asleep for a week. When he awakened, the owner brought him home with a new name and pretended he was a new dog. A year later, the guard’s wife opened the cage to feed the dog and it killed her the same way, jumped up and tore open her throat. My
face must have looked sick hearing this story, but the concho-driver just shrugged. “El dinero no es santo, pero haces milagros, [Money isn’t a saint, but it makes miracles].”

**The Price of Paradise**

As a tourist Nonspace, Las Ballenas is marketed as a place where social norms can be (for the space of the holiday) transgressed by perpetual travelers (PTs) seeking to exploit the politics of flow. Villagers, stuck firmly in place, are hard-pressed to establish friction through patronage-based or concubinage relationships informed by traditional scripts with such cosmopolitan visitors. Tourists and expats prefer to distance and mediate their relationships with villagers as “equals” through money and market exchange and deeply resent that their hosts seek la bola by “milking the gringo cow.”

Disenchanted foreign guests previously seduced by Rousseau-ian fantasies of living off the grid discovered the romantic “chaos” of underdevelopment which was accompanied by amoebas, contaminated water, skin infections, parasites, sewage flooding through the streets,
slash and burn fires in the lomas, and of development, overfishing of the seas and destruction of the coral reefs, and, more recently, wetlands to make golf courses. The relatively small scale of violence (drunken pool hall brawls and quiet indiscretions with prostitutes, that had been easily controlled by caudillos began to escalate to rampant land title forgeries, police corruption, and armed robberies. Robinson Crusoe and Paul Gauguin had become sex tourists on holiday as they made their way to Thailand and the Philippines. Increasingly, expats began to wrap their Shangri-la retreats in barbed wire, protected by armed guards and dogs, dogs that locals believed could “sniff out” those with darker skin. The fall of paradise was therefore inevitable as tigueraje practices increased by those desperate to create friction and connect with global flows. Even as tigueraje and corruption filled the gaps of incomplete state governmentality, worsening conditions of negative reciprocity caused the feeling of social trust and safety to deteriorate further for both hosts and guests located in tourist space.
Chapter XIII Conclusion

Ruptured Spaces

Places can be conceived of as bounded fields or spatial clusters of embodied social dispositions and practices that require boundary production and maintenance. When a range of deterritorialized populations inhabit the same space a myriad of conflicts emerge over place-claiming (reterritorialization) and borderwork. Borders marking difference emerge to impose order. Mary Douglas’s thoughts on the human obsession with difference (racial, sexual, class, those demarking the “modern” from the “primitive”) are worth reproducing here.

[There are] ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating and punishing transgressions, have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only by exaggerating the differences between within and without, above and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created. [1996:4]

But my analytical project has been to show how in daily, lived space, those who navigate the borderlands and use tigueraje re-appropriate abstract spaces and create friction with guests and thereby complicate such binary distinctions. Individual acts of tigueraje aggregate to make a significant impact on the emerging social tourist space of Las Ballenas, despite the power of market global flows and structural advantages of developers and other guests. In addition, a range of state and other actors are involved in tigueraje acts and/or unable or unwilling to prevent acts of re-appropriation. In this way authority in the form of dominant discourse or the Panoptic gaze is challenged by “denied knowledges” (Bhabha 1994:114).

However, my theoretical project has also been to describe the contentious social interactions between actors who use tigueraje tactics of resistance in the informal economies of Las Ballenas to create differential lived space in dialectic with the more powerful actors.
(developers, tourists, expats) who benefit from abstract tactics (colonial representations, law, bureaucracy, development policy) to control social space. The production of tourist space as a capitalist enterprise is bent on fusing the immediate realm of lived space with processes and strategies that produce conceived and perceived space. This fusion results in an abstract production of space shaped by tactics such as repetition (linear time and mapping), statecraft, technocratic knowledge, and phallocentric forms of representation (the Panoptic cyber-gaze). Abstract space becomes hegemonic when it absorbs the daily aspirations, dreams, and desires of subaltern populations (their lived spaces). But while villagers want to progressar, inspired by global scripts, they also continue to prize confianza predicated upon a redistribution of wealth that does not upset local moral economies. I have described the friction that accompanies this transitioning economy where kinship networks mix uneasily with principles of market exchange creating substantial friction in borderwork and trade expectations, and therefore negative social consequences.

