

## **Dominican-American Writers: Hybridity and Ambivalence**

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### **Abstract**

US-Dominican writers are not newcomers in American literary scene. Many of these writers were born in the US or immigrated as children with their families, but all share the fact of writing in English and publishing in the US, a fact that has disrupted the traditional literary canon of this country. In the words of Cuban-American literary critic Gustavo Pérez-Firmat, they have come to form a “hyphenated cultural identity.”

The importance of the Dominican presence in New York manifests itself in literature, which has functioned as a venue for reflecting, in one way or another, on the Dominican or Dominican-American cultural identity. One of the main purposes of this article will be to analyze the representation that Dominican writers in the US make of their culture of origin, and of their adopted country.

### **Introduction**

Dominican immigration to the United States, and more specifically to New York City, should be considered within the context of the peripheral migration towards the hegemonic centers of the so-called First World. According to Iain Chambers, migration, set in motion by modernization and the economic globalization, is currently reaching a magnitude and an intensity never before seen (1994, 5-6). The citizens of the Dominican Republic make up the fourth largest group of immigrants to the United States after Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans. In New York City, Dominicans constitute the second most-important group of Latinos after Puerto Ricans. Dominican immigration is relatively recent, compared to that of Puerto Ricans and Cubans.<sup>1</sup> The importance of Dominican immigration to the United States has mainly appeared in Dominican-American literature, where in one manner or another, the Dominican and/or Dominican-American cultural identity is represented. One of the objectives of this article is to analyze the hybridity of Dominican-American writers and the representations they construct from the cultures of their native and adopted countries. I propose as well that these writers have

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<sup>1</sup> After the death of the dictator Rafael Leónidas Trujillo, who ruled the Dominican Republic from 1930 to 1961, and the American invasion of 1965, Dominicans began to immigrate to New York. This migration grew during the 1980s and 90s after the severe economic crises that afflicted the country. According to the census of 1997, the number of Dominicans in New York had reached 832,000, or ten percent of the population of the Dominican Republic. Of that total, nearly 500,000 live in New York City.

appropriated the hegemonic discourse that primitivizes the Other as a way of combating the anxiety, angst, and fear produced by hybridity. In this way, Dominican-American writers achieve recognition from the hegemonic subject and go on to form part of the American literary canon. I will concentrate on the novels *How the García Sisters Lost Their Accents* and *¡Yo!* by Julia Álvarez, *Soledad* by Angie Cruz and the collection of short stories *Drown* by Junot Díaz.

### **The Immigrant Subject: Hybridity, Third Space, and the Screenplay Culture**

Migration in the context of modernization and economic globalization has created a hybrid space among the diverse cultures coming into contact. According to Homi Bhabha, hybridity is a new cultural and a privileged third space. The hybrid can be considered as that which is “neither the one nor the other” (1988, 10). In the case of hybrid US/Dominican writers, Julia Álvarez and Junot Díaz were brought to the United States as children. Angie Cruz, on the other hand, was born in the United States of Dominican parents and was raised in Washington Heights, New York. With respect to the first two, the Cuban sociologist Rubén Rambaut calls this type of immigrant the “One-and-a-Half Generation,” since not only have they had to struggle with the transition from childhood to adulthood, but also from one sociocultural environment to another. (Pérez-Firmat, 1994, 4). Gustavo Pérez-Firmat considers that, more than adult immigrants who seek to reaffirm themselves by identification with their original culture through time, or the first generation which completely assimilates to the host country’s culture, *Generation 1.5* is the one capable of negotiating both cultures and shape what he calls a hyphenated culture. Pérez-Firmat concurs with Bhabha in that the hybrid, by being “neither the one nor the other” can “negotiate” more easily between both cultures. These immigrant subjects

have had to articulate cultural differences as a process of integration/resistance throughout its encounters with the Other (Hall, 1996, 141).

