

Gazing at the Puerto Rican Anthropological Landscape *The “Natives” Look Far and Wide*

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REUNIÓN PARA EXPONER

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Edited by Marisol Ramos and
Manuel Valdés Pizzini

GAZING AT THE PUERTO RICAN
ANTHROPOLOGICAL
LANDSCAPE

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Fig. 1. Detail from Hieronymus Bosch, *Ship of Fools* (1490–1500)

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Anthropological Landscape
The “Natives” Look Far and Wide

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Finally, we dedicate this book to all the anthropology professors (past and present) at the University of Puerto Rico who shaped our lives and careers. Some of them may be gone, but they are not forgotten: Rafael Ramirez, Edwin Crespo, and especially Carlos Buitrago Ortiz, whose teaching, mentorship, and friendship left a mark on all of us.

Introduction

Marisol Ramos and Manuel Valdés Pizzini

In hill-towns, from San Fernando to Mayagüez,
the same sunrise stirred the feathered lances of cane down the
archipelago's highways. The first breeze

rattled the spears and their noise was like distant rain marching
down from the hills, like a shell at your ears. In the cool asphalt
Sundays of the Antilles

the light brought the bitter history of sugar
across the squared fields, heightening towards harvest, to the
bleached flags of the Indian diaspora.

— Derek Walcott, *Omeros*

A Starting Point

One may argue that the beauty of Homer's *Odyssey* is that it is a narrative from the heart and the experiences of a man from an island, Ithaca, who traveled broadly only to reflect on the turmoil on his beloved island. Reflecting on the fragment in our epigraph from *Omeros* by Derek Walcott, a poem from the contours of Saint Lucia in the Caribbean, we can argue that just as

the original *Odyssey*, it is a travelogue throughout the routes of the British Empire and the United States, but always reflecting on the isobaths of that insular shoreline. Similarly, the ethnographies discussed by some of our contributors in this volume, and by other Puerto Rican anthropologists, also reflect the colonial experience that links the archipelago with the coordinates of near and distant places: the Anglophone, Dutch, and Hispanic Caribbean, the African continent, the Atlantic Ocean through the slave trade and the circulation of commodities, the United States through the Sugar Kingdom and the Puerto Rican diaspora, among many other geographical and social ramifications. Other Puerto Rican anthropologists, including some of our contributors, followed a different route and engaged in fieldwork in other polities and nations. The rise of this reflexivity turn of the anthropological research enterprise in Puerto Rico, it is argued here, came about during the consolidation of the anthropology program at University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus (UPR-RP) in the 1970s, when key figures such as Rafael L. Ramírez and Carlos Buitrago Ortiz brought new perspectives into the debates on what constituted the practice of anthropology in Puerto Rico. Nevertheless, to understand how anthropology came to Puerto Rico and became an area of research inquiry, we must look back in time.

The Beginnings

For many years, the production of anthropological works in (and from) Puerto Rico was formed by a complex and diverse array of sources and scholars from the Island and from the United States. Many of the critical “ethnological voices” that paved the way to a new understanding of humans in relation to the Puerto Rican archipelago were trained in the bachelor’s program at UPR-RP. The core of those scholars had the opportunity of learning the ropes from two distinguished anthropologists, Rafael L. Ramírez and Carlos Buitrago Ortiz (1970 to 1990), and from Jorge Duany in the latter part of the 1990s and the next decade. Those young apprentices went to graduate school abroad, in the

United States, Europe, and Mexico, while keeping an intellectual lifeline with their professors at UPR-RP, who continued providing mentorship in all dimensions of their anthropological career until they finally succeeded in their graduate programs. In our view, it was an enormous feat for an undergraduate program in a colonial context, devoid of the financial and academic support needed to increase the potential of the anthropological lot.

One of those mentors, Carlos Buitrago Ortiz, affected, undoubtedly, the academic and even personal lives of all the contributors to this volume. Buitrago was a trailblazer who encouraged students to engage in a hardcore ethnographic practice (similar to the British ethnographers he admired), one with a poetic sensibility and emphasis on details comparable to Marcel Proust's prose. Our mentor encouraged us to do fieldwork in many contexts, and sometimes in a multisited approach, and to engage in a historiographical practice, traversing the archival documents as ethnographers facing live societies. In his honor, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at UPR-PR held,¹ in October 2016, a three-day conference in which participants discussed the influence of his teachings, methodological practices, and his intellectual and theoretical guidance.

A group of his former students also met in New York later in the year, at the meetings of the Latin American Studies Association (LASA), in a panel organized by Marisol Ramos, to discuss, in-depth, the bearings of Buitrago's teachings, and legacy in the research endeavor of a handful of his students. Those events led us to engage in a publishing project that served to communicate to our fellow anthropologists the rise of anthropological theory and practice in the post-World War II period, which coincided with the years after the publication of *The People of Puerto Rico* (Steward et al., 1956). We discussed the radical shift from a US-based ethnography to one led by the "natives" (albeit with foreign graduate training), providing readers and scholars with new topics and views of the social processes under observation

1 The department is the house for three programs — bachelor's in sociology, bachelor's in anthropology, and master's in sociology.

and analysis. This was a path taken by Rafael L. Ramírez and Carlos Buitrago Ortiz.

We used the term “native” ironically, since most of us do not see ourselves as such, but simply as anthropologists. However, we know that who we are affects our positionality vis-à-vis our research subjects. Hence, we kept the term to start a conversation that addresses the complicated feelings such labels still evoke among nonmainstream anthropologists. We invited the participants of both events to submit a chapter proposal exploring their positionality as native anthropologists in relation to their research agenda and fieldwork in or outside Puerto Rico.

This collection of essays features newfangled lines of research in various areas of anthropology, works that cannot be separated from the influence of those formative years at UPR-RP. In many ways, this book is an homage to that academic tradition, a *Festschrift* to honor Buitrago’s living legacy.² The bottom line is that we could not present a book about anthropology and ethnography in Puerto Rico without considering Buitrago and other Puerto Rican anthropologists’ influence on the education of the contributors to this volume. Significantly, Buitrago helped us become anthropologists, archeologists, or archivists because of his teaching and mentoring. For anthropologists educated in the United States or other countries, they need to understand that there are no graduate programs in anthropology in Puerto Rico. Therefore, if someone from Puerto Rico wants to become an anthropologist or an archeologist, they must study abroad (with the United States, Mexico, the UK, and Spain as the most likely destinations) and deal with the economic, cultural, and linguistic disadvantages unique to our colonial situation in the best way they can.

We need to acknowledge the unique conditions prevalent in a nation that is a colony of the United States, treated unequally

2 Although Buitrago died in 2013, his legacy and influences are still the topic of conversations and debates among his disciples and colleagues. In many ways, he is still here with us, and thus we prefer to call this effort a *Festschrift*.

compared with the rest of the states, and where anthropology, as a field of study, is barely supported by university administrators. Jorge Duany explains that “contrary to other social sciences disciplines — such as economy, sociology, and political sciences — anthropology played a secondary role in developing the great developmental and populist projects of postwar Puerto Rico”³ (Duany 2005, 245). Still, with the few resources available to us when we were undergraduates (the cohort from the 1970s to the 2010s), many of us could study abroad and obtain graduate degrees thanks to Buitrago’s support and mentoring. We were inspired by his determination to navigate, negotiate, and downright fight the university bureaucracy to get the resources he needed to provide us students with the best educational and fieldwork experiences.

The Dilemmas of the “Native” Anthropologist

An anthropology student from a township near Mayagüez, on the west coast of the island of Puerto Rico, was besieged by the words of one of his advisors in New York, telling him that Puerto Rican intellectuals are an insular posse, always looking inward, not having a more global outlook. Those devastating words came after the advisor evaluated the student’s dissertation project on a particular form of political and environmental activism that would reshape what we think about co-management and the environmental struggle to preserve the forest ecosystem and our cultural integrity. The enthusiastic young scholar did not expect the advice he received: “You should do fieldwork *elsewhere* to expand your worldview and break the *insular hold*.” Those words evoke to us Antonio S. Pedreira’s 1934 book on the Puerto Rican insular perspective, *Insularismo: Ensayos de interpretación puertorriqueña*. This book unleashed a scathing

3 In the original, “Contrario a otras disciplinas de las ciencias sociales — como la economía, la sociología y las ciencias políticas — la antropología desempeñó un papel secundario en los grandes proyectos desarrollistas y populistas de la posguerra en Puerto Rico.”

critique of the insular worldview of the local intellectuals who Pedreira wanted to embrace a universal cultural viewpoint and a more refined *Verstehen* of the world (see Flores 1978). Similarly, Sidney Mintz criticized Puerto Rican social scientists in 1978 during a congress organized by Ronald Duncan on the legacy of *The People of Puerto Rico* at the Inter-American University in San Germán:

The consistent tendency of Caribbean anthropologists, as part of this, to concentrate on the exclusive study of their societies, an admittedly crucial first step in the creation of indigenous social science, has so far admirably fulfilled that most cherished of European and North American imperialist dreams: that Caribbean peoples never move toward a perception of their historical, social and political common ground. How proud we shall all be when the first Puerto Rican anthropologist studies some other society — any other society — besides Puerto Rico! (Mintz 1978, 9).

We agree that a broader perspective is essential and needed in the field of anthropology in Puerto Rico and elsewhere and that the new generation of Puerto Rican anthropologists needs to be attuned to regional (e.g., Caribbean and Latin American) and global issues and embrace perspectives such as world economy and the world ecology to be able to grasp the complexity of our local communities. However, to insist on doing fieldwork outside one's national boundaries is also to establish a colonial hold and an imperialist point of view that some of our Marxist and post-Marxist colleagues hold, despite their claimed class consciousness and political *vanguardism*. The mantra that native anthropologists should do fieldwork in other societies — not their own — conceals the powerful argument that the anthropologists from the center are the ones chosen for the ethnography of the others (in our countries), but we should go abroad. Most Puerto Rican anthropologists (and sociologists) have been interested in understanding our society's risky and often obscured contours and layers, and in reevaluating other anthropologists' works

from the center and their authoritative statements on national culture, politics, labor, and development policies.

In the past, there was an implied criticism by anthropology professors at some US universities that foreign students, and Puerto Ricans, even if they were technically US citizens, should not study their cultures to avoid a subjective view of society. Even the term “native anthropologist” signals that colonial subjects are suspect and unable to perform ethnographic research as well as researchers from the metropole. Today, when most anthropologists in the United States and other countries turn inward to study their communities, terms such as “insider anthropology” and “anthropology of home” (Forster 2012, 14) are used to describe what so-called native anthropologists have been doing for decades. Forster explained in her review of the major debates regarding studying our communities that “native anthropology offers a critique of dominant anthropological practices by opposing the customary position of natives as objects and countering Eurocentrist domination in academia. At the same time, native anthropologists have been strong in voicing the fluidity of identity, which shows that every researcher is both an insider and an outsider” (14).

Today, we value what “native” anthropologists have to contribute to anthropology. However, it is apparent in Mintz’s quote that he shared this concern about the abilities and intentions of Puerto Rican social scientists when conducting research in their own country. He shared a typical stereotypical position of some American anthropologists (which we argue still prevails today in some quarters) who undervalue the contributions of minorities and people from the periphery.⁴ Another layer miss-

4 Talal Asad has raised these debates consistently since 1973, and for the Caribbean, we refer the reader to Charles V. Carnegie’s article on the fate of ethnography in the English-speaking Caribbean (Carnegie 1992). Interestingly, there was a time in the twentieth century in which the Caribbean was, for US academia, not worthy to be considered as an area of ethnological pursuits (Price 2022). Buitrago (1982) wrote about this dilemma, an argument he repeated (along with a critique of the UPR stance toward anthropology) in a statement read in Zagreb (see Buitrago 1988).

ing in the discussion about locals conducting social sciences research in Puerto Rico is the inherent disadvantages of working in a colony. Many anthropologists, including Mintz in the past, have chosen to ignore the material reality that academics from well-funded universities do not experience: lack of institutional support, lack of research funding, a push for more teaching over research, and economic and environmental crises. Even during the heyday of UPR-RP (the 1940s to 1960s), social scientists, especially anthropologists, did not have the research funds that Mintz or Eric Wolf had available to research the whole Caribbean. For Puerto Rican faculty professors in the social sciences, the most they could hope for was to request teaching release time to engage in research or get an assistant for some of their classes. Another route for local faculty was, and still is today, to apply for mini grants and additional external funds to hire one or two student research assistants to help with a local research project or, if lucky, to be invited to collaborate on an international project.

University funds to do pan-Caribbean or international research in the social sciences are still as scant today as they were back in the mid-twentieth century. Even more so now, since the financial crisis of 2009 and the imposed Financial Oversight and Management Board (FOMB) under the PROMESA Act in Puerto Rico. The FOMB, created by the US Congress and appointed by the president, which is in charge of implementing the austerity measures to pay out the island debt, has several times cut the operational budget of the UPR campus-wide system, hampering its capacity to teach and perform meaningful research. We must also state that the government of Puerto Rico and some UPR administrators have not defended the institution vis-à-vis the FOMB, leading to a persistent reduction in funding.

Therefore, the idea that studying one's culture is, as Mintz said, a sign of being "insulocentric" (1978, 8), sounds in our ears condescending and willfully ignorant of the challenges faced by Puerto Rican and Caribbean social scientists, then and now. Ironically, this perception also ignored the value of studying the local to understand the global. Various chapters in this book

will demonstrate that studying Puerto Rico is the beginning of understanding its place in the world system, something that Wolf and Mintz learned from their ethnographic experience in Puerto Rico, as seen in many of their works, and as documented and analyzed by Jorge Giovannetti (2018).

Anthropology in Puerto Rico

When thinking about anthropological inquiry and practice in Puerto Rico, the first thing that may come to mind is Puerto Rico as an object of study. American anthropologists Franz Boas and John Alden Mason visited Puerto Rico as early as 1915 as part of the *Scientific Survey of Porto Rico and the Virgin Islands*.⁵ However, it is *The People of Puerto Rico* project, directed by anthropologist Julian Stewart and his graduate students Mintz, Wolf, and Elena Padilla, to mention a few, who are most connected in the mind of social scientists as the pioneers of anthropological fieldwork in Puerto Rico. Of course, this is an overstatement since the first American to conduct anthropological fieldwork was Morris Siegel. During his time as a professor at UPR-PP, Siegel did ethnographic work in Lajas, a town located in the southwestern region of Puerto Rico, back in the 1940s (Ramírez 1978, 41; Duany 1999, 244) and also published several academic articles about race relations in Puerto Rico.

However, before the US occupation of Puerto Rico, Puerto Ricans were already engaging in anthropological work. For example, Dr. Augustin Stahl (1842–1917) wrote the first ethnological study about the native people of the island, *Los Indios Borinqueños* (1889). His book represents the first time a Puerto Rican scientist applied the theories and techniques of the new anthropology, ethnology, and archaeology fields on the island. Stahl was a physician by profession (a graduate of the prestigious Charles University in Prague) and a consummate scholar in zoology, botany, history, and ethnology. His book, a mix of methodologies from ethnology, archaeology, and historical

5 Volume 18 was dedicated to the archeology of Puerto Rico.

anthropology, tackled the challenge of separating falsehoods, embellishments, and facts from the earlier Spanish chroniclers. With that information and the analysis of archeological sites known in the nineteenth century, he compared those findings with what was known about similar extinguished or still-living Indigenous groups. The book's goal was to understand better the "grado de cultura, caracter, aptitudes, usos y costumbres, ideas religiosas y demás condiciones del pueblo indio borincano,"⁶ with the hope that his work would add new knowledge in the field of archaeology (Stahl 1889, 4). We mention Stahl's work to point out that the first wave of US-based anthropologists ignored the works of early Puerto Rican social scientists and historians. Even today, Stahl's contributions are little known among anthropologists and the public. Stahl's study may seem simplistic compared with the later archeological works about the Taíno people. However, that assessment ignores the challenges faced by local intellectuals to create a homegrown scientific tradition within a colonial setting, where the Spanish authorities controlled access to scientific literature and historical monographs for centuries, always ready to censure or seize controversial material. However, there has always been a long tradition in Puerto Rico, started in the nineteenth century and still alive in the twenty-first century, to create an autochthonous scientific and literary tradition "by Puerto Ricans, and for Puerto Ricans"⁷

6 The "degree of culture, character, aptitudes, uses and customs, religious ideas and other conditions of the Borincano indigenous people."

7 This tradition started when a group of Puerto Rican students living in Madrid, Spain, formed La Sociedad Recolectora de Documentos Históricos in 1851 to acquire (by purchase or by copying from the originals in libraries and archives) copies of primary sources about Puerto Rico's history from the Conquista and early colonization. To learn more about this society, see Isabel Gutiérrez del Arroyo, "La Sociedad Recolectora de documentos históricos: Colección documental," *Revista del Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña*, no. 48 (1970): 36–44.

Eventually, Alejandro Tapia y Rivera, one of the members of this group, published a collection of primary sources in 1854 in Puerto Rico. In the introduction, Tapia explained the importance of this collection to allow Puerto Ricans to start creating their own history: "[Este trabajo] es de bastante interes para la nacion y la provincia, porque abre camino

(Blanco-Rivera and Ramos 2018, 64) as a way to counteract the social, cultural, economic, and educational inequalities in the colony. Stahl was one of those pioneers in sciences and social sciences, with Salvador Brau y Asencio and Eugenio Maria de Hostos. Brau was a writer, historian, and sociologist. He was an observer of the social classes of his time, and a recorder of an alternative view of the island's history, before the US occupation. Hostos was, and still is, one of the United States' most influential sociologists and educators. Like them, many other Puerto Rican intellectuals, or "letrados" in the sense conveyed by Ángel Rama in *La ciudad letrada* (1984, 28–29), cultivated the sciences, social sciences, and the humanities and pushed for establishing universities or similar higher educational institutions in the colonies with different degrees of success. In Puerto Rico, although a university was not established during the nineteenth century, the intellectual class was able to establish and launch the Ateneo Puertorriqueño in 1876.⁸ For the intellectual class on the island, the Ateneo became an educational and cultural institution offering free courses in math, geography, and other sciences. It also hosted literary and scientific *tertulias* and intellectual competitions that were open to the public. Through membership and donations from its members, it awarded many travel grants for students to study abroad. The space has served as a museum, school, library, and performance hall for many generations, but its capacity to continue running as a cultural institution has become precarious in recent years.⁹

a nuevas investigaciones, que acaben de ilustrar en todos sus puntos la historia de Puerto-Rico" ([This work] is of great interest for the nation and the province, because it opens the way for new research, which would help to enlighten in all its points the history of Puerto Rico) (Tapia 1854, 6).

- 8 Puerto Rican Athenaeum, a literary and scientific institution and place for the learned exchange of ideas and debates.
- 9 After 1898, with the transfer of Puerto Rico to the United States after the Spanish–American War, the nature and support for this institution waxed and waned depending on the political vagaries of the new colonial conditions. The status quo party, Partido Popular Democrático (PPD), subsidized the Ateneo from the 1940s to the 1970s, but after the pro-statehood party, Partido Nuevo Progresista (PNP), came into power in the 1970s,

Puerto Rico transitioned from a Spanish colony to a colonial territory of the United States in 1898, and the first university was founded in 1903. Established as a teachers' college in the eastern coastal town of Fajardo in 1904, the college was relocated to Río Piedras, where it is currently located. In 1908, the UPR-RP became a land grant university under the Morrill Land Grant Acts (1862 and 1890). At the same time, a new university campus, the College of Agriculture and Mechanical Arts (CAAM), established in the west coast town of Mayagüez, known today as the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez (Recinto Universitario de Mayagüez, or RUM), was also established as a land grant school, and today is considered the premier STEM university in the Caribbean, with many of its alumni headhunted by tech and biotech companies in the United States and elsewhere. Meanwhile, UPR-RP became known for its departments in the biological sciences and their strong departments, programs, centers, and institutes in the humanities and social sciences. It is at UPR-RP that, eventually, the right conditions were created for the education of Puerto Ricans in anthropology.

The Imperial Theoretical Landscape: Puerto Rico and Chicago's Intellectual Tradition

Anthropological courses have been taught in Puerto Rico since the 1940s. The Sociology Department at the UPR-RP during the 1940s had two anthropology visiting professors, US-born Morris Siegel and John Murra (Ramírez 1978). Siegel taught the first anthropology courses in the department. However, after he left, between the 1940s to the end of the 1960s, anthropology was taught sporadically by a variety of visiting professors, many of them at the beginning of their careers. In the 1970s, Puerto Rican anthropologists and archeologists were hired in tenure-track positions in the department, including Carlos

subsidies slowly decreased, with increases when the PPD was in power. However, since 2017, the Ateneo has lost all its subsidies from the government, together with many other cultural and art-related NGOs.

Buitrago, Rafael Ramírez, Anthony Lauria, Diana López, and Edwin Crespo. Later in the mid-1990s and 2000s, other Spanish-speaking anthropologists, including Jorge Duany and Jesus Tapia Santamaría, were hired to tenure-track positions. Visiting professors or adjuncts, some from the United States or local anthropologists who got their bachelor's in Puerto Rico and returned after obtaining their doctorate abroad, filled other positions. The department offered only undergraduate degrees in anthropology and sociology for many years until the late 1980s, when a master's program was established in sociology.

Colonial societies model their academic institutions after metropolitan knowledge and research centers. UPR-RP invested in an institutional commitment to increase the student's general knowledge and became a first-class social science academic center. In the 1930s and 1940s, Columbia University and the University of Chicago were considered paragons of those disciplines. Both universities became the source of consultants, researchers, and faculty members and received many graduate students. Scholars and members of the political elite understood that industrial development required the research and analysis of the social sciences to design social engineering projects to pave the way for a new Puerto Rico.

In 1945, the Social Sciences Research Center (*Centro de Investigaciones Sociales*, CIS), a key institution in that process, was conceived in consultation with the American political scientist Lewis A. Dexter, a graduate of the University of Chicago. Ex-governor of Puerto Rico, Rexford Guy Tugwell (1941–1946), a former professor at Columbia, headed CIS initially. The influence of the University of Chicago on local politics and policies regarding the planning and development of the country cannot be overlooked.¹⁰

10 Readers are encouraged to read Duany's 2005 piece in which he thoroughly documented the rise of the Social Sciences Research Center, as an instrument for the analysis of modernization of Puerto Rico, in response to the government's developmental strategy, based on industrialization that was attuned with the theoretical interest of the University of Chicago. He also offers a view of the infighting between the Americans and the

Clarence Senior (University of Kansas) and Simon Rotenberg, a postdoctoral fellow and, later, a faculty member at Chicago (Duany 2005, 192–93), followed Tugwell. Millard Hansen, also connected to Chicago and to Robert Redfield, was a director of the CIS from 1949 to 1964. Arthur J. Vidich and Joseph Bensman pointed out the influence of the many University of Chicago graduates at UPR-RP, especially Tugwell: “It was through Tugwell that the University of Puerto Rico was partially colonized by the University of Chicago” (2009, 346).

Another research organization developed in those years was the Institute for Caribbean Studies, established in 1958. The Institute was an intellectual platform for research, publications, and debates on the regional processes that also influenced the development of the archipelago’s social science research (García-Muñiz and Vélez Natal 2011). Both centers served as conduits to the participation of several US sociologists and anthropologists, whose contributions were expected to entice local academics to engage in different research paths needed to understand and support the new industrial path. It is not a coincidence that the main objective of *The People of Puerto Rico*, a project tied to Columbia University, was to apply the theoretical model of cultural ecology, culture core, and ecological subcultures to help the transition of local agricultural production for the global markets (Lauria 1989).

The UPR also bet on the intellectual framework and opportunities the University of Chicago provided. This academic center became the host of many Puerto Ricans pursuing careers as political scientists, philosophers, and sociologists. The influence of the Chicago School on socioeconomic development, urban sociology, and anthropology was immediately felt in the hallways of the UPR-RP, mainly through visiting professors, some of them young scholars. From 1954 to 1976, Beate Salz, a sociologist of German ancestry, taught in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, carrying with her the Chicago scholars’

locals, and the perceived disparity in resources, as the Puerto Ricans were relegated to research assistants.

teaching in understanding the transitions from Indigenous and peasant societies to machine-age industrial societies. Vidich, an anthropologist (Wisconsin and Harvard), also came in 1954 and worked on an ethnography of a rural location and municipality titled *Material on the Class Structure of Trujillo Alto*, an unpublished manuscript, and later published *Small Town in Mass Society: Class, Power, and Religion in a Rural Community* (1958) with Bensman. His ethnographic bent probably influenced his colleagues at UPR-RP through his local and international publications (see Vidich 1955; Vidich and Bensman 1958). Paul Vidich came to Puerto Rico as a hire by the dean of the College of Social Sciences, Pedro Muñoz Amato. Reuben Hill (University of Wisconsin), who was also consulted to develop the CIS, recommended him. Vidich recalls his arrival into the UPR intellectual community: “I found myself a member of an expatriate and cosmopolitan community far exceeding my expectations of what life in Puerto Rico might be like. La Finca was an enclave of privileged foreigners welcomed and accepted by equally privileged Puerto Rican academics among whom I was accepted simply on the strength of being there” (Vidich and Jackall 2009, 342).

Vidich had many intellectual influences, among them Alfred Lewis Kroeber (editor of the compendium *Anthropology Today*, published by University of Chicago Press and assigned by Salz in her courses), William Whyte (Street Corner Society), Florence Kluckhohn, and Oscar Lewis, a resident in Puerto Rico, Columbia graduate, and author of *La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty—San Juan and New York* (1966). Other anthropologists who taught during this period included Ruben Reina (tribal and peasants’ societies of Mesoamerica) and John Murra (pre-Columbian Andean empires).¹¹

In 1950, the *estadounidenses* and foreigners who found themselves on the intellectual grounds of UPR-RP formed a discussion

11 The list of scholars and researchers that worked at UPR, and brought in by the UPR administration, is more extensive (see Duany 2005). It must be noted that Charles Rosario, who was a field assistant to Mintz, was also a member of the faculty.

group called The Country Circle. These scholars met outside the university in the house of Sybill and Gordon Lewis, who headed the Institute for Caribbean Studies. Most of the members of the group were part of the editorial board of the *Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, founded in 1957 (García-Muñiz and Vélez-Natal 2011, 10). The group also included Puerto Rican faculty members, such as Carlos Albizu, Eugenio Fernández-Méndez, Milton Pabón, and Delia Ortega. Some of them had a working relationship with the Julian Steward team. Robert Redfield, a significant figure in anthropology and a trailblazer in studies of the transformations of Latin American peasant societies, also visited UPR-RP and was invited to the colloquia at The Country Circle. Redfield's intellectual influence is evident in the work of Salz with the Ecuadorian Indigenous labor force, and in the presence of Redfield's books on the syllabuses of the courses taught by Salz and Fernández Méndez in the 1970s.

It is rather difficult to jump to solid conclusions about this time at UPR-RP. However, the fragments of information suggested that the Department of Sociology was highly influenced by Chicago and Columbia. Based on the ethnographies produced during that period about Puerto Rico, it is evident that anthropologists working at UPR-RP were not critical of the traditional research based on the concept of culture or the role of outsiders doing fieldwork in Puerto Rico. It was not an anthropology overly critical of the colonial contexts of the world, because the participants were *estadounidenses* transplanted in the *hortus conclusus* of Río Piedras. Their works aligned closely with the research agendas in Columbia and Chicago and the needs of the local political elite in charge of the industrial development of the island at the time.

The outstanding Puerto Rican figure in the department during that period was Eugenio Fernández Méndez, who participated as a research assistant in the project that led to the publication of *The People of Puerto Rico*. As per his experience with the project, Fernández Méndez pursued graduate studies in anthropology at Columbia but did not finish. A passionate adherent of the Boasian approach to culture, Fernández Méndez

studied the rise of a national Puerto Rican culture and identity through his observations of the historical processes, the *Weltanschauung* of nineteenth-century prominent thinkers (e.g., Salvador Brau), and the influence of the culture of the aboriginal societies, the Spanish, and the enslaved population in the cultural expressions of modern Puerto Rico. From 1955 to 1964, he presided over the board of the Institute for Puerto Rican Culture, thus setting the agenda, jointly with Ricardo Alegría, for the definition of culture and the publication and dissemination of works on the subject.

Nevertheless, this academic history had an interesting twist. During the 1970s, the situation changed with the recruitment of new faculty at the department and within the College of Social Sciences. These new faculty members were anthropologists and sociologists trained either in Europe or the United States, with a solid political economy and Marxism background, familiar with the concepts of modes of production and social relations, and a strong historical bend. A new anthropological conversation and research agenda started to flourish.

A Theoretical Paradigm Shift in the Anthropology of Puerto Rico

The anthropological landscape of the archipelago was changing dramatically in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s with the influx of theoretical constructs from Europe through the works and influence of several scholars trained in Europe in the fields of sociology, history, and anthropology who were hired at the UPR-RP.¹² However, the cultural anthropology prevalent in the United States and various countries of Latin America and the Caribbean was alive and well. At the Inter-American University of Puerto Rico (IAU), located in the southwest of the island in

12 This introduction does not purport to be a survey of the discipline in Puerto Rico. Again, readers are encouraged to read the cited works of Duany (2005) and Duncan (1978a, 1978b), and also Valdés Pizzini (2001) on the anthropology of the Island, in reference to *The People of Puerto Rico*.

San Germán, there was an active anthropology program guided by a mix of US and Latin American scholars who followed the precepts of cultural anthropology. This group, led by Ronald Duncan, held the ground of an active anthropological endeavor teaching in English,¹³ as opposed to at UPR-RR, where classes were taught in Spanish, but most textbooks and assigned readings were in English. They sponsored a symposium in March 1977 to appraise the theoretical and ethnological contributions of *The People of Puerto Rico*. They invited Mintz and Wolf as the main speakers of the conference and William Roseberry as a commentator (Roseberry 1978; see also Roseberry 1989 for expanded comments on the book). Duncan also invited a group of local anthropologists and historians to debate the topic, which has been central to the discussion on the anthropology enterprise in Puerto Rico.

The transition of 1960 to 1970 was a change in the guard of Puerto Rican mainstream anthropology, with incoming young scholars trained either in Europe or in very progressive programs in the United States to teach at UPR-RR. At the College of Humanities, things were also changing, with several historians trained in France and the UK inserting the Marxist and progressive theoretical approaches learned from E.P. Thompson, Fernando Braudel, Jacques Le Goff, and the school of the *Annales* into their courses and research agendas.

Ángel G. Quintero Rivera and his partner, Marcia Rivera, arrived at the island from the London School of Economics with refreshing ideas, research, and dissemination strategies based on the historical analysis of the working classes and a perspective on the complex transition of precapitalist mode(s) of production and the rise of capitalism. They were the moving force behind the formation of one of the most important social sci-

13 The IAU was developed from a local educational project called Instituto Politécnico, created by Juan Cancio early in the twentieth century. The institute was acquired by a group of Presbyterian ministers and educators who continued with the evolution of the concept and taught in Spanish and English. In the 1970–1980 transition, the university had an English track (see Feliciano Ramos 1993 and 1999 for a history of the university).

ence endeavors on the island, the Center for the Study of the Puerto Rican Reality (Centro para el Estudio de la Realidad Puertorriqueña, CEREP), a center not affiliated with the UPR.¹⁴

Quintero Rivera and Rivera emphasized the story of the lives, experiences, and contributions of those classes that made possible the growth of capitalist society: enslaved people, freed people, peasants, rural workers, artisans, and industrial workers. CEREP encouraged researchers to develop an innovative approach that emphasized the development of an archive of testimonials, images, and documents produced by those classes in their struggles (Quintero Rivera 1971). It was an effort to underscore the relations of production, the social role of the diverse types of workers' organizations, and, more importantly, to create illustrated publications depicting the lives and times of those classes. CEREP moved historical analyses away from the political parties and the lives of the historical political figures (*los próceres*) and shifted the view to those of the working classes, including women and their contributions to the social and economic world. The intellectual vortex of CEREP attracted many researchers and scholars who started new lines of inquiry, examples of which are the US military occupation, the transition of the modes of production, the rise and fall of labor unions, the role of women in the local political scene, the early endeavors in the garment industry, the role of sugarcane and tobacco in the evolution of unions, and the sprawl of shantytowns (*los arrabales*), among other topics.¹⁵ Rafael L. Ramírez, previously a chemist, changed disciplines to pursue a graduate degree in anthropology. He graduated from Brandeis University (under

14 However, many of the researchers with CEREP eventually formed part of the cadre of faculty members at UPR, including Quintero Rivera.

15 Helen I. Safa, a major anthropological figure in Puerto Rico and the Hispanic Caribbean, worked in the Island for various years since 1954, and played a major role in understanding the social dynamics of marginal communities, knowledge that she used to make solid recommendations to the government on the relocation process. Safa also offered a critique of the development strategies of the government in her work (see Valdés Pizzini 2001, 48–49).

Robert Manners, a member of *The People of Puerto Rico* team) and became a key figure of CEREP. He was an outstanding researcher of urban squatter settlements and a member of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at UPR. Furthermore, he shaped and changed the department's structure as a faculty member and chair.

CEREP, no doubt about it, engaged in a rupture from the emphasis on cultural studies that permeated *The People of Puerto Rico* and that also percolated in the works of Eugenio Fernández Méndez, Beate Salz, and those transient anthropologists from Columbia University and Chicago who had brief stints teaching and doing research at UPR. In the 1970s, the department hired anthropologists and sociologists who held radical perspectives and had graduated from well-known progressive universities, such as UC Berkeley.¹⁶ During that period, Carlos Buitrago Ortiz, a College of General Studies faculty member, decided to attend Cambridge University and studied under the mentorship of Meyer Fortes, a giant figure in British anthropology (even though he was from South Africa). After completing his PhD, he returned to the island and became a department member (see Duany's coda to this volume).

Although the Department of Sociology and Anthropology has had many faculty members (both tenure-track and adjuncts) who taught anthropology courses through the years, we decided to focus on the research and pedagogy of Ramírez and Buitrago.¹⁷ Both reshaped the nature of core courses (e.g., Introduction to Anthropology, Ethnographic Methods, Social Structure, Research Seminar, and Urban Anthropology), which

16 Such as Carlos Ramos and Carol Romey. The department also incorporated Juan José Baldrich, a social historian, with experience in the historiographical research of the tobacco sector and a faculty member who taught quantitative methods. Baldrich was also an original member of CEREP.

17 The department also consisted of several anthropologists, such as Donald Hogg (physical anthropology), Joan Koss (the role of spiritism in culture and life), Eduardo Seda Bonilla (culture and colonialism), and Diana López (archaeology). Jorge Duany, who became a prominent member of the faculty, has documented the whereabouts of the department after the 1980s (Duany 2005, xx).

began to incorporate important debates and authors who were transforming the field, moving it away from the culturalist and functionalist views. During that period, new courses were established, such as the Anthropology of Spain and the Mediterranean Sea, which introduced students to the works of Fernand Braudel, the *longue durée*, and the *Annals*. Other courses introduced new non-us-based theories applied to anthropology, such as structuralism, especially as used by Clause Lévi-Strauss, and Marxism and the application of modes of production in the study of Europe, Africa, and Latin America. Authors that were read extensively in class throughout this time include Maurice Godelier, Roger Bartra, Andre Gunder Frank, Samir Amin, Barry Hindess, and Paul Hirst. During class discussion, topics discussed included colonialism and nationalism, Latin American perspectives on urban growth, and a critique of the concept of culture (see Duany's coda in this volume) in anthropology. The understanding of colonial subjects and the role of anthropology were thoroughly debated, incorporating radical views of native anthropologists, such as Talal Asad.

Anthropology was changing in the academic departments of the United States. Those of us who went to graduate school in the 1970s had the advantage of having read and discussed avant-garde works in the discipline and taking courses that allowed us to do ethnographic, archaeological, and historical research by working in the field and in the archives. Historical anthropological research let us discover the social relations of people and their material culture in their diverse contexts and historical eras. During this time, the anthropology program also encouraged reading new works reshaping anthropology in the United States, Latin America, and Europe. It urged students to submerge in the process of empirical data collection, followed by a thorough analysis and critique of their own views, or, as Buitrago constantly advised us, "to do an anthropology of our anthropology," a critical view of our own work.

Buitrago was a student of Meyer Fortes, who proposed the study of "the domestic cycle of kinship," in which anthropologists were devoted to documenting how kinship, through de-

scent, residence, and marriage, structured social relations in a “historical” perspective, an approach that became fashionable in the anthropology of African tribal societies. This perspective was central in Buitrago’s published monograph on the rural people of Arecibo, *Esperanza: An Ethnographic Study of a Peasant Community in Puerto Rico* (1973). However, in class and ethnographic research, he went a step further in discussing the political economy of kinship and the relations of production (and extraction of surplus value) manifested in the domestic cycle and the structure of the marriage, residence, and descent system. French anthropologists such as George Balandier influenced Buitrago, but it was the work of Claude Meillassoux that had the most influence. His *Mujeres, graneros y capitales*¹⁸ was a required ethnography read by the program’s students. Similarly, he applied those precepts in his study of the Pietri-Mariani family. This Corsican family immigrated to Yauco (lowlands) and Adjuntas (highlands) in Puerto Rico during the nineteenth century. Buitrago researched how the kinship system of this family regulated the production of commodities and distribution of wealth throughout its system.

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology became a theoretical stronghold of the position that the anthropology of the archipelago should and must be done by native anthropologists, without any qualms or resentments, a position in response to the sheer force of the work of Julian Steward. Going back to the 1977 symposium *The People of Puerto Rico*, whose proceedings were edited and published by Ronald J. Duncan in 1978, it is in that context that we should evaluate the clash of the anthropological *Weltanschauungs* that transpired in that symposium. Duncan underscored the influence of *The People of Puerto Rico*, not only in terms of the theoretical contributions to cultural ecology but also in the launching of the careers of Eduardo Seda Bonilla, Elena Padilla, Eric Wolf, Robert Manners, and Sidney Mintz. The debate delved into the book’s limitations

18 Original title, *Femmes, greniers et capitaux*. In English it is known as *Maidens, Meals, and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community*.

and the possibilities of transitioning into a more critical political economy, using dependency theory and Immanuel Wallerstein's model of the world economy, topics discussed by Wolf, Mintz, and Roseberry. William Roseberry underscored that it was one of the few works that successfully documented a capitalist social formation, a feat without parallel in Anglo-American anthropology. René Velázquez, a historian from Inter-American University, and Rafael Ramírez, in English and Spanish, respectively, published critiques of Steward's work. Their main critiques focused on the project's view of Puerto Rican culture, which was fixated on the production subcultures (sugar, tobacco, coffee). They both pointed out the lack of any critical discussion of the role of the United States in the colonial mentality. Later on, Eduardo Seda Bonilla, an anthropologist who also participated in *The People of Puerto Rico* as a research assistant, discussed this at length in his works, such as *Requiem por una cultura* — in our view, one of the most critical works on the topic.