While cosmopolitan guests (from the segregated cruise ship tourist to the French expat living off his pension or the interest of his Dominican bank account) strive to maximize their fading privileges and fluidity in a place romanticized as beyond “Big Brother,” Dominican and Haitian hosts, informed by a deluge of foreign media and imports, are equally motivated to succeed as modern consumers. All of this makes Las Ballenas, despite its marketing as a socially transgressive paradise or inert tropical backdrop of “sun, sand, and sex,” a place teeming with competitive social actors who actively assert their optimal place among various hierarchies of power. Inevitably, while performing various scripts to engage the Other drawn from gendered and ethnic fantasies, inconsistencies and contradictions reveal the confusion or resistance around what kinds of social contracts are expected of host-guest relations. If either party perceives they
have been exploited, betrayal motivates aggressive and counter-tigueraje strategies such as when sex workers use concubine law or beach cooks resist eviction. Tigueraje practices provide an opening into host subjectivity, that is, how hosts experience their lives and the hierarchies in which they are ensconced. This can help explain how and why spheres of domination are naturalized or openly contested and in what ways the scrim of Las Ballenas continues to be seductive and mystified.

In my view, the conditions of negative reciprocity that accompanied the intense, aggressive, competitive borderwork I witnessed from 2006-2009 constitute an unsustainable model for tourism development. Informal “feminized” labor reproduced cycles of poverty for the majority of villagers, as more migrants poured in from the nation’s interior and across the border from Haiti. When traditional forms of cultural processes and subjectivity failed to be smoothly indigenized or re-contextualized in the face of state and transnational capital flows that perpetuated structural violence upon subaltern lives, violence ensued as a means to redistribute wealth. Ultimately the state and its agents (the police) stepped in to restore law, order, and “respectability,” but many felt these new police would learn the local rules of tiguere informality (ie: be corrupted) within a few months.

Throughout my fieldwork I studied the production of Las Ballenas as a “unruly” social space, what guests romanticized from afar as a “Wild West,” that was uneasily ordered. The contradictory conditions that resulted from the entanglements of the social actors in Las Ballenas inevitably created ruptures (gaps in knowledge) and allowed for social space to be disrupted because of three main factors. These three factors, then, that characterized the sociospatial production of Las Ballenas—that it is conceived as a transgressive site, an Other opening; its
incomplete state discipline and endemic corruption; and the shadow structure of its informal economy—also informed the violent nature of its ongoing borderwork.

During my participant observation, following Lefebvre, I studied this production of space through the ways social space was embodied and seen, where it was directly lived and communicated, and how it was organized through daily routines. I noted how social life rather than inhabiting bounded territory existed as the constant tension between territorialization and deterritorialization, or between abstract and differential space. It works like this: a sex worker coaxes a would-be sex tourist to visit her at home and induces empathy when he witnesses her poverty situated in place behind the tourist scrim—her shack of corrugated metal, the sewage piled in the river, and general crude conditions that accompany the lack of village infrastructure. Her orchestrated rupture to his fluid dream territorializes and differentiates their shared social space and reveals the tourist’s visceral proximity to varying degrees of human exploitation, degradation, and poverty that is normally concealed. Meanwhile abstract forces like Politur re-territorialize place as they patrol the beach and warn tourists not to leave the confines of their protected/policed spaces that their plastic bracelets and passports ensure them access to.
Ruptures which mar the picturesque scenery of a tourist postcard are therefore inevitable. A legless Dominican man drags himself over the sand to ask for money from a French topless woman sunbathing who covers herself from his gaze; a young Dominican girl with a crack addiction on a date with a German pensioner in an elegant hotel restaurant passes out on the floor in cardiac arrest and is carried out before the stunned clientele; a large, broad shouldered Dominican walks through town with a shovel cast over his shoulder and asks a group of foreign men at a pool hall to buy him a beer. They comply, and he then asks them to buy beer for his amigos and every man in the place step forward and look to the foreigners expectantly; a foreigner’s guard dog, a massive Rottweiler, is poisoned with Clorox filled salami and washes up on the pristine shore.