In the work of Homi Bhabha and Gustavo Pérez-Firmat one notes a celebratory attitude toward the hybrid. I believe, however, that there persists within the hybrid a heartbreaking ambivalence, often expressed as love/hate and manifested in the binary oppositions here/now and there/then proposed by Abril Trigo. (2000, 279). In the novels *How the Garcia Sisters Lost Their Accents*, *¡Yo!*, *Soledad* and in the short story collection *Drown*, the characters express an ambivalent relationship with Dominican culture: the desire to return to get to know the country and the depreciation of that same culture, which is, then, represented through a “dirty realism” as the primitivization and abjection of the subaltern Other.<sup>2</sup> Some characters return to the Dominican Republic as postcolonial tourists and then transform the here/now into a there/now, because if they truly have exchanged time, they speak from the hegemonic space.<sup>3</sup> This negative representation, on the part of the hybrid, is, if you will, a response to the massive immigration, perceived as an “invasion,” by citizens of the developing countries to the developed ones. In this manner, the -which the hybrid does not recognize in himself- is despised as a ghost of the colonized Other. The Other is symbolically consumed by the hegemonic subject and the hybrid by means of literature which represents them as abject and primitive -although often rare, exotic beings- as a form of expelling the negative terms of the civilization-barbarism dichotomy from their unconscious. It is the regression of the unconscious.

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<sup>2</sup> “Dirty realism” designates the tendency in American literature which came arose in the 1980s and is characterized by sordid, abject characters that live in a world of crime and in a depersonalized society. Some of the writers associated with this tendency are Raymond Carver, Jayne Anne Phillips and Richard Ford (Macey, 99-100). Junot Díaz appropriates this discourse in his representation of the Dominican as Other.

<sup>3</sup> Jaume Martí-Olivella reappropriates the concept of the postcolonial subject for the construction of his “postcolonial tourist” as a reconsideration of neocolonial relations through tourism. The gaze of the postcolonial tourist is the hegemonic gaze of the European and the American. The hegemonic gaze of Yo, Yunió, Soledad and other characters, as narrative masks for their authors, is the gaze of a postcolonial tourist.

### **Images of the Other-Within and the Ghost of the Other**

In *Soledad* by Angie Cruz, Soledad, the main character, is torn between her desire to assimilate to Anglo culture and her rejection of Dominican culture which nonetheless, maintains a strong hold on her, through ties to her family and principally to her mother. Soledad gets a job in an art gallery and moves to an Anglo neighborhood (called Gringolandia by another character), but she is quickly obliged to return home, manipulated by her mother's illness. Soledad, nicknamed "blanquita," "a sellout, a wannabe white girl" (Cruz, 2001, 12-13) transfers her quarrel with Dominican culture to her mother, whom she hates (and loves) and about whose death she fantasizes. Her cousin Flaca mocks her saying, "Classy Soledad is working at a *galería*. Do you have to wear a suit?" (Ibid., 41). Soledad does not know her father because her mother had been a prostitute in Puerto Plata, trying to escape poverty in the countryside near San Pedro, both towns in the Dominican Republic. A series of negative images and expressions concerning the Dominican Republic appear throughout the novel. Dominicans who live in Washington Heights are compared with cockroaches: "Gorda jokes that if someone invented a Raid for Dominicans the government would fumigate all of Washington Heights." (Ibid., 97). The Dominican Republic is represented by the narrator through a series of stereotyped images in English and Spanish, such as "Home, rice and beans, apagones, plátanos, mango trees, día de los muertos, strikes, warm beach water, malecón, never having an election that doesn't get recounted home. . ." (Ibid., 229).

In *How the Garcia Sisters Lost Their Accents* by Julia Álvarez, the Dominican Republic is also represented in negative terms, as a country populated solely by submissive servants, lower-class mulattos, and a governing elite under the eternal oppression of a capricious tyrant.