According to some conference participants (mainly anthropology students), the discussion was animated and, on some occasions, adversarial.¹⁹ Ronald Duncan²⁰ closed the collections of papers (and the symposia) with a cursory critique of how Steward's typologies failed to document the depth of Puerto Rican culture, and of the failings of anthropology in analyzing national cultures. Even with this weakness in this stance over

19 Although we do not have concrete evidence of what fully transpired in the symposium, we tend to believe that Buitrago also presented a paper. Apparently, he chose not to publish it in Duncan's compilation. However, according to those present, he commented on Mintz's presentation on what became part of the local anthropological mythology — they had a bitter discussion, to put it mildly.

20 Duncan's position was not necessarily a representation of the whole Department of Social Sciences in San Germán. For example, James Wessman, one of the few Marxist anthropologists on the island, was a professor at the time, and his work with historical materialism and the historiographical and ethnographic methodological approach to the study of the Sabana Grande haciendas in the southwest was closer to Buitrago's than any other scholar's on the island. He also was critical of the role of *The People of Puerto Rico* (Wessman 1983).

The People of Puerto Rico, Ronald J. Duncan was a key actor in starting the debate on the anthropology of Puerto Rico and played a critical role in opening opportunities for young scholars to publish, disseminate the results of their work, and include native anthropologists in the conversation (see Duncan 1983). Regardless of which anthropological camp Duncan belonged to, it is revealing that he acknowledged in the proceedings of this symposium the works of Ramírez and Buitrago in a manner that almost described them as trailblazers in Puerto Rico:

Research based on structural analysis was first used in Puerto Rico in the mid-1960s by Rafael Ramírez and Carlos Buitrago. Ramírez's analysis of the urban political structure and Buitrago's analysis of rural social structure are complete and methodologically sound ethnographies, and in each case, they are the only studies of their kind on a Puerto Rican population.²¹ Ramírez and Buitrago also combined with Levine to edit a work on social class and inequality which combines sociological work on class with anthropological perspectives. Buitrago's latest work on the development of the pre-capitalistic society in Puerto Rico bridges structuralism and historical materialist analysis. The introduction of structural analysis led to studies of social structuring, class and inequality, adding a dimension that was missing previously. (Duncan 1983, xxi)

In a sense, this event marked the first time “native” Puerto Rican anthropologists were recognized as part of the development of an anthropology of Puerto Rico with original contributions and insights.

After their initial work, Ramírez and Buitrago pursued other lines of inquiry and theoretical thinking that opened new expe-

21 Duncan's appraisal did not include here the work of Safa, but he preferred to mention it in the section on historical materialism. For an in-depth analysis of the work of Safa, see Jorge Duany, “Anthropology in a Postcolonial Colony: Helen I. Safa's Contribution to Puerto Rican Anthropology,” *Caribbean Studies* 38, no. 2 (2010): 33–47.

riences to a generation of students. Many of Buitrago's former students decided to study peasants' societies, labor and gender issues, migration in and out of Puerto Rico (e.g., New Jersey, and Chiapas, Mexico), the use of a postmodern approach, and the deconstruction of texts. In the case of Ramírez, he opened local anthropology to the study of masculinity (*machismo*) and its relationship with homosexuality, using ethnological and local examples, when the theme was a nonentity in our field and queer studies was not in the panorama (Ramírez 1993).²²

The contributors to this volume are the heirs of this anthropological tradition started by Buitrago and Ramírez, and their chapters are not just reminiscent of their time with them. Instead, they take their memories with these pioneers as the starting point for their trajectories of becoming anthropologists in their own right and reflect on what it means to be a native anthropologist working either in Puerto Rico or outside of it.

On Languages and Conversations between the Editors

As editors of this volume, one of the very first discussions we had was about in what language to publish it. The easiest way was to publish in Spanish, our native language. However, we feared that if we did that, we would miss the opportunity to engage the broader anthropology community, since English is still the lingua franca in the social sciences. Still, we had mixed feelings about this decision. For many of us, we see English not only as a tool of knowledge but also as the language of us imperialism since the beginning of the occupation in 1898. It is the language used to decide our political future in the halls of the US Congress and still is the official language used in all US federal courts, even in Puerto Rico, even though most of the population of the archipelago communicates only in Spanish.

Even 128 years (and counting) after the occupation of the Island by the United States and the fact that we are US citizens,

22 As early as 1974, Ramírez introduced the topic of masculinity and homosexuality in his seminar on National Culture.

most Americans consider us foreigners, especially those of us born and raised in Puerto Rico. In *Downes v. Bidwell* (part of the so-called *Insular Cases*), Justice Henry Billings Brown of the US Supreme Court wrote:

If those possessions are inhabited by *alien races*, differing from us in religion, customs, laws, methods of taxation, and modes of thought, the administration of government and justice, according to Anglo-Saxon principles, may for a time be impossible; and the question at once arises whether large concessions ought not to be made for a time, that ultimately our own theories may be carried out, and the blessings of a free government under the Constitution extended to them. We decline to hold that there is anything in the Constitution to forbid such action.... We are therefore of opinion that the *island of Porto Rico is a territory appurtenant and belonging to the United States, but not a part of the United States.*²³ (italics are mine)

As members of an “alien race” that come from a “territory” that belongs to but is “not part of the United States,” we started our graduate student journeys with a variety of disadvantages unique to our colonial status. Regardless of our status as US citizens, we are regularly treated suspiciously because of our accent and our desire to maintain our national identity — and our professionalism and competence are questioned as anthropologists if we want to study our own people!

Even though, in the twenty-first century, the colonial relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States has changed, the fundamentally unequal association persists. Although Puerto Ricans were allowed to self-govern through the establishment of the Estado Libre Asociado, known in English as the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, this government has never been permitted to make decisions related to foreign trade

23 *Downes v. Bidwell* 182 U.S. 244 (1901). Full text available at <https://caselaw.findlaw.com/us-supreme-court/182/244.html>.

or relations without the permission of the us Congress, which ultimately decides which laws or parts of the us Constitution apply to the territory. Language, specifically English, became associated with assimilation and subordination in the minds of many Puerto Ricans, but for others it is the language of business and educational opportunities.

For most Puerto Ricans born and raised on the island, English is both a desire and a reluctant skill. For us editors,²⁴ deciding the language for this book was not easy. Without entering into the politics surrounding the teaching of English and Spanish in K–12 in Puerto Rico, we recognize that learning to read, write, and speak English, in and of itself, is not an evil but a necessity, especially when engaging at the college level with academic textbooks published in the United States and England. Except for ethnographies and journal articles published in Puerto Rico, Latin America, or Spain, most of our textbooks and readings were in English or were ethnographies translated from French or other languages into English or Spanish (if we were lucky). Therefore, we decided as editors to publish this edited volume in English because we desire to engage our colleagues from the English-speaking world to make clear the challenges and contributions of anthropologists who got their start in one of the oldest colonies in the world. We want to make clear that we are not implying that anthropologists born in Puerto Rico are better at understanding these issues than are our fellow Puerto Rican anthropologists from the diaspora. That is not the purpose of this book. Our intention is to highlight the native anthropologist experience from a particular locale, Puerto Rico, and a particular time period, 1970s to 2020s, and to present our reflections on the field of anthropology, both theory and practice, in Puerto Rico and beyond. We hope our book will inspire other

24 Marisol Ramos came to the us in the mid-1990s to pursue an MA at the University at Albany, NY and stayed in the us, where she currently works as an Academic Librarian at UCSB. Manuel Valdes-Pizzini went to SUNY Stony Brook in the mid-1980s to pursue a PhD in Anthropology. In the '90s he returned to Puerto Rico and became a professor at the University of Puerto Rico–Mayagüez.

anthropologists from the periphery (from colonial or postcolonial societies) or diasporic communities to reflect and share their experiences to enrich and improve our field.

Book Organization and Content

Using reflexivity as a methodological tool to explore the development of an anthropology of Puerto Rico, the contributors to this book use their personal experiences as departing points to reflect their trajectory from undergraduate anthropology students to the professionals they are today. The book is organized as follows. Chapters 1 (Valdés Pizzini) and 2 (García Colón) discuss in more detail what we mean by an “anthropology of Puerto Rico” and the key influences for the development and evolution of the anthropological field in and out of Puerto Rico. Chapter 3 (Sanabria León) recounts her collaboration with Buitrago in deconstructing his seminal work, *Haciendas cafetaleras y clases terratenientes en el Puerto Rico decimonónico* (1982), through the lens of postmodern anthropology and multisited ethnography to explore the phenomena of globalization and transnational migration. Chapter 4 (Hernández Hiraldo) is the author’s examination of subjectivity, power relations, and gender in the anthropology of Puerto Rico through the examination of her mentor–mentee relationship with Buitrago. In chapter 5 (Cubero) introduces readers to the field of *nissology*, the study of islands on their own terms, and how it applies to the Caribbean, specifically to the island municipality of Vieques, located off the east coast of Puerto Rico. The last two chapters (6 and 7) discuss recent fieldwork experiences by the authors. Both of these authors discuss the fluidity of their positions as native Puerto Rican anthropologists in the context of doing ethnographic work in Cuba (Pérez) and the southern end of Florida’s Gulf Coast (Santos López). A coda is offered by Jorge Duany, former chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at UPR-RR, and currently director of the Cuban Research Institute and professor of anthropology in the Department of Global and Sociocultural Studies at Florida International University. Duany

shares his experience at the department, his interaction with Buitrago, and the latter's influence on his students' careers, especially the contributors to this book.

We hope to use this book to engage anthropologists from the United States and the rest of the world to have productive discussions about the unique perspective native anthropologists can bring to the table when discussing the field of anthropology in the twenty-first century.

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Anabasis and *Katabasis*: An
 Anthropological Walkabout
 across the Mediterranean and
 Puerto Rican Landscapes through
 the Works of Carlos Buitrago
 Ortiz and Ferdinand Braudel

Manuel Valdés Pizzini

Thalatta! Thalatta!

But as the shout became louder and nearer, and those who from time to time came up began racing at the top of their speed towards the shouters, and the shouting continually recommenced with yet greater volume as the numbers increased, Xenophon settled in his mind that something extraordinary must have happened, so he mounted his horse, and taking with him Lycius and the cavalry, he galloped to the rescue. Presently they could hear the soldiers shouting and passing on the joyful word, “The sea! the sea!”

— Xenophon, *Anabasis*, Bk. 7

Introduction

After the passing of Carlos Buitrago Ortiz in 2013, several colleagues planned a conference to highlight his works and contributions, a major event in October 2016. In preparation for that event, I scribbled outlines and notes on the reading materials used by Buitrago over the years, concentrating on his collection of books on the anthropology and rural sociology of Spain and the Mediterranean and Marxism, books (mostly on Spain, the Mediterranean, and political economy) that I sort of inherited, through the hands of my friend and colleague Raquel Brailowsky. My earlier notes were titled “Notes at the margin and lines to the center of a critique of Anthropology,” which I eventually used to write this chapter, but the end result is much different.

Buitrago’s interest in the binary relationship between the highlands and the lowlands (*altura–bajura*) stated in his works *Los orígenes históricos de la sociedad precapitalista en Puerto Rico* (*Orígenes*) (1976) and *Haciendas cafetaleras y clases terratenientes en el Puerto Rico decimonónico* (*Haciendas cafetaleras*) (1982), and in his ethnological musings on the Mediterranean societies and their relationship with his fieldwork site, Esperanza, in the northern region of the Island (1970), led me to title this reflection “Anabasis and Katabasis.” Those Greek words used by Xenophon in his work on the journey of Greek mercenaries describe his dialectical and intellectual walkabout. *Anabasis* refers to the path from the coast to the highlands, and *katabasis* to the marching to the coastal lowlands. I argue here that the dialectical relationship between *anabasis* and *katabasis* was a methodological and historiographical obsession of both Ferdinand Braudel and Buitrago, a binary relationship fully intertwined with the geographical and social processes that defined the formation of Mediterranean societies and were entwined with the *Weltanschauung* of the *haciendas* in Puerto Rico. That methodological approach also shaped the intellectual pursuits of many of Buitrago’s students.

Buitrago’s ethnographic practice started in a piedmont rural community of Arecibo on the northern coast of Puerto Rico.

Esperanza is located at the foot of a mountain range and, for the sake of this discussion, is a place between the highlands and the lowlands. From that location, Buitrago started to build an anthropological narrative based on the understanding of the structures of everyday life, anchored to the analysis of kinship and the role of the domestic unit in peasant societies. He made the ethnological connection between the Mediterranean and Esperanza's kinship structures and values (1970) long before he read Braudel's *The Mediterranean* (1972) and John Davis's ethnological study *People of the Mediterranean* (1977).

Buitrago's analysis of the *altura-bajura* binary process was constructed on the foundation of his readings about Mediterranean rural societies, his encounter with the abandoned documents¹ at the old hacienda of the Pietri-Mariani (a Corsican family that immigrated to Puerto Rico in the nineteenth century and settled in the hinterland town of Adjuntas), and the reading of Braudel's seminal work, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (1972), along with his masterpiece *Civilization and Capitalism, 1400–1800*, first published in English in 1975. It was also enriched by Buitrago's thorough understanding of the complexities of kinship, taught by Meyer Fortes at Cambridge University. Buitrago's readings on the transformation of precapitalist societies in Europe and other parts of the world shaped his intellectual scope and interests. His library contained a vast amount of classic works on the process of accumulation of capital in Europe and Latin America, studies on the theory of the modes of production (Assadourian et al. 1973), and the new (then) Marxist approaches in anthropology that included, most notably, the works of Maurice Godelier (1974) and Claude Meillasoux (1977), both ethnographical and theoretical accounts that emphasized the intricate manner in which kinship and the domestic unit were embedded in the mode of production. Finally, Buitrago read and commented on the works of Hindess and Hirst (1975) on the precapitalist

1 The documents were donated by Buitrago to the Puerto Rico General Archive where they were curated and made available to researchers.

modes of production, and on Cutler et al.'s volumes 1 (1977) and 2 (1978) on Marx's *Capital*. Most of his former students, now anthropologists in their own right, remember the intense travelogue throughout those pages and the awe and incredulity they felt as undergraduate students.

Buitrago's theoretical background in ethnology and political economy was enmeshed with his anthropological practice and modes of experimentation, most of which came through the teaching of the Ethnographic Methods and Techniques (ANTH 3075) course at the University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras (UPR-PP). His experience with British anthropology molded his vision of ethnography, which he considered the paragon of scholarship in ethnographic writing. I still have my notes from that course, and in those I recorded that he recommended the students read ethnographies, "preferably written by the British." In that list, he included classics such as *The Nuer* (E.E. Evans-Pritchard), *The Andaman Islanders* (A.R. Radcliffe-Brown), *Honor, Family and Patronage* (J.K. Campbell), *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (Bronislaw Malinowski), *Spanish Tapestry* (Michael Kenny), *The People of the Sierra* (Julian Pitt-Rivers), and *The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi* (Meyer Fortes).

Buitrago was also heavy-handed in his advice to students to use literature as a guide to describe social behavior and to write ethnography. In my class notes, I recorded the titles of various works of literature, such as *Alice in Wonderland* (Lewis Carroll) and *El hombre que trabajó lunes* (Emilio Díaz Valcárcel, a Puerto Rican novelist). He also lectured us for a long period on the literary ethnography found in Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*, which, in retrospect, I recognize as the long segments of the first volume (*Swann's Way*) in which Proust described the world surrounding the taste of a madeleine given to him by his mother, an essay on the social life of things. His reflections on Esperanza in *Estructura social y orientaciones valorativas en Esperanza, Puerto Rico y el Mediterráneo* (*Orientaciones valorativas*) also included a reference to the acclaimed play *La carreta* by Puerto Rican playwright René Marqués. He was obsessed with this interest during his early years at Cambridge University, where he

wanted to be, perhaps, the first postmodern anthropologist by writing an ethnography based on a novel.² Those ideas followed him in his pedagogical practice, as he recommended that his students observe reality as a poet does, for whom social reality is always new and fresh.

The methods course, ANTR 3075, also allowed Buitrago to explore the archives. He taught students how to read documents, similar to how the ethnographer reads culture. The physical world of irrigation and other production-oriented structures, forests, and trails connecting *haciendas* and *estancias* (small farms), the structural organization of graveyards (physically and symbolically), the pathways of the circulation of commodities (including labor), and the organization of harbors, coastal settlements, and fishing enclaves could be traced back and analyzed not only from a spatial perspective but also from a temporal way in the archives. Buitrago was reproducing, consciously or unconsciously, Braudel's research agenda: to understand society through the complex relationship between the seas, ports, coastal enclaves, the contiguous landscape, and the highlands, a relationship based on a total interdependence in production and in the circulation of commodities, in the long duration of the historical process.

The breadth and depth of Buitrago's readings on the topics mentioned above, and his frequent note-taking on index cards, lead me to imagine that he wrote *Orígenes* and *Haciendas cafetaleras* (and other works) using what could be called "the Nabokov method."³ That is, writing each sentence (or at least

2 All of them (topics for the dissertation) were exotic and seemed far away in our minds, like the anthropological study we intended to do on the work of Marie-Henri Beyle (Stendhal), French novelist of the nineteenth century, or a similar one on Dostoevsky (Buitrago Ortiz 1973, 202).

3 After Vladimir Nabokov's writing of *Lolita*, see Gold 1967. I do not have evidence of Buitrago's writing method, and perhaps it is a worthy area of inquiry. However, all his students recognize his use of index cards to write his notes on the topic at hand. His early students know that he produced his texts on a Remington typewriter, double-spaced and in Courier 12, on pages he regularly marked and corrected. Jorge Giovannetti's full comment on this matter is provided here as guidance to work on the topic: "On

thoughts and ideas) on a notecard, producing a precise text that distilled (though not citing or quoting each step of the way) the rich historical, ethnographic, and ethnological literature he explored on kinship, all possible forms of Marxism, political economy, and peasant societies, as he reconstructed, exposed, deconstructed, and explained the structures of everyday life of Corsican families in the highlands. It is worth noting that Braudel was emphatic about documenting social life and culture in the collection of essays titled *On History* (1980), originally *Écrits sur l'histoire* (1969). Reading *On History* while drafting my dissertation in 1983 was a pivotal moment in my career. My anthropological practice became decisively tied to this historical approach from that moment forward.

Buitrago's practice and forms of experimentation in the classroom translated into the mentorship of various generations of anthropologists, with whom he maintained intellectual and fictive kinship ties, always a process of continuous growth through the revision of articles, theses, dissertations, and books, the continuous recommendations of references, and his unabashed critique of anthropology, which included his practice and texts. The chapters in this edited volume spring from this personal and intellectual history and ties, based on mentoring and an intense and profound dialogue on the dimensions of anthropology.

Buitrago's writing method it is told that when he made the transition from typewriter to computers (in the 1990s, with the blue color Word Perfect screen) he said that one of the advantages of the typewriter was that by the time you sit down to write, you have to have all your ideas clear in your mind. With functions such as cut and paste, you could just fix here and there in the process of writing. There are, therefore, two distinct mental/intellectual processes involved: cooked meal been served with the typewriter and cooking and serving at the same time with the computer. From the reception standpoint, readers will receive the text at once, of course, but the process was different — what is the result, or what are the implications, is probably for psychologists to decide. (Who is the one that writes about half-cooked fieldnotes? Geertz, I think, or Clifford?). I don't know what this may suggest about Buitrago's writing process with the notecards" (Jorge Giovannetti, email message to author, May 20, 2016).

Although the label “Marxist” is the first one that comes to mind when, for those of us who know his scholarship, we think of Buitrago’s works, he was, in essence, a sophisticated structural-functionalist as a result of his British anthropological formation. His early views on kinship and the analysis of the developmental cycle of domestic groups reflected that theoretical proclivity. Later in his career, he enthusiastically embraced the Marxist views and approaches that grew from the structural views developed by Althusser and Balibar (1976) and Althusser (1975) in his works. He also incorporated the historical perspective of Braudel, whose voluminous work and theoretical framework had a similar structural viewpoint (Braudel 1980, 32). Buitrago’s interest in kinship led him to read Claude Lévi-Strauss’s seminal work, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1969). Lévi-Strauss’s view on binary oppositions was a concept that Buitrago worked with later in his research. Structuralism became an important theoretical current on the North American continent in the 1970s. During that time, Buitrago assigned *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* to his students and discussed it with them in his undergraduate course on social structure.

The Ethnology of the Mediterranean: Spain and Esperanza

Buitrago discovered the Mediterranean Sea before reading Braudel. Buitrago’s *Orientaciones valorativas* was published in 1970, and his reading of Braudel’s *The Mediterranean* was after 1972 when the book was published in English for the first time. In addition, critical ethnological essays on the Mediterranean as a cultural area came afterward, particularly those written by Davis Gilmore (1976, 1982). Buitrago’s interest in the Mediterranean was rooted in the examination of the structure of kinship. He was engrossed in the anthropological literature on kinship and marriage and the role of those institutions in keeping social order (Fortes 1969). Indeed, he admired Fortes, his doctoral advisor and mentor at Cambridge, and recognized his influence in *Esperanza*. Buitrago was particularly interested in Fortes’s notion of the developmental cycle of kinship, noted in his hand-

written comments on the pages of his Spanish copy of William Douglass's *Death in Murelaga* (1973) and on Gerald Sider's *Culture and Class in Anthropology and History* (1986), a book on Newfoundland.

Esperanza: An Ethnographic Study of a Peasant Community in Puerto Rico (1973)⁴ is a monograph on kinship and the household and gender roles in the domestic unit, and explores values of conflict and cooperation, common themes in the social anthropology of Spain and the Mediterranean.⁵ In preparation for his doctoral work, Buitrago read the most important works written at the time on the social values and institutions of rural societies of the Mediterranean. His readings covered critical issues and processes in the region, such as migration from rural villages (Lison Tolosana 1966), the honor-and-shame complex (Peristiany 1966), hospitality and social forms of cooperation and help (Pitt-Rivers 1961, Freeman 1970), gender roles and masculinity (Kenny 1961), family and patronage (Campbell 1964), and the "folk-urban continuum" (Kenny 1961, Lopreato 1967). Buitrago's structural-functionalist theoretical tendency is evident in *Orientaciones valorativas*, and his recommendations for further readings in the early 1970s included the works of Talcott Parsons and A.R. Radcliffe-Brown.

After Buitrago wrote his dissertation, he pursued an intense reading agenda devoted to the anthropology of Spain, with special attention to socioeconomic development and the transformation of rural communities (Aceves 1971; Brandes 1975; Douglass, 1969, 1973; Greenwood 1976; Moreno 1972). He also kept abreast of the debates on the social anthropology of Spain

4 A book based on his doctoral dissertation.

5 For professional, personal, and strategic reasons, I became a student (and teaching assistant) of David Gilmore at the State University of New York at Stony Brook in 1978. Because of his influence (and not necessarily Buitrago's), I became interested in the anthropology of Spain and wrote one of the three essays required by the program on that topic. At the time, Gilmore was not interested in the making of manhood (Gilmore 1990), a topic that linked him to Rafael L. Ramírez (also my professor and mentor, to some extent, at UPR-RP), who worked on that topic in the 1980s and 1990s (Ramírez 1993).

(Jiménez Núñez 1975) and the political economy of Spain and the Mediterranean (Terrades 1973, Schneider and Schneider 1976). He immersed himself in the study of the transition from feudalism to capitalism and the transformation of the modes of production in Europe and Latin America.⁶

However, Buitrago abandoned the basic propositions of the social anthropology of the Mediterranean in the late 1970s and never looked back on the honor-and-shame complex that served him so well in his early interests in *Esperanza*. He also disdained approaches underscoring cohesiveness, acculturation, and community studies, even though he always spoke of *Esperanza* as a community. Buitrago distilled that knowledge to provide cultural and social explanations of the *Weltanschauung* of the Corsican families he studied and their Mediterranean upbringing and background.

As he distanced himself from those approaches, Buitrago turned his attention to works of political economy and, more importantly, to class relations. He could have agreed with Gilmore's conceptualization of social classes in his overview of the Mediterranean: "Class has to do with the social organization of production, with the division of labor, and with the appropriation of value. The fundamental relations established between classes in modern societies are relations of opposition" (Gilmore 1982, 186). However, he found Gilmore's approach shallow because of the emphasis on social stratification instead of social relations of production, a model used by Buitrago. Buitrago used the Spanish word and expression *aguado* (*aguau*), "watered down," quite often when he felt that the analysis was not up to his rigorous Marxist standards.⁷

Buitrago also had some qualms about the use of patronage (another primary concept employed in the Mediterranean) and

6 Except for a handful of comments on Oscar Lewis and Robert Redfield in *Orientaciones valorativas* (1970), and despite his readings, there is a silence on Latin American peasantries and rural societies in his work that he broke during his Chiapas period.

7 I provided him with a number of Gilmore's articles on class relations in Andalusia, which I intended to use in my dissertation.

was suspicious of its usefulness, because it was political, interpersonal, and transactional, and thus oblivious to the essentials of the Marxist analysis of class. He thought that the use of patronage was diluted in anthropology, because it served to study relationships between friends and between brokers or to explain how asymmetric relations were masked by the system of redistribution of resources.⁸ Instead, he reinforced those views on patronage to explain class relations in the coffee haciendas in nineteenth-century Puerto Rico (Buitrago Ortiz 1982). In other words, patronage was a cultural variant of the strategies used by the owner class to extract surplus value in their dominions of the highlands and the lowlands.

Altura–Bajura, Anabasis–Katabasis, Mountains–Lowlands: Following the Path of Braudel

Buitrago had an affinity for local (emic) binary spatial oppositions that defined positions and social differences in a system of relationships. In *Esperanza* (1973), he explored—in thick ethnographic detail—the positions of males and females in the household, using “up” and “down” as the main poles. For example: “In a very general way the roles of husband and wife are reflected in the distribution of space inside the house and its surroundings. The concepts of *arriba* (up) and *abajo* (down) define the area of operation of wife and husband” (Buitrago Ortiz 1973, 27). Later, as he delved into the Pietri-Mariani documents, he noted that the world of the coffee haciendas’ landholders was structured by a geographical divide between the highlands (*la altura*) and the piedmont and coastal areas (*la bajura*). These families used these emic categories in letters and notes, which

8 In the 1980s, I experimented with the use of patronage and the transactional analysis of that school (Boissevain 1974) and with the Marxist approaches proposed by Hamza Alavi (1973), among others. Buitrago brushed aside those theoretical approaches, labeling them as useless, because they masked the intricacies of the social relations of production. He was then reading Barry Hindess, Paul Hirst, and other British Marxist theoretical thinkers.

documented the circulation of people, beasts, commodities, spoils, and affections in the subtropical landscape.

Buitrago's most important works on the rise of the *haciendas* are *Orígenes* (1976) and *Haciendas cafetaleras* (1982). He described and analyzed the relationship between the highlands and the lowlands (the coastal plains and hills), focusing on the development of incipient agricultural capitalism and the establishment of class differences among all the social and ethnic groups whose lives revolved around the production and circulation of coffee. *Orígenes* is a direct heir of the lessons learned from his study of the anthropology of the Mediterranean and of Braudel's ideas. His book *Haciendas cafetaleras* featured British studies and analyses of the Marxian postulates on the social formations, modes of production, and the social relations of production (Hindess and Hirst 1975).

Braudel described, in excruciating detail, the environmental and geographical contours of the Mediterranean landscape. However, he used the contrast between the mountains and the plains for their historical and heuristic value to show the symbiotic relationship between the peoples and livelihoods of the highlands and those of the plains and coastal areas. He also added the role that islands (and small archipelagos) played in the historical formation of the Mediterranean. He spent time dealing with Corsica and the geographical mobility of its inhabitants (Braudel 1992, 25), which may have contributed to Buitrago's conceptualization of the world of the coffee haciendas and the Pietri-Mariani family.

Although Braudel touched on several factors accountable for the facilitation of the human interface in the relationship between the highlands and the lowlands, he placed some weight on the role of transportation and, more specifically, the use of beasts of burden, mostly mules serving as the key vehicle for the circulation of people and commodities. Braudel also wrote about the role of transhumance in the Mediterranean, an activity involving families and herds in a constant movement from the highlands to the lowlands. He addressed the complexity of transhumance practices throughout the region, always empha-

sizing its role in connecting the two poles of this binary opposition (1992, 53–54).

Buitrago used all his knowledge and readings on the Mediterranean to describe the Pietri-Mariani and their transit coherently through the *altura-bajura*. Their family ties, social practices, and cultural background were the fruit of their Mediterranean background, bringing “a complex of styles and world-views” (Buitrago Ortiz 1976, 108, my translation) the product of the *longue durée* of the region. Buitrago describes this world in the hinterlands of Puerto Rico:

A world that receives as its foundation the richness of the family and economic institutions of the Hispanic and Mediterranean world. This is how the insurmountable task of modifying the Puerto Rican worldview developed to what emigrants found. A world that presents us a whole set of styles and conceptions of quasi feudal and patrimonial life that in the long and rich history of the mediterranean [*sic*] are intermingled with a highly commercial and capitalized culture and society. (Buitrago Ortiz 1976, 108, my translation)⁹

The socioeconomic walkabout of these Corsican immigrants started on the coast, then advanced into the highlands in their own *anabasis*, conquering the subtropical forests, “domesticating” and aggressively occupying the highlands (Buitrago Ortiz 1976, 19, 43). This process was dialectical, always referring to the coast, the ports, and the urban centers that served as the foci of imports and exports, financing, goods, and commodities, that is, in a constant *katabasis*.

9 “Un mundo que recibe como basamento el rico caudal de las instituciones familiares y económicas del mundo hispánico y mediterráneo. Así se desarrolla la ingente tarea de modificación del mundo borinqueño, tal y como lo encuentran los emigrantes. Mundo que nos trae todo un complejo de estilos y concepciones de vida cuasi feudales y patrimoniales que en la larga y rica historia del mediterráneo [*sic*] se entremezclan con una cultura y sociedad altamente comercial y capitalizada.”

The Pietri-Mariani used their relative Domingo Mariani, who had homes in Yauco and Guánica (piedmont and coastal municipalities), as an intermediary between the highlands and the lowlands. Don Domingo made the flow and circulation of goods, commodities, people, and beasts possible, centered on the production of coffee and its market. The owners and operators of the mule trains transporting goods from Adjuntas to Ponce were other types of intermediaries in the system. Buitrago's analysis explored the cultural nuances of this system of relationships. The intermediary (the owner of the mule trains) moved commodities and a variety of objects (consumption goods), ideas, and perceptions of the economy of the *bajura* into the highlands (Buitrago Ortiz 1976, 69–70). Indeed, he displayed some Weberian views (which he never renounced, as he recommended that his students know and understand the interior of the system) when he suggested that his analysis was an effort to explore a system of values and beliefs and the work ethic of those families (66).

The influence of Braudel in Buitrago's work is evident—he specifically cites the French historian in his analysis of the role of the beasts of burden in the highlands–lowlands interface. Throughout *The Mediterranean*, Braudel traced the transportation and the exchange of goods through the routes of the “unending processions of beasts of burden, mules, and donkeys, invisible under their loads” (Braudel 1992, 29), a form of transportation that persisted in many parts of the Mediterranean until the nineteenth century. Perhaps I am a bit overzealous in my assessment of his view of that process. Still, Buitrago described in detail the relationship of the intermediaries and the plantation owners, the flow of things and commodities using the mule trains, and the connection of the trains with the southern coastal cities and towns of Ponce and Salinas.

For both scholars, the *altura–bajura* dichotomy was also a cultural divide that—in the case of Corsican families—was well structured in their speaking events and, thus, in their writing and documents. In the case of the Pietri-Mariani, those terms were constantly used by members of the family in their

documents and were tied to spatial and transit references: *aquí y allá* (here and there) or *subir y bajar* (going up and down) were charged with all the cultural and socioeconomic meanings provided in the social relations of production (Buitrago Ortiz 1976, 61). Those terms also served to establish the different poles of Robert Redfield's folk-urban continuum concept, which Buitrago knew very well. However, this time, he used the sophistication of Braudel's analysis to underscore the dialectical relationship between two worlds immersed in the highly profitable business of producing and selling coffee, and in the flow of people, goods, and information between those worlds, each with their specific values linked to the system of production (Buitrago Ortiz 1976, 64-65).

Buitrago's view of the Pietri-Mariani and their *altura-bajura* relationship departed from the perspective of social class formation and the development of a capitalist and entrepreneurial mentality (1976, 73). Theoretically, the social relations of production were anchored, in Buitrago's view, in their kinship system, which aligned with his readings of Godelier (1974), Meillasoux (1977), and Hindess and Hirst (1976). In *Haciendas cafetaleras*, he spent a considerable amount of time explaining the mechanisms of this family to establish lopsided relations of class, power, and patronage and the strategies for the accumulation of capital. To exemplify these relationships, he analyzed the shady dealings with the head of the Inspección de Montes (the Spanish Forest Service), Don César de Guillerna, in the demarcation and claims of the Guilarte Forest (Buitrago Ortiz 1982, 43-46).¹⁰

10 Although he had access to the literature on patronage from the Mediterranean in the 1960s and early 1970s, it was not until 1977 that he came to realize that the process of patronage encompassed his ideas of what was transpiring with the dealings of the Pietri-Mariani. An article by Michael Attalides (1977) on the forms of peasant incorporation in Cyprus, published in the volume edited by Gellner and Waterbury on the topic, aroused his interest. His notes on all the articles of the volume were intense and profuse. On the first page of the Attalides article, he wrote, "Podría servir para comparar procesos similares en Proyecto Pietri Mariani" (Could be useful to compare similar processes in the Pietri Mariani Project) (my translation). He also noted that the article dealt with class

Buitrago fully explored how loans, debts, and the articulation of patronage were used as powerful tools for the exploitation and extraction of surplus value in the production and circulation of commodities, and in the consolidation of large tracts of land (a form of capital accumulation) by the Pietri-Mariani (Buitrago Ortiz 1982, 170). Following his careful reading of *The Mediterranean* (Braudel 1992) and his experimentation in his methods course (ANTR 3075) doing ethnography in a wide variety of locations (coastal, urban) and his foray into ethnohistory, using primary sources from the archives, he described the transformation of the forest landscape through the clearing of areas and the installation of a hydraulic system to move the water into the machinery at the hacienda house and operations. In *Haciendas cafetaleras*, he expanded the ideas laid out in *Orígenes*, faithful to Braudel in his analysis of the relationship of the coffee haciendas of the highlands with the commercial houses, warehouses, small factories, financial institutions, and harbors along the coast.

Coastal Communities and the Maritime Societies of the Mediterranean

According to scholars such as Karen Wigen (2007, 13), Braudel is one of the precursors of the historiography of coastal social processes. Indeed, the first part of *The Mediterranean* is a precise and detailed analysis of the inextricable relationships between the mountains, coastal areas, and the sea. He also went into great detail to describe and explain the configuration of coastal settlements and the importance of maritime activities in defining the Mediterranean character. These were activities that operated in tandem with the production of foodstuffs and commodities in the piedmont and mountainous areas (plateau, hills, and foothills), accounting for the relationship between those producing areas (the hinterland) and the population centers located throughout the Mediterranean landscape, but prominently in

struggle, precapitalist structures, in-kind payments, colonialism, and a milieu that lacked banking, similar to Puerto Rico in the nineteenth century.

the coastal areas. Braudel also underscored the concentration of large landholdings in the plains and described them as the home of the noblemen (1992, 49–50).¹¹

In his travelogue throughout the seas and coasts of the Mediterranean, Braudel dissected the role of maritime activities at the harbors and the subsidiary activities that supported the vagaries of navigation and coastal commerce, including fishing, agriculture, and timber extraction (1992, 103–11). Thus, breaking that structural process may introduce havoc in a seemingly balanced relationship:

This is the traditional wisdom of the old Mediterranean way of life where the meager resources of the land are added to the meager resources of the sea. If it is disappearing today it rarely does without provoking distress: the Greek fishermen of the Pelion region, “increasingly drawn to the sea, have to give up their gardens and cottages and move their families to the harbor streets.” But once removed from the traditional balances pattern of the former way of life, they swell the ranks of the sea poachers who fish with dynamite in spite of government prohibitions. For the sea alone is not rich enough to feed her fishermen.

Neither is the land, on these barren mountains, and this explains the considerable role played by the old rural villages in the economic development of their neighboring coast. (Braudel 1992, 144)

Braudel’s description of the sea and the Pelion (Greece) region was based on “contemporary” observations, an essential technique in his method, and it was also derived from a literary work (a novel) written in Greek and translated into French as *Bracconiers de la mer en Grèce* (Poachers of the sea in Greece). His description of the Mediterranean (on a synchronic and diachronic level) was enriched by the thick descriptions of poets and novelists (known and obscure), such as Miguel de Cer-

11 See Gilmore 1976, 1980 for an analysis of that class-based relationship.

vantes, Michel de Montaigne, Werner Helwig, and Théophile Gautier, among others. Similarly, Buitrago used literature as a source of information and for the heuristic value of the narratives, because they address key issues of rural society. In that respect, he found in Braudel a kindred soul.

It is important to note that the anthropological research on the Mediterranean did not underscore the importance of maritime societies and, indeed, did not use examples of coastal communities to describe or argue about the preponderance of the social processes that became the primary concepts of that cultural area: honor, shame, patronage, migration, and the relationship between religion and socioeconomic practices (Peristiany 1966; Davis 1977; Gilmore 1982). With the notable exception of Oriol Pi-Sunyer's work on technological change in Catalanian fishing communities (1977), there was an absolute void in terms of maritime anthropology of Spain and the Mediterranean until the late 1990s.¹² I propose that Buitrago was enthralled by Braudel's analysis of the role of the lowlands and the maritime areas in shaping the social processes in the highlands. That led him to redesign his *Ethnographic Methods* (ANTH 3075) course to try a new line of research. In 1975, he embarked on an ambitious project to map the social landscape of the San Juan harbor area. That was my first systematic immersion in an ethnographic study, one that shaped my future interests in the discipline. The project had a relatively grand scale in geography, and it did not dwell on the traditional ethnographic study of a community of a specific place. He compelled his students to cover the spectrum of social and economic relations in the bay: the blooming cruise ship industry, recreational and small-scale fishing, the history of the commercial houses and importers in the area, the reshaping of the cargo industry from stevedores and trucks to mobile cranes and containers, the role of San Juan in the global economy, the transportation industry, the coastal shantytowns (*arrabales*), the industrial development of the nearby town of

12 See Montes del Castillo and Juan Luis Alegret (1999) for discussion and compilation of this issue.

Cataño (across the harbor), the maritime installations, and the military presence in the area, among other topics.