A Dominican Biology professor told me one stormy afternoon she and a fisherman named El Negro went trolling the beaches to count turtle eggs for one of her internationally
funded eco-projects. When he noticed her shivering, he dug around in his old duffel bag and offered her a jacket which she accepted and gratefully zipped up as they continued down the beach. At some point he stopped and asked her how she liked the jacket. “It’s nice, really warm,” she said. He nodded, smiled, and after awhile, stopped to ask her again how the jacket felt. “Is it too big?” he asked. She laughed, “No, it’s fine, why?” El Negro looked over the choppy slate-gray Caribbean sea in the direction of Puerto Rico. “Well, I’ve got quite a collection of clothing from walking this beach over the years. I’m glad it fits. You just never know what’s going to wash ashore.” And that is when she realized the direction of the tide, that the clothing this fisherman carried was the human evidence of unsuccessful flows from local passengers who hoped for a new life and boarded the yola-canoes, and that she was wearing a dead man’s jacket.

El Negro’s discursive act differentiates and disturbs the abstract construction of space—in this case the picturesque seascape or even the site of a worthy eco-project that privileges turtles over humans—and makes it more difficult for the guest (or upper class Dominican) to remain neutral and detached. When islanders overlay their social worlds (territorialize) upon the cliché of what is depicted or desired in the tourist brochure (miles and miles of empty white sand…), there can be jarring, uncanny moments when it suddenly becomes more difficult to glide past the encounter without some lingering trace or reaction. ²²⁷ However, precisely because this type of discomfort is so incompatible with the illusory playworld of Caribbean space, particularly with the hedonistic tropes so overused in branding the Caribbean, there are, simultaneously, redoubled efforts, backed with considerable power and resources, to prevent

²²⁷ Freud would call it “the return of the repressed.”
such encounters from happening. In closing, I would like to offer a few thoughts toward the production of alternative futures in Las Ballenas predicated on a more sustainable development of social space.

**Beyond Binaries**

Tourism enterprises face many challenges in developing and marketing commodified spaces in ways that are sustainable and encourage long-term investment that value both people and place as a non-expendable resource. But when people, in this era of the free market as a model for free competition, are reduced to their most saleable capital (land, sex, bodies, labor, money) under conditions of rapid paced development borderwork becomes violent through hyper-competition. The mythologizing representations (of monsters, pirates, etc), stigmatizing discourse, and scapegoating practices among various social groups help mask such vulnerabilities and the crudity of the social exploitation. Sex tourists who seek to avoid commitments and social contracts with local women want to render the strange familiar by exploiting the usual hierarchies of race, class, sex, etc. but mask it as a kind of macho transgression. This attempt to render the strange (exotic other) familiar through the travel encounter becomes then merely the extension of a narcissistic impulse, rather than a real desire to experience difference, “to leap over the walls of their own cultural, intellectual, and spiritual ghettos…” (Cuthbert 1971:9).

Many feminist critics have discussed sexualized spatial representations in which masculine discourse based on coherence and hierarchy seeks to order “unruly” feminized spaces such as Las Ballenas (Grosz 1990; Irigaray 1993; Best 1995). Elizabeth Grosz (1995) argued

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228 Perhaps even more than the explorer-travelers of the past, the tourist is often shielded from these unpleasant confrontations. For example the Dominican government under President Balaguer built miles of walls to hide the slums outside the Columbus Monument during the Columbus Centennial.
how chora, as the passive receptacle that nurtures masculine material existence without itself possessing form, in Plato’s discourse linked the function of femininity with spatialization. Chora then is akin to what I understand feminist scholar Luce Irigaray (1993) termed “porosity” and what colonial gentleman travelers desired/feared confronting in their Caribbean encounters with exotic otherness. But Irigaray challenged the phallocentric normalcy of psychoanalysis that spatialized woman’s sexuality as a “dark continent” while at the same time rendered her amputated (lacking the penis) through the castration complex. Instead Irigaray returned to the body as a site of resistance.