Above all is apparent an implicit criticism of the submission and the traditional role of women in the face of machista patriarchal culture. The oppositions superior/inferior, democratic/authoritarian, developed/backward, liberal/dictatorial, therefore, correspond to the United States/Dominican Republic dichotomy. In *¡Yo!*, her third novel, the chapter “The Wedding Guests” is one of the most interesting in terms of the representation of Dominican culture in contrast with Anglo culture. First, in the section corresponding to Doug, one of the characters, the shape of the map of the Dominican Republic is compared with that of an amoeba under a microscope. Next, the instruments of the *merengue campesino*, interpreted by a “*perico ripiao*,” are described as the “crudest instruments,” or in other words, rudimentary, primitive instruments. The same civilization/barbarism dichotomy, brought up in the first novel, reappears when the priest witnesses an argument among wedding guests from a distance and assumes that the problem had arisen among the guests and not among “Yolanda’s tropical-island family. . . surely they are used to conducting themselves civilly in much hotter weathers” (Álvarez, 1997, 236). The novel *¡Yo!* is full of stereotypes, negative images, and false conceptions about Dominican culture. On various occasions superiority/inferiority oppositions overflow the characters’ points of view and become part of the imaginary of a postcolonial tourist who, as an omniscient narrator, seems to express the author’s ideology.

### **The Primitivist Discourse: Appropriation and Projection**

In her book *Gone Primitive*, Marianna Torgovnick defines primitivism as an ensemble of diverse and contradictory tropes, which form a grammar and a vocabulary referring to the Other (8). These tropes, which consist of recurring images and ideas, were crucial to the formation of European cultural identity. By means of these tropes, Europeans constructed a vision of the

Other as a way of struggling with cultural differences and at the same time as a justification for the colonization of Asia, Africa, and the Americas (Root, 1996, 34).<sup>4</sup>

In this way, some Dominican-American writers, through their personal narratives, have appropriated the European primitivist discourse and have transferred it to the inhabitants of their home country in order to construct them as the Primitive-Other. This appropriation takes place in the context of a postcolonial imaginary and becomes a metaprimativism -now that these writers are part of the United States. Primitivism has its corollary in that which Torgovnick calls projection: “Primitives are our untamed selves, our id forces -libidinous, irrational, violent, dangerous” (8). From the binary oppositions good/bad, rational/irrational, civilized/savage, cultural/natural, some Dominican-American writers expel the second term from themselves and project it onto the citizens of their country of origin, as a form of dealing with the fear and anxiety produced by hybridity. In this way, they imaginarily construct themselves as that-which-they-are-not, which is to say, as a hegemonic subject.

The same female character, named Primitiva, appears in Julia Álvarez’s novels *How the Garcia Sisters Lost Their Accents*, *¡Yo!* and *In the Name of Salomé*. This character functions as a metonymy of Dominicans and immediately refers back to the primitivist discourse which I mentioned earlier.<sup>5</sup> The Dominican Republic remains associated with Haiti, upon which Dominicans in their turn have projected the European and American primitivist discourse.<sup>6</sup> In *How the Garcia Sisters Lost Their Accents*, there are two important characters pierced by the Dominican-Haitian conflicts of race, social class, and cultural identity. The first of them is the

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<sup>4</sup> Tropes are rhetorical figures which organize images, concepts and symbols. Paraphrasing Root, the notions of savage, cannibal, cretin, animal, decadent, inferior, lustful and violent are tropes of primitivism. Root also distinguishes between stereotypes and tropes. Unlike stereotypes, tropes can be ambivalent, contradictory and much more difficult to deconstruct.

<sup>5</sup> In the story “The Sun, the Moon, and the Stars” by Junot Díaz, one of the characters is named Bárbaro, which alludes to the civilization/barbarism dichotomy.