To my knowledge, our mentor did not repeat this topic in his pedagogical experimentation. I do not recall any of my fellow students (from that course) pursuing a career in anthropology. However, Buitrago may have insisted on the maritime topic, or perhaps his students' interest led him to reexamine the coastal areas in 1978 through an ethnographic study of fishers' families in Loíza on the north coast. Perhaps these digressions served as a vehicle to rest his mind from an intense anthropological agenda that drove him from Yauco to Adjuntas, back and forth, pursuing the understanding of the political economy of the *altura*. It is fascinating that many of his students became interested in maritime societies and pursued careers related to those endeavors: Juan Vera, Carmen Marquez Marín (whose ethnographic practices for the course I supervised in coastal communities of Aguadilla and Culebra), Jesus Vega (underwater archaeologist), Guillermo Iranzo, Ricardo Pérez, Carlo Cubero, and Miguel del Pozo, among others.

Buitrago maintained a distant but attentive interest in maritime activities, approaching them from the perspective of the political economy and, more specifically, the production and circulation of commodities and the social relations of production that evaded the category of capitalist. He read and shared the works of Gerard Sider on Newfoundland (1986) and Marcus Rediker's analysis of the merchant seamen in the world economy (1987). His readings and discussions helped us make theoretical adjustments to our work on semiproletarianization in Puerto Rico (Griffith and Valdés Pizzini 2002). He also read James Faris's work on Newfoundland's coastal communities. Faris and Scott Cook (widely read by Buitrago) became the mentors of Ricardo Pérez at the University of Connecticut, where he worked on the plight of the precarious lives (a term used by Braudel) of coastal settlements on the south coast of Puerto Rico (Pérez 2005). In the case of Rediker, his work underscored the historical importance of the ship as one of the first factory systems producing wage laborers for the world economy, creating its own

forms of labor exploitation and co-optation. It also contributed to the concept of an ideal laborer (the Jack-Tar, in a Weberian sense), used heuristically to describe and explain the movements of a transatlantic labor force. Rediker's work influenced Buitrago's belief that it was possible to do *ethnography* in the archives through its documents, with the process of reading as a form of witnessing, being there, taking notes, and producing a thick narrative.

Sider's *Culture and Class in Anthropology and History* (1986) was profusely marked and commented on by Buitrago. The core of those comments dwelled on the following: the composition of merchant capital, the class tensions based on the merchants' strategy for the extraction of surplus value, the relation between fish and labor, and a critique of several sociological concepts that masked, in his view, the social relations of production (culture, modernization, community, and folk or folklore). He flagged those areas where Sider, without acknowledging it, agreed with Braudel: (1) the obliteration of the relationship between offshore and onshore fishing (*pesca de altura y de bajura*, as per his comment at the margin) because they were part of an intricate relationship with the land-based economy, and the Atlantic markets, including the Caribbean, and (2) "the linkages between people in daily life and production," key to the understanding of class relations and the juncture of production and appropriation at various scales (Sider 1986, 194). The reading of Sider (and other ethnohistorical accounts) led me to explore the production of cod (salt fish) in Newfoundland and its link to Puerto Rico as a key market for that commodity. My reading of Sider's book and the fortuitous encounter with a dossier at the National Archives and Records Administration branch in College Park, Maryland, pushed me to visit the Newfoundland archives to explore in detail the route of codfish in the world economy (Valdés Pizzini 2021), which has important ties with the marketing and consumption of fish in Spain and Puerto Rico.

Final Comments

By chance or by design, I have modeled my professional career after Buitrago's.¹³ That crucial moment, in which I started my walkabout in the San Juan harbor area to engage in the ethnographic practice of the coast, determined my path along the shoreline for more than forty years. Buitrago was the *outside member* of my doctoral committee at SUNY Stony Brook and played a critical role (literally) in his review of my dissertation and its defense (Valdés Pizzini 1985 and 2001).

While writing this chapter, I reflected on my career and realized that, professionally, I have engaged in a constant *anabasis* and *katabasis*. In 1990, a bit tired from the coast, I started my ascent to the *altura* in an anthropological and sociological project studying the visitors to El Yunque forest. That effort led to an immersion into the history of the Caribbean National Forest (its former name) through analysis of the role of the Civilian Conservation Corps (a New Deal conservation and labor program; CCC) in the 1930s (Valdés Pizzini, González Cruz, and Martínez Reyes 2011). That project forced me to explore the uses and management of the Puerto Rican forests (*montes*) since the nineteenth century and the influence of the Spanish Inspección de Montes (Forest Service). While immersed in that process, I visited Buitrago at UPR-RP, and he asked me, "Are you still interested in the documents of the Archivo Histórico Nacional de Madrid, on the forests?" That day, I returned to Mayagüez with two boxes of documents, the contents of which were largely the materials he used to document the relationships (and the spoils) between the Pietri-Mariani and Don César de Guillerna, the head of the Inspección de Montes.

I returned, once again, to the coast, in another *katabasis*, this time (from 2006 to 2012) interested in the conservation of coral

13 His call for an absolute (and almost) monastic discipline still resonates. Also, my colleague Jorge Giovannetti once indicated that Carlos "occupied the University every day," teaching, reading, writing, tending students, and receiving the visits of his disciples in that dark hallway of the fourth floor of the Ramón Emeterio Betances Building at UPR-RP.

reefs, fishers' local ecological knowledge, and the understanding of the socioecological system of La Parguera (Valdés Pizzini and Schärer Umpierre 2014). In 2015, I was asked by a regional organization, Cafiesencia Inc., to collaborate on the nomination of buildings constructed by the CCC at the Maricao State Forest in the highlands of the west coast for the State Historic Preservation Office.¹⁴ I agreed and initiated another *anabasis* into the highlands and into the archives. The project coincided with my efforts to document the coastal areas in the first half of the twentieth century, with special attention to the Mayagüez Playa quarters and the Guánica–Lajas–Cabo Rojo coastal wetlands, using Puerto Rico's Police Logbook (Libro de Novedades de la Policía) and other documents of the Archivo General de Puerto Rico (AGPR) related to the uses of water in the Lajas valley in the nineteenth century. Reading documents from Maricao and the nearby forests (Guilarte) on the ferocious quest for land and exploring the complex history of water claims in Guánica, I faced, once again, the constant *anabasis* and *katabasis* of my professional endeavors, mapped by the relentless walkabout between the *altura* and *bajura* of the Pietri-Mariani, whose interests also marked the coastal territory of the Guánica Forest. This time, I was able to *observe them* on the coastal landscape and, thanks to Haydée Reichard de Cancio's book (2009), see the faces of the Pietri-Mariani patriarchs for the first time since that afternoon in 1975 when I met them at the AGPR under the guidance of Buitrago.

Perhaps one of the most important lessons here, as noted by our colleague Jorge Giovannetti in his comments on this chapter, is that Buitrago's agenda was a moveable one, not fixed in a specific point or coordinate, but one that allowed for the understanding of complex dynamic processes in time, and thus his obsessive analysis of the *altura–bajura* complex. The chapters

14 Cafiesencia Inc., led by Lissette Fas (a former student of Buitrago), is an NGO devoted to the development of sustainable activities in the southwestern coffee region. The local State Historic Preservation Office has confirmed the nomination of the Observation Tower at Maricao and is submitting, as a conservation district, the Maricao Fish Hatchery.

in this book are examples of the diverse, multiple, complex, and dynamic ethnographic, theoretical, and intellectual trajectories of his disciples, forging a good portion of what may be called “the anthropology of Puerto Rico” in the twentieth- and twenty-first-century transition.

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A Personal Reflection on the Anthropology of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans

Ismael García Colón

Carlos Buitrago Ortiz's emphasis on reflexive anthropology was one of his most important legacies for many Puerto Rican anthropologists. In the 1980s, when I began to study at the University of Puerto Rico, the reflexive turn was one of the central academic debates being waged within anthropology (see Clifford and Marcus 1986; Rabinow 1977). In Buitrago's research methods and contemporary theory courses, he often discussed the importance of anthropologists inserting themselves into ethnographic accounts to elucidate the social power relations between anthropological subjects and themselves. For Buitrago, crafting an ethnography without being conscious of the anthropologist's position as a researcher was impossible. Following his insights, I try to understand my place within the field in relation to the subjects of study. Here, I continue his legacy by reflecting on my trajectory as an anthropologist.

In departing from Buitrago's obsession with reflexivity and drawing upon Pierre Bourdieu's concept of participant objectivation, this is my first attempt to look at how my work is a

product of three distinctive traditions: the anthropology of Puerto Rico, anthropological political economy, and the work of oral historians at the Center for Puerto Rican Studies (Centro). Bourdieu argues that anthropologists must consider not only their social position but also their location in anthropological traditions: what we can talk about, what is censored, what rituals are parts of our academic training, and what is shaping our work (2003, 282–83). To paraphrase Bourdieu, my goal for this chapter is to understand the *X*, *Homo*, or *Femina Academicus* in the context of Puerto Rican academia and how my formation as an anthropologist reflects the history of the anthropology of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans.

My career is intimately related to developing a particular critical strain of the anthropology of Puerto Rico, for which Buitrago was a central figure. The study of political economy, history, subject formation, reflexivity, and agrarian societies and the rejection of the study of culture and identity were some of the most important ways in which Buitrago influenced my work. However, my academic career continued along the path of the study of power and migration, while Buitrago's latest work was postmodern. I am part of a cohort of Puerto Rican anthropologists at the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras (UPR-RP), who, under Buitrago's mentorship, pursued graduate studies at universities in the United States, Europe, and Latin America. Coming from a working-class background, many of us rose to the challenge and pursued a career in higher education that, for many years, had been reserved for those coming from wealthy families or those whose parents had formal professions in higher education. Reflecting on my academic path, I hope to shed light on the connections, disconnections, and continuities between my formation as an anthropologist, both in Puerto Rico and the United States, and what that means for an anthropology of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans.

In the early 1990s, when I was part of the anthropology program at the University of Puerto Rico, there were already long-established traditions of anthropological work in the islands. There is a clear development of Puerto Rican anthropology sur-

viving side by side with North American anthropology (Valdés Pizzini 2001). Both traditions left an imprint on the study of Puerto Rico's history and society. Because of the colonial status of Puerto Rico, the collision between North American and Puerto Rican anthropologies was inevitable. These tensions arose from the critiques of imperialism in anthropology and the limited opportunities Puerto Rican anthropologists had at the universities in Puerto Rico (Asad 1973; Gough 1968).

Although North American anthropology currently pays little attention to contemporary Puerto Rico, some of the most important contributors to the development of anthropology worked in Puerto Rico. Even Franz Boas found a brief interest in the islands as part of the role of anthropology shaping the US empire (Iranzo Berrocal 2011). For a brief period in the early 1950s and 1960s, Puerto Rico became a significant laboratory for American social sciences. Examples of the ethnographies written during that period are *The People of Puerto Rico* (Steward et al. 1956) and *Worker in the Cane* (Mintz 1960), which examined the historical connections of regions that produced sugar, coffee, and tobacco to global capitalism. In addition, Oscar Lewis's *La Vida* (1966) inaugurated the culture of poverty studies, with Puerto Ricans as anthropological subjects (Valdés Pizzini 2001, 47). It was not until the 1970s that the works of Buitrago Ortiz (1973), Rafael Ramírez (1973), Helen Safa (1974), and Eduardo Seda (1980) initiated important critical analysis of Puerto Rico, considerably expanding the anthropology of Puerto Rico. Later works, such as Manuel Valdés Pizzini's studies on political ecology (1985), Jorge Duany's studies on migration (2000), and Carmen A. Pérez Herranz's studies on gender (1990), led the way to explore contemporary issues affecting Puerto Ricans both on the island and abroad. In the past few decades, new generations of Puerto Rican anthropologists, through works on history and power, gated communities, race, gender, environment, religion, social justice, and modernity, have maintained a vibrant critical stance (Godreau 2015; Hernández Hiraldo 2006; Lloréns 2014; Mulero 2000; R. Pérez 2005; García Quijano 2006; Torres Vélez 2007; Rivera Bonilla 2003; Santiago 1999; Torres 1995).

Moreover, the fact that most Puerto Ricans live outside of Puerto Rico has generated important studies of migration and community formation (see Dávila 2004; G. Pérez 2004; Ramos-Zayas 2003). More than 5.5 million Puerto Ricans live in state-side communities, compared to the population of 3.2 million in the islands (Centro 2018, U.S. Census Bureau 2020).¹ Puerto Rican anthropologists from the diaspora have fought important battles about the problematic way Puerto Ricans are represented (Torres 1998).

However, the contemporary anthropology of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans is marginalized by mainstream academia and mostly relegated to spaces created by Latinx, Latin American, and Caribbean studies. Similar to the status of ethnic studies in US academia, tensions between products of colonialism still permeate the relationship between North American and Puerto Rican anthropologies. In the following sections, I examine the importance of Puerto Rican migration and stateside communities vis-à-vis the works of Buitrago, Mintz, and Centro oral historians and how placing these works in dialogue contributed to my formation as an anthropologist.

Academic Enclosures of a Diasporic Island-Born Anthropologist

Publications, research experience, and academic jobs are the products of experiences that take anthropologists along different paths, and their own personal trajectories are different from that of their mentors. My academic training is the product of North American and Puerto Rican anthropologies, which exposed me to the study of history, workers, and rural life. In 1992, I obtained my bachelor's degree in anthropology from the UPR-PP. In addition to Buitrago, my mentors included Carlos

1 The Puerto Rican diaspora has grown in the years since the 2009 financial collapse, but it was exacerbated after the devastation of Hurricane Maria in 2017. For a visualization of the current exodus, visit CNN's "'Exodus' from Puerto Rico: A Visual Guide," <https://www.cnn.com/2018/02/21/us/puerto-rico-migration-data-invs/index.html>.

Ramos, Rafael Ramírez, Carmen Angelica Pérez, and Jaime Pérez. My training there emphasized the combination of structural Marxism, social history, and urban anthropology, with a strong critique of the concept of culture. My graduate training was at the University of Connecticut, where I obtained a doctorate in 2002. This was a typical path for most Puerto Rican students who wanted to continue graduate education in anthropology, since it had never been offered as an option in Puerto Rico. This trajectory also reflects the diasporic reality of Puerto Ricans.

In graduate school, I became interested in historical and political anthropology. I also explored the work of neo-Marxist anthropologist William Roseberry and the connections between his writings and Eric Wolf's and Sidney Mintz's work. Anthropological political economy also led me to explore Antonio Gramsci's contributions to state formation and apply them to Puerto Rico. My research focused on how the land distribution program of the government of Puerto Rico, as a form of spatial organization, contributed to the hegemony of the Popular Democratic Party from the 1940s through the 1960s. I completed graduate school under the supervision of Samuel Martínez, a former student of Mintz, Puerto Rican historian Blanca Silvestrini, and historian of popular culture Elizabeth Mahan. They provided a solid background and training in political anthropology and social history.

Another experience that has profoundly shaped my research was working for the Center for Puerto Rican Studies. I have been part of and collaborated with Centro since 1999. At Centro, I learned a tremendous amount about the history and struggles of Puerto Ricans in the United States. I became interested in farm labor migration while processing part of the records of the Migration Division, an agency of the government of Puerto Rico in charge of facilitating migration and overseeing a migrant farm labor program. Another interest I developed at Centro was using oral history as a research method when I began interviewing Latinx leaders of the labor movement in New York City and explored the work of Centro's Oral History Task Force. My experiences at Centro are not only part of my formation as

an anthropologist, but are also part of my formation as a Latino and *Niuyorikan*.²

These influences shaped my research agenda, documenting how modernization policies transformed the lives of Puerto Rican agricultural workers in mid-twentieth-century Puerto Rico. My first book examined how the government of Puerto Rico attempted to transform landless agricultural workers into “modern” workers by establishing land distribution resettlement (García-Colón 2009). I used Gramsci’s concept of hegemony through land distribution and colonial state formation in my study of Puerto Rico. My latest project explores the history of Puerto Rican migrants in us agriculture and its relationship to us colonialism, immigration policies, and guest work programs. My goal is to trace the fields of power that formed Puerto Rican workers into subjects for us agriculture. This project would not be complete if I did not explore the contributions of Buitrago, Mintz, and Centro oral historians³ to the study of Puerto Rican migrant farmworkers. As I began to review the literature on Puerto Rican farmworkers for my current project, the resemblances to concerns and comments within the works of Buitrago, Mintz, and Centro oral historians emerged. Their attention to workers, power, and rural life provides ethnographic details for historical anthropology that concentrates on the formation of anthropological subjects (Narotzky and Smith 2016, 13).

Buitrago, Mintz, and the Anthropology of Puerto Rico

Buitrago became a central figure in the anthropology of Puerto Rico through his commitment to fieldwork and as a dedicated teacher who trained his students with a strong background in

2 I use the term “Niuyorikan” to refer to Puerto Ricans from New York City.

3 When I mention oral historians at Centro, I am mainly talking about the work of Rina Benmayor, Ana Juarbe, Blanca Vázquez, and Celia Alvarez on the Oral History Task Force. From the 1970s through the early 1990s, Centro staff emphasized teamwork, often eliminating individual authorship from their work. This task force also included Carlos Sanabria, Felix Ojeda, and Amílcar Tirado, among others.

contemporary theory and intensive fieldwork experiences. His biographical blurb in his book, *Esperanza: An Ethnographic Study of a Peasant Community in Puerto Rico* (1973), states: "As a native of the Island, educated in Puerto Rico, Ortiz has encouraged himself and his students to become involved in the problems of Puerto Rican society and a concern with their possible solutions." An important part of his legacy is that he trained many historians, sociologists, and anthropologists to conduct critical analyses of Puerto Rico based on ethnography and archival research.

I became Buitrago's student in 1990 when I took his course on anthropological theory. At that time, Buitrago's interests and theoretical orientations were a combination of the study of social history through the exploration of the social organization of space and place, structural Marxism, and deconstructionism. All of his courses offered a fieldwork component. In the theory course, we visited La Reserva de las Cabezas in Fajardo, a protected natural reserve, to deconstruct its landscape and spatial organization. In his anthropology of the Mediterranean course, we conducted fieldwork in cemeteries in Adjuntas and Ponce, looking at the connections between these two towns, the city of Barcelona in Spain, and the French island of Corsica. Finally, in his famous ethnographic methods course, we conducted research on the urban periphery of Adjuntas. My dissertation, "Hegemony, Social Space, and Land Distribution in Puerto Rico," and first book *Land Reform in Puerto Rico* incorporate the teachings on landscape, space, and history that Buitrago covered in his courses (García-Colón 2002, 2009).

Another important part of Buitrago's legacy is his first book, *Esperanza*. Buitrago thought of *Esperanza* as outmoded and irrelevant to the anthropology he aimed to practice in the 1990s. However, *Esperanza* is influential in understanding the history of rural life in Puerto Rico. The book reflects on the importance of kinship in the anthropological studies of the 1960s. It also highlights the relevance of looking at social relations as part of a changing way of life and looking beyond the confines of a specific spatial organization.

I read *Esperanza* again twenty years later, discovering it was an essential contribution to my work on Puerto Rican farm labor migration. Buitrago considered emigration to the United States to be part of the economic strategies used by households in *Esperanza* and a process in which males become adults. For Buitrago, migration was part of the social relations shaping individuals' lives and the family structure rather than a process in and of itself. In his conclusion, Buitrago was correct to add that "the dynamics of the migration process are also solidifying the ties between Puerto Rico and the United States," and that "there is no way of reversing these trends" (1973, 198–99). Despite the limitations of *Esperanza*, Buitrago's structural-functional analysis of kinship in a rural community broke with traditional studies of communities as self-bounded entities. Migration played a central part in the lives of its inhabitants rather than an external factor shaping the community.

In *Esperanza*, Buitrago launches a critique of North American anthropology in Puerto Rico, questioning what he calls "the dictatorship of the questionnaire." His critique is aimed at team-oriented fieldwork, where anthropologists such as Oscar Lewis landed on the island and conducted research through a local assistant using rigid questionnaires. Buitrago was aware of the discussion surrounding the relationship of anthropology to imperialism. He cited Vine Deloria Jr.'s *Custer Died for His Sins* (1969), which criticized the anthropological enterprise of exotifying *the other*, the subjects of study, and how these representations perpetuated unequal social relations of power between the colonized and the colonizer. Even when Buitrago's writings did not explore these critiques in-depth, his teaching carried a post-colonial critical stance that left a mark on my work. Buitrago's postcolonial critique inspired me to conduct fieldwork in the community I grew up in, Cidra, Puerto Rico, a land distribution resettlement for landless workers. Coming from a working-class and rural background, my objective was to challenge the traditional fieldwork of becoming an outsider in order to understand one's society (Roseberry and Polier 1989).

In his postcolonial critique of us social science in Puerto Rico, Buitrago cites the lack of reliable sources for studying rural communities in Puerto Rico. Mintz felt uneasy about this critique and deployed an attack on Buitrago in his review of *Esperanza* (1975). He criticized the book for lacking theoretical clarity and connection between theory and fieldwork. Buitrago argued that

territoriality and kinship are powerful factors in the operation and resolution of conflicts at the local level in *Esperanza*. This does not mean that there exists anything approaching corporate groups in the African manner, acting as a unit in religious, economic and political levels. But households of certain sectors of the barrio tend to form clusters in terms of consanguineal, affinal, ritual, kinship and friendship ties. They do not see themselves as a completely discrete unit, but a process of differentiation and contrast with other clusters gives some degree of identity and solidarity. (Buitrago 1973, 172)

For Mintz, *Esperanza* is a descriptive book that does not offer any contributions to understanding Buitrago's claims regarding the role of territoriality and kinship. However, Mintz fails to consider how family clusters in Puerto Rico are part of rural society in the highlands. Perhaps Mintz could not understand the differences faced by people living in the highlands because his expertise was on Jauca, a coastal community. Jauca's population consisted of sugarcane workers, where co-parenthood, rather than kinship ties, were stronger because of its origin as a highly proletarianized community constituted by diverse rural backgrounds and migration.

Mintz also attacks Buitrago for his critique of imperialism. This should not surprise us, because Mintz, an advocate of a political economy approach, often praised the Popular Democratic Party reforms (Mintz 1966). Until recently, Mintz indicated that one of the problems with Puerto Rican anthropologists had been their concentration on the study of Puerto Rico. He attrib-

uted our endeavors to the island's political status, criticizing it as a limitation of the anthropological enterprise, with its emphasis on the study of the other (Mintz 2001, 80). Mintz states that "people can do serious ethnography only if they are willing to accept the evidence of their own eyes and ears. Ethnography at home can be depressing. One's fellow citizens do not always live up to one's stereotypes, let alone one's hopes" (2001, 80). Mintz missed Buitrago's criticism of the role of American anthropology in the US colonization project. Buitrago's stance on this issue in Puerto Rico offers a critical analysis of the intervention and dominant role of American academia in funding and settling the research agenda. His critique reflects an important awareness of the postcolonial debates on the history of anthropology and imperialism.

Mintz's influence on my work comes from my studies at the University of Connecticut, where I was trained under the direction of Samuel Martínez, his former student. My work on Puerto Rican migrant farm labor draws upon Mintz's insights into the formation of subjects and the connections between history, culture, and political economy in anthropology. In the 1950s and 1960s, Puerto Rico was part of Mintz's efforts to develop an anthropology inclusive of political economy and history. Under the rubric of "culture-history," his work on Puerto Rico shaped how many anthropologists accounted for the history of capitalism. The People of Puerto Rico research project, in which he played a key role, highlighted the connections of local communities to global processes (Lauria-Perricelli 1989; Roseberry 1989, 146–53; Steward et al. 1956; Wolf 2001, 387–88). Mintz's *Worker in the Cane*, the result of further interviews with Taso, a sugarcane worker, provided the first life history of a modern agricultural worker. Both works challenged the established definitions of community and anthropological methods.

The People of Puerto Rico research project ignored migration to the United States, but Mintz touched very briefly on the topic in *Worker in the Cane* (1960). He examined the changes occurring in Barrio Jauca because of migration during the summer of 1956:

Emigration to the United States has assumed large proportions....Barrio Jauca has its own post office substation now....Most of the letters — and they were arriving at the rate of about thirty a day — are airmail, coming from the United States. Many contain money orders. Almost every day someone leaves for the first time “para el Norte.” (Mintz 1960, 272)

Mintz addressed how Jauca was being transformed by migration, giving us glimpses of this experience. In keeping with the anthropology of the time, migration was not an area of research explored in the books *The People of Puerto Rico* and *Worker in the Cane*. Mintz argued that migration happened mostly after his fieldwork (2001, 78). However, in the 1940s, emigration grew to more than 140,000 people, reaching 460,000 by the end of the 1950s (Dietz 1986, 284). Mintz missed the opportunity to grasp the importance of migration at that time because it was not part of his research focus (Wolf 2001, 387–88).

Buitrago's *Esperanza*, Mintz's *Worker in the Cane*, and the work of Elena Padilla, Eric Wolf, Raymond Scheele, Robert Manners, Julian Steward, and others in *The People of Puerto Rico* provide important insights into migration and rural life in twentieth-century Puerto Rico. These studies constitute some of the significant pillars of the anthropology of Puerto Rico, with their North American and Puerto Rican anthropologies. Their attention to communities with connections to regional, national, and global processes contributed to the understanding of Puerto Rico at the crossroads of the histories of capitalist development in the Caribbean. Unfortunately, community studies in Puerto Rico missed the opportunity to explore the migratory field that gave formation to Puerto Rican communities in the United States. The experiences and understandings of migration were ignored by Mintz and the Puerto Rico project team and by many Puerto Rican researchers.

Toward a Historical Anthropology of Puerto Ricans

Aside from some anthropologists studying stateside Puerto Ricans, migration is still almost an exclusive concern of Puerto Rican scholars living in the United States (Buitrago Ortiz 1973; Duany 2000; Griffith and Valdés Pizzini 2002; Padilla 1958; G. Pérez 2004; R. Pérez 2005; Planell Larriñaga 1996). Scholars living in Puerto Rico tend to consider the islands as a bounded entity, in which the processes and social relations unfolding at the local level are only partially related to processes happening regionally and globally. The anthropology of Puerto Rico has, in many ways, mirrored the rest of academia in the islands, in contrast with the work of Puerto Rican scholars in the diaspora. An approach that considers Puerto Rico not only a territory but also a field of complex relations and processes happening across different territories must be considered. When one explores the unboundedness and fluidity of such relations and processes, migration emerges as a category of analysis playing a vital role. The transnational approach has helped to break with the analysis of Puerto Rico as a bounded entity, but its lack of understanding of empire and colonialism obscures the everyday life of Puerto Ricans across different territories (Duany 2000; see García-Colón 2020). Even with these critiques, the study of migration contributes to the shift from an anthropology of Puerto Rico to an anthropology of Puerto Ricans. Migration studies, along with the field of Puerto Rican studies, help us to think about the complexity of the anthropology of Puerto Ricans.

Part of the first efforts of Puerto Ricans in the United States was to foster an understanding of their situation by rescuing their history. Oral history, like salvage ethnography, became an important methodological tool to explore the history of community formation stateside. For more than thirty years, scholars have developed the field of Puerto Rican studies by using oral history. The practice of oral history, an alternative methodology, offers an “unofficial version” of history provided by workers, women, and minority groups that “official” records and manuscripts cannot offer. Latinx scholars share the use of oral history

with public historians, archivists, librarians, and other people outside the mainstream of academic history (Olmedo 1997). For Puerto Rican scholars and students of the Puerto Rican community, oral history provides testimonies that, though frequently ignored by mainstream academia, are crucial to understanding the development of Puerto Rican communities. Oral history also facilitates the documentation of problems affecting Puerto Rican communities. Since the establishment of Centro, oral history, as an alternative research method, has had a significant role in exploring the different faces of the Puerto Rican experience in the United States.

In the 1970s and 1980s, different oral history projects at Centro sought to document the experiences of working-class Puerto Ricans and the issues affecting their communities (Benmayor 1986, 69). From 2000 to 2001, I was part of Centro's Library and Archives Unit and its Hispanic Labor Documentation project, with the support of New York University's Tamiment Library. The project collected institutional and personal oral histories of Latinx labor leaders in New York City. While working at Centro in 2005 and 2006, I examined the work of oral historians to get a sense of what issues were foremost among Puerto Rican workers in the United States. I found that the work of anthropologists such as Michaela Di Leonardo (1993) and William Roseberry (1989) is similar to the research conducted at Centro. Both academic traditions emphasize the study of the intersection of culture, power, and history, tracing their common interests to the influence of British historians, such as E.P. Thompson. The historical and political anthropology and the oral history at Centro informed my research on, and interests in, social relations of power, ways of life, and the past.

Rina Benmayor, Ana Juarbe, Blanca Vázquez, Carlos Sanabria, and scholars at Centro conducted oral history research to explain the problems that Puerto Ricans confronted in stateside communities and Puerto Rico. These efforts examined how people perceive their lives, their struggles, and how they survive as individuals and as a community. Allowing working-class Puerto Ricans to speak about their experiences became a tool

for empowerment, in which they became active participants in defining their community's history. The researchers analyzed the interpretations that Puerto Ricans ascribed to events, everyday life, and their connections to different transformations in capitalism (Benmayor 1986, 69). The legacies of Centro oral historians have encouraged me to document how Puerto Rican farmworkers' discourses, practices, ways of life, and interpretations of their history and future are part of the different transformations in capitalism and not a mere reflection of economic changes. Incorporating a different type of archive, oral histories, and the methodology and analysis developed by these scholars as part of my research corpus allowed me to reshape and expand my perception of what I consider an anthropology of Puerto Rico.

One can identify three distinct stages in the development of oral history at Centro. The first stage corresponds to the institution's first years during the 1970s. Centro staff began collecting oral histories from members of the Puerto Rican community in New York City. These oral histories emerged from different projects being carried out at Centro and, thus, were not part of a systematic effort to document the Puerto Rican experience through oral history. The situation changed in the 1980s when staff established the Oral History Task Force as a multidisciplinary unit within Centro. This led to a second stage in developing oral histories at the institution from the 1980s to the mid-1990s. Members of the History, Library and Archives, Cultural Studies, and Language Policy groups composed the Oral History Task Force. The initial project of this unit was "Puerto Ricans in New York: Voices of the Migration," which focused on documenting the experiences of community leaders and pioneers of the Puerto Rican migration to the United States. "Puerto Ricans in New York" led the Oral History Task Force (1982–1995) in exploring various aspects of the Puerto Rican migration, such as the Puerto Rican community in Hawaii, women, garment workers, the civil rights movement, and issues of language, culture, and identity. Other Centro programs, such as the El Barrio Popular Education program, also generated oral histories during these

years (Archives of the Puerto Rican Diaspora 2006, 52, 72–73, 104–5).

The common topic of these projects was working-class Puerto Ricans' experiences and the issues affecting their communities. They focused on documenting community history from multiple sources and challenging existing paradigms of the Puerto Rican experience in the United States (Benmayor 1986, 70). Puerto Rican studies scholars have used oral history to understand the past and explain the problems the Puerto Rican community currently confronts. This effort examines how people perceive their lives, their struggles, and how they survive as individuals and as a community. Allowing average Puerto Rican people to speak about their experiences is a tool for empowerment in which they become active participants in defining their community's history. By evaluating the Puerto Rican community's past through alternative methodological and theoretical approaches, scholars have sought to leave a long-lasting historical legacy via the testimonies of Puerto Rican women, workers, activists, and community leaders (Benmayor 1998, 16).

Oral histories also provide information about the role of cultural practices and meanings and social networks in shaping individual and collective histories. Practices, symbols, interpretations, experiences, and skills are a cultural capital essential in the development of Puerto Rican communities, challenging established paradigms that classify Puerto Ricans as culturally deficient by the dominant society (Moll et al. 1992, 134; Olmedo 1997; Vélez Ibáñez and Sampaio 2002, 294; García-Colón 2004).

Departing from oral history projects, my current research on Puerto Rican farm labor migration provides a background to understand the origins of stateside Puerto Rican communities. It explores the implications of the juridical and political status of contemporary Puerto Rican migration to stateside communities. The experiences of migrant farmworkers encompass hope, depression, violence, struggle, and resistance, but they were all experiences of livelihood. Their expressions and actions were enmeshed in the larger process of citizenship, colonialism, and capitalism. Studying migrant farmworkers became a way to pur-

sue a similar agenda to the one established by Centro oral historians. My tenure at the Center for Puerto Rican Studies focused on extending the work of Buitrago and Mintz, solidifying my interests in studying history, power, and working-class Puerto Ricans.

Conclusion

The legacy of Carlos Buitrago Ortiz lives on in those of us, his students, who have taken on the task of critiquing, analyzing, and understanding Puerto Ricans' unequal access to power and wealth. The study of capitalism, power, culture, and class remains relevant in contemporary anthropology. My current anthropological project is to disentangle the history of the realities that led Puerto Ricans to migrate and work in us agriculture (Wolf 2001, 386). I firmly believe that contemporary ethnographies and histories of Puerto Rico need to include Puerto Ricans born on the Island and in stateside communities. The great migration of the mid-twentieth century mobilized Puerto Rican migrants and dispersed them throughout the United States. In the twenty-first century, Puerto Rican migration to the United States and other countries has reached even larger proportions, and the number of migrants surpassed the population of Puerto Rico. Circular migration and vibrant Puerto Rican communities in the United States have redefined Puerto Ricanness. At the same time, scholars need to keep in mind that the roots of the social transformations occurring in early twenty-first-century Puerto Rico lie at the intersection of capitalism, power, history, and culture.

Reflexivity, and participant objectivation in contemporary anthropology, continues to be relevant. It is a powerful tool for understanding the intellectual work of scholars and the schools of academic thought, as it provides the context in which scholars work and produce ethnographies. I do not have any specific answers to decolonizing anthropology, but acknowledging our privileges, the social relations of power in our endeavors, and our place in the discipline are ways to begin decolonizing an-

thropology. The *X*, *Homo*, or *Femina Academicus* are part of the history of the anthropology of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans. These are also some of the reasons that anthropological analysis requires a historical perspective.

Future students of the anthropology of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans will confront new challenges in discerning the problems that Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans face in the twenty-first century. The anthropology of Puerto Rico practiced by Buitrago and Mintz has been enriched by anthropologists, such as Gina Pérez and Jorge Duany, among others, who have traced the connections and disconnections of Puerto Rican stateside communities to Puerto Rico, and vice versa. However, an anthropology of Puerto Ricans also needs to focus on studying inequality. Class, gender, race, and sexuality are important to understanding how power operates in specific contexts. Such contexts must be mapped out with historical specificity without applying labels and concepts that hide how power operates, orchestrates, and transforms realities. In the case of Puerto Ricans, colonialism plays a significant part in their histories of migration and work. Colonialism cannot be characterized by romantic notions of agency that imply that subjects are not shaped or engaged within specific social relations of power. At the same time, US colonialism, which construes Puerto Ricans as citizens and immigrants, shapes, makes, and reproduces the fields of power where Puerto Ricans are immersed. Buitrago's, Mintz's, and Centro's oral historians' attention to migration provided a horizon on which historians and anthropologists are not forced to imagine Puerto Rican migrants' understanding of the world and what their experiences were in the islands, the empire, and beyond during the twentieth century. The task now is to continue carrying their torch and remind others of their contribution to the anthropology of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans.

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Investigative Praxis, the (Self-) Deconstruction of Ethnographic Texts, and Multisited Ethnography: Reassessing *Haciendas cafetaleras*

Waleska Sanabria León

When alluding to influences, investigative praxis constitutes the referent, with a continuous dialectic that constantly modifies the tools used. It is a matter of maintaining an orientation and studying particular structures and processes, within a historically specific context, with the long-term intention of rounding out a global vision, with theoretical and practical projections.

— Buitrago Ortiz (1982, 7–8)

Introduction

The (self-)deconstruction of anthropologists as authors begins by reconceptualizing their own production and ethnographic work. In this sense, the production of ethnography as text is structured within the epistemological transformations that arise within the discipline. This occurs because of the continuous

changes in sociocultural time and space. It works in continuous movement, a fractal whose behavior is linked to multidimensional networks and spatial arrangements relative to the construction of reality. In that sense, ethnographic texts become a fractal representing the authors' here and now, their epistemological and hermeneutical present. The analysis of said ethnographic production is the site where the multiple positions of the social groups that gave rise to the original text are generated.

This chapter collects my theoretical and methodological discussions with Carlos Buitrago Ortiz during 2009–2010 as part of a collaborative project to reevaluate and reanalyze the letters on which he based his analysis in *Haciendas cafetaleras y clases terratenientes en el Puerto Rico decimonónico* (Coffee farms and landowner classes in nineteenth-century Puerto Rico) (1982) (hereafter cited as *Haciendas cafetaleras*). We deconstructed those letters using the theoretical and methodological lenses developed during the postmodern turn of the late twentieth century (1980–2000) by theorists such as Arjun Appadurai, James Clifford, George Marcus, and Michael Kearney, among others. These scholars were focused on studying globalization, migration, and culture to understand how space and locality built the different cosmopolitan imaginaries of the social groups dedicated to trading merchandise and agricultural products, specifically the Pietri-Mariani Corsican immigrant family, and different global spaces — Madrid, Paris, and New York.

Without setting aside his structural-functionalist or Marxist training, especially his approach to kinship relationships and the development of the production processes on coffee *haciendas*, Buitrago incorporated authors who, since the 1980s,¹ began to reconceptualize anthropological theory from globalization phenomena and the local–global transformations they generated. That is, authors who reflected on and reconceptualized the

1 Buitrago had already incorporated these theorists into his teaching practice when I met him in 1999 as an undergraduate student in anthropology and enrolled in the course he was offering at the time, Sociocultural Anthropology.

ethnographic present from the different dimensions of globalization² and its influence on group identities, culture, and the binary relationships between local and global³ (Appadurai 1996, 2001), rural and urban, peasant and proletariat, nation and state, hegemonic and subaltern (Kearney 1996). Likewise, Buitrago was interested in incorporating authors who analyzed ethnographies as text, ethnography as a product of research, and ethnography as an experimental strategy (Marcus and Cushman 1982), and the reconceptualization of ethnographic work from global dynamics (e.g., the flow of subjects, ideas, perspectives, merchandise, etc.) and multiple spaces (Marcus 1995).

Through the last years of his academic life at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras (UPR-RP), Buitrago inserted himself in these discussions as a strategy to understand the transformations of the discipline itself and to understand “himself” as defined by Paul Ricoeur, as an anthropologist, ethnographer, and ethnohistorian. Ricoeur states that it is an “I” that raises doubts, questions, reflexivity, and is theoretical (metaphysical) and hyperbolic (2003, xix). Buitrago used this strategy to identify the dual relationship between the Self and Other, that otherness structured in culture, signified in the different sociocultural practices and actions that gave meaning to the Puerto Rican historical, social, political, economic, and cultural context.

During the period I worked with Buitrago (2009–2010), we collaborated on reconceptualizing and deconstructing his ethnography. He called this self-evaluation process “investigative praxis,” a practice he had already developed in *Haciendas cafetaleras*. In this regard, Buitrago says, “When alluding to in-

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- 2 The dimensions of globalization, according to Appadurai (1996), are the following: ethnic (groups in flux or movement, located in cosmopolitan spaces and deterritorialized), technological (global configuration of technology related to the flow of economic values), and financial (disposal of global capital, related to markets and merchandise).
 - 3 According to Appadurai (1996), group identities are defined by the differences that exist inside and outside the group, which in turn build their mobility, and in turn generate different perceptions about what the social group is.

fluences, investigative praxis constitutes the referent, with a continuous dialectic that constantly modifies the tools to be used. It is a matter of maintaining an orientation and studying particular structures and processes, within a historically specific context, with the long-term intention of rounding out a global vision, with theoretical and practical projections" (Buitrago 1982, 7–8).