“Porosity,” for Irigaray, references the anatomy of the woman to emphasize permeability and interrelationship over autonomy. The mucous-lined labia is an in-between medium that changes depending on the touch of the Other. The placenta is both permeable tissue and a nourishing envelope that mediates birth. This return to the body as a site of symbolic and representational resistance is meant to inspire a sense of wonder over sexual difference rather than revert to the Oedipal threat of negation. In spatial terms, Irigaray’s return to the female body frames the woman’s body as a tangible landscape that can never be enclosed like a map. Brimming with fluid desire, such an imagined body does not depend on difference for its propulsion and does not turn the sex worker into a “social sewer” for the unruly excess of the social body at large (Corbin 1987:210).

I reference Irigaray here because it inspires another way of imagining the travel encounter that would be more sustainable in an environment like Las Ballenas. As it exists now, the Dominican state is caught up in the untenable contradiction of promoting tourism through eroticized female bodies to stimulate guest fantasies while needing to contain such “contamination” in order to preserve the respectability of its national elites who resent the
encroachment of sex workers in what is now becoming defined as respectable (non-prostitute) space. Along the vein of sustainable travel encounters that cease to make the “other” monstrous, abstracting space and bodies, we might conceptualize a new “mode of intercorporeality” within intimate relations. “In place of…the masculinist economy that reduces difference to a property relationship, our selves could form in the dynamic contact with others, not according to a fixed ideal but in a transformatory encounter in which neither self nor other is a predictable, calculable identity with inviolable boundaries” (Shildrick 2002:118).
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Appendix

Selective timeline of DR history from 1822-1910

(Moya Pons 2007; Vega 2007; Aracena 2000)

1822-1844- Haitian president-for-life Jean Pierre Boyer abolishes slavery and promises farmland to all freed men. (There are fewer than 4000 slaves in the DR.) The process is slow because lands are owned communally, so most freed men remain with their masters waiting for land or join the Haitian army. Dominican landowners refuse to show their land deeds.

1823- President Boyer names a commission to reexamine property titles and eliminates state-funded salaries of the clergy. Revolts spearheaded by clergy are violently repressed. Boyer passes a rural code which is resisted by peasants who have never experienced forced labor.

1821-1824- During the 22 year “Haitian domination” Boyer starts negotiations in 1824 to bring freed slaves from Philadelphia in the United States to Hispaniola and promises to pay their passage and maintain them for four months, giving them 36 acres of land to each dozen. Out of 6000, 2-300 freed slaves are sent to Samana to grow fruit. They carry the names of their owners and bring cultural customs from southern US plantation society. These Americans are members of the *Iglesisa Metodista Episcopal Africana, de Filadelphia* and support the separatist movement against Spain. They reconstruct their Methodist Church in Samana. Some French nationals who also own large tracts of land sell their parcels to freed slaves.

1844- The withdrawal of Haiti and declared independence of the DR marks the beginning of land consolidation in the hands of the Dominican government.

1854- The US and DR negotiate terms for a treaty for the American recognition of Dominican Independence. In exchange, the US will be permitted to rent the Samana peninsula and Bay of Samana to establish a naval station for its ships operating in the Caribbean. But the deal is eventually de-railed by a Spanish trade agent.

1861- Spain re-annexes the DR.

1865- Spain abandons the island.

1870- The Dominican state seeks Spanish or American annexation borne out of a desire for protection from Haiti, and for development. Gregoria Rivas de Moca constructs the railroad with its route: Sanchez—La Vega—San Francisco–Samana.

1880-1940- Los “cocolos” arrive as day laborers from small Caribbean islands to work in sugar fields and in Samana, on cocoa plantations.