<sup>6</sup> See my essay “Primitive Borders: Cultural Identity and Ethnic Cleansing in the Dominican Republic.”

maid who lives with the Garcia family in New York. Her name is Primitiva and as such, in order to do honor to her name, occupies herself with some “santería” ceremonies, although perhaps the narrator purposely meant to omit the word “Vodun,” which is a religion much more prevalent in the Dominican Republic, in order to relate the word “primitive” with Haiti. In fact, it is never said that the maid is Dominican but rather “from the Island,” which implies that she could be Dominican or Haitian. The other character is Chucha, an elderly black Haitian woman. It is a redundancy to say black and Haitian because as is well known, there are no blacks in the Dominican Republic, because “black” is a synonym for “Haitian.” In the novel, Chucha is described as “a super wrinkled and Haitian blue-black, not Dominican *café-con-leche* black.” (Álvarez, 1994a, 218). The color “coffee-with-milk,” as a translation of *café con leche*, is used to characterize Dominicans, although the only difference here is the placement of the word “black” alongside the category of *café-con-leche*. And this is so perhaps in order to contextualize these differences within the racial polarization in the United States. Obviously, upon the mention of Chucha’s skin color and nationality, Dominican skin color and nationality had to follow closely, in the same sentence. In the next sentence, the narrator continues, saying that Chucha was a “real Haitian” and because of this, could not pronounce certain words like “perejil.” By “real,” the narrator means that Chucha was born in Haiti and is not Dominican-Haitian or a Dominican of Haitian parents. Chucha’s name is tied to the religion of Vodun, because she made her living doing “readings.” References to the black race and Haitian culture must be followed by references to the antonyms civilization/barbarism. Laura, the girls’ mother, tells Chucha that she must sleep in a bed like “civilized” people, not in a coffin as she had wanted, in keeping with her religious beliefs. In this way, it would seem that there exist levels of primitivism: if

Dominicans are primitive in comparison with Anglos, Haitians are primitive in comparison with Dominicans and Anglos.

### **The Abjection of the Other**

In the stories of Junot Díaz, the abjection of the Other, through that which has been called “dirty realism,” constitutes a form of primitivization of the Other.<sup>7</sup> In *Powers of Horrors*, Julia Kristeva uses the concept of abjection in order to analyze the individual’s separation from and his later identification with not only his mother but his nation as well. That which is abject is expelled on the other side of the border. Abjection implies an ambivalence, since the body from which the individual tries to separate himself is loved and hated at the same time. This ambivalence has to do with what Freud called the “unheimlich,” that is to say, the sensation of de-familiarization within the context of the familiar. In this sense, Kristeva states: “Instead of sounding himself as to his “being,” he does so concerning his place: “*Where am I?*” instead of “*Who am I?*” For the space that engrosses the deject, the excluded, is never *one*, nor *homogenous*, nor *totalizable*, but essentially divisible, foldable, and catastrophic.” (235). Therefore, faced with the “Where am I?” question of the here/there intersection, Junot Díaz expressed the following in an interview: “I always lived in a situation of simultaneity. It’s like a science fiction book where an alien or creature or an artifact exists on two worlds, or on two different planes at one time. They’re not fixed in one place. They phase in and out.” (Lewis). It is

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<sup>7</sup> “Dirty realism” as a form of primitivism constitutes a space assigned to the Third World in the literature about the Other at the same time that it expresses the ideology of canon-forming publishing companies in the assignment of a place to the literatures produced by the Other-Within in a process of postcolonial Other-ification on the part of the metropolis. According to Pascale Casanova, the literature of each region or country would have an assigned space in the “Republic of Letters.” The space of Dominican-American letters is exoticism, tropicalism, and the modalities of primitivism like abjection and dirty realism.



not a coincidence that Díaz uses the word alien, a word that in English designates both the foreigner and the extraterrestrial.

In the majority of Díaz's stories, the main characters, Yuniór and Rafa, and the other characters as well, live in the countryside and/or in marginal neighborhoods both in the Dominican Republic, and New York City. These spaces are represented as sordid, dirty, and abject, where fights and beatings are staged or where the characters psychologically torture each other. The heartbreak of familial separation is represented as well: the resentment of children abandoned in the country or in a marginal neighborhood in the Dominican Republic.