Buitrago's investigative praxis was reflected in our conversations on the theoretical and methodological debates instigated by the postmodern turn, which led to the reanalysis of *Haciendas cafetaleras* and its primary sources, by the questioning and reexamination of the binary processes he had previously identified: highland–lowland, hegemonic classes–working class, local–global, rural–capital (cities, cosmopolitan spaces), Indigenous–mestizo, and the here–now.

The reanalysis of the correspondence between the members of the Corsican Pietri-Mariani family located in the highlands (Adjuntas) and the lowlands (Yauco, Guayanilla, and Ponce), and their family networks in Europe (the global), from the perspective of multilocation ethnography, reflects the interconnections between the local and the global dynamics that reconfigure the perception of the group and its culture flows that were developed in the local sociocultural and historical context. The analysis of the consumption of merchandise (newspapers, magazines, fashion, imported groceries, etc.) linked to the cosmopolitan identities of this group helped us to see where the local imaginaries were structured from the processes of product production and distribution, and expanded our understanding of the role of this Corsican immigrant family in inserting itself from Puerto Rico into the global and cosmopolitan networks of production and consumption.

Investigative Praxis and the Postmodern Turn

During his last period as an academic at UPR-RR, Buitrago sought to reconceptualize and situate *Haciendas cafetaleras* within studies of the twentieth century that emerged in the 1980s, especially those related to globalization and transnationalism, which, in

turn, questioned ethnographic work related to the movement of subjects in different local and global contexts. Using the concept of *investigative praxis*, which he developed during the writing of *Haciendas cafetaleras*, Buitrago once again decided to challenge *himself* and question his anthropological practice to incorporate these new theoretical perspectives and see his ethnographic work through new eyes.

We used several postmodern theorists as references to re-analyze *Haciendas cafetaleras* and its primary sources: Michael Kearney (1995, 1996), Arjun Appadurai (1986, 1996, 2001), and George Marcus (1982, 1995). Kearney proposed that between the local and the global, the anthropology of transnational globalization has been structured in the movement and flow of information, symbols, capital, and merchandise related to the spaces and identities where subjects are located (Kearney 1995). For Appadurai (1996), the imaginary is defined as a new way of constructing modern subjectivities within the studies on globalization, migration, transnationalism, and culture. According to Appadurai (1996, 6), the imaginary is an everyday social project, a social practice registered in group movements and solidarity, related to the consumption of symbols that create “subjects” or “agencies” and associated with capitalist consumption dynamics. Within symbolic disputes and negotiations, subjects seek to connect the global to their everyday practices (Appadurai 1996, 10). Therefore, locality is historical, relational, and contextual, with a phenomenological quality (relative to everyday experience) that articulates the sense of social immediacy, different social interactions, and constructs of subjects. It has its dimension within itself. It can be fragmented and dynamic. Its production is a structure of feeling, a property of social life, and an ideology of located communities that arises, and it is constructed as a result of a globalized world (Appadurai 1996, 18). As a locality, we reconceptualized the La Esperanza hacienda as a space to reproduce the everyday experiences and imaginaries of subjects and groups, considering the epistolary evidence of the time.

On the other hand, it is a location-space that generates multiple locations within the imagination of the landowner classes. In

this sense, Buitrago found in the proposal by Marcus (1995) the ethnographic strategy that enabled him to reinterpret his work. According to Marcus, within the world system, ethnography has moved from being in a single place (the tradition framed in Bronisław Malinowski) to being framed within the macro constructions generated by a macro social order. This global capitalist system has generated the construction of multiple spaces of observation. On multilocation ethnography, Marcus says:

I understand making ethnography multi-sited to challenge four pillars of the still-regnant Malinowskian complex, expressed as worries or anxieties. Foremost, there is the worry about the further dilution of an already diluted practice since the ruptures of the 1980s with past disciplinary agendas, especially in the doing of apprentice research projects, which launch careers. The Malinowskian ethos of ethnographic research as focused, sustained, intensive life communities of distinctive difference and its North American emphasis on interpretation — working through the logic of subjects' perspectives as the mode of developing ethnographic analyses from fieldwork — are endangered. Lurking here is the idea that anthropology will become even more like cultural studies and its interdisciplinary inspirations, which in a sense, capture its imagination and research agendas after the 1980s. (Marcus 2009, 183)

In this sense, the reconceptualization of Buitrago's work on kinship relations,⁴ coffee plantations, and the landowning classes located in the central-southern region of Puerto Rico at the end of the nineteenth century was reinterpreted based on the interpretation of multiple spaces to construct the totality of forms of life of the landowner classes through the construction of an "ethnographic realism" as defined by Marcus and Cushman, "a

4 Buitrago analyzed kinship relationships based on the influence of the British anthropologist Meyer Fortes (kinship relationships) and the structural-functionalist current.

mode of writing that seeks to represent the reality of a whole world or form of life" (1982, 29) through the narratives and epistolary discourses of the Pietri-Mariani. In this way, the text, not the ethnographer, defines the subjects and their everyday situations and allows the representation of the point of view of the "other" (Marcus and Cushman 1982, 29). As an author, Buitrago sought to articulate the relationship and genealogy of the historical narrative as a producer of particular geographies, both real and imaginary — as defined by Appadurai (1996) — without abandoning the functional-structural-Marxist perspective but instead incorporating the postmodern trends of the late twentieth century. As a methodological strategy, we decided to situate the ethnography of multiple locations from the ethnohistory of the presence of Corsican descendants and coffee plantation owners located in the southern-central region of Puerto Rico at the end of the nineteenth century. This helped us to reconceptualize the flow and movement of contemporary (and, in our case, ethnohistorical) societies from multiple spaces and to incorporate another concept, Nikos Papastergiadis's turbulences. In *The Turbulence of Migration*, Papastergiadis defines this concept as a metaphor linked to the interconnections and interdependence between various factors that construct the current world and that generate within it the articulation of identities, the regulation of movements, and cultural hybridization (2007, 4–5). We applied these concepts to the forms of solidarity that arose around the coffee trade and the migration of some members of the local landowner class to European territory as a response to the international consumption of the coffee grown in the colonial territories. The movement of these individuals generated the construction of deterritorialized spaces between these groups, which contributed to constructing the imaginaries of subjects in the Pietri-Mariani with cosmopolitan spaces, such as Madrid and Paris.

Consequently, the construction of commercial networks from the Caribbean can be analyzed from multiple locations, since they have been linked to the regions that held commercial power in the countries that made up the North Atlantic. This

reconceptualization of the Caribbean space helped us to reread Sidney Mintz's *Sweetness and Power* (1985) from a postmodern perspective since he describes the production and consumption of agricultural products as a process directed toward the European and North American markets (69). The trends of the commercial development of certain agricultural products (e.g., sugar, coffee, cocoa) in the Caribbean region advanced hand in hand with the colonial expansion of the hegemonic countries of the North Atlantic (58), which in turn displaced the production of said products from certain localities to others (70).

This phenomenon generated social class distinctions from the different dynamics of merchandise consumption that determined everyday habits in Europe. In the case of Puerto Rico discussed in *Haciendas cafetaleras*, Buitrago, from his Marxist perspective, had identified the class struggle framed within the increase of the economic power of those who controlled land distribution in the south-central zone, which made possible the control and specialization of property linked to the coffee industry, exemplified in the case of the Pietri-Mariani. Decentralizing the ethnohistorical discourse developed along the lines of evaluating the productive processes toward one focused on multiple locations within the imaginary of local subjects allowed us to see how structured practices and actions were generated in the global coffee trade and the role played by transnational migration, from the production and consumption processes in different spaces (sites) and localities, and how these anthropological subjects constructed different identities.

Methodology

In the summer of 2009, while we were discussing other matters, Buitrago let me know that he was transcribing the letters from the Pietri-Mariani in their entirety and that many of them were used to develop his *Haciendas cafetaleras*. He was doing this without any concrete objective regarding theoretical analysis, so I suggested reinterpreting the letters from the perspective of the readings I had been doing since we met during my

undergraduate studies. After several conversations, we decided to establish as a starting point for this study the reinterpretation of Buitrago's anthropological text and the transcribed letters of the Corsican descendants of the south-central region of Puerto Rico, which are part of the data that Buitrago published in *Haciendas cafetaleras*. Reanalyzing the Pietri-Mariani letters gave us a "voice" to put with the anthropological subjects in the archives, a type of knowledge that needs to be brought out of its silence (Zeitlyn 2012, 470). The reexamined letters were part of what Buitrago referred to in *Haciendas cafetaleras* as the "second phase" of the project, where he researched the development of the system of haciendas, ranches, and farms by analyzing the families (hegemonic classes) with economic capital between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In *Haciendas cafetaleras*, Buitrago used "two frames of reference, the familial and the regional" (1982, 5). His research method consisted of analyzing and interpreting documents (e.g., family letters) linked to kinship relationships in what he later called, in personal communication, the south-central region of Puerto Rico (this includes the towns of Adjuntas, Yauco, and Ponce). Subsequently, in the years 2009 and 2010, we reconceptualized localities as those local spaces where the dynamics of merchandise distribution (coffee) constructed imaginaries between the kinship relationships, which were later related to the consumption of ideas, knowledge, merchandise, and to the flow of local subjects toward the transnational dynamics of the time.

Letters are a form of multiple locations where the different everyday activities of kinship relationships are fragmented, juxtaposed, and interconnected. They are the spaces where local imaginaries were structured based on the production and distribution processes of products, not only agricultural but also merchandise linked to group identities. In this context, the letters written by the landowner classes from south-central Puerto Rico evidenced the social system, which, at the time, built solidarity dynamics that generated practices and actions (e.g., the flow of issues between the local and the global) related to family micro-narratives, regarding the global meta-narratives of the

time, focused on the various discourses related to modernity. Buitrago had already glimpsed the effect of globalization on the locals in 1982 when he explained that

transformations at the international level promote global change in the conceptions around the notion of property; the colonial regime and the holders of the means of production gradually focus their productive and commercial eyes on the outside world. The entry of capital, people, and other resources occurs (8).

La Esperanza hacienda, located in the Guilarte community in Adjuntas, and the Santa Clara hacienda, in the Río Prieto community in Yauco, became places of local interconnections that developed the encounter and flow of subjects toward the global dynamics that developed in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. The juxtaposition of the local, from the coffee haciendas, and the global later generated the theoretical reconceptualization of the concepts of territoriality, mobility, and consumption from the experience of the landowner class located in the context of south-central Puerto Rico. In this case, the subject was defined as the active element in power relations, encompassing the concept of a hegemonic network. The following section will discuss this project in more detail.

Corsican Landowner Class and Coffee: From Territoriality to Deterritorialization — The Pietri-Mariani Project

In his *La Industria Cafetalera de Puerto Rico, 1736–1969*, Luis Pumarada O'Neill (1990) mentions several economic and social points regarding the development of the coffee industry on the Island. In the first place, Puerto Rican coffee for export was the most valued in the world market (especially in Europe). The main goal of Puerto Rican coffee exports from the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century was to sell to the “gourmet” European consumer, and this coffee was sold at a higher price than usual because of its superior quality. On the other

hand, the large landowners of the highlands were mostly immigrants from the Metropolis (Spain) or Corsicans (Pumarada O'Neill 1990, 33). Likewise, in her thesis "Work, Culture and Class in 19th Century Puerto Rico: The Coffee *Jornaleros* of the Adjuntas Highlands" (1998), Zoraida Santiago argues that the construction of identities of those situated in the industry was related to the location of those day laborers within the structure of production, their relationship with property ownership, family structure (kinship), and the cultural capital of the social actors.

On the other hand, Libia M. González López, in *Los caminos del café: El café ayer y hoy* (2011), highlights that several phenomena went hand in hand with the rise of the mountain coffee industry, among them the growth of the population in the mountainous areas of Puerto Rico, the founding of new towns, and the establishment there of residents from the island's coast and of European immigrants. There were persons from other islands, such as Corsicans (France), Majorcans (Balears, Spain), Canarians (Spain), and French (from Saint Domingue and Martinique). These populations that arrived at the Island had family and commercial ties outside the Island that contributed to investing and expanding the coffee business (González López 2011, 29).

The Pietri-Mariani migrated to Puerto Rico during the opening created by the implementation of the Real Cédula de Gracia of 1815, where the Spanish government granted its colonies (Cuba and Puerto Rico) the possibility of developing commercial relations with Spanish allies at the time and thus develop, among other things, the agricultural industries of its colonial possessions. Said provision allowed migrants from different ethnic origins to enter the Puerto Rican context. According to Ricardo Camuñas Madera (1989), French immigration became, in numerical terms, the largest into Puerto Rico during the nineteenth century. Migrants of French origin who arrived in Puerto Rico in the early 1800s were characterized by differences among their groups, including those from mainland France, those who had settled in the French possessions, and the Corsicans (26).

The latter settled mainly in the coffee-growing and coastal municipalities of the southwestern region of Puerto Rico (26–29). Because of the importance of this migration to Puerto Rico and its persistent connections with its family and economic ties to its countries of origin, we decided to redefine this migratory process of the landowner class into two types: one internal (e.g., the movement between the coffee-producing mountain towns and the coast) and another transnational (e.g., Puerto Rico–Europe, Puerto Rico–United States). The coastal towns, such as the ports of Guayanilla and Ponce, had become cosmopolitan localities by the end of the nineteenth century, as evidenced by the flow of material goods, values, and people, between Puerto Rico and other regions of the world, mainly Europe or the United States.

As a Corsican landowner and merchant family, the Pietri-Mariani offer an example for understanding the integration of the landowner class within the processes of globalization and transnationalism during the nineteenth century. For example, in a letter sent by Domingo Mariani (his location is unknown), in the late nineteenth century, to Tomás Pietri in Río Prieto, Yauco, transnationalism and the movement of merchandise (coffee) between Puerto Rico and Europe can be appreciated:

As to coffee, I have received 8 loads today. See if you can send 25 to 30 loads of the unpolished coffee, I have sold to Bacó so that it can be conditioned and you can send samples to Europe, you don't need to hurry so much with the rest, you can send [it] when you have it ready. (AGPR Pietri-Mariani Collection, n.p.)

In our conversations, Buitrago argued that the migratory experience of the Pietri-Mariani, and their role as producers of commercial goods and assets (coffee), moved across local and international geographical limits, constructing subjects that were imagined to be deterritorialized.

The reexamination of the letters revealed the dynamics of the global and migratory movements that created deterritorialized spectators and in whose imaginaries spaces were generated, as

defined by Appadurai, for disputes and symbolic negotiations, in which groups and social actors linked the global to their everyday practices (1996, 53). According to Appadurai, space is the location of relational, spatial, and temporal specificity where local spatial differences are constructed, which determines the production and reproduction of the everyday and imaginary experience of subjects or groups. The imaginary is a social and collective fact, creating a rupture in social spaces. In this sense, the imaginary, within the context of the Pietri-Mariani family, is part of the everyday mental structure of the subjects, who appropriate goods and symbolic material values (e.g., magazines, newspapers, etc.) and discuss and share them through letters to their relatives that reflect and are reinstalled in the cosmopolitan spaces related to the ethnic, social, and cultural origin of the subjects who consume them in the local context. For example, in a letter dated February 27, 1887, written from Yauco by Tomás Pietri to his son José Manuel, who was living in Madrid, Tomás comments on how happy it makes him to imagine his son enjoying the theater and arts of Madrid: "Dearest son...I see that you are enjoying yourself, while, at the same time, you are working, thus fulfilling all of my desires. It pleases me that you have seen the Royal Theater of Madrid and, even more, that you admire the great, the marvelous, the sublime; because you told me so, and I do not doubt that it is the marvel of art that is that coliseum."

In a letter from José Manuel to his father dated October 8, 1889, he describes the importance of living in Spain, making friends, and advancing his career:

And I studied, and if anything was missing to increase my vehement desires, History came, presenting me with the glorious halo of its great feats, its wise men and poets, influencing the progress of humanity like no other nation.

I complied as a good man, modestly said, and it is sad that ... the time I left my land and my sun ... [broken space in the letter] land less fertile but for a less fiery sun. Everything seemed magnificent to me; I had the luck that I will never de-

serve, to appreciate being with my family, I made very good friends, I was able to admire the gigantic effort of the active Barcelona, I have started my career with happiness.

These texts reflect, in general terms, the Pietri-Mariani's perception of the importance of José Manuel Pietri's experience in the transnational context in Madrid. A narrative is linked to modernity about the theater and higher education in Madrid as a reflection of modernity. These are narratives constructed about modernity as lived in Madrid.

The movement of people, ideas, and goods (for sale or consumption) and the insertion of the different members of the Pietri-Mariani family and their European connections in cosmopolitan spaces such as Paris and New York are reflected in many of the letters analyzed. But it is not only the mention of the spaces but the activities that these subjects could savor or remember having experienced, such as attending world fairs, national holidays, the theater, studying at a foreign university, traveling by steamship, or receiving visits or gifts, that demonstrate how the Pietri-Mariani considered themselves deterritorialized and cosmopolitan. New York and especially Paris were the physical and symbolic spaces constantly evoked in the letters. From the perspective of the Caribbean subjects in the letters, Paris, New York, and Madrid are seen as the locations of late nineteenth-century modernity. The following fragments display this imagery shared by the Pietri-Mariani.

Letter from Tomás Pietri, Yauco, to José Pietri, Madrid, June 8, 1889:

Your Uncle Santiago Tonto and the Boy left Ponce on the 1st of the month to go around to see if Tonto likes it, because he is and if so, they will probably, after going to *New York*,⁵ go to *Madrid* to see you and also visit the *Paris Exhibition*⁶ while they're there since you are also going this season.

5 Emphasis added by Tomás Pietri-Mariani.

6 *Exposition Universelle* of 1889, which ran from May 6 to October 31.

Letter from Tomás Pietri, Yauco, to José Pietri, Madrid, July 13, 1889:

Cousin Antonio, the Boy and Santiago are all breathing the sea air, but it is American. According to their reports, the trip to *New York* was very happy and even more satisfying to find themselves at *the celebration of the holiday on the 4th of this month*: We don't know if they had fun, but we must assume it was so.

Having been forced to remain in *New York* for the season, they decided to return to Puerto Rico in the month of August, and I suppose they will go to see you as they received a letter from Tio Domingo before they sailed in which you threatened them saying that under no circumstances should they return here without having seen you; I also wrote to them expressing my great desire for them to go see you and that is what will happen. In that case, do go to *Paris* and use the opportunity to take in the remains of the exhibition and *visit the delights of France* that *its Capital* will currently contain.

Letter from José Pietri, Madrid, to Tomás Pietri, Yauco, October 8, 1889:

Paris! Paris! How the spirit expands when pronouncing your name! God and I know countless times that I have longed to see the wonders enclosed in your magical grounds in my short years of life.

The letters show how, from the fantasy of the imaginary of Paris and New York, transnationalism became a familial practice for the Pietri-Mariani.

The 1889 Paris Exhibition was an event with a great influence on this family. In a sense, it was the event of the century. The Paris Exhibition was an activity that was promoted worldwide. Therefore, the presence of members of the Pietri-Mariani family as spectators was very important as part of their imaginary as cosmopolitans and modern subjects. This is reflected not only

in the descriptions of the event shared in the letters but also through shared objects representative of modernity, for example, photographs. Here is the letter:

Paris November 8 1889

My dear Manuel

With this document, I send you *my portrait* that you will keep as a memory of your uncle and his stay here in this 89.

On Wednesday, we closed *the exhibition* with many people that truly sealed the doors. A long queue had to be made and many blows were received, but all were happy and awed.

As you know we will leave *Paris* tomorrow, Saturday and we will be in *Bordeaux* until the morning of the 12th.

I already gave you my instructions for the letters you might receive. The mail brought by the *French steamer* was distributed today in Paris.

We have written and *telegraphed* you regarding Mattei's tasteless prank, and I am surprised that you are asking me for further explanation. Anyway, goodbye my dear Manuel. My cousins and the Matteis join me in sending their regards, and a strong hug from your uncle, who loves you so much.

Santiago Pietri

The letter and the photograph evidence transnationalism, the movement of people from one context to another, determined by actions. There is a connection between the different spaces, both perceptive and geographical. The subjects demonstrate their familiarity and knowledge of the modern: the telegraph, the steamship, and the Paris Exposition.

Through the reexamination of the letters used in the creation of *Haciendas cafetaleras* with postmodern theoretical and methodological models, especially the concepts of multilocation ethnography and the anthropology of globalization and transnationalism, we can appreciate how these Corsican, Caribbean, and cosmopolitan subjects moved physically and metaphorically within and outside the territoriality of the south-central area

of Puerto Rico as deterritorialized, cosmopolitan, and modern subjects.

Final Thoughts

The contribution of anthropologist Carlos Buitrago Ortiz to the anthropology of Puerto Rico was characterized by the following: his approach to the kinship system as an axis for anthropological interpretation, his transdisciplinary approach from the perspective of social ethnohistory and Marxism, and what he called “investigative praxis,” that is, the possibility of incorporating new theories as the discipline of anthropology itself transforms in relation to sociocultural facts and practices.

The reassessment of the letters of the Pietri-Mariani offered an approach that he had not taken into account in *Haciendas cafetaleras*, but Buitrago had thought about it. The letters evidence the construction of imaginaries beyond local dynamics, touching on kinship relations, land distribution, and coffee trade and cultivation. These are imaginaries where the spectators (the Pietri-Mariani and local subjects related to them) generated practices and actions linked to the transformations typical of cosmopolitan spaces (e.g., the 1889 Paris Exposition), which made it possible to incorporate them into their everyday dynamics, as evidenced in the epistolary spaces and transnational movements of some subjects or agencies. In and of itself, the south-central local space was not fixed, but rather a space where shattering borders and constructing imaginaries were constantly negotiated (Appadurai 1996, 56–57). The subjects’ imagined mental structure is located in the different letters and the periods in which they were written. Their temporalities and spatialities allow for deconstructing the ethnographic text of *Haciendas cafetaleras* and Buitrago’s self-evaluation as an author. Investigative praxis evidences that the initial ethnographic work continues to be moving and in flux, as were the actors who were part of the epistolary evidence used by Buitrago. The work on *Haciendas cafetaleras* is a projective work on the identity of the anthropologist who is the author. It is a text that reveals

epistemological-methodological complexities and how anthropological theoretical paradigms arose and are constructed. It is a rhizome — deterritorialized, ethnohistorical, ontological, a dialogue with itself. Furthermore, it is a break with the theoretical proposals generated by juxtapositions (e.g., working class–landowner, highlands–lowlands, etc.), a generational passing to all those who, in some ways, have collaborated with the author–subject and teacher.

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From Dialectic to Dialogic: Reflections on Mentor– Mentee Relationships, Gender, Power, and Subjectivity in the Anthropology of Puerto Rico

Samiri Hernández Hiraldo

Peggy Golde introduced *Women in the Field: Anthropological Experiences* with this: “In the field of anthropology, there has been little public discussion of the subjective aspect of fieldwork, perhaps because it would have been considered unessential or irrelevant to the communication of information about other cultures, the central scientific task” (1986, 1). A little more than fifty years after *Women in the Field*, my reflection on my academic experience in Puerto Rico, beginning in the mid-1980s, has been propelled by Golde’s opportune and still pertinent assessment. Like other contributors to this book who studied and did research under the mentorship of the late, male, prominent Puerto Rican anthropologist Carlos Buitrago Ortiz (in my case, as his student, mentee, teaching assistant, research assistant, and cowriter), I was energized by a spirit of solidarity and collaboration by the invitation to write and present a paper for a confer-

ence in Buitrago's memory, at the University of Puerto Rico, in October 2016.

I dedicate this, perhaps overdue, reflection, first and foremost, to the women anthropologists who paved the way for other women, including those who have not considered themselves feminists or have not been feminists in terms of declarations. Lutz, in *Women Writing Culture* (1995), corroborates the experience of women ethnographers and the feminist critique in various disciplines, where their academic writing and ethnographic experience have been historically devalued. Lutz's validation was unprecedentedly presaged by the great significance of the subjective or *new* subjective, along the lines of variegated new theoretical and methodological insights and experimental writing fronts. The emphasis on subjectivity is evident in its association — whether explicit or implicit — with literary criticism and its integration within the framework of postmodern anthropology (258). It has simultaneously permitted the rethinking of relationships, but not exclusively with other men, in the realm of anthropology, be they teacher-mentors (Behar 1995, 18), other scholars (Landes 1995, 125), field companions, or the subjects of study (Newton and Stacey 1995, 292).

This chapter is my first attempt to examine these issues closely in the context of Puerto Rican anthropology and the legacy of Buitrago. I look at Buitrago's sustaining influence on me, my academic decisions, and my ethnographic work, mainly my dissertation and published book, *Black Puerto Rican Identity and Religious Experience*, based on the town of Loíza in the north-eastern coast of the island. I also capture my gradual and non-linear transition to poetry, autoethnography, and ethnographic poetry.

My experience is not schematically unique. It more or less follows the template of anthropologists who have engaged in poetry for decades in the United States, such as Ruth Benedict, Margaret Mead, Zora Neale Hurston, Jeremone Rothenberg, Renato Rosaldo, Gananath Obeyesekere, Lila Abu-Lughod, and Gina Athena Ulysse, some of them at first almost obscurely and with time experiencing an ascendant recovery. The literary and

poetic turn within anthropology is widely recognized in articles and edited works (see Brady 1991; Cohen 2013; Diamond 1986; Tyler 1984; Waterston and Vesperi 2009; Wiles 2020; Wulff 2016). Writing poetry alongside academic work while keeping them separate, admitting that each influences the other, and adding to my interest in literary anthropology while trying to establish priorities with financial and time limitations and counter stereotypes, has not been an easy unraveling or without trepidation. I consider this chapter a self-leveraging exercise, even therapeutic, by applying retrospective reflexivity to my career choices vis-à-vis broader and quite revealing issues in the field and in my personal journey.

Power Relations

Buitrago's emphasis on power relations can be expressed in the following juxtapositions, all of which I grapple with in this chapter: anthropology versus other disciplines, American (colonial) anthropology versus Native or Indigenous anthropology, Black versus Spanish and Taíno Indian identities, otherness from outside versus otherness from within, secondhand knowledge versus fieldwork, the observer versus the observed, university bureaucracy versus students, the political economic perspective versus religion (versus ideology), men versus women, structures and processes versus folklore, Loízan versus non-Loízan experiences, one main theoretical perspective versus a multilayered approach, objective versus subjective, and anthropology versus poetry.

I took the introductory anthropology class (my first anthropology class) from Carmen Angélica Pérez Herranz (a former student of Buitrago). Her class introduced me to the discipline of anthropology as a vital space of extensive inquiry and a more holistic path to self-discovery after having tried music and psychology. Growing up in the Baptist (Northern) tradition, with my family as founding members and leaders of a church, I immediately found anthropology liberating, eye-opening, and inclusive. My exposure to the theory of evolution, the existence

of different cultures around the world, and peasant studies in Pérez Herranz's class showed me a new way of making sense of the world while accessing new possibilities involving those at the top and those at the bottom, or the center-core and the periphery.¹

In "Anthropology in the Puerto Rican Colonial Context: Analysis and Projections," Buitrago argues that the domestication or indigenization of anthropology in Puerto Rico, which emerged in reaction to imposed Americanized colonial anthropology, happened under the auspice of the new commonwealth, established in 1952. According to Buitrago, such domestication became synonymous with rallying for the nationalist agenda of affirming and defending national identity. Native anthropologists almost doctrinally tried to win the race of *lo indio*, *lo negro*, and *lo español* as a harmonious trio, while the Black had a "harder time in obtaining respectability as a legitimate object of study" (Buitrago 1982a, 105).

Buitrago's proverbial skeleton critique, which I heard in my first class with him, was instantly alluring, showing the capacity and willingness of anthropology(ists), especially native anthropology(ists), to reflect on itself (themselves). It also made sense to me on a deep level, coming from a relatively low-class, rural, tight community, with a "white" father from a "white" barrio and a "trigueño" (light-colored) mother from a "Black" barrio. I experienced racial tensions from both sides, but especially from the white side toward the Black side. I, mostly silently, accepted the idea of the inferiority of the Black side of my heritage.

My fascination with Buitrago began before taking my first class with him. My interest was sparked when someone told me that Buitrago was anthropology with arms and legs, and therefore students needed to pass through his formidable strainer. When I was in the work-study program at the José M. Lázaro main library, I observed Buitrago passionately flipping through historical documents, and saw his eyes absorbed in the micro-

1 Two of Buitrago's notorious expressions, following Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Theory.

films in the *Colección Puertorriqueña* reading room. Between waves of courtesy and exigencies, I was convinced that, with Buitrago, I had to commit and work rigorously, and I was up for the challenge.

Buitrago was hard to miss as he walked across campus. He took each step as if pushing seeds down into the soil. He wore what seemed to be an iconic uniform (a light solid-color cotton shirt and dark solid-color polyester pants), a briefcase in hand before he later changed to a backpack, and tennis shoes. His appearance was a source of inspiration after years of trying to impress others while, at the same time, trying to minimize the ways I appeared different. I felt connected with other students for whom Buitrago also represented something novel and refreshing and who approached him with the same ovation as I did. It was common to see former students coming in and out of his office for a consultation, mentoring, a friendly visit, to go to the field, for a bite to eat, or a drink. Buitrago even came to represent a new side of me—perhaps what Cornell (1993, 41) calls the otherness “within” as the unconscious. I knew I had to chase that other side of me and embarked excitedly on that other-layered pursuit.

For Buitrago, fieldwork was the highest marker of anthropology. This was another confirmation of my decision to follow anthropology. Those overnight ethnographic trips were exciting and quite adventurous. It was not just that we were outside the classroom walls or amidst the camaraderie in the cooler tropics, but also how the trips allowed a closer examination while using all the senses.² As a student and, later, as Buitrago’s teaching assistant, I witnessed relations of power during fieldwork preparations and in the field. Buitrago’s frequent arguments (sometimes hostile) with the university “bureaucracy” (as he called it) to obtain funding for the class of ethnographic methods and tech-

2 I was greatly influenced by a sense of familiarity and nostalgia from growing up in the mountains. My cousins and I used to play explorer in the neighborhood, finding old objects under or above the ground that attested to the changes that had happened between my great-grandparents’ generation and ours.

niques were not secret and left me in a state of aporia or embarrassment. The money would help us pay for our three-day stay in Adjuntas every other weekend for a semester, and to pay for food and gas. He also fought successfully for my fair salary as teaching assistant, or *asistente de cátedra*, even though I was not a graduate student. As far as I know, that had not been done before.

Thanks to Buitrago's persistence and unapologetic manner, we stepped inside a picturesque scene at the top of the town of Adjuntas, a town he had been studying and taking students to for years. With a notebook and pencil in hand (some of us with cameras hanging around our necks, as long as they did not substitute for note-taking and sketching), we observed the passages of life, the birth, and growth of flora and fauna, an old hacienda, and cemeteries. Other times, like spiders or worms, we were inside a nature-made cave or on the ground. We joked that the only thing missing was a magnifying glass or microscope. Buitrago called the whole *asunto* (thing), *micro-etnografía* (micro-ethnography), his pupils growing so large, almost expanding above his glasses. The class trained us in methods and techniques, or *micro-etnografía*, as he insisted on calling it, which we would apply to a research project, on a topic of our choice, with Buitrago's blessing. Alicia Muñoz and I did an exhaustive analysis of the dynamics between the natural and man-made landscapes using photography.

In Buitrago's ethnographic province, there was no place for convenient distances or hierarchies between him and us "collaborators," rather than "students," even if you had to earn the title by showing commitment. When we walked with him around campus or through the paved streets and mountains of Adjuntas—we jokingly called him the shepherd and ourselves his sheep—he always chose to walk beside us rather than in front, in an almost constant physical game that seemed to extend his teaching and mentoring style. With the understanding that he was still in charge, he led us into an in-depth collaborative engagement with the ethnographic text in a Socratic way; we usually read three to five books, and some articles, per course.

Buitrago's emphasis on the political economic perspective, which I understood had developed from Structural Marxism, was almost immediately obvious. His perspective helped me better discern the different infrastructural and economic changes that resulted from Puerto Rico's fast movement toward capitalism in the nineteenth century and toward development after World War II. The changes that came with development were supposed to benefit us all, but still, decades later, as a good number of us in the *barrio* and as many other Puerto Ricans (in a worse situation than ours) learned from days with little or no resources, including food, the benefit was cut short. Therefore, it was with great incentive that, following Buitrago's recommendation, I inquired about the peasants' and proletarians' conditions in the context of unfair capitalism.

Soon after I became his research assistant, Buitrago and I delved into an extreme case of capitalist tragedy: *slavery*. (I had learned a little about slavery, more so than in school, from the TV miniseries *Roots*.) I spent long hours in the *Colecciones Puer-torriqueñas*, in the José M. Lázaro Library at UPR-RP, reading over archival records from the nineteenth century and, in the dark, going over microfilms, chasing data about slavery and the name and descriptions of enslaved people. Using Buitrago's old-fashioned typewriter, we produced more than three hundred pages of manuscript. We took it to the university's publisher and to the Institute of Puerto Rican Culture to be considered for publication, with no success.³

Since I grew up almost immersed in the (Northern) Baptist church, even with all the effervescence of the economic processes, religion as a main subject caught my attention. At that point, I had become convinced that religion only made sense as "ideology," the term Buitrago preferred. I remember such an "aha" moment after seeing Buitrago's drawing of a triangle with

3 I felt partly responsible that we could not push this further, because I went off to the University of Michigan. However, I was glad that Buitrago wrote an article about slavery with one of his research assistants, Beatriz Riefkohl, in 1993.

the economy, or infrastructure, at the bottom, and the ideology, or superstructure, at the top. However, at some point, the ideology — such a tiny corner that was supposed to include religion, as if merely to legitimize or to bolster the economic system and its inequalities — began to seem adolescent, even childish. Feeling trapped and disconcerted, I asked, What is more determining — using Maurice Godelier's term (1986) — the mental or the material? Because I was noticing more of Christianity's pastiches and damages in the world, in Puerto Rico, and in my personal life, the Marxist critique of religion as the opium of the people was hard to ignore, like a plantain stain on fabric. Even if the question of how religion can be the opium was a tempting one, I asked myself, Why not stay with something more literal and with a greater revolutionary appeal, such as the economy?

Back then, my inclination to study religion over economic processes, I believe, had something to do with resentment over Buitrago's dismissal and criticism of religion, and even of liberation theology, which I also had found both illuminating and redemptive, on spiritual and sociopolitical levels. I first learned about liberation theology and its Marxist roots during an activity on campus, endorsed by a Christian group I had joined. The injustices happening in South and Central American countries made me regard liberation theology as a more legitimate and realistic activism than that of the mostly secular, seemingly atheist, or leftist activism, Puerto Rican or not.⁴ The thought that Buitrago was playing devil's advocate did not deter me from finally telling him that academia, anthropology even, can function as opium. Therefore, miraculously, and to my personal satisfaction, we ended up writing a paper about the religious discourse in the formative years of *Adjuntas* under the Spanish regime. We submitted it to the 1993 Annual Conference of the Association of Caribbean Historians in Mona, Jamaica.

4 I learned later that the songs I had performed at religious events and that I found personally meaningful and revolutionary were from "Misa campesina nicaragüense" (Nicaraguan peasant Mass) by Nicaraguan composer Carlos Mejía Godoy, and were part of the liberation theology movement.

Feminist Critique and the Gender Issue

I do not recall any open or in-depth discussions about the woman experience (or the gender issue) or the feminist critique in my anthropology class with Pérez Herranz, my archaeology class with Diana López, or my physical anthropology class with Maria Cashion Lugo. I found Pérez Herranz's work on the experience of women in the garment factory provoking and was very impressed with López's long trajectory in the male-dominated Mesoamerican archaeology field, and I was privileged to dig with her in one of her courses.

The work of classic Puerto Rican female anthropologist Elena Padilla—one of the coauthors of *The People of Puerto Rico*—on poverty, Puerto Rican migrants, and women was almost hidden in the milieu. This was most certainly related to the marginalization she experienced (Duany 2014, 156). I heard casually about North American anthropologist Helen I. Safa, even though she was already well known for her work on Puerto Rico's urban poor and social problems, especially those of women in the Caribbean and Latin America. She is also considered part of the transition from colonial to "postcolonial" Puerto Rican ethnography and known for engendering it, but she did not spell out the feminist perspective nor did she reflect on her own experience as a female ethnographer with certain personal attributes (Duany 2010, 35, 43–44). The curtains opened in Rafael L. Ramírez's class and his research on the social construction of masculinity, which encouraged me to reflect upon my relationship with men in different capacities and their way of expressing maleness. I wish I could have learned about the pioneering work of American anthropologist Margaret Mead on the construction of gender and the diverse experience of sexuality, which she based on her fieldwork in American Samoa in the 1920s.

More significantly, at the time I do not think I missed or anticipated the issue of women. The fact that there were women, even if not a large number, close and distant, old and young, working in anthropology might have been enough for me at the time. The closest I came to something like anthropology and

women was through church films shown during missionary week, where male missionaries in remote parts of India or Africa sought to understand local cultures to advance their work, and women were cast primarily as assistants—teachers and nurses.

Although Buitrago was critical of his lack of representation of women in his work, he did not completely ignore it. A singular moment, arrested in time, was when, with great emphasis, he made the observation that the *jíbaro*, the peasant emblematic of the Puerto Rican identity, was always portrayed as a white-tanned-skin male from the mountain and *jíbaras* were barely portrayed or mentioned. Buitrago made the same demand for intellectual and fieldwork engagement of all of us, regardless of gender, without depriving ourselves of captioning the specifics of gender as hindering or beneficial in terms of openness of people, privacy, and safety. In the field, it did not apply that when “the question of theory is not at issue, fieldwork can be coded masculine, heroic, adventurous” (Lutz 1995, 256). Over the years, Buitrago worked and published with female collaborators, such as Beatriz Riefkohl (1995), Eva Villalón Soler (1999), and Jessica Santos López (2004). He and I published together in 1993.

I never understood the reason(s) for Buitrago’s preference for working closely with female students. Our relationship was consistently respectful, but not always harmonious. At times, I considered gender, in addition to age, work ethic, and intellect, as having something to do with his high expectations and, what I considered, extreme demands in situations where my circumstances as a woman (like having severe period pain and caregiving responsibilities) needed more attuned consideration. There were issues of sensibility and priorities with regard to family and friends. There were also our different ways of focusing, from my point of view: he *uni* and me *multi*. Was his controlling and condescending attitude, at times, my responsibility? Was it a matter of gender more than personality? Still today, I admit to not having a comprehensive answer, not even a provisional one.