1860- The Junta de inmigracion (office of immigration) in Samana opens for cocolos who will farm and build the Sanchez railroad.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>President Baez is overthrown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>The DR lacks “cities, paved roads or industries… secondary schools and universities, and its most developed institutions includes a church devoid of priests; a caricature of an army plagued by generals and regional caudillos who constantly competed for leadership; a bureaucracy that is extremely inefficient and ignorant of statistics and whose administrative practices have been inherited from parish colonial procedures” (Moya Pons in Vega 212).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>President Hereaux is elected in fair elections and is the nation’s dictator for 17 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>Thirty percent of the DR’s export income is set aside to promote immigration as a “civilizing mission” to turn peasants into capitalist farmers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>Sanchez, with its operational railroad, is a thriving port town opening up a new route for exports from El Cibao, the nation’s interior farmland. Sanchez is divided in two, an enclosed section with the houses of the Company Escocesa in charge of the rail and the other the living quarters for some 2,000 pioneers: 25% Dominicans, 50% from the Virgin Islands and Turks and Curacao and another 25% Europeans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>President Heareaux is assasinated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>San Francsico de Marcoris is connected to the rail network but the rail will later languish under the 1930’s dictatorship.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>The U.S. takes over Dominican finances.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Despite the introduction of the telegraph and newspapers, the DR still only has two roads. Country is 90% illiterate.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vita

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- Concentration in Gender and Women’s Studies, UIC, 2007
- PhD in Anthropology, University of Illinois at Chicago, UIC, 2012

Research Areas: Cosmopolitan Identities (Migrations, Diaspora, Refugees), Translocal ethnography, Global Citizenship, Transnational Relations, Intersection of Race, Sex, Gender, Cultural Geographies of Desire, Politics of Representation, Spanish Caribbean, Political Economy, Feminist theory, Crime and Informal Economies, Medical Anthropology

Teaching/Research Appointments

Summer 2012 (Currently designing course)
St. Mary’s College at Notre Dame, Indiana
- Anth141 Intro to Cultural Anthropology

Fall 2011-Spring 2012
University of Illinois, Chicago
Ashford University (online)
- Anth101 World Cultures: Introduction to Social Anthropology
- Pol353: Comparative Politics

Winter-Spring 2011
St. Mary’s College at Notre Dame, Indiana
- Anth345: Anthropology of Women

Fall 2008-Winter 2011
University of Illinois, Chicago
- International Studies 301: The Global in the Local, Friction and Flow in a Dominican Tourist Town
- Political Science and Gender Studies 485: Gender and Politics in a Globalized World
- Anth101 World Cultures: Introduction to Social Anthropology

**Ashford University (online)**
- Pol353: Comparative Politics (International)
- Soc304: Social Gerontology
- Anth101: Cultural Anthropology

**Spring 2003-Spring 2008**
- Research Assistant to Renee Beard, Institute for Health Research and Policy, UIC
- Teaching Assistant for Global Perspectives on Women and Gender, UIC
- Research Assistant for the Center for Women’s Excellence, UIC
- Teaching Assistant of The Human Adventure (twice), UIC
- Research Assistant at the Center for Health and Aging, UIC
- Teaching Assistant for Intro to Archaeology, UIC
- Teaching Assistant of World Cultures: Introduction to Social Anthropology (three times), UIC
- Events Planner at the Humanities Institute, UIC

**Collaborators**
- Dr. Renee Beard, Institute for Health Research and Policy, UIC. I was hired to research and write a literature review on the influence of the biomedical model in the cultural construction of Alzheimer’s disease.
- Dr. Tonda Hughes and Dr. Stacie Geller, Center for Women’s Health and Excellence, UIC. I helped organize and secure funding for a pilot mentor project within the UIC medical school for students working in the area of women’s health.
- Dr. Thomas Prohaska. Center for Health and Aging, UIC. I was hired to analyze qualitative data within a study that focused on the doctor/patient interaction using Atlas/Ti software.
- Dr. Lenny Jason, community psychologist at De Paul University. I interviewed him on his work around stigmatized illness and published an article in the Chicago Reader on HOME, an intergenerational living center Dr. Jason was involved with.