In my first year (1992) as a graduate student in anthropology at the University of Michigan, I read *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. At the time, the fact that it only had one female contributor was not enough of a source of grievance for me,⁵ but I considered the observation, at the time, valid. Eventually, I had to ask myself why the lack of women's representation had not sparked my curiosity. I was raised in an environment where women exercised a degree of agency; however, this agency was unevenly distributed and contingent upon specific and situational contexts, ranging from the household and workplace to church and community events. This seems to be consistent with what I learned much later, doing my own research on gender for my dissertation. In general, in foraging and simple farming societies, relationships tend to be egalitarian between genders, where women's work, whether in gathering, fishing, and even hunting, was as significant as men's work, or men did the same work. At the same time, cross-cultural data in Sered's *Priestess, Mother, Sacred Sister* (1996) confirmed that in matrilineal or matrifocal societies,⁶ women may have considerable economic, political, or spiritual power as mothers and elders although less so as simply wives. Even in this context, women have rarely exercised exclusive authority, and never at the expense of men (46–48).

At Michigan, I took an anthropology course with Ruth Behar, where we read academic and nonacademic material for inspiration to create ethnographic writing, including prose and poetry, and to use photography from a subjective perspective. The subjective experience had already been set at the table of conversation under the rubrics of interpretive, reflexive, or experimental anthropology.⁷ There was a section for feminist critique, but it

5 There is only one male contributor in *Women Writing Culture*, Laurent Dubois, my classmate at Michigan.

6 I am purposely avoiding the term "matriarchal," because it is the exact opposite of "patriarchal."

7 That is how it was referred to on the list of different theoretical perspectives for the required theoretical course Traditions in the doctoral program.

did not immediately appeal to me. In *Writing Culture*, George E. Marcus states: “Ethnographic truths are thus inherently *partial*” and “ethnographic work has indeed been enmeshed in a world of enduring and changing power inequalities, and it continues to be implicated” (1986, 7, 9; emphasis original). Unaware that literary anthropology was an actual field in anthropology, it was much later that I learned about its three branches. The second branch is the most controversial and focuses on “the use of literary modes of writing ethnography, ranging from the incorporation of metaphorical language and the subversion of conventional ethnographic structures to the production of fiction as ethnography” (Wiles 2020, 1). I will talk about the other two branches later. Nevertheless, I remained skeptical that the subjective approach, the topic of gender, and experimental writing, stretching it as far as possible, were real possibilities for me. It was only for those in the discipline, especially women, brave enough or well established in the discipline, such as Behar.

Literary Approach and Critique

I benefited from Buitrago’s dazzling intellect, along with his consistent effort to stay up to date by reading new material — mostly on economic processes in regions beyond the Caribbean and the Mediterranean — in order to put our work into perspective. His openness to new theoretical frameworks soon brought both of us to the door of literary criticism and the deconstructionism of Derrida (1976). Even as I was unable to decipher all of their mysteries, we applied them for the first time to an inventory of production, as another type of *field*, as best as we could. This resulted in the first piece we wrote together, a paper for the 1992 Annual Conference of Caribbean Studies Association in St. George, Grenada, published a year later. It is about the gradual and nonlinear shift in the nineteenth-century Adjuntas from a cattle-raising economy to a primary monoculture economy (see Buitrago Ortiz and Hernández Hiraldo 1991). We critically examined the various voices or interlocutors involved, considering who was speaking, how they were represented, and for

whom the sociocultural (or strictly “social,” in Buitrago’s terms) document was produced. In doing so, we engaged with the third branch of literary anthropology, as identified by Wiles (2020, 1), the analysis of literary and cultural production practices. Another major breakthrough came with looking at the document intertextually, always in relation to competing inner and outer discourses, for example, the different names for pigs according to their condition and use, cattle raising versus farming, and *lo económico* versus *lo religioso* (the economic versus the religious). We also placed the content of the document within the meta-narratives of Spanish political-religious colonialism and the development of capitalism.

From Buitrago, I also learned about non-Puerto Rican, mostly British, poetry. I took a class on British literature after being encouraged by our conversations (Buitrago did his doctoral degree at the University of Cambridge). He was elated to introduce me to a few famous local and international poets.⁸ I experienced how, through poetry, one could learn about culture and history, not knowing that the use of literature as ethnographic source material, particularly for historical anthropologists such as Buitrago himself, is considered the first branch of literary anthropology (Wiles 2020, 1). Maynard and Cahnmann-Taylor (2010, 4) remind us that this cannot be confused with ethnopoetics, which, coined by poet-ethnographer Jeremone Rothenberg in 1968 with *Technicians of the Sacred: A Range of Poetries from Africa, America, Asia, Europe, and Oceania*, exposes the aesthetic principles of Indigenous oral poetry and its translation.⁹

I took my cue from Buitrago that anthropology and literature should stay separate, and I should focus on anthropological work. I did the same as the famous anthropologist Ruth Benedict, who kept her poetry hidden from her mentor-teacher,

8 He introduced me to classical music and to old music voices from Spain and Latin America. At the time, I was invested in contemporary Christian music, mostly translated from English, since I was a performer at the time.

9 See also the work of my dear friends, Michael A. Uzendoski (2005), also a former colleague at Florida State University, and his wife, Edith Felicia Calapucha-Tapuy (2015), on oral traditions among the Napo Runa.

Franz Boas — the father of modern and American anthropology (Behar 1995, 17–18). Once, while doing fieldwork in the area of old haciendas in the town of Adjuntas, during a visit with Mr. Riutort, an old-time landowner, everyone, including Buitrago, was in the main room talking to him. Another student and I reached out to his quiet and stoic wife, back in the kitchen, who ended up giving us a different perspective on things. Buitrago seemed proud of us when we told him, but it was quickly put aside. I, on the other hand, secretly wrote a poem about it.

My hesitation to let Buitrago, in particular, know about my poetry was reinforced by his adamant critique of pseudo-scholars who pretend to do serious work by studying folklore as “the frosting on the cake,” as Buitrago once stated sarcastically, exaggerating the *r* sound in folklore and in frosting. The implication was that they lacked the *right* theoretical approach and rigorous data collection, whether collected in the archives or in the field. In the paper for the conference, I called Buitrago’s reaction “defolklorization.” There was no excuse for avoiding fieldwork. Even if one studies a particular hacienda in the nineteenth century, why not visit what was left of it or another one to complement the written information? Still, I like to think that I hid my poetry from Buitrago less out of fear of its association primarily with women’s emotionalism, romanticism, and irrationality and more because it was an area I wanted to keep to myself and under my sole control.

Loíza: Fieldwork Experience

In 1992, assisted and highly recommended by Buitrago, and by López and Pérez Herranz, I went to the University of Michigan, seeking what I conceived to be a more utilitarian or applied path by studying the capitalist development in Puerto Rico, with Buitrago’s Adjuntas in mind. The possibility of studying in another country was a far-off dream, and perhaps I conveniently convinced myself that I should stay in Puerto Rico, close to my vulnerable family. But Buitrago inspired me to go ahead and study abroad by reminding me of the scant amount of good-quality

anthropological studies about Puerto Rico and that I could do fieldwork in the Island.

At Michigan, I took a few classes on political economy, but in no time I reverted and shifted the focus to religion. Somewhat surprisingly, I ended up writing my dissertation mainly about religion, not in Adjuntas (after two months of pre-fieldwork there, happily encouraged by Buitrago), but, as if an antidote to it, in Loíza, a town I considered somehow familiar and yet *othered* enough, but for me an enigma. At that time, Buitrago and I were out of touch, a bit disappointed with our relationship. Yet, I found myself, as if in front of a mirror, practicing defending myself against him and presenting arguments about why it was worth studying Loíza's marginal status, poverty, and history of slavery. Loíza is commonly regarded as the town that most vividly represents African Puerto Rican culture and folklore. In my mind, I thought this would tick off Buitrago, who hated the idea of folklorization. As the possibility of reconnecting with him grew, this mental dialogue was going back to such habitual — as in Bourdieu's (1977) *habitus* — discussions about economic processes and agents when studying the enslaved people of Adjuntas with him. I sensed I could please him once more through conversations comparing the slavery and economic processes of Adjuntas and Loíza.

As a test, with my first step into Loíza, the topic of “identity” took center stage. This was another word (mostly associated with the academic left and the Puerto Rican diaspora) that Buitrago would spit out of his mouth for the same reasons as “folklore.” People frequently mentioned identity or self-identification in obvious and subtle ways, contradicting female anthropologist Raquel Romberg's review of my study indicating Loízans as “obsessively” (2018, 316) concerned about identity. My point was really about the way it was recurrently addressed and significantly implicated, implicitly and explicitly, in peoples' everyday lives. With no time or intention to gloss over identity, I considered the dynamic interplay of different identities based on skin color, gender, family, town, residency, religion, and politics, each identity interacting and competing with the others on different plat-

forms and daily circumstances, while often being redefined. For example — ironic from the point of view of Buitrago's critique of identity and folklore — I learned from my research that the most feasible way for Protestants and Catholics to reconcile the Festival of Santiago (St. James the Apostle), celebrated in Loíza with its mix of Spanish and African roots, with the town patron saint, St. Patrick (selected in the nineteenth century to please the recently arrived Irish immigrants), was to consider the first festival as traditional or cultural, and the second festival as religious or spiritual.

I was inspired by Sarah Caldwell's work, particularly her *Oh Terrifying Mother: Sexuality, Violence and Worship of the Goddess Kali* (1999), and its multilayered theoretical model.¹⁰ I cannot leave out that the class allowed me to learn so much about the existence of many gods and, more significantly, many goddesses. At the time, I was familiar only with the goddess Asherah from the Bible, the Taíno goddess Atabey, a few deities from Greek and Egyptian mythologies, and the orisha Oshun from Santería.¹¹ I decided to follow Caldwell's approach to research and interpret the religious experience in relation to identity in a small neighborhood of Loíza. Her model considered different layers or dimensions of experience, including the political-economic, social, socio-spatial, and kinship, all of which I had learned with Buitrago.¹²

Another dimension to be included, although with initial reluctance because of the common angst, especially among female anthropologists in regard to self-referential/indulgence, was my personal experience as a native female anthropologist, and my personal relationship with religion, *lo negro*, and with

10 I was her assistant for the class Women, Hinduism, and Feminist Critique.

11 For the past few years I have taught a course on women in religion where we elaborate on female deities since the Paleolithic. We not only discuss goddesses and their relation to male gods but as supreme beings and creators of the universe. Perhaps it is my way to compensate for the lack of exposure to the thousands of goddesses from different parts of the world.

12 I wrote a paper about kinship and social space using data from a cemetery in Adjuntas for a course with him about the Mediterranean.

Loíza. I could not resist the thought that behind the encouragement from members of my dissertation committee to include my personal experience in my work was the preconceived idea that I was more of a “native informant” than a scholar. Behar (1995, 15–16) made this observation when it came to pioneer female anthropologists African American Zora Neale Hurston and Native American Ella Cara Deloria. The dimension of the ethnographer’s personal experience added to the challenge of classical objectivism, or the positivist canon, is also discussed by Ricardo Pérez, Chapter 6 in this book, as something he experienced when researching Puerto Rico as a “native” and then Cuba, as a “turista libre.”

The multilayered approach, by explicitly admitting personal feelings and situations affecting the gathering and interpretation of the data, poignantly counters the classical ethnographic model. For this same thing, Caldwell, like other female anthropologists, has been criticized and marginalized (she told me in personal conversation). Next to Caldwell’s polished ethnographic account of domestic abuse that the women she was studying were experiencing, she included, in a different font, her rough notes about her personal experience with domestic abuse in the field. The psychological dimension of the chapter on women and hair in the book about Loíza, including the study of subconscious processes (which Buitrago rejected with an eye-roll), struck me as an essential part of the ethnographer’s experience. At the same time, it aligns with the feminist critique that had attacked the founding psychological field as Western, white, male-oriented, and having a tendency to pathologize the “primitive” or “savage” and women.

In addition, the multilayered approach demanded a nuanced examination of the interrelationships among the various dimensions, along with the potential hierarchies both between dimensions — for example, the religious dimension taking precedence over the economic — and within individual dimensions, such as the formal or legal economy being privileged over the informal or subterranean economy. Buitrago emphasized the importance of carefully attending to the dynamics between formal and in-

formal economies. The distinction is demonstrated by a saying in Loíza, *buscárselas por el lado*, “getting money by doing small side jobs,” including under the table or illegal (Buitrago called it *economía subterránea*, “subterranean economy”) fishing, construction, moneylending, mechanic work, hair styling, or selling Avon products or Loízan cultural products (food, arts, crafts, music, and dance). The prevalence of informal employment in Loíza—by no means unique to this municipality—must be understood within the broader historical context of systemic discrimination and racism experienced by its residents, both in everyday interactions and through state institutions. This reality is encapsulated in a commonly heard expression, namely, that it has been easier to secure funding from the public and private sectors for cultural initiatives than for meeting basic needs.

Loízans’ experiences, activities, and practices, similar to the different theoretical conversations within each dimension (which I do not discuss here), proved that boundaries between dimensions are not discrete but porous and flexible and, at times, choked with inconsistencies and contradictions. The religious dimension, in particular, demanded a proficient take on official and unofficial religion, which I had already cultivated with Buitrago (beginning with his study of Esperanza published in 1973), and on the utterly performative properties of religion as nondetriment. My application of distinctions between official and unofficial religious discourses, the varying performative qualities of these expressions—often marked by fluid boundaries—the notion of hierarchy within elements of religious experience and practice, as well as initial considerations of the ecological dimension (which I was unable to explore as fully as I had intended), are all influences I attribute to the late Roy Rappaport,¹³ former chair of my dissertation committee.

Buitrago’s frequent, almost excessive, reminder about the importance of asking questions and listening carefully to the re-

13 He passed away shortly after I started doing fieldwork. He, Daniel Levine, and, later, Gillian Feeley-Harnik greatly inspired me to study religion, and Sueann Caulfield encouraged me to study the woman experience.

search participants, including those seemingly less promising, became useful and enjoyable, for the most part, during my participant observation, and rewarding when interviewing Loízens, some of whom I followed to New Haven, Connecticut, albeit neither closely enough nor as systematically as I would have wished.¹⁴ Still, along the lines of Carlos A. Cubero's nissologist approach to understanding the experience of the small Puerto Rican island of Culebra as simultaneously insular and mobile, as he discusses in Chapter 5 of this volume, I observed and attested to the active role Loízens play in transgressing both identity and geographic boundaries, while simultaneously maintaining, to varying degrees, the distinct characteristics that lie within those boundaries. The experience of Loízens also taught me that at least three levels of transnationalism could manifest and not always agree: (1) physical locality and ancestry, (2) sentiments and attitudes, and (3) social interactions and investments that can translate into financial gains.

A critique of my book about Loíza made by male historian Floyd McCoy, from what I call the *exteriority camp* — the word “camp” borrowed from Brady (1991) — is that the way I “handle[d] the Catholic history of the region and of Puerto Rico as a whole [was] very weak.” He also indicated that I gave “more pre-eminence to the Protestant material and analysis” than Catholicism or other religions, perhaps because of my already acknowledged Protestant bias (McCoy 2007, 730–31). In the book, I mentioned catching myself having a too critical, or even intolerant, attitude toward Christianity, particularly Protestantism, precisely because of my Protestant background (Hernández Hiraldo 2014, 19). I explained that my purpose was not to provide a history of the Catholic Church, since it had been done cleverly and extensively by Puerto Rican scholars (some of whom I interviewed), but to target the specifics of Loíza's deep and broad

14 Growing up, I always liked to hear stories, especially from elders, about the past. People commented on that. I was fortunate to have a good number of elders close by, some of them blood-related, and who I visited to hear their *cuentos* (stories).

religious experience and its immediacy. I also indicated that, for safety reasons related to some coincidental, unfortunate events, where I was accused of being a police informant, and also in part for being a woman of white skin, I had to concentrate on a neighborhood without previous knowledge of its high number of Protestants,¹⁵ instead of selecting a neighborhood where *Espiritismo* or Santería were practiced, as where I had hoped to do research. For better or worse, that was not the exact case, but there was some evidence of the influence of *Espiritismo*, Santería, and other African-derived religious practices, hidden practices, and syncretism in the neighborhood I focused my research on, as there was in New Haven. I was also criticized, because of my Protestant bias, for not finding enough Africanness. The same observation about my bias could have been made regarding gender, since the book includes more interviews with women than men and even fewer with young men. This concern about gender bias is an old research concern that seems to continue (Sudarkasa 1986, 181–82, 188).

I was able to gain access to my research subjects by taking advantage of their practice of ascribing a type of “vulnerability” to me, describing me as *la muchachita universitaria*, *blanquita*, *chiquita y flaquita*, and to some *sencilla y cristiana* (the white, short, and thin [with the diminutive] young college woman, a simple, and Christian woman). To increase my accessibility to my informants, I maintained an understated appearance with regard to gender and religion, and, more importantly, I was extremely careful not to share my strong criticism and skepticism about religion.

At the other extreme, from what I call the *interiority camp*, there is Romberg’s critique (2008, 317) of my “peppering” the study with the *opinions* (originally in italics) of residents about their identity. More fundamentally, I showed how their opin-

15 For one semester, I had to teach at the University of Puerto Rico to fund my research. I also had to go back to Michigan to get more funding, and, after my return, I found out there had been rumors I was an undercover police agent because there had been a big drug raid right after I left. There is more to the story in my book (Hernandez Hiraldo 2014, 32–34).

ions or perspectives, though embedded, were constantly negotiated and were the reason they could change from one skin-color classification to another, from the concept of Loíza as religious or as secular and pagan, from shame to pride. Besides, Sudarkasa asserts that "in the course of field work, one always learns that some questions are likely to be answered honestly, whereas some are not" (1986, 184). Buitrago and I discussed a few times that the best we can aspire to, as observers and researchers, is to approximate or to agree or not, depending on the situation, with people's points of view. It is true that providing an objective perspective beyond peoples' reach and attainment can be among our main contributions as ethnographers in a way that could motivate the participants to think about their own reality differently, as if in a new merging of the objective (possibly new or previously dormant) and the subjective (always in transaction with the possibilities), which now would have to include social media, conspiracy theories, algorithms, and accumulated data.

Such an unapologetic question insists on resurfacing: What good does it do if our findings are not shared with other scholars, the public in general, and research participants, especially those who show interest? Besides the issue of what or not to share or confess and the concern of opening Pandora's box, Gordon (1995) has spoken about a tendency of women anthropologists to be helpful, considerate, and respectful, even if it causes us to miss some data or to omit some information in the text as if asking or screaming for judgment. Reviewing my book, Romberg additionally observed my "unspecified number of visits" (2008, 317). What is more substantial is that I was able to help with errands, provide useful information, help women in abusive situations, advocate for residents with the government officials, give a puppet show in a church to address issues of racism, and provide company to the ill and elders. Most of this I did not share, and even here, I am not sharing it all.

As I indicate at the end of my book, a good number of Loízans, since the beginning of my fieldwork, expected me to provide at least suggestions regarding, if not solutions to, their problems. I initially hesitated to do it from a scholarly perspec-

tive, because it seemed akin to reading fortune cards for them, but after their insistence, I tried to do it to the best of my abilities, in person and in the book. Some people made the request with a warning tone, as in “you better,” like a final warning. At the same time, several of them had a protective attitude and felt compelled to give me advice, even on personal matters. This is something that Sudarkasa (1986, 179), doing research in Nigeria decades ago, also experienced.

I have tried to make the writing as accessible as possible, with less “abstract language and less jargon”¹⁶ (Lutz 1995, 253). My poetic turn has undoubtedly helped with that endeavor. It was reassuring to learn from Duany’s article (2014) that accessibility was or has also been the concern of Padilla and Safa and other female anthropologists without depriving the experience of insightful patterns, practical generalizations, new concepts, theories, and information.

Ode to Reconnecting

In 2007, Duany, then the director of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Puerto Rico, who was writing a reflection about Buitrago’s legacy for the Distinguished Professor award, contacted me to ask to contribute with some words about Buitrago. Of course, I immediately said yes, while wondering if Buitrago would accept the award, attend the ceremony, wear “the costume,” and how he would react to what I had to say about him. Duany’s invitation made me reexamine not only Buitrago’s legacy but also my relationship with him.

My minimal exposure to linguistics in Puerto Rico and with Buitrago (we talked many times about missing linguistic courses in the department) but greater training at Michigan, especially through Bruce Mannheim (later a member of my dissertation committee), made me realize how the interaction between Buitrago and I included the linguistic dimension. I always thought

16 From some comments, including from my brother, I thought I had done enough of that when turning the dissertation into a book.

of Buitrago as a source of *micro-etnografía* himself. Let me say that I do not take for granted this opportunity to write about him, knowing he will never have the chance to write about me, whether he would have liked to or not. I imagine him putting his finger at the corner of his mouth, then drawing it across his lips in a zipper motion, telling me, as he did several times, “Sometimes it is better to keep the mouth shut.” Buitrago was quite outspoken and, ironically, would place his hand so it almost covered his mouth while saying something important. He was friends with words and new concepts, which showed up in the long sentences and long titles in his writing. At the same time, he made complicated, hard-to-pronounce, fancy, or esoteric words, which he referred to as *la jerga*, more accessible by pairing or substituting them with common or slang words. To emphasize his point, he used paradox, satire, and hyperbole, as he had with the word “folklore.” He had a great sense of humor. At the top of his list of jokes was one regarding “the deconstruction of the deconstruction,” after Derrida, which he used to criticize himself while giving his famous ear-to-ear smile. I used to criticize him and myself when I could.

Duany’s invitation presented itself as a good excuse to reconnect with Buitrago. I had visited him only a few times over the years. I was pleasantly surprised and moved to hear he had been studying the migrant experience of Mexican workers and then of Indigenous Mayan women in Chiapas, traveling there with students and publishing about it. He had publicly acknowledged the gender omission and lack of reflexivity in his work back in 1989 (Giovannetti and García-Colón 2014, 243, 246), and I like to think my explicit or implicit criticism of it had something to do with Buitrago’s eventual admission. I wish I had collaborated with him on the project because of the opportunity it would have provided for us to explore new topics and methods, for instance, health and the environment, transnationalism and technology, and ethnopoetics and film. I also learned he got into filming with Cubero.

Sometime after I had written for Buitrago’s award, he and I talked by phone a few times. He initiated the first call. I had not

been able to get a hold of him for quite a while. We talked about our families, especially “the” (as opposed to “our”) children and grandchildren. As expected, each time, we exchanged information about what we were up to and what we were reading. I sent him a few books, including *Silencing the Past* by Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995). In one of those conversations, when I told him I was into creative writing, he told me, “Suenan bien” (sounds good). At first, I thought he said it to be mean, like saying between the lines, “Ehm, that is quite unexpected.” However, as we talked more, I no longer thought that he was being dismissive or oppositional. As I imagined Benedict, Mead, or Hurston felt about “Papa Franz Boas” (Behar 1995, 17–18), I felt the need to clarify that my doing creative writing did not mean that I would stop doing anthropology or that it was a license to do “mediocre” (another common word of his) anthropology. I wanted to tell him I was not insinuating that academic writing could not be creative. I did not get to tell him that I actually saw the two disciplines as part of a *continuum*, a *back-and-forth*, or as *transethnographic*, and that creative writing had given me more stylistic, thematic, and expressive freedom and, potentially, more access to the public.

I have been writing poetry since high school for myself, mainly observational and existential. Early on, I was inspired by poets from the Christian community, including my cousin Fela Febres at church (she was very good at reciting poetry and had a captivating voice) and Monchito Rohena (well known in the Christian community via the radio). Via elementary school events and radio and tv programs, I emotionally indulged in the work of Puerto Rican poets, such as Luis Palés Matos (known for his Black poetry) and Julia de Burgos (known for her nationalistic and romantic poetry from the woman’s perspective). Growing up, I discovered poetry in hymns and in songs that by addressing different issues and experiences, beyond the Christian and romantic themes, allowed me to explore other topics and experience life in different ways. In college, I was exposed to other local and international poets and, particularly, to British poetry. Behar’s class served to renew my interest, but it contin-

ued to be marginal until 2008 when my youngest daughter had a near-death experience.

There is no doubt in my mind that my walking toward poetry, separate from anthropology, has influenced my academic work in unexpected ways. I have applied this connection to my interest in literary anthropology and current research on religion, re-Africanization, community activism, and the environment, when teaching various courses, especially women in religion, where I include nonacademic writing, different art media, or engage students in individual and creative community projects.

The global awareness, or overawareness, and the micro-ordeal regarding the human experience that came with following Buitrago, especially in the field, have been critical to my creative writing in both English and Spanish, making it, I want to believe, attentive to the human realities present in all corners of the world down to the micro level. Like Maynard and Cahnmann-Taylor (2010, 3), I have also been able to express it in many ways. I have benefited from reading and publishing poetry along with empirical and theoretical work. I am an active member of the poetry community where I live and interact with both established and emerging poets, including students of all ages. I regularly share my work at educational, cultural, and literary events, both locally and internationally, and have also coordinated or served as a juror for some of these events. My creative practice remains deeply enriched through ongoing collaborations with fellow poets and artists, and an increasingly receptive audience.

A Most Poetic Ending

I have opted to place my academic and personal relationship with Buitrago by means of the movement from the dialectic to the dialogic, believing that there is power in words, concepts, and metaphors. I learned the dialogical approach in anthropology from Bakhtin's model at Michigan through the lenses of Tedlock and Mannheim's *The Dialogical Emergence of Culture* (1995). In *Black Puerto Rican Identity and Religious Experience*, I applied it, along the lines of literary criticism and deconstruc-

tion, to the enduring testimony narratives of Loízan elders about their religious experience, including miracle healing, and to which I dedicated one chapter of the book. I also applied it to the analysis of Loízan's various classifications, especially "race," or skin color, associated with certain expressions in my survey.

Through my research experience and the relationships developed with research participants, and through my collaboration with Buitrago and others, I have come to align with Kavouras's (2006) assertion: "To discard dialectic as an antagonistic trope, oppositional, in which a synthesis comes out of opposition... only to favor the dialogic as a process of concurrence, cooperation, and egalitarian coexistence is [not] persuasive" (n.p.). Any meaningful pursuit of dialogism, even among those whose positions appear inherently dialectical or seemingly closed to dialogical experience, must acknowledge the potential for polyphonic voices and multiple resonances, whether they are clearly situated within, or even aligned with, distinct or mutually exclusive spaces and moments. This makes me think of an ongoing discussion in women's studies, including in my *Women in Religion* course, about transcending the female-male dichotomy as part of women's liberation, with men on their side, especially in the religious realm. Ironically, both men and women have advocated for the advancement of their own groups. In the case of women, this has often taken the form of calls for agency and empowerment in response to a long-standing history of patriarchy. Cross-cultural historical evidence suggests that when women have held leadership roles, they have generally demonstrated a greater willingness to collaborate with men.

At first, it was easy to characterize my relationship with Buitrago primarily as dialectic — with gender as the main issue — for being a thesis and antithesis, a resolution or synthesis, defined by one person above the other, whether consciously or unconsciously, whether Buitrago or I. Now, I resist relying exclusively on the concept of the dialogical to describe the dynamic and the complementary, in order to make space for multivocal or polyphonic interlocutors (including Buitrago's colleagues, friends, and students, especially my classmates) — whether they are

clearly situated within, or aligned with, distinct or even mutually exclusive spaces and moments. This stance also reflects my attentiveness to the affective dimensions of memory, nostalgia, and respect, and to the ethical imperatives of privacy and responsible representation, as illustrated throughout this chapter and its multiple revisions and readings. Put differently, I refuse to commit to a conflict-free, neatly resolved balance — or to a comfortable middle ground or oscillation — between the dialectic and the dialogic, especially in an almost idyllic fashion (often found in binaries, such as reason versus intuition, power versus resistance, or structure versus agency).

What I experienced in writing this chapter lies, most of all, in the word “alliance” (as used by Newton and Stacey 1995, 301): an alliance with Buitrago’s unwavering commitment to knowledge, understanding, and the pursuit of what he considered right. This alliance is also reaffirmed and consolidated by his humility, true collaborative spirit, and openness to new ideas and change, even when these ideas stretched beyond his comfort zone. And for it, for him, I am thankful.

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Where Do Islands Go?: For an Archipelagic Caribbean

Carlo Cubero

“Culebra is not an island”: A Visit to Buitrago’s Office at the University of Puerto Rico

In 1998, soon after completing my social science degree at UPR, I was hired by a San Juan-based NGO that offered educational and social services on the island of Culebra, an offshore municipality of Puerto Rico. My responsibility was coordinating resources and services between San Juan and Culebra that would support afterschool programs, language courses, a library, an internet hub, and a community center, among other services. Before this posting, I had developed an image of Culebra as one of the poorest and most marginalized municipalities in Puerto Rico. The NGO I worked for shared this vision of Culebra. My assumptions about Culebra’s marginalization and poverty were informed by my knowledge of the island’s geographical isolation and the community’s exclusion from most of US-sponsored development programs in Puerto Rico.

After a few months of living in Culebra, I realized that my assumptions associated with insularity were inaccurate. Rather

than a homogeneous, small-scale community whose only connection to the outside was the ferry service that connected Culebra to Puerto Rico, I experienced a cosmopolitan environment, made up of Western Europeans, North Americans, West Indians, Asians, and Puerto Ricans, most of whom were directly engaged in the tourist economy. Many of the islanders with whom I interacted did not emigrate to Culebra from their place of birth but had arrived through circuitous routes, which suggested to me that it was a matter of time before they pulled up stakes again and moved elsewhere. Most of the individuals I presumed to be native islanders were not born in Culebra but in the eastern Puerto Rican city of Fajardo.

I also observed the effects of Culebra's relationship with the English and French Caribbean, as it manifested in public displays of music, performance, life stories, food, and language. Many of the community leaders I met had lived a significant portion of their lives in the Virgin Islands, Europe, and the Americas. And yet, for all this mobility, linguistic complexity, tourism, and cosmopolitanism, the narrative of the *culebrense*—and its related associations of the native, the local, tied to the land through extensive kinship relations—persisted in public discourse. The tensions I observed were not necessarily between the Indigenous and the foreigner—everybody in Culebra is historically an immigrant or had spent a significant part of their lives “abroad” or sailing through the region. Neither was it a tension between globalization and localism—I was not sure where or who the Culebra “local” was that would oppose the “global.” I felt I lacked the vocabulary and understanding that would allow me to develop a consistent understanding of social life on the island to offer the services I was hired to deliver.

With these broad questions in mind, I paid a visit to Carlos Buitrago Ortiz at his office at UPR. At the time, Buitrago was researching transnational practices of migrant farmworkers in Chiapas in an effort to understand continuities and changes in discourses and practices associated with Mexican indigeneity and its connection to labor practices. I attended numerous lectures given by Buitrago during my undergraduate studies and

listened to his presentations at academic conferences, where he made the case for a reassessment of the identity concept in a mobile and globalized context. I hoped Buitrago's research in Chiapas would offer theoretical insights into my Culebra project.

My conversation with Buitrago went in a different direction. We addressed the ethnographic tendencies of Caribbean anthropology and how, historically, it reproduced discourses of empire that fragmented the archipelago into discrete colonial spaces. We also spoke about the ways in which this discourse is reproduced in the field of Puerto Rican studies, which tends to fixate on the Puerto Rican experience and its relationship with the United States, bypassing its West Indian connections. We discussed the terms of identity discourse and its tendency to reify culture, resulting in its conflation with race, ethnicity, and nationalism. As we brainstormed, Buitrago suggested the possibility that a central component of my conceptual problem was that I was presuming that Culebra was an island—a piece of land isolated by water. Instead of looking at Culebra as a singular, easily delineated social space, an insular location, I could consider looking at Culebra as a node in a broader field of relations. I liked the way Buitrago phrased his views on Culebra, which offered an alternative to insisting on a definitive category to describe the Culebra experience.

As I said my goodbyes to my anthropology professor and thanked him for his time, he replied, "Remember, Culebra is not an island." That phrase stuck with me. It felt right. However, I wondered, if the category of "island" is not applicable to Culebra, what would be the alternative? What kind of vocabularies and methodologies can researchers develop to come to terms with the complexities of the island experience? How is an island constituted? How can we articulate and render the experiences that define the island? What are the political implications of such a description?

In this chapter, I will support the case for a perspective on islands that considers their simultaneous insular and mobile condition. My findings are informed by periods of participant

observation I have conducted on the island of Culebra since the late 1990s. Theoretically, my argument follows an emerging scholarly tradition in the fields of nissology (McCall 1994, 1996; Depraetere 2008) and island studies (Royle 2007; Baldacchino 2006; Péron 2004). This body of research aims to develop a theoretical model that takes the island experience seriously, rather than dismissing it in comparison to continental life.

I will argue for islands as complex locations whose dynamism is informed by their simultaneous mobile and static character. This seemingly paradoxical characterization does not represent a negative contradiction. Rather, it presents a creative tension from where islanders articulate a sense of identity on their own terms. This approach, I argue, broadens the perspective of the island experience and considers the different connections afforded through islands. This broader perspective entails looking at islands as the product of, and contributors to, an archipelago of relations rather than isolated units. The image of the archipelago evokes numerous possibilities. It presents an image of an insular specificity that is constituted by and contributes to other sites, foregrounds the sea as a simultaneous connector and divider of insular relationships, and promotes an interactive rather than isolating agenda. I will offer a brief summation of the terms of my argument. I will then illustrate the creative capacities of an archipelago approach by reviewing Culebra's colonization process in the 1880s, followed by the US military occupation in 1910, and the islander's successful expulsion of the military from the island in 1978. My goal in presenting this narrative is to show the reciprocal relationship between the creation of insular sites and the networks of mobility.

The Critique of the Normative Island

For Godfrey Baldacchino, the concept of *insularity* as a descriptor of an island experience carries associations of separation, backwardness, and marginality (Baldacchino 2004). The term reproduces the view of islands as sealed units, cut off from broader historical processes, and of limited social or politi-

cal relevance. Against this, Baldacchino proposes *islandness*, a concept that simultaneously acknowledges the bounded quality of islands and their constitutive openness. For Baldacchino, islands are constituted through migration, trade, ideas, and ecological events that circulate through islands. Baldacchino argues that to understand islands solely in terms of boundedness is to misrecognize their dialectic between locality and connection (Baldacchino 2004).

For Baldacchino, this dialectic reveals insularity as a historical and political process where the sea is imagined as a boundary that marginalizes the island space. The process of isolation and exclusion is naturalized once water is interpreted as shorthand for a lack—a lack of scale, of markets, of modernity. This process produces two effects. First, it renders the sea as a blank and hostile margin, rather than a medium of relation. Second, the approach fosters policy myopia that casts islands as laboratories or peripheral problems to be managed by the outside. For Baldacchino, boundedness should not be confused with closure, and external forces must be seen as central to island life.

According to DeLoughrey, these tropes have long precedents in Western imaginaries. DeLoughrey associates the imaginary of islands as isolated, marginal, and pristine with the context of the imperialist, expansionist mission (DeLoughrey 2001). From a Caribbean perspective, Mimi Sheller (2003, 131) draws a genealogy of ideas and images dating from the late European medieval period, which imagines a hitherto unvisited island location called *Antilia*. This island-space would be located in the mid-Atlantic, depicted as a utopic site, a prototype place of the noble savage, and a materialization of the garden of Eden. Sheller suggests that the construction of islands as marginalized and pristine spaces preceded European contact with the Americas and point to the discursive power dynamics at play when islands are imagined. The history of Western anthropology also reflects this entanglement. Baldacchino describes how Margaret Mead's *Coming of Age in Samoa* illustrates the ambivalence of this tradition (Baldacchino 2004). Mead's ethnography popularized the

notion of the island as a contained social world, a bounded site against which continental norms could be contrasted.

For DeLoughrey, works such as Shakespeare's *Tempest*, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Wyss's *Swiss Family Robinson*, and Stevenson's *Treasure Island* stage the island as a site for fantasies of conquest, survival, and discovery (DeLoughrey 2001). Other narratives, including Golding's *Lord of the Flies* and Stacpool's *The Blue Lagoon*, project anxieties about civilization, sexuality, and the "natural" state of humanity. Gauguin's Tahitian paintings extend the trope in visual form, representing the island as a sensual, timeless elsewhere. DeLoughrey describes these works as part of a "colonial cartography of the island," one that downplays histories of migration and oceanic exchange in favor of land-centric stories of isolation.

Culebra offers a contemporary example of the island as a "test site." Following the 2017 hurricane season, the island attracted a wave of experimental interventions: health initiatives, engineering projects, and renewable energy pilots, each promoted as scalable models for Puerto Rico or the US mainland. The same logic was visible after Hurricane Hugo in 1989, when NGOs sought to implement social and economic development programs on the island (Cubero 2017). Underlying this framework is the assumption that islands are simplified environments, defined by their difference from continental space and valued as controlled sites for experimentation.

The Nissological Response

A nissological perspective highlights how islanders have constructed a history where they figure at the center of global processes and represent the vanguard of modernity and globalization (McCall 1996). For example, many of the precedents for global industrialization can be identified in the sixteenth-century Caribbean plantation: the development of a cosmopolitan location where finance, labor, and markets are sourced from different locations and where production is linked to labor and time (Trouillot 1992; Cubero 2017, 12). Researchers have also

pointed out how islanders have experienced the first instances of the social effects connected to global events, such as rising sea levels, extreme weather, and other indicators of climate change (Briguglio 1995; Nunn 2004).

The prevailing view of Caribbeanist research is that of a region resulting from continuous Creolization among already syncretized Europeans, Africans, Asians, and Indigenous peoples. The historical movements back and forth across the Atlantic are so intense that it is problematic to either establish any kind of origin or certainty to the origins of Caribbean practices or draw predictions as to the directions that Caribbean identity may or may not take.

Interregional migrations supplement these transatlantic movements. The relationship between the islands, regardless of their colonial legacy, has been a consistent practice in the Caribbean and has become commonplace in the contemporary context (Puri 2003). Describing twentieth-century interregional migrations, Hoetink writes about Curaçaoans working in Suriname, Barbadians in Peru, and tens of thousands of Jamaicans and British Virgin Islanders working in Panama and along the coast of Central America (Hoetink 1985). Hoetink concludes:

Such movements attest to the connections between all parts of the Caribbean that we have so artificially separated; they make the social fabric of the region more complicated and in some ways more unified; and they have in some instances profound influence on power, and hence racial relations. Islands such as those in the Caribbean never have been entirely isolated but have continuously invented migration; their Robinson Crusoes have always had a chance to sight a ship. (Hoetink 1985, 76)

Inter-island migrations subvert imperialist narratives that cluster the islands according to their colonial legacy, be it Hispanic, British, French, or Dutch. In island historiographies, practices associated with mobility, travel, and connection figure as the main engine of history, the motivator of social events, contrary

to land-centric narratives that are prioritized in continental perspectives. The narratives that emerge in this context engage with culture as an ongoing process of becoming an island continuously nourished by its waves of migrations and movements, a culture of travel.

Crafting a *Culebrense* Narrative

The consensus among Culebra historians is that, before Spanish colonization in the early 1870s, the island was referred to as Passage Island, *Ile de Passage*, or *Isla Pasaje* (Feliciano 2001; Pérez 2013; Cubero 2017). Its forests of hardwood, its deep inner bay protected by mangrove trees, and its location between the Danish colonies of St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix and the Spanish colony of Puerto Rico made Passage Island an ideal place for passing ships to anchor, collect mangrove trees and timber for charcoal, or make quick repairs to their vessels. Claro Feliciano, local historian and mayor of Culebra from 1921 to 1930 and from 1934 to 1942, described mid-nineteenth-century Culebra as a place that “had turned into a refuge for fugitives, smugglers, and foreign evildoers from the Caribbean islands belonging to the kingdoms of England, France, and Denmark” (Feliciano 2001, 2; my translation). It was an island of transit under the unenforced jurisdiction of the Puerto Rican colonial government, which reported to the Spanish Crown (Iranzo 1995).

In 1871, the governor of Puerto Rico commissioned a military expedition to visit Passage Island and report on the resources of the island (Feliciano 2001). The expedition recommended that the island be colonized. The colonization expedition was led by Don Cayetano Escudero, a retired general of the Spanish army who had previously been involved in campaigns in the Philippines and North Africa. After a ceremonial shooting of a cannon, Escudero and his ten-soldier battalion proceeded to build a fort and barracks for the men. Months later, a delegation from San Juan arrived at Passage Island with orders to begin the construction of a settlement and establish the protocols by which the island was to be colonized. The delegation delineated three

streets — two honoring the king and queen of Spain, Fernando and Isabela, and one named after Escudero. Public buildings such as a post office, a pier, a delegate house, an area for the mating of cattle, and a space for a cemetery were designed and constructed. The settlement was christened San Ildefonso de la Culebra. There are different local theories as to the choice of the name San Ildefonso, which include that San Ildefonso was a Spanish saint from the Middle Ages, that it was the noble title of the Spanish minister of overseas affairs, and that it was a common name used by the Spanish to name new towns in Central America.

The government of Puerto Rico published an appeal in the *Puerto Rico Gazette* to any person who could fulfill four requirements to settle in Culebra and offered tax-free living and free transport. All potential colonizers had to (1) be agriculturalists by profession, (2) have a stipulated amount of capital, (3) be loyal to the Spanish Crown, and (4) be in good standing in their community of origin. The agreement was that the government of Puerto Rico would grant the colonizer a plot of land that the settler had to make productive within six months. If the land was cultivated to the satisfaction of the authorities, the settler's stake on the land was extended to one year, and a second inspection could allow the settler to stay for four years.

Claro Feliciano describes the settlers who responded to the call of the Puerto Rican government as representatives of the Puerto Rican peasant class from the nearby island of Vieques and the mountainous regions of eastern Puerto Rico. The settlers successfully made the land productive, and the village of San Ildefonso slowly grew, with water cisterns, a church, a medical facility, and a school following the initial constructions. By 1892, the population of Culebra had passed 200, the church had begun issuing birth and matrimonial certificates, and fifty-seven heads of cattle were brought to the island for pasturing.

Puerto Rican historian Carmelo Delgado Cintrón has argued that Spain's motivation to colonize Culebra, via military and geopolitical strategic initiatives, was to avoid further expansion of Danish, Dutch, French, and English influence in the region.

Spain had already taken possession of the eastern Caribbean and was making offers to acquire Vieques and settle in Culebra (Delgado Cintrón 1989). The insistence on committing colonizers to work the land for extended periods of time and to swear loyalty to Spain, and the presence of a military fort and garrison, followed the general pattern of Spain's policy toward the Caribbean, whereby settlers were expected to stay on the islands for extended periods, defend the territory against other European interests in the region, and contribute to the promotion of Castilian hegemony in the New World (Mintz 1996).

Settlers were charged with isolating Culebra from non-Spanish interests, but they soon came into contact with passing Danish and English merchant boats trading with the open harbor of Charlotte Amalie on St. Thomas. Passing sailors encouraged Culebra peasants to learn how to make fishing equipment, construct boats, and develop general maritime knowledge. Soon enough, the certified land laborers, charged with colonizing the island to push out squatters and discourage further settlement from other imperial interests, were looking to the sea for their sustenance and creating new trade networks. Of special value for the Danish market was sea turtle conch that was sought after by firms on St. Thomas, which would export the shells to manufacturing firms in Hamburg, Germany, to make combs, brushes, and jewelry.

These vignettes of colonization illustrate the interplay of mobile and insular discourses and practices that characterized the first decades of the official settlement of Culebra. As Creolized Spanish subjects and formally committed to a long-term colonization process, the first generation of official settlers of Culebra engaged in mobile practices and exchanges that continue to be reproduced today. The exchanges and contacts present in the first decades of the island's colonization can be seen as the beginnings of an island identity informed by an insularizing discourses of empire and its contact with other discourses and knowledge. It presents an alternative to the idea of an isolated island and offers an image of a mobile and interactive island that

contributes to the comings and goings of an interconnected archipelago.

In 1898, Spain ceded its sovereignty over Puerto Rico to the United States. The transfer of power followed the US invasion and occupation of Puerto Rico and the signing of the Treaty of Paris of 1898, which ended the Spanish–American War. In the Treaty of Paris of 1898, Spain acknowledged an independent Cuba and ceded Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines to the United States. The Treaty of Paris specified that all lands that were the property of the Spanish government, such as public buildings and unclaimed land, would pass into US jurisdiction. Lands owned by the Spanish Crown, such as roads, paths, and public parks, would continue to be used for their original purpose and administered locally. Private lands would remain private.

In the case of Culebra, this meant that any plots of land that were unclaimed or whose claimants could not provide documentation were to become the property of the US government under the executive branch's authority. Only two Culebra settlers produced such documentation. The rest of the lands were confiscated and placed under the jurisdiction of the US Department of Defense, which decided to use Culebra for military practice exercises (Feliciano 2001). Two years after the United States assumed jurisdiction of Puerto Rico, a steam battleship flying under the US flag made its way into the main bay of Culebra. Using a Mexican interpreter, naval officers informed the mayor of their intentions for the island. The US Navy planned to claim all lands that were not privately owned and use them for bombing exercises and planned to build its military base on the lands where San Ildefonso had already been established. The US Navy proceeded to move into the village and evict the people from San Ildefonso. A group of residents from San Ildefonso bought the marshlands that lay south of the island, designed a town plan with three streets, and resettled. They transported their houses and stores in barges across the bay and christened the new village Dewey in honor of US admiral George Dewey. This is the site of today's main town, municipal government

seat, and Culebra's main pier. The public buildings and houses that remained were put to new use by the military or used for scrap wood. The three streets that defined San Ildefonso were unrecognizable because a baseball field had been constructed in their place.

In 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt proclaimed the entire archipelago of Culebra a military practice range for the use of the navy. An extract from the presidential order reads:

At no time shall any person, other than persons on public vessels of the United States, enter Culebra Island Naval Defensive Sea Area, nor shall any vessels or other craft, other than public vessels of the United States, be navigated into Culebra Island Naval Airspace Reservation, unless authorized by the Secretary of the Navy. (Executive Order, Abstract from Fed. Reg. of 2-18-41; cited in Feliciano 2001)

The signing and implementation of this ordinance meant that every boat not part of the US Navy required a special pass from the base commander to travel through the area circumscribed by a perimeter of three miles around the Culebra archipelago. Given the importance that the sea played in the islanders' lives—former mayor Anastacio Soto claims that close to 90 percent of the islanders depended on the sea for their livelihood—this policy had a serious effect on the quality of life of the islanders. The US Navy effectively isolated the island space and militarized the surrounding waters. For the islanders, the kinds of limitations imposed by the navy contributed to the feeling that they were “prisoners on their own island” (Pérez 2013). For all legal and practical purposes, Culebra islanders had no access to the lands lying to the north, northeast, or southwest of the island, nor to any of the cays surrounding Culebra.

This development represented a violent change to daily life for the people of Culebra. The vast majority of local peasants lost access to their lands, which they depended on to work, lost their cattle, and, most importantly, lost access to the waters surrounding their island. This was complemented by military ma-

neuers and bombing practice, making for an unpleasant and dangerous life. Many people from Culebra moved to the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and the United States.

The presence of the us Navy in Culebra was not limited to military practices. Thousands of marines, sailors, and soldiers camped on the island, representing a significant change in the island's demography. Depending on the practice season, it is very possible that there was more us Navy personnel on the island than Culebra islanders. The islanders adapted to the circumstances, and, during the time of the us Navy occupation, they opened leisure businesses, rented out their horses, opened brothels and bars, and extended the pier and the airport, among other novelties that still can be seen on the island today.

Throughout the late 1960s, a young generation of Culebra islanders began a legal and illegal process to protest for the exit of the us Navy, free their lands, and regain access to the waters surrounding them. When I refer to "legal" practices, I am referring to conducting a propaganda campaign in the Puerto Rican and us mediascape, hiring lawyers to take their cases to the us courts, and marches in Culebra, San Juan, New York, and Washington, DC. The Culebra campaign also secured the support of numerous labor and cultural organizations in Latin America, some of which would otherwise be in ideological conflict with each other (Cubero 2017). By "illegal" practices, I refer to acts of civil disobedience, vandalism, harassment of the soldiers, incursions into the bombing zone during the military drills, and not obeying the us Navy's instructions. It is important to contextualize this struggle in the historical moment of opposition to us involvement in Vietnam, the enthusiasm generated by the anti-imperialist movements in Latin America and the Caribbean, the counterculture movement, the us civil rights movement, the rise of feminism, and other global emancipation movements.

In June 1974, after a six-year campaign of protest, President Richard Nixon signed an executive order reversing Roosevelt's 1941 ordinance and ordering all us Navy personnel and exercis-

es off the archipelago from July 1, 1975.¹ The us Navy's departure was met with massive celebrations in Culebra, attracting elements of the Puerto Rican and us elite to Culebra to celebrate and acknowledge the success of the *culebrense* project (Feliciano 2009, 90). However, the us government did not transfer the lands to its former owners. Instead, the lands passed to the us Department of Interior, which designated the lands as an environmental protection zone and declared that parts of the north of Culebra were to be managed as a natural reserve. In part, this measure was in response to the concern that the lands to the north of Culebra were littered with unexploded ordnance and extensive military matériel. Interior opted to close off some lands indefinitely and manage others as an environmental protection zone.

The news of the liberation of lands to the north of Culebra attracted elements associated with the tourist industry, land speculators, squatters, and islanders that had left the island during the navy years. Once again, the demography, economy, and quality of life in Culebra took a spectacular turn. Within a few years of the us Navy's departure, the islanders experienced an inclusion in the tourist circuit of the Caribbean. Various tourist publications rated the island's beaches among the most beautiful in the world, and tourists' receipts began increasing incrementally. Today, the tourism industry is the most significant economic activity on the island, displacing agriculture, fishing, light industry, the service sector, and cattle ranching. The tourist economy, though ushering in its own set of challenges and contradictions to the management of the island's resources, can be seen as a continuity of the complexities of Culebra's story. Tourism suggests a contact zone where social actors meet and interact within a wider political, social, economic, technological, and cultural sphere in the process of constituting a locality (Picard 2007, 97). The tourist economy plugs Culebra into a global network of relations, but it does so through imagery that

1 For more detail on the movement to oust the us Navy from Culebra, see Delgado 1989, Feliciano 2009, Copaken 2009, Pérez 2013, and Cubero 2017.

presents Culebra as undeveloped, underpopulated, and dotted with untouched natural coasts, an insular identity that is linked to the land. It is an association that is reproduced through tourism sites such as TripAdvisor.com and informs public policy and NGOs such as the one I was hired by in 1998.

Narratives that see Culebra as an isolated unit, a piece of land surrounded by disconnected waters, reproducing itself internally and on the margins of continental developments, are missing the aspects of Culebra's story that are interactive, connected, cosmopolitan, and mobile. Expelling the US Navy from Culebra was not based on binary markers of difference or otherness (colonial specificity in opposition to a global empire, *culebrense* versus Americans, etc.), nor was it about defending *culebrense* difference in opposition to the pressures of global imperialism. It was not a struggle for national liberation or access to their lands. *Culebrenses* would not have won their struggle had these been their goals. The goals of the anti-US Navy movement were more related to recovering the islanders' right to be physically mobile and to regain access to their island space—sea and land. The activists on the island of Culebra ascribed to a subtle discourse that emphasized archipelagic ties in order to make a progressive case for promoting the conditions in which autonomy, justice, and dignity were possible. For Culebra activists, the struggle with militarism was about creating a place for themselves in the world and articulating an island project on their own terms.

Conclusion: On Archipelagraphy

The characters in the Culebra story are sailors, fishermen, tourists, US sailors, pirates, protesters, and peasants who construct a sense of place while transiting through different spaces. The struggles that characterize its political program can be seen as a struggle for an insular identity intimately connected to its surrounding waters. In the case of Culebra, the sea is more than a space from where resources are extracted. It serves as more than the backdrop where the story unfolds. The phenomenal

experience of living on Culebra requires a direct engagement with the sea, and it could be argued, it represents an existential contribution to the life and consciousness of the islanders. The inhabitants of Culebra live in constant contact with the sea. Their sustenance, tattoos, home decorations, poems, songs, myths, wishes, fears, and repulsion come from the sea (Cubero 2017, 97).

The sea also figures on a macro-historic level in the context of the Americas. Paul Gilroy and Antonio Benítez-Rojo argue for the centrality of the sea in the Caribbean experience (Gilroy 1993; Benítez-Rojo 1996). For Gilroy, the process of modernity occurs at sea, in the comings and goings through the Atlantic. Gilroy traces an alternate history where the processes associated with the Enlightenment—scientific knowledge, industrialization, revolutions (United States, France, Haiti, and the independence of countries in the Americas), workers' movements, the idea of human rights, capitalism—do not occur in determined locations. Instead, they occur in a relational process at sea, in people, goods, and ideas crisscrossing the Atlantic. These maritime orientations contribute to a double-consciousness, where the modern subject is both a victim and producer of the structure of power that drives his or her creative agency.

Benítez-Rojo makes a similar analysis but with a more specific view of the Caribbean. He makes a case for the centrality of the sea in understanding the culture of the Caribbean. He suggests that the key to understanding the logic of Caribbean culture is not limited to knowledge created from a terrestrial perspective, enlightened, or following a consistent methodology. Instead, Benítez-Rojo argues, it is necessary to develop a perspective that adjusts itself to the “chaos” of the sea, its nomadism, and its improvised processes to give value to what he calls “performative identities,” the swinging of the hips, syncopation, and the knowledge that is simultaneously European, Indigenous, African, and none of them at the same time (Benítez-Rojo 2003, 18). Caribbean island experiences are constituted within this stochastic process without a past and with an uncertain future. From these perspectives, the sea is where

history happens, the locus of creativity, where revolutions occur and national programs are articulated and contested.

The image I wish to convey here reflects an approach that describes the world in archipelagic terms (Benítez-Rojo 1996; DeLoughrey 2001; Hau'ofa 1993; Pugh 2013; Stratford et al. 2011). An archipelagic perspective sees the planet as an ocean dotted by islands and island chains, in mutual relation and difference with each other. DeLoughrey (2001) called this way to see history from an island perspective “a system of archipelagraphy — that is, a historiography that considers chains of islands in fluctuating relationship to their surrounding seas, islands and continents — provides a more appropriate metaphor for reading island cultures” (23). Stratford and colleagues interpreted archipelagraphy as a “re-presentation of identity, interaction, space and place that comes across in different combinations of affect, materiality, performance, things. Such counter-mapping requires a double destabilization: dislocating and de-territorializing the objects of study — the fixity of island difference and particularity — and constituting in their place a site or viewing platform by which they are perceived and analyzed afresh and anew” (Stratford et al. 2011, 114).

Archipelagraphy is how the world looks from an island's point of view. It opposes a continental perspective that prioritizes landed narratives, methodological nationalism, its consequent conflation between land and identity, and the binary logic associated with the Enlightenment. It suggests a refocused gaze of the global map with the ocean in the foreground. The sea is then rendered as multilayered rather than a homogeneous blue expanse. This gaze would appreciate the traces of movements that create history and appreciate that lands are tips of earth that emerge from the sea momentarily before they descend back into the ocean, and the planet would be seen as an archipelago, each unit in a mimetic and altering relation to each other. The cement that bonds these elements together, connects and insulates them, is the ocean. History, in this regard, is not a progressive linear process but rather,

a discontinuous conjunction (of what?): unstable condensations, turbulences, whirlpools, clumps of bubbles, frayed seaweed, sunken galleons, crashing breakers, flying fish, seagull squawks, downpours, night-time phosphorescence, eddies and pools, uncertain voyages of signification; in short, a field of observation quite in tune with the objectives of Chaos... Chaos looks toward everything that repeats, reproduces, grows, decays, unfolds, flows, spins, vibrates, seethes... Chaos provides a space in which the pure sciences connect with the social sciences, and both of them connect with art and the cultural tradition. (Benítez-Rojo, 1996, 2–3)

I have found the archipelagic approach helpful in thinking through some of the tensions I have observed in Culebra. It provides a vocabulary and a methodology that consistently renders a program that draws its strength from its movement networks. It allows for the maintenance of an insular experience as marginalized, colonized, nationalist, and local and simultaneously maintains a sense of cosmopolitanism at the center of global processes, irreverent and mobile.

I suggest that Buitrago struggled with similar questions toward the end of his career. The findings of his participant observation exercises in Glassboro, New Jersey, and in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, suggested a profound connection between Chiapas and New Jersey. However, I do not think that he would have argued for seeing Glassboro and San Cristóbal as a singular transnational site. They did not fold into a singular location; each site kept its own specificity. The process of tracing relationships between these sites showed more of a multinodal network of relations that was informed by and informed new networks of relations. Buitrago also argued for the need to rethink the concept of indigeneity and transcend classic binary oppositions, such as tradition and modernity, urban and rural. Buitrago was also interested in the potential applications of his descriptions and actively cooperated with women's community groups in Chiapas and migrant labor unions in New Jersey.

Unfortunately, I never got to ask Buitrago how he managed to apply his research in Chiapas and New Jersey. But perhaps more unfortunate is that I did not have the opportunity to share with him how my conversations with him inspired my research in Culebra. I can only hope that this chapter does some kind of justice to my sense of debt to him.

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Unforgiving Islands: Reflections on Ethnographic Fieldwork in Cuba and Puerto Rico

Ricardo Pérez

Three years after the conclusion of my fieldwork in Puerto Rico (in 2002), I started a new research project in Cuba. Since 2005, I have examined the development of the Cuban tourism industry in Jardines del Rey, an “emerging tourist area” on the north-central coast of the island between the province of Matanzas (to the west) and the province of Camagüey (to the east).¹ Known to biologists and conservationists as the Sabana-Camagüey archipelago, Jardines del Rey covers 465 kilometers and makes up more than 60 percent of all the offshore keys in Cuba, where sand dunes, mangrove forests, and coral reefs are abundant (fig. 6.1). Since the early 1990s, when the Cuban government began to promote international tourism in the area, it has been the subject of various comprehensive natural resource management plans to preserve its diverse ecosystems. The creation and

¹ An “emergent tourist area” was how Manuel González Herrera described Jardines del Rey to me during an interview in Santa Clara, Cuba, on August 3, 2007.

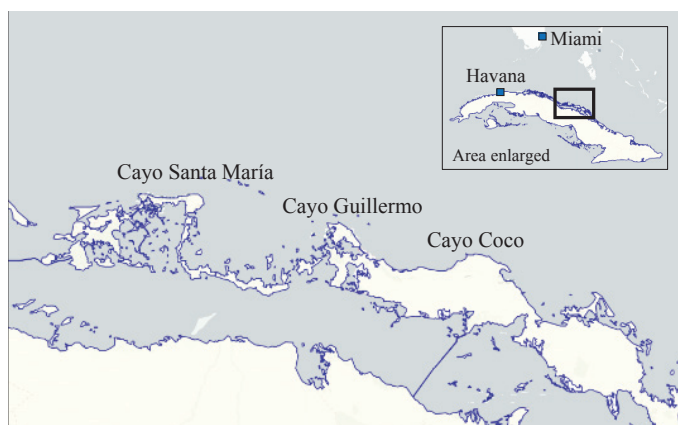


Fig. 6.1. Map of the ethnographic fieldwork sites in Cuba. (Aki Michimi)

implementation of the management plans have been a joint effort between the Cuban government, the UN Development Program, and the Global Environment Fund (Alcolado, García, and Espinosa 1999; Alcolado, García, and Arellano Acosta 2007; Menéndez Carrera, Arellano Acosta, and Alcolado 2015). Most touristic infrastructure is found along three keys — Cayo Coco, Cayo Guillermo (both in the province of Ciego de Ávila), and Cayo Santa María (in the province of Villa Clara). These keys constitute my field research sites in Cuba (R. Pérez 2010; R. Pérez 2014).

My fieldwork in Puerto Rico examined the roles played by the Puerto Rican and US governments after World War II in transforming the rural economy in three small-scale fishing communities on the southern coast (fig. 6.2). I documented the declining contribution of the small-scale fishing economy to the rural households and the steep reduction in fish landings caused by environmental pollution from nearby industries and fishermen's reliance on outdated equipment and fishing practices (R. Pérez 2002; R. Pérez 2005a; R. Pérez 2005b). By the time I left the study area, incipient plans for ecotourism development projects were being discussed by government agents and local commu-

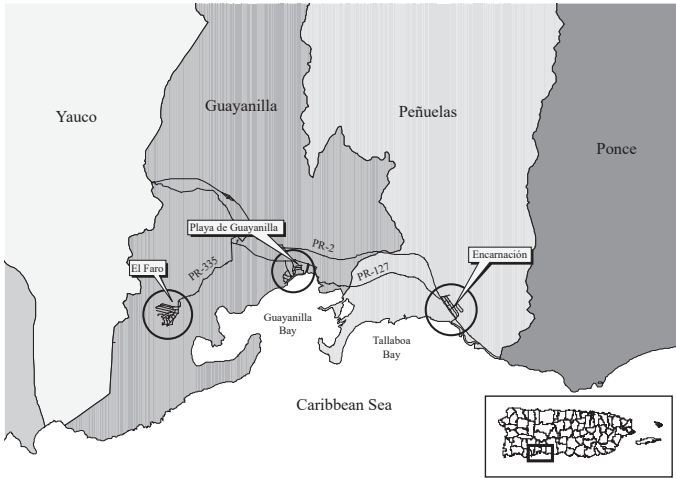


Fig. 6.2. Map of the ethnographic fieldwork sites in Puerto Rico. (Augusto F. Gandía)

nity leaders. Development plans centered on utilizing the nearby keys to promote recreational activities, such as kayaking and snorkeling. I enthusiastically supported the development of ecotourism as a potential alternative for economic diversification, but I was also wary of the prospect of using for such purposes a coastal environment heavily polluted by oil refineries and petrochemical industries. Those projects never materialized, and no further attempts (that I know of) to promote ecotourism in the area have been proposed. Hence, my interest in Cuban tourism development derives from previous fieldwork experience in a coastal environment in Puerto Rico, which, much like in the Cuban case, was slowly transitioning to a new form of natural resource utilization.

Research on Cuban tourism development since the Special Period in Times of Peace (*Período especial en tiempos de paz*) was booming when I started fieldwork in Cuba (Cabezas 2009; Colantonio and Potter 2006; Roland 2011; Spencer 2010;

Wilkinson 2008).² Likewise, at the start of the twenty-first century, journalists and social scientists were documenting the difficult everyday conditions of the Cuban population — many on the island struggled with scarce resources to meet necessities, such as food and transportation (Chávez 2005; Domínguez, Pérez Villanueva, and Barbería 2004). I wanted to understand how Cubans coped with such devastating circumstances before economic conditions gradually improved in the mid-2000s. By the time I arrived in Havana in 2005, the worst of the economic debacle had already passed, and the Cuban economy was slowly recovering. Tourism development was the engine driving the economic recovery process, and I set out to understand how tourism's effect on the Cuban economy was unfolding. I arrived in Havana with high expectations, having secured funding from my university to study the significant role that tourism was having in the socioeconomic reconfiguration of Cuban socialism since the start of the Special Period. Little did I know my Cuban research experience would differ drastically from my Puerto Rican experience.

Fieldwork in Puerto Rico went smoothly, but my fieldwork in Cuba has been very difficult because of the limited opportunities to gather ethnographic data. Access to information from government publications, magazines, and books, on the other hand, has not been problematic. In this chapter, I compare my fieldwork experiences in Cuba and Puerto Rico and focus on the difficulties I have encountered while conducting fieldwork in Cuba — my most recent research endeavor. Such difficulties are a consequence of both the tense diplomatic relationship

2 The Special Period in Times of Peace is the name that Cuban government authorities use to refer to the socioeconomic reforms implemented to deal with the devastating consequences of the fallout from the former Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc (socialist economic bloc) in 1990. Although Raúl Castro Ruz implemented major economic reforms during his twenty-year presidency (1998–2018), the main tenets of the Special Period in Times of Peace remain in place. Following the conventional use of the term on the island and in academia, hereafter I will use the shortened version of the name: Special Period.

between Cuba and the United States and the restriction by the Cuban government on conducting social science research, especially ethnographic fieldwork.³ Ethnographic fieldwork is a research methodology typical of cultural anthropology that emphasizes the systematic and meticulous study of a given research inquiry for extended periods of time. It allows anthropologists to develop in-depth, firsthand knowledge of the cultural practices of the people we study — our informants — through participant observation and structured (and sometimes unstructured) interviewing. As I shall explain, each fieldwork experience followed a different trajectory with regard to establishing rapport with informants and gaining access to sources of information.

This chapter is, thus, a reflection on ethnographic fieldwork in my two very different research contexts: first, as a “native anthropologist” doing fieldwork “at home” in southern Puerto Rico and, second, as a Puerto Rican anthropologist considered by the tourism industry workers in northern Cuba to be a *tourista libre*. The latter term, literally translated as “a free tourist,” is used in Cuba to designate those visitors arriving at the island independently rather than as academic, cultural, religious, or

3 The United States and Cuba normalized diplomatic relationships on December 17, 2014, under the administration of President Barack Obama. However, the normalization of diplomatic relationships between the two countries regressed when Donald J. Trump became president in January 2017. For example, in 2017, the Trump administration rolled back engagement with Cuban businesses believed to be owned by the armed forces in an attempt to strangle the socialist regime. Then, on April 17, 2019, the Trump administration lifted the waiver on Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity Act (1996), better known as the Helms–Burton Act. Lifting the waiver on Title III allows us citizens to sue individuals and companies that have profited from using the assets of us companies nationalized by the Cuban government after the triumph of the revolution in 1959. On May 2, 2019, two us citizens (one of them Cuban American) sued Carnival Cruise Lines for using docks in the ports of Havana and Santiago de Cuba that their families presumably owned. That same day, ExxonMobil sued the Cuban government enterprise CUPET (Cuba Petróleos) for using storage facilities in a petrochemical complex in the port of Havana formerly owned by Exxon (known at the time as Standard Oil). At the time of this writing, twenty-five Title III lawsuits have been filed against fifty-one companies, most of them based in the United States.

sports delegations members. Every time I have traveled to Cuba for research, I have been a *turista libre*. The term “native anthropologist,” on the other hand, has long been used to refer to non-West European anthropologists conducting research in their societies. In Vesna Godina’s assessment, native anthropologists are emblematic of the second “type of fieldwork situation,” where both the field site and observer are non-West European (Godina 2003, 474). Following Godina (2003), I argue that my position as a *turista libre* in Cuba constitutes a fifth variant of fieldwork situations that deviates from canonical representations of ethnographic fieldwork as a Eurocentric endeavor.⁴

Since the 1980s, native anthropologists have brought heightened attention to anthropology’s questionable political engagements with native populations in non-Western countries and, in the process, have become influential critics of Western knowledge and ethnographic practice (Buitrago Ortiz 1982; Godina 2003; Narayan 1993). The aprioristic view of native anthropologists as unbiased critics, however, is not without its pitfalls. Their position as researchers in a field setting they might be familiar with does not necessarily render them objective participant observers or owners of inside cultural knowledge. Instead, it pushes them to confront their biases as they attempt to interpret, through “the alchemy of fieldwork,” the objectification of their culture that informants produce in multiple conversations and interviews (Rabinow 1977, 3). The balancing act of writing about this cultural objectification for a wider audience might explain why, as Samiri Hernández describes in Chapter 4 in this

4 The first variant of fieldwork situations described by Vesna Godina is typified by the “classical setting,” in which a West European anthropologist conducts research in a non-European field. The third variant is typified by a West European anthropologist conducting research in a West European field (fieldwork at home) and the fourth by a non-West European anthropologist (such as herself) conducting research in a West European field. My position as a “native anthropologist” conducting fieldwork in a non-European field (but in a different society from my own) differs significantly from the four variants described by Godina (2003).

volume, “native anthropologists” are seen merely as informants rather than scholars in their own right.

In this chapter, I use the terms “native anthropologist” and *turista libre* as codes to discuss my position as a researcher with previous cultural knowledge of the communities in Cuba and Puerto Rico I have studied for the past two decades. I should note that the term “native anthropologist” never came up in my conversations with Buitrago, or in any of the courses I took with him in the late 1980s, even though the term was gaining currency in US academic discourse (Jones 1970; Narayan 1993; Ohnuki-Tierney 1984). Like all the contributors to this book, I pay homage to Buitrago and acknowledge his influence on my personal and professional development, starting with my formative years as an anthropology major at the University of Puerto Rico. As I reflect upon the significance of fieldwork in cultural anthropology, especially toward the end of the chapter (where I compare my fieldwork experiences in Cuba and Puerto Rico), Buitrago’s undeniable influence will be readily apparent to every student who also passed “through his formidable strainer” (this volume, 120).⁵ Before comparing my experiences with fieldwork in Cuba and Puerto Rico, I shall describe my ongoing research in Cuba.

Cuban Tourism Development Takes Flight

The Cuban government’s decision to open its centralized economy to international tourism resulted from the collapse of the Eastern bloc, which was composed of the former Soviet Union and the East European country members of the Council of Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA). During the first half of the 1990s, Cubans struggled to maintain the comfortable living standards they had become accustomed to during the three

5 Equally influential in the development of my research in Puerto Rico were my relationship and intellectual conversations about Puerto Rican fisheries with Manuel Valdés Pizzini, once he became a member of my dissertation committee.

decades of benevolent Soviet economic subsidization. The sudden lack of access to markets for Cuban products in member countries of the CMEA — estimated to account for 85 percent of Cuba's foreign trade — dealt a huge blow to the faltering Cuban economy (Díaz Vázquez 2010). For example, acute fuel shortages hampered the Cuban government's ability to power thermoelectric plants and to run the public transportation systems regularly. Limited access to food, construction materials, and even clothing complicated the already vulnerable living conditions for millions of Cubans across the island. To the surprise of many international observers, the Cuban government continued to provide access to health care and education to the general population with relatively few setbacks (Chávez 2005; Domínguez 2004; Roland 2011; Rosenberg Weinreb 2009).

The opening of Cuba to international tourism was an unintended consequence of the collapse of socialism in the former Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe. The promotion of the Cuban tourism industry thus began reluctantly. According to Jorge Domínguez, a speech by President Fidel Castro Ruz during the inauguration of the Paradiso and Sol Palmeras hotels in Varadero Beach on May 10, 1990, spearheaded the promotion of tourism development on the island (Domínguez 2004, 17). In his peculiarly assertive demeanor, Castro Ruz proclaimed that tourism would become an important activity in the island's future economic development plans. His remarks, however, revealed little knowledge about the industry and confusion about the best way to turn tourism development into a viable economic strategy. As the following quote attests, Castro Ruz's passionate speech bordered on careless improvisation: "We do not know how to administer a hotel, how to handle tourism and — gentlemen, I do not know whether to say it or not — how to make more money out of tourism, how to better exploit tourism."⁶

6 "Es que no sabemos cómo se administra un hotel, como se maneja el turismo y — caballeros, no sé si emplear la palabra o no — como se le saca más dinero al turismo, como se explota mejor el turismo" (quoted in Domínguez 2004, 17). This and all translations from Spanish are mine.

Almost a decade later, in a speech at the 1998 meeting of CARIFORUM in the Dominican Republic, Castro Ruz elaborated on the role that tourism should play in the Caribbean economic development:

Through the development of multiple destinations, tourism could well become the catalyst to promote commerce, investments, and contact between our countries. We could project ourselves to the world as an attractive tourist destination, a unique and diverse destination that, at the same time, gives a good example of how to preserve the environment and our natural resources. In the tourist development of our area, we are not, nor will we be, adversaries but close partners and collaborators.⁷

The inauguration of the Paradiso and Sol Palmeras hotels in 1990 — the result of a joint venture created by the Cuban government and the Spanish hotel company Sol Meliá — typifies the Cuban tourism development model from the start of the Special Period. According to Manuel González Herrera, this model is anchored to three pillars. First is the joint venture with (mostly) European hotel chains, such as Sol Meliá, Barceló, Iberostar, and Accor. In this arrangement, the Cuban government retains more than half of the earnings from the joint venture. The second pillar is the agreement with hotel management, whereby Cuba provides the workforce, and the transnational hotel corporation trains Cuban tourism workers. Here, Cuba seeks to take advantage of its commercial association with a recognized

7 “El turismo, a través del multi-destino, bien podría convertirse en el promotor del comercio, las inversiones, y los contactos entre nuestros países. Podríamos proyectarnos al mundo como un destino turístico más atractivo, un destino único y diverso que al mismo tiempo brinde un buen ejemplo en cuanto a la preservación del medio ambiente y nuestros recursos naturales. En el desarrollo turístico de nuestra área no somos ni seremos competidores sino socios y colaboradores estrechos” (quoted in Rodríguez Millares 2001, epigraph).

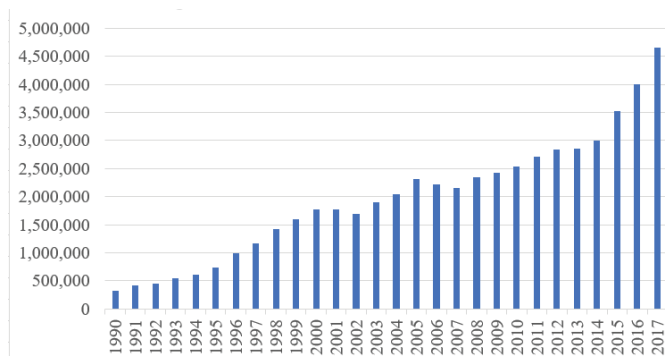


Fig. 6.3. International tourist arrivals, 1990–2017. (*Anuario Estadístico de Cuba, Turismo*)

global brand.⁸ The third pillar is typified by the hotel enterprise with sole national investment and management. Islazul, a Cuban brand that seeks to meet the demands of domestic tourists, is a good example of this kind of government investment and management.

Since the late 1990s, the Cuban tourism industry has developed rapidly, and about thirty years later, tourism has become one of the most dynamic sectors of the Cuban economy (fig. 6.3). Official statistics from the Cuban government revealed that in 2018, Cuba received a record 4.75 million international tourists, and in 2017, revenues from the industry soared to 3.3 billion CUC\$ (*Anuario Estadístico de Cuba* 2018, 16; Wood 2018).⁹ Undoubtedly, the Cuban government has devoted ample resources to promote tourism development, aiming to earn much-needed

8 Excerpt from an interview with Manuel González Herrera on August 3, 2007. The Spanish quote: “sobre todo con el fin de aprovechar su nombre comercial, o sea, la marca.”

9 Since the introduction of the Cuban convertible peso (CUC) in 1994 until its elimination in 2021, a dual currency system existed on the island: the CUC and the Cuban peso (CUP). The CUC was used to pay for commodities and services in the tourism-based economy and in government-designated stores to acquire hard currencies. It was pegged to the US dollar at the rate of 1:1. The CUP was used to pay for all daily economic transactions, and it was pegged to the CUC at the rate of 1:24.

revenue to keep the island's economy afloat amidst an uncertain socioeconomic and political future. As numerous scholars have noted, sun-and-sand tourism is, by far, the most popular modality among international tourists (Cabezas 2009; Simoni 2016; Spencer 2010). However, an increasingly diversified portfolio of Cuban tourism attractions exists, including modalities such as ecotourism, health tourism, heritage and cultural tourism, and urban tourism. Sun-and-sand tourism remains the dominant modality, especially in tourist areas such as Varadero and Jardines del Rey, but the capital city of Havana — with an impressive catalog of attractions to meet the high demand for cultural and urban tourism — continues to be the most visited place on the island.

Tourism Development in Jardines del Rey

The expansion of tourism development in Jardines del Rey has been made possible by constructing causeways. *Pedraplenes*, as Cubans call them, are long and sinuous corridors over the Caribbean Sea that connect the offshore keys with the Cuban mainland, forming what Tomás Cárdenas García and Naida Orozco Sánchez (2012) have aptly called “stone necklaces.” The causeways were built by dumping rocks and soil into the shallow bays separating mainland Cuba from the offshore keys. The first causeway (Pedraplén Turiguanó to Cayo Coco), built between 1989 and 1991, caused major environmental damages, such as the destruction of mangrove forests and the decimation of fish species and maritime flora and fauna (Cepero and Lawrence 2006; Scarpaci and Portela 2009, 124–35). Construction of the second causeway (Pedraplén Caibarién to Cayo Santa María) lasted from 1994 to 2001. Its design included forty-eight bridges, which allowed for the movement of maritime currents and fish species in a north–south direction (figs. 6.4a–b). This design has been credited with a noticeable recovery of maritime and aquatic ecosystems and mangrove forests (Alcolado, García, and Arellano Acosta 2007, 65).



Figs. 6.4a–b. Top: Turiguanó to Cayo Coco Causeway; bottom: Caibarién to Cayo Santa María Causeway. Photos by the author.