**Graduate Dissertation Advisors and References**
- Dr. Mark Liechty, Anthropology, UIC. liechty@uic.edu (Chair)
- Dr. Molly Doane, Anthropology, UIC. mdoane@uic.edu
- Dr. Norma Moruzzi, Political Science and Gender and Women’s Studies, UIC. nmoruzzi@uic.edu
- Dr. Gayatri Reddy, Anthropology and Gender and Women’s Studies, UIC. gayatri@uic.edu
- Dr. Ralph Cintron, English and Latino Studies, UIC. rcintron@uic.edu
• Dr. Mary Beth Pudup, Community Studies at University of Santa Cruz, Ca, and former undergraduate advisor. pudup@ucsc.edu

Organized Panels
  Panel Title: Rethinking Intersectionality: the Transnational Constitution of Dominican and Haitian Gendered and Racial Subjectivities in Paradise,” in progress. This paper will be presented as part of a panel I’m currently organizing for the 2012 AAA conference. The session will interrogate how the subjectivities of modern subjects are constituted within multiple, intersecting borders or power gradients in ways that explain the "intersection" of race, class, and gender. Panelists will track various geographies of desire, economies of pleasure, and politics of representation in order to chart how different (sometimes competing and contradictory) subject positions actually "intersect" in both material and immaterial ways.

Past Conference Paper Presentations
• April 18, 2008. UIC Humanities Institute, Chicago. Race, Sex, Power.
• April 30, 2008. Immigration at the Margins: day laborers, sex workers, domestic violence, and HIV. Chicago LGBTQ Immigrants Alliance in partnership with the Ellen Stone Belic Institute for the Study of Women and Gender in the Arts and Media. Chicago.
• October 15-17, 2009. Rethinking the Mangrove. 2nd symposium of Critical Caribbean Studies, University of Puerto Rico- Mayaguez.
• March 3, 2012. UIC Second City Anthropology Conference
  Panel Title: Gentrification, Tourism, and the Recommodification of Space. Discussant Dr. Neil Smith.

Scholarly Publications

Mass Media Publications
• Pataki Punishes the Mentally Ill, Village Voice. March 5, 1996.

**Awards and Honors**

• 2008. Alice Dissertation Award.
• 2006-current. Anthropology Honors Society Membership.
• 1993. Mott Foundation Cultural Study Award for Fort Belknap Reservation

**Synergistic Activities**

• **March 1999-June 2000.** Communications Coordinator and Editor-in-chief of *neighborhoods*, a quarterly publication for the Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety (CANS). CANS is a non-profit that connects neighborhood organizations citywide around issues of crime and safety and wrote the prototype for the nationally recognized model of community policing.

• **March 1997-March 1998.** Reporter for the *City News Bureau* of Chicago, a wire service for local TV, radio, the *Sun-Times* and *Tribune*.

• **March 1996-July 1996.** Traveled with Big Apple Circus to research feature article. Article was published in David Egger’s *Might* magazine and reprinted in the *Chicago Reader*.

• **February 1995-March 1996.** Research Assistant to Investigative Reporter Wayne Barrett covering Metro Politics at the *Village Voice*. Also freelanced and fact-checked for the *Voice*.

• **Jan-June 1993.** Interned with Red Thunder, a grassroots non-for-profit comprised of traditional Native American activists from the Fort Belknap Indian reservation in Montana. I published a series of articles documenting their struggle against Pegasus Gold, a cyanide heap-leach gold mine in the *Harlem News* and *Z Magazine*.

**Deirdre Guthrie’s Three References:**

Dr. Mark Liechty, Anthropology, UIC. liechty@uic.edu
Dr. Molly Doane, Anthropology, UIC. mdoane@uic.edu
Dr. Norma Moruzzi, Political Science and Gender &Women’s Studies, nmoruzzi@uic.edu