In 2011, the Spanish foundation San Benito de Alcántara presented Cuba with the Premio Iberoamericano Príncipe de Alcántara for the best engineering project built anywhere in Latin America and the Iberian Peninsula between 1998 and 2000 for the second causeway project (Cárdenas García and Orozco Sánchez 2012, 183; Quintana et al. 2004, 162–63). Halfway across the Caibarién-to-Cayo Santa María causeway, a rustic monument commemorates this achievement with three rugged limestone boulders, one emblazoned with three engraved copper plaques. One of the plaques reproduces the following excerpt from the award jury's decision: "The Caibarién-to-Cayo Santa María causeway is a construction project for the future of the Cuban economy, planned and developed with the utmost respect for the natural environment, whose transcendence for the socioeconomic development of the Santa Clara region and the northern littoral of the island of Cuba is unquestionable."¹⁰

Two important observations about tourism development in Jardines del Rey must be noted. First, Cuban nationals have never inhabited the offshore keys permanently, since they have been devoted to promoting economic activities such as agriculture, ranching, fishing, and, especially since the early 1990s, tourism. In November 1993, Hotel Jardín de los Cocos was inaugurated on Cayo Coco, unleashing a dramatic expansion of the touristic infrastructure in the area, which has continued unabated until the present (González Martínez 2010; Tamayo Torres 1997). Second, the Cuban government built the Center for Coastal Ecosystems Research on Cayo Coco before any hotel installation or touristic infrastructure was built in Jardines del Rey. Building a research center with the lofty ideal of promoting environmental conservation in the area clearly indicates the Cuban government's genuine concern with sustainable tourism development in the area. Most journalists and scholars writing about Cuba's

10 The original Spanish quote: "Una obra de gran importancia para el futuro de la economía cubana planificada y desarrollada con el máximo respeto hacia el medio natural y de indudable transcendencia para el desarrollo económico y social de la región de Villa Clara y en general del litoral norte de la isla de Cuba."

socioeconomic transformation since the Special Period tend to overlook these two factors.

The academic literature on the Cuban Special Period emphasizes both positive and negative outcomes of tourism development, leading a prominent British scholar to ponder whether Cuban tourism development is “a curse or a blessing” (Wilkinson 2008, 979). Ethnographic renderings, on the other hand, overly emphasize how tourism development exacerbates racial and social inequities (Roland 2011), contributes to an increase in antisocial and delinquent behavior, such as prostitution (Cabezas 2009), and commodifies the history of the Cuban Revolution for tourist consumption (Babb 2011). I see tourism development in Cuba as neither a curse nor a blessing. Instead, I see it as a complex domain of action with the potential to unleash numerous social problems (as the ethnographies mentioned above clearly show) but simultaneously to afford Cuba an opportunity to reinvigorate its stagnant economy. In the case of Jardines del Rey — an impressive landscape with diverse and sensitive ecosystems — the challenge for tourism development lies precisely in resolving the dilemma between expanding the tourism industry and preserving the natural resources it depends on.

Conducting Fieldwork in Cuba “is not easy”¹¹

In the introductory chapter of *Economies of Desire*, Amalia Cabezas (2009), a native of Cuba, recounted her obstacles to conducting ethnographic fieldwork on the island. Her status as “a Cuban émigré living in the United States” complicated her access to informants rather than helping it (Cabezas 2009, 6). Cabezas entered several situations and spaces normally off limits to researchers and foreigners by becoming an “assistant tour guide for educational conferences, business meetings, and music festivals in Havana, Santiago, and Varadero” (7). Her case is not

11 Cubans use the colloquial expression *no es fácil* (it's not easy) to refer to a wide array of difficult everyday situations and circumstances.

anomalous. Australian anthropologist Rachel Spencer (2010) also researched tourism development in Cuba by working as a tour guide for renowned NGOs Oxfam and Global Exchange. Likewise, American anthropologist Florence Babb (2011) wrote a segment of *The Tourism Encounter* based on her experiences as a member of various tour groups to Cuba in the mid- to late 1990s. Finally, Swiss anthropologist Valerio Simoni (2016) explained in *Tourism and Informal Encounters in Cuba* that he was able to interact with Cubans and independent tourists by circumventing state regulations against the open and free interactions between international tourists and Cuban hosts in Havana and Viñales. In essence, the methods whereby anthropologists begin to conduct ethnographic research in contemporary Cuba do matter.

I have faced similar obstacles mainly because of the “awkward, contentious, and erratic relations that characterize U.S.-Cuba affairs,” which Cabezas aptly described in *Economies of Desire* (2009, 6). For instance, a lack of diplomatic relationships between Cuba and the United States (before 2014) prevented me from establishing a research agreement with Cuban institutions, such as the University of Havana or the School of Higher Studies in Hospitality and Tourism, even though I followed the official procedures to do it. The Cuban government is suspicious of us citizens conducting social science research on the island. As a close Cuban friend has told me several times, the Cuban government considers any us citizen to be a potential spy. There is also a long history of us intervention in island affairs before the Cuban Revolution of 1959, and direct attempts to destabilize the socialist regime since the breakup of diplomatic relationships in 1962 have persisted into the present (Al Jazeera 2025; Kapcia 2008; LeoGrande and Kornbluh 2014; L. Pérez 2013). For example, the maintenance of an economic embargo for the past five decades—a us foreign policy that has caused great hardships for the Cuban population—is emblematic of Cuban government officials’ distrust of us foreign policy toward the island. Any us-based researcher engaged in ethnographic fieldwork on the island (myself included) must grapple with this reality.

My Puerto Rican background and native fluency in Spanish did not afford me an advantage over the anthropologists named above (for whom Spanish is not their native language), as some people might think. Knowing Spanish helped me communicate with Cubans, but the government officials I approached at several institutions of higher learning did not see me as any different from other foreign researchers. Although they seemed to be aware of the lingering colonial ties between Puerto Rico and the United States — a condition that could have potentially created sympathy toward my position as a “native anthropologist” from a colonized territory — they nonetheless noted that I came to Cuba directly from the United States, not from Puerto Rico. Moreover, their awareness of Puerto Rico’s condition as a US territory may have led them to believe that the US government supported my research. Only when all doors to the official approval of my research were closed did I engage in the type of “informal encounters” that, according to Simoni (2016), tend to occur between foreigners and Cubans when ready access to informants is restricted.

As in Puerto Rico, cultural anthropology in Cuba is not a well-known discipline, and its development alongside other social sciences has been marginal. Moreover, in Cuba, the rapid development of archaeology and physical anthropology since the late nineteenth century — subdisciplines that received institutional support to foster research and the collection, classification, and exhibition of artifacts deemed important for the (intellectual) construction of a national discourse on *cubanía* — overshadowed cultural anthropology (Rangel Rivero 2012). Especially during the first half of the twentieth century, prominent Cuban researchers obtained advanced degrees in medicine, physical anthropology, and archaeology (mainly in France) and, upon returning to Cuba, participated in archaeological expeditions across the island. On most occasions, American archaeologists using European-trained Cuban personnel led those expeditions. Archaeological and osteological remains from pre-Columbian sites (particularly Taíno) provided count-

less artifacts that helped archaeologists trace the history and evolution of the Cuban Indigenous past (Rangel Rivero 2012).

On the other hand, cultural anthropology owes its development to an endogenous attempt by Cuban researchers to document the cultural expressions of the different ethnic groups (of Indigenous, African, and European stock) that make up the Cuban population. The interest within a small cadre of social scientists, such as Fernando Ortiz and Lydia Cabrera, in the ethno-racial makeup of *cubanía* resulted from historical, sociological, and legal case studies with a tenuous connection to cultural anthropology. Their emphasis on Afro-Cuban themes led to a proliferation of cultural studies focusing on Africa's contributions to Cuban popular religions, traditions, language and speech patterns, and music (Victori 2003). However, cultural anthropology did not become a regular subject at the university level until the second half of the twentieth century. On the few occasions when cultural anthropology was part of the university curriculum, it was confounded with ethnology, indicating the marked French influence on Cuban anthropologists. At no point in the development of cultural anthropology were the crafts of ethnographic fieldwork and writing included in the university curriculum.¹² With the dramatic transformation of the Cuban higher education system after the Cuban Revolution, cultural anthropology was relegated to even more marginal position vis-à-vis related disciplines such as sociology, history, and psychology (Espina 2003; Victori 2003).

In contemporary Cuba, the expression “doing research” seems to carry negative connotations. To do research is to investigate and probe for answers to a particular inquiry. The Spanish word *investigación* provokes suspicion and distrust, because it can also be understood as meddling—in the highly politicized Cuban context, *investigación* is a deterrent for government officials, who, in actuality, are responsible for the approval of re-

12 For a brief analysis of the development of anthropology in Puerto Rico since the mid-twentieth century and a critique of the “culturalist” perspective in Puerto Rican archaeology, see Buitrago Ortiz 1982.

search projects on the island. In a professorial tone, a Cuban acquaintance, whom I met in 2005, instructed me to “modify the language” and “use words such as [knowledge] dissemination or even collaboration.”¹³ He also reminded me of the need to explain clearly the benefits of my research to the Cuban people. He also expressed the commonly held belief that conducting social science research for the sake of research is not highly regarded in Cuba. Ethnographic data and knowledge need to be framed as contributing to creating and implementing government policies. For him, a better approach was to suggest that my research would be useful, for instance, in developing workshops to train tourism workers. Unsurprisingly, after this early lesson on the tribulations of conducting research in Cuba, I was compelled to modify my speech patterns whenever I approached the Cuban people, my would-be informants necessary to conduct ethnographic fieldwork on the island.

Conducting research in Cuba requires tremendous patience and perseverance (Kirk 2013). Besides the limitations stemming from the lack of diplomatic relationships between Cuba and the United States (before 2014), there are also limitations stemming from the political control exerted by the Cuban government over every aspect of Cuban life. Contrasting sharply with my fieldwork experience in southern Puerto Rico, where the interactions with informants in the three fishing communities studied went smoothly, in Cuba, it has been very difficult to engage freely with informants in a loose, unscripted, and unpredictable manner. In Puerto Rico, I never faced incessant questioning by skeptical informants (except for a couple of youngsters who one day questioned me about taking pictures, without their consent, of a row of wooden houses in an isolated section of one of the fishing communities). In contrast, in Cuba, I have avoided immersing myself in everyday activities where police presence might deter open interactions with Cuban informants. This has been more the case in Havana and the provincial cities

13 The Spanish quote: “el lenguaje hay que modificarlo y usar vocablos tales como divulgar o colaborar.”

and towns than in the keys of Jardines del Rey, where my interactions with international tourists have taken place within the protected boundaries of all-inclusive hotel resorts. Inside those fortified spaces, my interactions with Cuban hosts have been mediated by their roles and position as tourism workers.

Identities in Question

Following the advice of the Puerto Rican anthropologist Antonio Lauria Perricelli, who once told me, “in Cuba, participant observation is not regarded highly,” I chose to stay away from frequent interactions with informants in public places, such as streets, plazas, and parks.¹⁴ In the fortified spaces of the all-inclusive hotel resorts in Jardines del Rey, private guards constantly surveil the premises, checking for individuals who do not belong there. The colored bracelets that hotel guests must wear all the time greatly facilitate policing — people without the bracelet or with a different colored bracelet are quickly approached and questioned. I did not notice such overt police presence or surveillance in the *casas particulares* where I stayed, but I should mention that the owners of *casas particulares* must report the name and personal data, such as passport number and visa information, of every guest who rents their homes to local police delegations.¹⁵ Living in a fishing community in southern Puerto Rico and commuting daily between the communities that were my field sites, there were never such concerns. Constant and unchecked movement and continuous interactions with in-

14 The Spanish-language quote: “En Cuba, la observación participe no se ve bien.” In 2004, Antonio Lauria Perricelli and I participated in a workshop on Cuban Studies at Casa de las Américas, one of the premier cultural institutions in Cuba. The workshop, sponsored by the Latin American Studies Association, afforded me the opportunity to network with Cuban researchers and government officials as I began to design my research on tourism development since the Special Period.

15 A *casa particular* can be described as a bed-and-breakfast. Homeowners must obtain a license from the Cuban government in order to rent their homes to domestic or international tourists, for which they pay taxes to the government for the services rendered to the tourists.

formants in public and private places characterized my Puerto Rican fieldwork experience as a *native anthropologist*. In Cuba, my interactions with informants have resulted mainly from being labeled a *turista libre*, pointing to my status as an independent traveler. Since 2005, I have traveled to Cuba for research. Even though the US government relaxed some travel regulations after the normalization of diplomatic relations in 2014, the US government still prohibits its citizens from traveling to Cuba as tourists. For US citizens to travel legally to Cuba, they must qualify for the general license under one of twelve travel categories, including people-to-people exchanges, educational and religious activities, and professional research. Because I could never establish a research agreement with a Cuban institution, I always traveled to Cuba with a tourist visa as stipulated by the general license. In such a manner, the legal construction of “tourist” undoubtedly blurs any distinction between the tourist and the anthropologist (Crick 1995).

Malcolm Crick (1995) has persuasively argued that anthropologists and tourists share similar motivations—each group of travelers attempts to make sense, albeit through different epistemes, of the “other” culture they have come to visit. What better proof of this “identity in question” than the experiences as anthropologists-*cum*-tourists by Florence Babb (2011), Amalia Cabezas (2009), Rachel Spencer (2009), and Valerio Simoni (2016), from which they derived their insights into Cuban tourism in the twenty-first century (Crick 1995, 205). Being a *turista libre*, that is, traveling to Cuba without the convenience (or constraints) of a prearranged travel itinerary, differs considerably from experiences as either a participant in or an organizer of guided tours. As a *turista libre*, my encounters and interactions with Cuban informants have not been as circumscribed as others’ appear to be by their participation in guided tours. The staged nature of the guided tour is, according to Dean MacCannel (1976), the defining principle of the supposedly inauthentic cultural encounter between hosts and guests (see also Smith 1989).

Another important remark by Crick concerns “the reality... that what one does in the field is determined by what other people allow one to be” (Crick 1995, 216). To the Cuban informants and hosts I have known through the years, it does not matter that, in Cuba, I never feel like a tourist — for them, I am just another tourist who comes on one of the countless tours they have successfully hosted. It also does not matter to them that I usually stay at a *casa particular* and rarely at a hotel or that, because I am obsessed with being an anthropologist all the time (as I learned well from Buitrago), I incessantly write field notes to document my research experience on the island.¹⁶ Writing field notes has afforded me the best chance to enhance my evolving analysis of Cuban tourism. Field notes from observations and interactions with Cuban informants have helped me to understand the changing Cuban reality better than the information gathered from books and government reports at various libraries and research centers in Cuba and the United States.

Writing field notes constitutes my secure entry into Cuban everyday life. Just as with my field notes from Puerto Rico, the goal is to let the field notes produce the record of the fieldwork situation and convey to readers the objectification of Cuban culture that develops from the dialectic relationship “between reflection and immediacy” (Rabinow 1977, 38). Anthropologists still consider writing field notes a crucial aspect of ethnographic fieldwork; it is possibly the most important legacy of the anthropological dictum of “being there” in the field and of its claim to authority, objectivity, and truth. The social life of field notes is something to behold: From preliminary scribbles, they become (no doubt after multiple iterations) significant descriptions and reflections of fieldwork. Similarly, they can be safely guarded in archives for eventual analysis (using a different interpretive gaze

16 Whenever I visit Jardines del Rey, I must stay at a hotel. There are no communities (and thus no family homes) in the keys to rent from the owner of a *casa particular*.

than the one originally used by the anthropologist) long after they were scribbled in the field.¹⁷

From Buitrago, I learned that writing field notes facilitates the practice of ethnographic fieldwork by underscoring the need for “thick descriptions” of local meanings (Geertz 1973). As I now understand it, writing field notes is fundamental to understanding the subject of our research and enhancing the theoretical framework with which to analyze ethnographic data. Field notes, however, are partial facts that reveal only cultural knowledge fragments. For instance, from writing detailed field notes after fortuitous encounters with tourism workers in Jardines del Rey, I have learned about their work experiences in the tourism industry. However, those field notes provide little information about the cultural transformation that Cuba is currently going through. In other words, those field notes fail to contextualize properly the complex global transformations of the capitalist world system into which Cuba is trying to reinsert itself.

Therefore, we should not limit ourselves to writing field notes to describe the encounter, interaction, and conversation with our informants. Rather, we should place the field notes within a coherent theoretical framework to understand the effect of our informants’ larger socioeconomic and political structures. I agree with Buitrago’s (1973) statement that ethnographic fieldwork should develop alongside the production of social theories to create a unified body of inquiry. He eloquently wrote in the epilogue to *Esperanza: An Ethnographic Study of a Peasant Community in Puerto Rico*: “Cultural anthropology should be a theoretical discipline and fieldwork the ‘dialectic husband’ of theory” (1973, 207). In Cuba—a politicized society where access to sources of information is curtailed by government control and oversight of research plans—being a *turista libre* has

17 For a nuanced interpretation of the sociocultural and economic transformations in post–World War II Puerto Rico and Cuba using the field notes by Sidney Mintz, Eric Wolf, and Carl Withers, see García-Colón 2017; Giovannetti 2015; and Giovannetti, Escobar González, and Tapia Santamaría 2015.

provided me with a unique opportunity to travel within the island, observe the remarkable culture of the Cuban people, and document ethnographically the changing socioeconomic reality of the island as it continues to unfold in front of our very eyes.

Atypical Ethnography

Ethnographic fieldwork continues to be vital for cultural anthropology (Godina 2003; Rabinow 1977). Through fieldwork, anthropologists can understand the complexities and realities of their informants. The practice of fieldwork has changed significantly since the beginning of the twentieth century, when Bronisław Malinowski conducted his seminal research in Melanesia, and even since the second half of the century, when Buitrago conducted his research in Barrio Esperanza and Paul Rabinow conducted his in Morocco (Buitrago 1973; Malinowski 2013; Rabinow 1977). I can only describe my Cuban fieldwork as atypical. For example, I have sparsely utilized typical research techniques, such as formal interviews, demographic censuses, and surveys. In Puerto Rico, on the other hand, I utilized those research techniques with little concern for potential setbacks. As a result, in Cuba, I have attempted to take advantage of informal encounters with informants or, in the words of Rabinow, “the structure of the situation” (1977, 130).

My position and identity as a “native anthropologist” in Puerto Rico required less patience and perseverance because of the fewer restrictions on my interaction with informants and no limitations on collecting field data. In contrast, my position and identity as a *turista libre* in Cuba have slowed the progress of my research. My fieldwork experience in Cuba has been like a whirlwind—at times, it envelops me in the satisfaction of documenting a dramatic moment in Cuban history, and other times, it frustrates me to see that it does not advance as swiftly as I hoped. On many occasions, I have questioned the feasibility of my Cuban project. Nevertheless, I have never questioned whether conducting ethnographic fieldwork would allow me to understand the history and development of Cuban tourism

during the Special Period better than other (typical) research methods.

For the past two decades, I have used ethnographic methods and social theories to understand the sociocultural and economic transformations of Cuba and Puerto Rico, two unforgiving islands with divergent post–World War II development trajectories. As their respective economies and societies modernized in the second half of the twentieth century, both islands have revealed themselves as flexible, global, and cosmopolitan (Cubero, Chapter 5 in this volume; Pérez 2005a, 69–96). Marrying ethnographic fieldwork to social theories in the dialectical unison that Buitrago (1973) considered necessary for the future development of Puerto Rican anthropology still resonates with the newer generations of anthropologists currently conducting fieldwork in Puerto Rico and beyond.

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From Chiapas to Florida: A Reflection on Maya Indigenous Migrant Practices

Jessica Santos López

Introduction

As an undergraduate student, I had the opportunity to conduct research in the highlands of Chiapas as Carlos Buitrago Ortiz's research assistant (2001–2005). We interviewed Maya Indigenous peoples, mostly women, in rural communities and in San Cristobal de Las Casas (SCLC), the closest urban center. We analyzed their perspectives regarding a potential migratory process and their experiences leaving and settling in SCLC. These people lacked economic resources, and our findings demonstrated their need to activate and accumulate social and symbolic capital that allowed them to operate in the urban center (Buitrago Ortiz and Santos Lopez 2004). Another critical component of their narratives, relevant to this chapter, was the nonlinear and unpredictable nature of the migratory process.

As a young Puerto Rican anthropologist, I found value in these women's narratives. I tried to make sense of their extraordinary efforts and courage to initiate long journeys on unpaved

roads through steep mountains to SCLC, nearby cities, and the United States. I had never lived anywhere but in Puerto Rico, so I could not imagine them traveling long distances, further removed from possibilities to activate their cultural and symbolic capital (Buitrago Ortiz and Santos Lopez 2004). This research incredibly influenced my limited understanding of inequality and cultural differences. I eagerly explored social theories and ethnographies suggested by Buitrago Ortiz, but my knowledge was not grounded in the experience of any social reality other than my own. Since then, I have been fascinated by the complexity of migration processes and the migration experience itself. Chiapanecan women's migration processes often began with a desire or need to migrate from rural to urban areas, with periodic returns to rural areas and farm fields, thereby becoming farmworkers. Interestingly, their narratives challenged the supposed rural-urban dualism (Roberts 1990; Kearney 1996; Hernández Corchado 2018). They would return periodically for different reasons, including to visit family members or during the off time that characterizes seasonal farm jobs. There was a circulation of migrants and their narratives, which bear a resemblance to Buitrago Ortiz's use of the concepts *altura-bajura* to address the "symbiotic relationship between the peoples and livelihoods of the highlands and those of the plains and coastal areas" (Valdés Pizzini 2021, 10–12).

My interest in exploring these themes developed into a passion in graduate school. The absence of an anthropology graduate program in Puerto Rico pushed me off the island. I applied to various graduate schools and pursued a master's in the Netherlands. Initially, I experienced Europe on a student visa, but I overstayed my visa and became an undocumented low-wage worker. People often mistook me for someone from Eastern Europe or South America and would be mesmerized by learning I was from Puerto Rico. I was even more *exotic*. The guessing game soon stopped being enjoyable, and job opportunities were limited. My survival wage came from cleaning homes and offices and waitressing. My passion for studying migration processes matured, and I decided to pursue a PhD. As a colonial subject,

the promise of economic benefits for someone considered a minority in the United States was increasingly alluring. My objective became to attend a graduate program that would offer me a decent scholarship, which I received from the State University of New York (SUNY).

While doing my doctoral studies at Binghamton University, I attended a women factory workers conference. It was an all-women panel with powerful speeches addressing critically their working conditions. They were sharing their struggle to demand better working conditions and wages at a PACTIV factory, a manufacturer of food packaging, in New Jersey. Most of these women traveled daily from the Lower East Side (LES) and Chinatown to New Jersey. Translators were helping these Spanish- and Mandarin-speaking women to tell their stories. This is when I first heard about the Chinese Staff and Workers' Association (CSWA) and the National Mobilization Against Sweatshops (NMASS), based in Manhattan's Chinatown and LES, respectively. This group of People of Color (POC) immigrant women were enmeshed in a becoming-belonging cycle, where their class, race, and gender were and still are a major centripetal force. Here, I discovered that many immigrant workers in the United States do not organize in labor unions, but in worker centers. They are community-based, primarily immigrant organizations that address workers' issues using popular education as an essential learning and organizing tool. Through my fieldwork, I learned that many so-called Mexican workers were, in fact, Indigenous peoples, and many did not even come from Mexico. Most members of the National Mobilization Against Sweatshops (NMASS), a worker center in Chinatown of the Lower East Side of New York City, originated from Guatemala, Mexico, and several other countries in Central and South America. At NMASS, I was fortunate to become friends with a Mixtecan organizer from Chiapas and to listen to his migration process. The connection between the narratives of the soon-to-be immigrants in Chiapas and those who settled in cities such as NYC became clear.

My experience in Chiapas increased in relevance when I started working with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers

(CIW) worker center, the subject of my doctoral dissertation. CIW is a Florida-based farmworker and human rights organization with membership hailing from Mexico, Guatemala, and Haiti—almost the same regions in which Buitrago Ortiz and I had conducted research: “From its inception, the CIW paired collective leadership with participatory, critical reflection upon the conditions in the fields through popular education” (Dami-co and Reyes 2015, 260). I have always been fascinated by art as a popular educational tool. I wanted to learn more about CIW’s art-related strategies for organizing farmworkers. After a short email exchange, where I shared my experience as a Theater of the Oppressed (TO) facilitator, which uses a specific method that encourages collective decision-making to resolve everyday conflicts, CIW invited me to join the Art Team in Immokalee, Florida.

My days (which became years) as part of the CIW’s Art Team started in February 2015, where, after the second week of intensive artmaking, Gerardo Reyes Chavez, a farmworker organizer, agreed to an interview: “When art is incorporated into the struggle, together with dreams...when the art of dreaming is incorporated and it is connected with any type of art, the artist becomes part of the bigger dream that many communities are trying to reach” (Reyes, interview 2015). Reyes highlights the importance of art to the CIW and reflects upon the use of art in the struggles of marginalized and oppressed communities worldwide. He understands the extent to which artists belong to these communities and defines politics as a collective ongoing process. He addresses imagination (dreaming) as intrinsic to the artist’s work and to community members active in social struggles.

To understand the roles of art and artmaking, I analyze the relationships between subjects, objects, and places, specifically in preparing for CIW’s annual Spring Action, their most attended event of the year. I investigate the interactions between CIW staff members, farmworkers, and volunteers and the ensuing power dynamics resulting from separate places of knowledge and power. I refer to categories such as class, race, and gender to

analyze my observations. For this chapter, I will connect my ethnographic experience with Buitrago Ortiz in Chiapas to how it has influenced my analysis of this group and how I think about peasants and farmworkers, migratory processes, and processes of cultural, social, and symbolic capital accumulation (Bourdieu 1986). In my experience with CIW, I once again reflected upon themes that Buitrago Ortiz and I had pondered for long hours more than a decade ago.

My analysis reflects my formative years as a Puerto Rican woman and anthropologist, later influenced by the contexts of Europe, the United States, academia, and by the challenges of negotiating my identity as an anthropologist, an activist, and an artist. For instance, while in Chiapas, Sebastiana, our Maya translator, a midwife, and I brainstormed ways to support the midwives we interviewed. We decided to provide them with materials that would facilitate the midwives work, such as shoes, waterproof backpacks, and construction materials for a women's clinic. Sebastiana and I did this with Buitrago Ortiz's full support, but he wanted us to focus more on our research. This was a common tension between us, frequently leading to deep and productive conversations. I would never claim that these interventions were very effective or had the intended effects. However, I have always felt troubled by the idea of taking (information) without giving something back. With CIW, my fieldwork and field notes are a product of these internal tensions of my simultaneous participation for several years as both an artist and an ethnographer, taking field notes and conducting interviews. I wanted to contribute to their cause while having a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between staff and members trajectories, productive and reproductive practices, and the influence of the material world on their organizing strategies. In some ways, my research is still a continuation of my work with Buitrago Ortiz. By analyzing the presence of Indigenous peoples in Florida's farm fields, my research illustrates the complexity of the rural-urban distinction as a product of structural conditions of the modern capitalist system and the ways in which migration and the proletarianization of Indig-

enous peasants can give rise to collective politics (Roberts 1990; Kearney 1996; Hernández Corchado 2018). In my current research, a phenomenological and feminist approach facilitates an analysis of collective artmaking and the material use of objects that enable feelings of belonging instead of a focus on their monetary exchange value.

CIW Origins and Goals

In Florida, “the farm value of Florida’s vegetable production exceeded \$1.191 billion, behind only California and Arizona” (Bond and Perez 2018). The US Department of Labor described farmworkers in this multi-billion-dollar industry as “a labor force in significant economic distress” (CIW 2011). For decades, there has been a lack of basic labor protections for farmworkers, who, in extreme instances, fall under the category of forced labor, also referred to as modern slavery (Damico and Reyes 2015). Immigrants coming from Haiti, Mexico, and Guatemala were exploited in the fields as farmworkers. The great majority had experience working as peasants in their countries of origin, where they had gone through a proletarianization process (Kearney 1996; Hernández Corchado 2018) and had experience in defending peasants’ rights or as community organizers. With a renewed urgency to improve farmworkers’ labor conditions, a small group of farmworkers in Immokalee started having weekly meetings at a local church.

In 1993, Lucas Benitez and human rights lawyers Greg Asbed and Laura Germino coordinated efforts to protest the working conditions of farmworkers in Immokalee (O’Neil 2018). Two years later, the CIW demonstrated its convening power by mobilizing hundreds of farmworkers for their first successful work stoppage. This stoppage eventually led to CIW acquiring its first office space, an operations center, to move its struggle forward. By 1998, “after three community-wide work stoppages with intense public pressure, including a month-long hunger strike, farmworkers had won industry-wide raises of 13–25% and a

newfound political and social respect from the outside world” (Damico and Reyes 2015, 250).

CIW’s bottom-up organizing tradition, where workers’ critical reflections inform the organization’s goals and strategies, has been vital to their campaigns’ successes and has inspired hundreds of farmworkers worldwide. CIW’s current efforts are exemplified by their push to implement the Fair Food Program (FFP), which has been described as “the best workplace-monitoring program” (Greenhouse 2014) and “one of the great human rights success stories of our day” (Burkhalter 2012). By harnessing consumers’ power, the CIW has brought corporations to the negotiation table through legal agreements with enforcement mechanisms that protect farmworkers’ labor and human rights. Their main strategy has been to show farmworkers’ humanity by calling attention to the inhumane treatment in the fields and demanding concrete changes in their working conditions, such as bathroom breaks. This emphasis on human rights, as globalizing and universalizing discourses, reflects a deconstruction of the opposition between peasants and farmworkers, calling attention to the complexity of Indigenous peoples’ identities.

Each Spring Action, CIW puts effort into making creative changes to its media and art campaign based on how its current campaign is advancing. When the CIW incorporates guest artists, the conversation is about how to make CIW staff and members’ ideas even more effective. Farmworkers want the material world with which they interact — tomatoes, buckets, the sun — to speak to the unfairness of their working conditions and to their humanity.

Popular Education and Phenomenology

To analyze how the CIW organizing principles intertwine with their media and art campaign, I draw on popular education theory and materiality studies, the latter of which draws from phenomenological theory. On the one hand, popular education begins from the immediate reality of a community to obtain critical consciousness and stronger collective processes for so-

cial change. Reflecting on Paulo Freire's works, Nestor Kohan explains the formation of critical subjectivities as an experience of dialectical education that arises from exposing and refuting authoritarian power dynamics (cited in Coelho 2014, 215). Phenomenology, on the other hand, attempts to understand how objects and humans mutually transform each other and approaches subjectivity as "an ongoing negotiation of things perceived, both consciously and unconsciously, within and outside the body" (Conley 2011, 193). By addressing the formation of critical subjectivities in artmaking processes, I am also addressing the lack of analysis of the role of power relations within phenomenology and, consequently, within materiality studies (Ingold 2005; McKee 2015; Van Dyke 2015). I argue that art-objects can be understood as mediators of relationships, facilitating processes by which people become critical subjects, collectively and determinedly.

I use the materiality concepts *assemblages* and *communities of practice* as my theoretical lens. According to Williams, assemblages have physical and ideal sides that interact, producing a "becoming" informed by hope, sadness, excitement, and creativity (2007, 85–93). The physical side concerns the places that, embedded in the communities' habits and rhythms, enable human interactions and practices to acquire further meaning (de Certeau 1984). Communities of practice are addressed "as dynamic, transformative, and emergent through practice," making up the "interaction between humans and things, the physical and that which lives in the imagination, sharing an identity" (Harris 2014, 79). Harris argues that considering communities as assemblages reinforces the need to acknowledge how affect fundamentally influences relationships (2014, 91). There are emotional stakes related to belonging or not belonging to a place and a group, and wanting or not wanting to belong, and those emotions are also shaped by power relations (McKee 2015).

I address the Art Team as part of the Spring Action assemblage and as a community of practice, constantly interacting with other communities of practice, such as the Student–Farmworker Alliance and the Faith Community. The CIW staff rear-

ranges spaces and creates circumstances for volunteers to enter into a specific set of groups and subgroups, such as the Art Team. In the context of the ciw, the Art Team is a group assembled each year by ciw staff, whose main purpose is to make art for that year's Spring Action. The Art Team is composed of volunteers chosen by the staff and some staff members. Many volunteers spend weeks or months away from their places of residence, habits, and rhythms to inhabit a common one in Immokalee. Places and practices intertwine, "redefining 'the local' as that which is constituted by shared ethical life" (McKee 2015, 236). Communities of practice are groups of people brought together to carry out specific tasks, but who have already participated in similar structures to practice a set of skills. In these groups, many of ciw's thousands of allies get a chance to meet and get to know each other better by sharing a space intended for collective work.

The Art Team's twofold objective is to produce meaningful and effective campaign-related objects and to inspire farmworkers to participate in the Art Team's creative process. In these interactions, art-objects are produced in physical spaces, where participants with varying skills and power can engage with art materials and each other through them. Everyone involved goes "through a process of taking up or taking on the particular relation of speed, slowness, effectivity, and language that makes it up....It is not a process of imitating but of becoming" (McGregor 2011, 94).

The relationship between artmaking and becoming in a community is well understood through a collaged memory described by a community organizer: "Art is fundamental, especially for a community like Immokalee. Many of us don't write, read, never went to school....We are trying to create a different type of consciousness and with an image you understand better because you can remember it while working. Someone says, 'Do you remember the drawing in the morning?' That brings you to the root of the problem. Popular education and art go together completely" (Benitez, interview 2016).

Lucas Benitez refers to consciousness as the awareness provoked by the interaction with art-objects, which can influence future interactions. Art educator Courtne Wolfgang (2013) recognizes the “interstitial space of knowing/not knowing as a site of productivity and potential—and the values of recapturing that potential for creative use” (53). That moment of reflection, that pause, also refers to interstitial spaces that allow something else to be or happen. As a reminder, it becomes part of the past, which informs present actions and can be renegotiated positively or negatively. The past exists as something that can be changed or reproduced, such as the commitment to farmworkers’ struggles. In 2015, as part of their Spring Action fundraising efforts, CIW stated on their website, “Like many of history’s most powerful grassroots movements for change, the movement for Fair Food has been driven by art and music. Theater, music, murals, and puppets rooted in the diverse cultural traditions of the Fair Food Nation have always brought its message to life. Art animates the struggles farmworkers face in the fields and articulates their demand to work with dignity” (CIW website, 2015). The influence of art and other movements on CIW’s history is unequivocal. That history remains and resurfaces (albeit in different forms) in all the Spring Actions and other events.

When Buitrago Ortiz and I were researching Indigenous communities, we did not directly address the material circumstances we encountered in the highlands of Chiapas. We did not talk about the muddy roads after long rains, our fears of being in a vehicle accident on our way to secluded communities, or our long walks from house to house, hoping we would get to talk to someone. We did not refer to the feelings aroused by having shoes while surrounded by barefoot Indigenous women or to the tears of women telling their stories. The feelings arose from those material circumstances, and our exchanges undeniably affected the lives of the women, our research, and ourselves. A phenomenological and feminist approach would have helped us further problematize our relationship with the interviewees and their social life. For example, midwives had developed a network to support each other in their demanding roles as mid-

wives and women through sharing knowledge about maternity health issues in meetings and workshops. When referring to a community emerging through practice, the goal is to point to the subjects' agency and the role of affect and emotion when opting in or out of them. In the highlands of Chiapas and in Immokalee, the role of community, in its multiple meanings, is fundamental to understanding the facilitating and deterring factors that created a community of practice, be they the midwives' network or the CIW Art Team.

For Spring Actions, volunteers choose to interact face-to-face and partake in the activities required by communities of practice. For the rest of the year, these communities are loosely maintained through virtual means or briefer meetings. Like other communities, communities of practice are not necessarily comfortable places to be but are contexts where individuals "as strategic actors, exhibit agency and construct their social identities" (Ingold 2005; Harris 2014). The next section discusses in detail how these Art Teams become a community of practice.

The Art Team as Community of Practice

A few weeks before the Spring Action, the CIW and the Art Team discuss in more detail what needs to be done and how, in addition to what art-objects can be repaired or need to be produced to respond to that year's campaign goals. However, an all-encompassing goal is generating massive media attention to convince consumers to stop buying tomatoes from a corporate buyer who refuses to join the FFP. In 2000, for instance, CIW carried an eight-foot Statue of Liberty,¹ primarily composed of chicken wire. Benitez informed me that the decision to make this statue occurred in a weekly meeting. It was a product of a brainstorming session in which CIW, as an organization, decided it would lead the march. Benitez remembers saying in that meeting, "It's like when César Chavez [California's farmwork-

1 This art object is now part of the exhibition *The Nation We Build Together*, at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, Washington, DC.

ers' leader] marched. They were carrying the Virgin of Guadalupe. Maybe we are not as religious, but we can carry a Statue of Liberty that represents the immigrants of this country. And we make her with our skin color" (Benitez, interview 2016). This anecdote demonstrates the importance of the weekly meetings to artmaking processes, CIW's understanding of the relationship between aesthetics and politics, and the knowledge of the aesthetic choices made by other social movements, with a major effect on the farmworkers' movement. It also demonstrates CIW's emphasis on being seen: "We make her our skin color." Indeed, an important part of their strategy is for corporations to see the workers' humanity. Gonzalo explained, "Corporations only see consumers, where the money is. They ignore the workers even when they know of their existence. It is about thinking how to say, 'We are the ones who grow your products. You have to see us!'" (Gonzalo, interview 2017). Even when the campaign's main objective is for corporate buyers to join the FFB, the CIW staff strongly emphasizes the process.

There is a general agreement that artmaking before the Spring Action is a special time within the campaign. Many people come from various places to volunteer. The intention of the exercise was to make getting to know each other more enjoyable and energizing. In the middle of a seemingly chaotic situation — with children playing, visitors arriving, musicians rehearsing the *Son Jarocho*, constant trips to the airport, and unexpected yet awaited breaks to share a meal — artmaking imposes a slower and more focused pace that people enjoy and long for. It creates the interstices wherein lies a potential "becoming" (Deleuze and Guattari 2007, 11) through the exchange of perspectives. Gonzalo noted that "through art, you get to know the person. You don't need to talk two or three hours with the person to get to know him or her, not only physically, but what is within.... People make those connections and take with them something beautiful.... Art is a connection to other people" (Gonzalo, interview 2017).

Gonzalo highlights why the CIW prioritizes methods that require collective efforts, such as screen-printing, papier-mâ-

ché, and painting messages in bidimensional cardboard pieces (signs), to actualize the collective becoming through dialogue and information sharing. Yet, each method defines interactions. For instance, to mass-produce screen-printed flags, you need a few people with a relatively high level of agility. This medium fosters less conversation than papier-mâché.

In 2015, when I joined the Art Team, CIW wanted the Art Team to make three parade floats representing essential aspects of the Boycott Wendy's campaign. Each float would carry one or two, eight-foot by eight-foot papier-mâché objects that had either been created in previous years or needed to be created from scratch. To create these giant papier-mâché objects, artists and volunteers worked by placing papier-mâché layers over sand sculptures. It is a very slow process that requires soaking big cardboard pieces, cutting them, dipping pieces a few inches long in a special glue, getting rid of the excess glue with fingers, overlapping the corners of each little piece with the previous one, and so forth. A few dozen people worked for four days in a row, from early morning to late night, to finish them. The process allowed us to get to know each other and our perceptions of "the other." During the day, the majority working on papier-mâché spoke Spanish, either as a native language or as a fluent second language. The conversations at the beginning, as tends to happen, were about superficial distinctions in the use of the Spanish language. Jokes were made about each other's culture for how they talked, the meaning of words, and what they ate. However, none of it was ever really offensive. The comments were smart and vivacious, intended to provoke comebacks and laughter. Slowly, we started realizing that many of us learned Spanish in different countries, including Mexico, Guatemala, Puerto Rico, Venezuela, and the United States, and that for those who initially identified themselves as either Guatemalan or Mexican, their native language was a version of Mayan. Even when I knew they were Indigenous peoples, I did not realize the great diversity of Mayan Indigenous languages spoken by CIW members and farmworkers.

Another relevant observation is that most native languages have already been affected by each person's trajectories, which became the prelude to a more personal exchange of stories. There was an exchange of narratives about where people came from, why they came, under what circumstances, why they stayed in the United States, who was left behind, and how difficult it was to visit them. There were stories about being arrested just for having darker skin. Oftentimes, issues related to gender inequality were brought up, such as what it is like to be an immigrant single mother while working in the fields or working as an organizer. I mentioned that most people at ciw's annual workers' day party, celebrated before the Spring Action, were men, and some were drunk. Some people commented that there were increasingly more women and families, and that the sale and consumption of alcohol were strictly prohibited at ciw. ciw staff added that it is fundamental to educate the members of our communities and create accountability processes instead of re-creating shame and alienation. Similarly, ciw is committed to ending sexualized violence in the fields and its own offices.

Those who were not directly involved in the Art Team still passed by and spent time making art, especially later at night, when the ciw closes — particularly ciw staff and members of the Student–Farmworker Alliance and the Faith Network, that is, those who feel exhausted organizing the Spring Action. Those were the ones who wanted to stay and make art the most but were submerged in a world of old, new, and stressful responsibilities. ciw staff and Spring Action organizers would share updates from their front and add to the storytelling. They would share exciting yet difficult stories about encouraging people to support their campaign and participate in the actions, or encourage farmworkers' participation while making them feel safe.

The Art Team *per se* would confront distinct challenges and have their own internal dynamics, while others were busy in their primary communities of practice. There were numerous bonding moments for the Art Team. For instance, while driving to Spring Action, two art group members joyfully recalled the anarcho-cheerleaders, or radical cheerleaders, who became a

national phenomenon in the 1990s but are rarely seen anymore. This historical moment involved a larger community of activists that participated at different times. The Art Team was bonding while creating a new memory in the present moment. This exchange also illustrates the density of activist networks (from the East to the West Coasts of the United States and beyond) and how different communities of practice converge in grassroots organizations.

Regarding challenges, my first time in Immokalee, I was taken aback by the amount of work. The working day was at least twelve hours long, fast-paced, and nonstop. I feared getting sick. It would mean missing the creative process, the personal exchanges, feeling and celebrating the small successes each step of the way, sharing meals, and being in a community. We all got sick and kept working. Struggling to find time and energy to write field notes, I also questioned my capacity as an artist. I had not yet worked with wood, but it was required when making floats for the parade. By the end of the third week, we had become experts in nailing, drilling, assembling, and disassembling every part of the floats and the papier-mâché objects that would go on top of them. Learning to work with wood at that scale was made possible thanks to Jacob, one of the Art Team members, a professional carpenter.

When I first met Jacob, I was intimidated by his expertise, but I still wanted to learn from him. I was also conscious that Jacob is a privileged white man and that I was reproducing race, class, and gender hierarchies by wanting to learn from him specifically. At the same time, there were actual affinities between us. I had recently arrived in the United States after five years in Amsterdam, and Jacob reminded me of the anarchist world I belonged to in Europe. Many identities and worlds were overlapping and colliding in a completely new context, yet it felt familiar.

In human relationships, conflict is inevitable, and artmaking is no exception. A case in point occurred during one of the years we worked with floats. A group of staff and volunteers was disassembling heavy art-objects and loading them onto trucks.

A piece of wood slipped from one of the volunteers' hands, causing everyone to lose their balance. The wood almost fell on a white male volunteer's hand. His response was to yell at everyone, telling them they had to focus. Nobody confronted him or called him out about the way he responded. It was late at night, and after weeks of uninterrupted work, everyone was exhausted. The incident resulted in a series of discrete and critical conversations about a much broader and more important topic, namely, what it is like to collaborate with white men, particularly in an organization led by People of Color (POC). A volunteer said, "In other collectives, we trust that the other will do his or her job. However, wherever there is a *gringo*, you see how they immediately assume leadership under Protestant logic. They enjoy being leaders and martyrs" (my field notes, 2016). Similarly, other discreet conversations often arose around cultural, racial, and gender differences. In this manner, I also became part of this process of developing critical subjectivities, seeking to understand problematic situations and explore ways to express them.

Two years later, the artists' experience with other artmaking processes brought a different energy to the group. My desire to be useful had transformed into a desire to be more creative. I arrived before any other Art Team member, and the CIW expressed that for the *Teatro*, they wanted an art-object prop: a portable bridge. Since I was the only art member there, I drew from my experience as a puppeteer and determined that the best way to make it would be to use cardboard. I spent two nights working on the bridge. When Jacob arrived at Immokalee, I tried to communicate what I had been working on. He showed no sign of interest in my work and made a wooden bridge. CIW staff members were happy with the wooden bridge, but the other Art Team members supported my idea. I felt like I had not been heard and that my design and effort had been ignored and wasted. I finally experienced the felt-yet-disguised hierarchy referred to in feminist theory (Deleuze and Guattari 1980; Wolfgang 2013; Karkov 2016).

That same year, during a meeting between the Art Team and CIW staff, there was a conversation about what would be on top

of each float. CIW staff did not want to use theater objects on the floats because they could cause an accident, and they wanted the artists to create new objects for the floats. However, Jacob wanted to use the same props, which would mean less work. A few of us had an idea to build an evil Wendy's puppet made of wire. The staff, Ivan (a nonwhite male), and I were excited about the idea, which would go well with one of the floats in terms of color. Jacob, who wanted to have the same elements on both the theater and the floats, assembled objects in line with his understanding of what would be most appropriate. CIW staff did not react, and the rest of us felt either ignored or directly blocked.

We started having conversations about our attempts to share ideas and how those ideas got lost. However, this time, we had an opportunity to have longer conversations and better understand the changes we wanted to see. Ivan, in particular, pushed the need to address things directly and talk to the staff. However, it was the last day of the art build, and many volunteers had left Immokalee, including Jacob and Mary, another artist who wanted to be part of the conversation. We talked with a staff member about how important it was for the artists to have a space to be creative and how it was best for CIW to use our respective skills. It would be more inspiring for artists, and the outcome would be better art. In retrospect, it took us years to articulate what we wanted, and it was a conversation full of love and kindness, which brought us to deeper topics about why organizing that year specifically was more challenging than previous ones. We discussed US national politics and considered the repercussions of having Donald Trump in power as president. The process of understanding is complex, as is the process of verbalizing and overcoming the fear of "burning bridges" and no longer belonging to the community. We were unable to speak directly with Jacob, but I am hopeful conversations like this will continue to take place and end up being both as productive and as caring as the one Ivan and I were able to have with the CIW staff member.

Analysis

Artmaking as part of the Spring Action assemblage illustrates the complex relationship between two distinct ongoing processes: becoming critical and belonging to communities of practice. They are far from linear processes, but they still lead to harmony between the distinct elements within the Art Team. The Art Team proved to be thought-provoking, requiring a problem-solving frame of mind to address a spectrum of situations representative of common interactions between humans and the world. Even when spaces were intentionally arranged to facilitate collaboration and bonding, identities and perceptions inevitably affected the processes. Belonging to a community of practice entails remaining open to the unexpected and letting its dynamism transform oneself. The process of understanding our own and others' sensibilities and priorities is also needed to continue identifying binding commonalities, like those that brought people together in the first place.

Artmaking processes help establish interactions that are inclusive and challenge participants to respond creatively to continuously unfolding situations. They can be exhilarating and profoundly transformative. For instance, when making papier-mâché objects, the need to stay late to get the work done — sharing personal stories and prolonged silences without the usual awkwardness and going through simple and repetitive movements — created a moment of feeling fully present that allowed participants to absorb information through all their senses. It created a safe space where conversations alternated between seemingly superficial and more intimate and serious topics. The process offered an opportunity to deconstruct essentialist notions of identity. According to Gonzalo, “the most beautiful memories are when we have all the little cardboard pieces cut, when we are all cutting, putting them in water with glue... chatting. In those moments, we all could talk, tell our stories” (Gonzalo, Interview 2017). The process enables a becoming, and it is where creativity happens in social life (Ingold 2005, 3). The dialectical relationship between the body and the world of-

fers the possibility to go deeper into what permits bonding and community building.

The puzzling aspects of these processes and interactions are not only a consequence of individual differences, but also transversed by power relationships. A major weakness of phenomenological approaches is the lack of attention to power relations (Van Dyke 2015, McKee 2015). Amidst countless moments of joyful exchanges and creative breakthroughs, there were also stressful, irritating, and troubling moments. On the one hand, there are dozens, and sometimes hundreds, of people working collectively, often sleep-deprived and under demanding circumstances. On the other hand, the give and take between humans and objects is influenced by differences in class, race, and gender. An example of this is the experience with Jacob and his lack of awareness of his privilege as a white male craftsman. There were moments when there was a lack of understanding about how Jacob's opinion weighed more than the other People of Color and female members of the Art Team. It affected interactions between Art Team members and ciw staff and sometimes influenced our enthusiasm and capacity to work. The experience helped some of us become more aware of how privilege can play out. The process of understanding and putting it into words was empowering.

Power relations also manifested in how ciw staff and members *perceived* guest artists and how artists *perceived* themselves in relation to farmworkers. These perceptions ranged from seeing artists as teachers and guides to people with non-unique skills to artists as being more privileged than farmworkers. For instance, some ciw staff viewpoints included the following sentiments: "The ciw has the idea but when it comes to doing it, we don't always know how to assemble the *bochinche*"² (Gonzalo, interview 2017). "Artists come with an idea on what and how to do a piece of art, and the members help to paint, but it is the artists that are like the teachers. When the artists arrive, [farmworkers] see how it's done and how to write a message" (S.

2 Puerto Rican slang for "gossip," here referring to uncertainty.

Perez, interview 2016). Other staff emphasized that farmworkers have been working since childhood and have experience that artists do not. According to Benitez, artmaking “is the process of developing leadership and consciousness in oneself and in the community. Members are part of the process of creating what you want to show, what you want to express” (Benitez, interview 2017). Artists are perceived as absolutely necessary for specific parts of the Spring Action assemblage, such as writing beautiful messages to attract media attention (skills that many farmworkers lack). In contrast, farmworkers surpass the artists’ expertise in other areas, such as carpentry. This distinction between farmworkers’ and artists’ skills is necessary. For CIW staff, it is fundamental to acknowledge farmworkers’ skills in organizing processes and as actors with a history beyond working in the fields. CIW’s main strength comes from actively seeking worker participation by recognizing workers as human beings. Artists are invited to hold a creative space for farmworkers to participate in preparing for the Spring Action.

From an artist’s perspective, artists have a good understanding of their privilege vis-à-vis farmworkers, while also struggling with precarious working conditions, such as underemployment, unregulated employment conditions, and limited options for career advancement (Michael 2015). For artists working for the Spring Action, there is no increase in economic capital, but rather one of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1991), and of affect and belonging. Nonetheless, the idea of the artist as autonomous and free (i.e., bohemian) is rarely challenged within leftist and radical circles (Michael 2015). Artists do want their expertise and work to be recognized and validated, while also wanting to collaborate and be helpful. When the artist’s work is not remunerated, it becomes more important for their skills and creativity to be recognized. In this regard, the CIW’s treatment of artists is exceptionally good compared to many other organizations. For example, the CIW regularly expressed gratitude for the Art Team, and it always felt genuine. Still, artists are invited to work, are expected to work hard, and do not receive a salary. Instead, they are paid in kind. The CIW compensates the artists

by covering food expenses, lodging, and, often, travel expenses. There is an understanding among artists that they are generally in a more favorable economic and sociopolitical situation than farmworkers. This is one of the main reasons artists volunteer their time to support CIW's cause and other groups' social struggles. A white female artist said, "I feel like I have had so many privileges, so many opportunities, so many things handed to me in a way that so many people that I meet in Immokalee have not, and have had to fight much more, and still have to fight for these things all the time" (Leah, interview 2016). This sensibility toward others' struggles and her straightforward acknowledgment of her privilege is common among political artists who, to some extent, volunteer their work. However, it can be easier to relate to those who asked for the artist's "help," as the less privileged *Other*, and lose perspective of the power relations at play among artists themselves.

The Art Team is a community of practice and, thus, a community of feelings. Hope and imagination move the artmaking processes forward in semiprivate spaces for Spring Actions. Those *momentos de convivio y expresión* (being together, expressing ourselves creatively) are also shaped by multiple power relations. Feelings that arise from these power differentials and the participants' perceptions of those power differentials are vented through discreet conversations or discussions within a larger group. However, I consider the most radical part of the process to be accepting how power relations play out within circles defined as "radical." The conversations are possible because of a deep understanding of past and modern exploitation. They become more radical through a process of self-reflection, slowly becoming even more critical of the dynamics at play. Both the individuals involved and the organization may participate in becoming together and *becoming* something else. We are rehearsing, albeit imperfectly, in being in a world that challenges our current understanding of equality and fairness. Questioning deeply rooted beliefs about oneself and others leaves many with a greater sense of hope. According to one artist, "I think that to be able to leave something feeling hopeful, it's a huge, huge feat,

and [the ciw] do it. People feel fired up, and they feel hopeful to change things. It leaves me feeling like, ‘how can I be cynical in this world?’ There’s this deep belief in humanity and in community, and it really feels genuine” (Carolyn, interview 2016). For artists who continue collaborating without remuneration, it is important to commit their time to a compelling struggle and derive gratification from the process itself. Here, the process is defined by collective tasks that enable and encourage feelings of belonging and hope that a fairer world is possible.

Final Reflections

My relationships with ciw members have been both effortless and complicated as a Puerto Rican woman, anthropologist, and artist. Since the beginning, I have connected with the Mexican, Central American, and Caribbean cultures that pervade the organization. Spanish, my native language, facilitated my communication. In addition, my research in Chiapas sparked invaluable reflections on Puerto Rico’s common colonial history with most of Latin America. I also connected with the Maya people, especially women, who were directly and indirectly involved with ciw. I have been in villages similar to the ones many of them came from and have had extensive conversations with other Maya women, either in Spanish or with the help of a Maya translator, Sebastiana. Nonetheless, as a Puerto Rican, the influence of American culture and values is undeniable. I speak fluent English and understand many American cultural references. I could communicate well with the white American staff members and volunteers. Furthermore, I was able to navigate juxtaposing cultures, which sometimes felt like a constant questioning of my own identity, long ingrained as a result of my colonial subjectivity.

In my fieldwork notes, on my way back to NYC, I wrote about the depression-like feelings I experienced when leaving Im-mokalee. Even though our bodies and minds were exhausted, the end seemed abrupt. We had created a new life, rhythm, routine, and path. Yet, it was hard for me to strike a balance

between activism, artivism, and ethnographic work. I berated myself, thinking that I did not take enough field notes. Buitrago would not have let that happen. We would have discussed what needed to be prioritized. Buitrago would have pushed ethnographic notes and interviews. He would have told me to read less phenomenology and critical pedagogy and, instead, listen to people. I would have pushed for giving back, responding to the needs of the ones we were interviewing. I wonder if Buitrago would have made me a better ethnographer or if that process was completed. His presence and absence are always felt during and after fieldwork.

Writing this chapter has made me even more aware of Buitrago's influence on my formative years as a college student. Our research had a tremendous influence on my interest in the nonlinear and unpredictable nature of the migratory process and on my understanding of the identities of complex subjects. Our long, semi-open interviews with Indigenous women were intended to study subject-formation processes. Still, they were within a more structural-functionalist and political economy framework, primarily addressing the importance of material life using the concepts of social, cultural, and symbolic capital accumulation.

I departed from my earlier theoretical grounding with Buitrago by incorporating materiality theory in my work. It allows me to observe and interact with the material world differently, where production relations acquire a more complicated meaning within the capitalist system, but still mediate human relationships. It allows me to directly address humans' interaction with the material world and the relationships humans establish with objects. Humans imbue objects with power. Objects mediate power relations rather than produce them. However, the nonhuman world should be understood beyond humans' understanding of utility and our limited perception of reality. Materiality theory does not assign preeminence to the social world. It offers the opportunity to look closely into the individual parts (subjects and objects) and also into the social world. Combining

materiality theory with a power relationships analysis allows for a better understanding of the agency of human subjects.

The phenomenological aspects of materiality theory allow the incorporation of political philosophy in the understanding of power relations. Buitrago was undeniably inspired and influenced by Marx's writings. My interest in political philosophy also comes from my training with Buitrago. As I understand it, phenomenology goes a step further by giving more freedom to the role and effect of objects in our world without necessarily being reducible to capitalist value relations. I join others in trying to rescue the effect of power relations with a phenomenological approach, paying serious attention to material life.

A lesson from Buitrago that remains with me is the importance of the details of the historical and geographical context. To understand the role of power in these phenomenological approaches, it is important to address context. For Buitrago, imagination could only be applied after deeply understanding the historical and geographical context. There was joy *en buscarle las cinco patas al gato*, "finding the cat's five legs." We would endlessly debate the meaning of words, relishing details without over-moralizing, trying to go beyond theoretical obstacles. As long as we remained honest and informed about context, there was openness and playfulness.

Buitrago Ortiz followed the material life of humans to understand complex processes of cultural, social, and symbolic capital accumulation. Similarly, I am tying the role of affect to the production and reproduction of their material lives. Through practice, fieldwork, and as a political artist, I found the importance and relationship between affect and belonging within collective politics and social movements, and their influence on the dissolution of political groups. I have experienced the difference between groups that prioritize activities that encourage bonding and those that are solely task-oriented. The most successful groups, the ones that last longer and have less conflict, are the ones that prioritize collective work and bonding. Success and affection must go together. My experience informs the need to study the importance of the feelings of belonging associated

with feminist anthropology. I also consider ethnicity, racism, and colonialism, concepts that are relevant when addressing the migration of Indigenous peoples and proletarianization processes.

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**From Guayama to Cambridge
to Santa Rita:
Carlos Buitrago Ortiz and the
Development of an “Indigenous”
Anthropology in Puerto Rico**

Jorge Duany

In 2004, Carlos Buitrago Ortiz and his research assistant Jessica Santos López presented their monograph on Indigenous Mayan women in Chiapas, Mexico. Undergraduate anthropology students and faculty members packed the auditorium of the College of Social Sciences of the University of Puerto Rico (UPR) in Río Piedras. After summarizing his main findings, Buitrago answered questions from the audience. One of them was, “How did you gain rapport with your key informants?” Buitrago’s quirky answer was, “I don’t believe in rapport.” For an instant, the audience sighed in collective disbelief. Fortunately, Santos took the microphone to explain that a local interpreter (Sebastiana Vázquez Gómez) had helped establish trust and interpreted the informants’ responses. Confidence in the sacred tradition of building rapport in ethnographic fieldwork was momentarily restored. The anecdote reveals something about Buitrago’s

favorite pose as a provocateur and his reliance on his research assistants. Santos suggests in her contribution to this volume (Chapter 7) that such a story also raises questions about the complicated relationships between anthropologists and their informants.

Of all the contributors to this volume, I am the only one who was not a disciple of Buitrago. Instead, I was his colleague at UPR's Department of Sociology and Anthropology between 1994 and 2012, when we shared the task of teaching many of the required and elective courses in sociocultural anthropology. I met Buitrago briefly before joining UPR and found him reserved and enigmatic. In the almost two decades that we were departmental colleagues, I got to know him better and witnessed firsthand his devotion to his students, his commitment to ethnographic and archival research, his concern with maintaining high academic standards, his insistence on theoretical and methodological rigor, his solidarity with alumni and fellow scholars, and his sarcastic sense of humor. Buitrago was also renowned for his constant battles against the university bureaucracy, which he felt stifled academic creativity. He was especially adept at securing funds for his research assistants, who accompanied him to conduct fieldwork in rural areas of Puerto Rico, New Jersey, and Mexico and to present papers at international academic conferences. During the 1996 American Ethnological Society meeting in San Juan, I organized a special session to honor some of the pioneering figures in the anthropology of Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, and Buitrago was one of our honorees. In 2007, under my tenure as chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, we nominated Buitrago for the highest academic award for a faculty member at UPR, Distinguished Professor (Senado Académico 2006–2007).

As the chapters in this volume attest, Buitrago had a long and productive career as a scholar, teacher, mentor, and faculty member of the only anthropology program in Puerto Rico. After teaching social sciences at UPR's College of General Studies between 1958 and 1972, he taught in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology from 1973 until his retirement in 2013,

shortly before his death. Together with Rafael Ramírez, Diana López, Carlos Ramos, and me, he was one of the cornerstones of the anthropology program. Buitrago trained several generations of local anthropologists, sociologists, historians, and archaeologists (including contributors to this volume). Many of them still remember the exhausting but exhilarating expeditions, led by Buitrago, to coffee haciendas in Adjuntas and Yauco, cemeteries in Adjuntas and Ponce, and archives in Old San Juan as part of their ritual initiation as anthropologists (for vivid descriptions, see Valdés Pizzini 2013, Gutiérrez Ortiz 2015, and Ramos 2015). More than twenty of his former students pursued graduate studies in anthropology in the United States, Europe, and Latin America (Senado Académico 2006–2007; Giovannetti and García-Colón 2014). Among these, I would highlight Carmen Angélica Pérez Herranz (Rutgers) and Manuel Valdés Pizzini (SUNY Stony Brook) in the 1970s; Jaime Pérez (Connecticut) in the 1980s; Carlo Cubero (Manchester), Ismael García-Colón (Connecticut), Isar Godreau-Santiago (UC Santa Cruz), Madeliz Gutiérrez Ortiz (National Autonomous University of Mexico), Samiri Hernández (Michigan), Maite Mulero (Temple), Ricardo Pérez (Connecticut), Marisol Ramos (SUNY Albany and UCLA), Beatriz Riefkohl (Chicago), and Eva Villalón (Rutgers) in the 1990s; and Waleska Sanabria León (National Autonomous University of Mexico) and Jessica Santos López (Amsterdam and SUNY Binghamton) in the 2000s. Several of them became Buitrago's close assistants and coauthors (including Gutiérrez Ortiz, Hernández, Ramos, Riefkohl, Sanabria León, Santos López, and Villalón). Each of the chapters in this volume explores the enduring influence of Buitrago's teaching and research agenda on the academic formation of their authors, and on the multiple paths they followed throughout their professional careers.

Born in 1930 in the southeastern city of Guayama, Puerto Rico, Buitrago earned his bachelor's degree in sociology at the University of Puerto Rico in Río Piedras in 1954 and his master's degree in sociology and anthropology at New York University in 1960. His master's thesis focused on the sociological contributions of the Puerto Rican philosopher and educator Eugenio

María de Hostos (Buitrago Ortiz 1960). He was part of a growing cadre of Puerto Ricans who pursued advanced degrees in anthropology in the United States (including Ricardo Alegria, Eugenio Fernández Méndez, Elena Padilla, and Eduardo Seda Bonilla) after World War II. (For more details on the expansion of Puerto Rican social sciences during the 1950s, see Duany 2005.) However, Buitrago completed his PhD in social anthropology at the University of Cambridge in 1966, which shaped his intellectual orientation in two main ways: first, he came under the spell of British structural-functionalism, especially through his mentor Meyer Fortes; and second, he experienced the tutorial system at Cambridge, involving small group sessions under the supervision of an academic advisor, which he would later adapt to UPR. He also inherited, from British anthropology, a dislike for the concept of “culture” (and “identity”) and a preference for empirically grounded research on rural communities. He adopted this approach in his doctoral dissertation, *The Family in the Social Life of a Rural Area of Northern Puerto Rico* (1967), which became his first book in English, *Esperanza: An Ethnographic Study of a Peasant Community in Puerto Rico* (1973). Valdés Pizzini notes in this volume (Chapter 1) that Buitrago regarded British social anthropology as “the paragon of scholarship in ethnographic writing” and encouraged his students to follow that model. Buitrago also distrusted quantitative methods such as surveys and census data, which he derided as “the dictatorship of the questionnaire” (Buitrago 1973, 201). Instead, he favored documenting the biographic, geographic, and historical details of people’s daily lives, asking pointed questions, and listening carefully to research participants, as Samiri Hernández observes in her recollections of her teacher (Chapter 4).

Buitrago’s professional trajectory was embedded in the emergence of “Indigenous” anthropology in Puerto Rico, particularly since the mid-twentieth century.¹ With the major exceptions of

1 The term “Indigenous” (or native) anthropology was coined to describe the practice of anthropology in one’s own country, particularly in the

Jesse Walter Fewkes, Franz Boas, and John Alden Mason, few US anthropologists conducted systematic fieldwork in Puerto Rico in the aftermath of the US occupation in 1898 (see Duany 1987, 2002, 2010). García-Colón notes in this volume (Chapter 2) that Puerto Rico was not of prime interest to US social scientists until the mid-1940s, when the island became a “laboratory” for the study of social change, modernization, and development as a result of industrialization and the establishment of the Estado Libre Asociado (or US Commonwealth) in 1952 (see Rivera Medina and Ramírez 1985). Major works on Puerto Rico by US anthropologists in the post-World War II period included Morris Siegel’s pioneering ethnography, *A Puerto Rican Town* (originally written in 1948, translated in 2005); the monumental study *The People of Puerto Rico* (Steward et al. 1956); Sidney Mintz’s classic oral history *Worker in the Cane* (1960); Oscar Lewis’s controversial *La Vida* (1966); and Helen Safa’s *The Urban Poor of Puerto Rico* (1974). Buitrago (1973, 1982a) was a bitter critic of American anthropology and its technique of “information gathering” to “perfect” colonial domination, and he sought to foster a new cohort of “Indigenous” anthropologists who could dissect their communities and those of other countries. For decades, Buitrago imbued his students with a postcolonial perspective that questioned the traditional tenets of ethnographic fieldwork as the study of distant and exotic *Others*. For overviews of the history of anthropology in Puerto Rico, see Fernández Méndez 1970, Duncan 1979, Duany 1999, Valdés Pizzini 2001, and Godreau 2011.

During the 1970s, Buitrago was drawn to political economy, particularly to the Marxist approaches espoused by Maurice

so-called Third World (Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia), which became increasingly common after World War II (Fahim and Helmer 1982). However, Buitrago observed the irrelevance of the category “non-Western” to Puerto Rico, which “is part of the occidental world, in a colonial role” (1982a, 98). In the case of Puerto Rico, the transition from US-born to Puerto Rico-born anthropologists took place primarily in the second half of the twentieth century, with the rise of a new generation of local scholars that included Buitrago.

Godelier and Claude Meillassoux in anthropology and by Fernand Braudel and Louis Althusser in history and sociology. Two of Buitrago's monographs, *Los orígenes históricos de la sociedad precapitalista en Puerto Rico* (1976) and *Haciendas cafetaleras y clases terratenientes en el Puerto Rico decimonónico* (1982), became classic formulations of Marxist perspectives in Puerto Rican history, much in line with the "New History" that became increasingly popular in the 1970s and 1980s (see Castro Arroyo 1988, Matos-Rodríguez 1997). This school of thought focused on unraveling the material forces in Puerto Rican history—particularly the relations among land, capital, and labor—and their effect on class conflicts, political ideology, and cultural practices. Buitrago's main contribution to this intellectual tradition was to document the complex interactions between the inner highlands and the coastal lowlands of Puerto Rico during the nineteenth century, based on the unpublished correspondence of the Pietri-Mariani family of coffee hacienda owners in the south-central region of the Island. He would continue to mine this primary source of information for decades, but from a different stance.

During the 1990s, Buitrago turned to postmodern and reflexive approaches in anthropology, as championed by Michael Kearney, Arjun Appadurai, George Marcus, and James Clifford. He was especially concerned with deconstructing ethnographies as texts and reinterpreting anthropologists as authors, including himself. Valdés Pizzini quips that Buitrago "wanted to be, perhaps, the first postmodern anthropologist" because of his early interest in creative literature as a source of ethnographic information. In Chapter 3 of this volume, Waleska Sanabria León writes about her collaboration with Buitrago to reread the Pietri-Mariani letters as windows into the discursive world of nineteenth-century *hacendados* in Puerto Rico within a "global" and "transnational" context. In his contribution to this collection (Chapter 5), Carlo Cubero offers another telling example of Buitrago's postmodern viewpoint when he recalls a 1998 visit to his office to discuss a research project on the offshore municipality of Culebra. "Remember, Culebra is not an island," the

expert told Cubero, and that insight led him to explore the open, mobile, and interconnected character of residents of that small territory. Contrary to the conventional image of insular cultures as isolated and marginalized entities, Buitrago encouraged Cubero to rethink them as “an archipelago of relations,” echoing the postmodern celebration of hybridity and nomadism.

Nonetheless, Buitrago never indulged in the excesses of some postmodern theorizing, which abandoned empirical research altogether or turned into an autobiographical, confessional narrative. Rather, he conducted extensive fieldwork in Chiapas, Mexico, and archival research at the General Archive of Puerto Rico until well into his seventies. Even a postmodern sociologist such as Madeline Román (2013), who was an undergraduate student of Buitrago, recognizes his penchant for “a discipline of observation and dense writing in order to apprehend the relevance or not of big concepts in the study of singular lives, events, and irreplaceable groups” (my translation). Ricardo Pérez recalls in Chapter 6 of this volume that Buitrago urged his students to keep copious field notes and to “marry” them to social theories in a “dialectical” fashion. Fieldwork was the highest marker of anthropology for Buitrago, Samiri Hernández recalls. He also “taught students how to read documents, similar to how the ethnographer reads culture,” Valdés Pizzini adds. To his credit, Buitrago always sought to reconcile the major conceptual fads in anthropology—whether it be structural-functionalism, Marxism, or postmodernism—with the “thick description” of everyday routines.

One final observation emerges from these recollections by several generations of anthropologists. Some of Buitrago’s former students remark on the peculiar traits of his personal style, such as the use of index cards for note-taking (which Valdés Pizzini and others have commented on), his standard dress code (a light-colored shirt, dark polyester pants, tennis shoes, and backpack), or his hasty gait—what Samiri Hernández graphically describes “as if pushing seeds down into the soil.” Many of us remember him strolling along the streets of the Santa Rita neighborhood near the Río Piedras campus, where he lived for

years. In contrast, others often encountered him at the Puerto Rican Collection of the UPR library or the General Archive of Puerto Rico, tirelessly pouring over yellowish manuscripts. He could frequently be found working in his university office, even on weekends and summer vacations (Giovannetti and García-Colón 2014), and was put off by periodic interruptions, such as student and labor strikes. Buitrago was an iconic presence at UPR for decades and played a key role in the formative years of many college students.

In closing, I would like to underscore several themes in this insightful retrospective volume about the life and work of Buitrago. First, he instilled a critical and reflexive perspective in his former pupils, particularly on Puerto Ricans' role in anthropology. Second, he encouraged his students to pursue autoethnography or, at least, ethnographies of Puerto Rican communities, mostly on the island, particularly in rural communities. Third, he insisted on ethnographic fieldwork and archival research as the core of anthropological and ethnohistorical inquiry. Fourth, he considered thick description, note-taking, participant observation, and intensive interviews hallmarks of ethnographic writing. Fifth, one of the theoretical blind spots of Buitrago's work was the question of gender, which was crucial in his interactions with students, assistants, and research participants. Finally, his intellectual trajectory recapitulated much of the history of post-war anthropological thought—from structural-functionalism to Marxism to postmodernism. In the process, Buitrago indelibly molded the academic careers of his most distinguished students and, more broadly, the "Indigenous" anthropology of Puerto Rico. I am happy that most of his disciples have kept their faith in the power of rapport to facilitate the collection of information in ethnographic fieldwork.

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Contributors

Carlo Cubero is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Tallinn University. His research focus is on the contemporary Caribbean and visual anthropology. Many of his publications address the complexities of Caribbean islands' life in a parcolonial and global context. His book *Caribbean Island Movements: Culebra's Trans-insularities* (2017) makes a case for the concept of "transinsularism" as a means to engage productively with the contradictions that characterize Caribbean island identities.

Jorge Duany is the former Director of the Cuban Research Institute and Professor of Anthropology at Florida International University in Miami. Born in Cuba and raised in Panama and Puerto Rico, Duany previously served as Acting Dean of the College of Social Sciences and Professor of Anthropology at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras. He has held visiting research and teaching appointments at several US universities, including Harvard, Connecticut, Wisconsin, Florida, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and the City University of New York. Duany has published extensively on migration, ethnicity, race, nationalism, and transnationalism in Cuba, the Caribbean, and the United States. He is the author, coauthor, editor, or coeditor of twenty-two books, including *Cuba and Puerto Rico: Transdisciplinary Approaches to History, Literature, and Culture* (2023); *Obra selecta* (2021); *Picturing Cuba: Art, Culture, and Identity on the Island and in the Diaspora* (2019); and *Un pueblo disperso: Dimensiones sociales y culturales de la diáspora cubana* (2014).

Ismael García Colón is a Professor of Anthropology at the College of Staten Island and CUNY Graduate Center. He is a historical and political anthropologist with interests in political economy, oral history, migration, Gramsci's concept of hegemony, farm labor, race and citizenship, the us Empire, and us ethnic and racial histories. His research experiences include documenting Latinxs in the NYC labor movement and conducting ethnographic research on landless workers, migrant farmworkers, colonial state formation, and land distribution programs in Puerto Rico. García Colón is the author of *Colonial Migrants at the Heart of Empire: Puerto Rican Workers on US Farms* (2020) and *Land Reform in Puerto Rico: Modernizing the Colonial State* (2009). His publications have also appeared in *Latin American Perspectives*, *CENTRO Journal*, *American Ethnologist*, *Latino Studies*, and *Dialectical Anthropology*. García Colón's current research explores the Puerto Rican experience in us farm labor, its relation to us colonialism and immigration policies, and how government policies and workers formed and transformed modern subjectivities in Puerto Rico.

Samiri Hernández Hiraldo teaches anthropology and religion at Florida A&M University. Her research focuses on the religious experiences of women in Puerto Rico. She published *Black Puerto Rican Identity and Religious Experience* (2006, rpt. 2014). In recent years, she has explored autoethnography and ethnographic poetry. Her poems have appeared in various national and international journals and have been translated into several languages. She has published six poetry collections, including *Al vapor* (2020), *The Five Legs of the Cat* (2021), *Carnadas* (2023), and *Cara de tierra* (2023). Hernández Hiraldo enthusiastically incorporates the arts into both her research and teaching.

Ricardo Pérez is a Professor of Anthropology and Coordinator of the Anthropology Program at Eastern Connecticut State University. His teaching and research interests include political economy, sustainable development, transnational migration, and globalization. He is the author of a book, *The State and*

Small-Scale Fisheries in Puerto Rico (2005), and several peer-reviewed articles about those interests based on his ethnographic fieldwork in Puerto Rico and Cuba. His most recent publications are “On the Cuban Road to Development: Reflections on Sustainable Tourism, Environmental Conservation, and Globalization,” in the *Newsletter of the Society for Applied Anthropology* (2010) and “The Promise of Globalization: Sustainable Tourism Development and Environmental Policy in Cuba,” in *Cuba in a Global Context: International Relations, Internationalism, and Transnationalism*, edited by Catherine Krull (2014).

Marisol Ramos is the Subject Librarian for Latin American and Iberian Studies, Spanish & Portuguese, and Selector for Ethnic and Gender Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She has been part of several writing projects, from coauthoring a book about creating an archival program with limited resources to collaborating on several book chapters about access to cultural heritage archives and issues of diversity and inclusion in libraries and archives. Some of her works are the co-authored book, *Building a Successful Archival Programme: A Practical Approach* (2006), the co-authored book chapter “Puerto Rico’s archival traditions in the context of colonialism,” in *Decolonizing the Caribbean Record: An Archives Reader* (2018), and “Identity and Inclusion in the Archives: Challenges of Documenting One’s Own Community” in *Through the Archival Looking Glass: A Reader on Diversity and Inclusion* (2017). Her more recent solo article was, “La visión de la nación puertorriqueña dentro del marco del romanticismo, el cosmopolitismo y la modernidad de Alejandro Tapia y Rivera,” published in *Caribbean Studies* in 2018.

Waleska Sanabria León is Associate Professor and Chair of the Social Science and History department at the Pontifical Catholic University of Puerto Rico, Ponce. She holds a Professional Certification in Bioethics from the Eugenio Maria de Hostos Institute of Bioethics, Medical Sciences Campus, University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras. Her research interests include bioculture, bio-

medicine, bioethics, ethnicity, migration, gender, STEM education in Hispanic Serving Institutions, globalization, health, and the environment. She is the co-author of the article “Colonial Necropolitics in Responding to Gender Based Violence Amidst Cascading Disasters in Puerto Rico” (with Gabriela M. Torres), published in *Feminist Anthropology* in 2024. Since 2023, she has been training science students in anthropological research from an applied, public health, and medical anthropology approach.

Jessica Santos López was Carlos Buitrago’s undergraduate research assistant on a migration project, part of a research agreement between the anthropology program at the University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras and the Center for Research and Advanced Studies in Social Anthropology in Chiapas, Mexico. She co-authored the report with Dr. Buitrago, *Mujeres indígenas, empoderamiento y migración hacia San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas* (2004), which explores the reasons why Mayan women migrated from rural to urban communities. As a PhD candidate and Clark Fellow at SUNY Binghamton, she used materiality theory to explore immigrants’ participation in public protests, which resulted in the publication “From Banned Bodies to Political Subjects: Immigrants in Protest Bundles,” in *Practicing Materiality* edited by Ruth M. Van Dyke (2015). Her dissertation focuses on the challenges faced by low-wage immigrant workers and how immigrant worker centers use political art, feminist, and environmental justice narratives and legal recourses to overcome these obstacles. Currently, Santos López teaches at CUNY Brooklyn College, and is Project Advisor and Local Coordinator in Puerto Rico for Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI).

Manuel Valdés Pizzini is a Professor Emeritus from the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of Puerto Rico in Mayagüez (UPRM). He is currently the Coordinator of the Interdisciplinary Center for Coastal Studies (Centro Interdisciplinario de Estudios del Litoral, CIEL) at UPRM. His research focuses on the human-ecosystem interface, with special atten-

tion to the use of coastal and marine resources, species, and habitats, underscoring the socio-ecological and historical perspective. Valdés Pizzini is the author and co-author of several articles on Local Ecological Knowledge (LEK), marine protected areas, coastal communities, fisheries, and the history of fishing gear. His research interests also covered the use of tropical forests from an ethnographic and historical perspective. He is the co-author of *People, Habitats, Species, and Governance: An Assessment of the Social-ecological System of La Parguera, Puerto Rico* (2014, with Michelle T. Schärer-Umpierre), *Una mirada al mundo de los pescadores en Puerto Rico: Una mirada global* (2011), *La transformación del paisaje puertorriqueño y la disciplina del Cuerpo Civil de Conservación, 1933–1942* (2011, with Michael González and José Eduardo Martínez), and *Fishers at Work, Workers at Sea* (2002, with David Griffith).