In "Ysrael," the two brothers, on vacation near Ocoa, in an environment of abjection and poverty, torture a boy who uses a mask to hide a facial deformity. Like in the story "Face," the absence of a face -like the dolls sold in Dominican markets-represents the search for identity. Rafa, the older brother, treats Ysrael brutally and kicks him, strikes him on the head with a bottle, and succeed in "unmasking" him in order to verify the true face of this Dominican boy. If Ysrael does not have a white mask, using Fanon's metaphor, in order to hide the color of his skin, at least he wishes to hide that face deformed by poverty and abjection, a face that will be substituted with another mask, the Anglo one, as a result of the plastic surgery he will one day undergo in the United States.

### **The Impossibility of Return**

Iain Chambers considers that return is impossible, but I suspect that it is a not a question of a physical return, but of a psychological one. Yo, as well as Soledad and Yuniór, return to the Dominican Republic. However, this return, as a "return to the seed," inverts the here/now and there/then antitheses, which implies that they have not freed themselves from them, because the

same “discontinuity” persists (“Una distancia entre dos momentos” (Trigo, 2000, 279)), a discontinuity installed in them upon leaving the country for the first time.

With respect to the impossibility of return, Chambers states the following:

Migrancy, on the contrary, involves a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain. It calls for a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation. Always in transit, the promise of a homecoming -completing the story, domesticating the detour- becomes an impossibility. (5)

In *¡Yo!, Soledad* and “The Sun, the Moon and the Stars,” the return would seem to close a cycle, but this return is only the return to a contra-nostalgia which forms part of the ambivalence in which the characters find themselves trapped.

At the end of *Soledad* by Angie Cruz, the character of the same name returns to “Plátano Land,” a pejorative name with which the characters rechristen the Dominican Republic, in order to get to know the place that her grandmother, her mother and her aunt called home. Soledad goes with her cousins to visit Las Tres Bocas (¿Los Tres Ojos?), some caves filled with seawater.

The entrance into the cave, into the water, is the return to the womb and the amniotic fluid:

And when I surrender to the warmth of the water, I feel the past, present and future become one. My mother becomes the ocean and the sky. . . Her eyes stare at me and I can hear the high pitch of my mother’s voice. . . When I open my eyes, my mother is holding me, my head on her lap, her hands combing through my hair (Cruz, 2001, 236-37).

As can be seen in this quote, return is only possible through the womb (regression) symbolized by the cave Soledad penetrates.

Symptomatically, in the story “The Sun, the Moon, and the Stars” by Junot Díaz, Yuniors travels to another cavern, the “Cave of the Jaguar,” considered by another character to be the “birthplace of the nation.” (Díaz, 1998, 71). In his descent to the cave, Yuniors experiences fear and begins to shout for help, making the others pull him out. For his apparent cowardice, Yuniors

is called “pussy” by the other characters. For Jacqueline Loss, cowardice and the fact of having been called “pussy” constitute the proof that this story “ridicules the universal search for truth and originality and the construction of national foundations on the basis of an obscure descent.” (Ibid., 812). Totally on the contrary, the mention of the vagina by a character during the descent is nothing more than fear of the return to the womb and to the nation, a return to the known which is also unknown, the *unheimlich*, the return to “. . . the hole [which] is blacker than any of us.” (Ibid., 71)

### **The Master/Slave Dialectic: the Search for Recognition**

In his book *Undoing Empire*, José Buscaglia-Salgado analyzes the discursive complexities of the creole and the mulatto in the New World, as a retort to the European Ideal which tried to exclude them. According to Buscaglia, Sigüenza y Góngora “was a typical creole, spending his entire life in search of recognition, honor, and legitimacy at all costs.” (137). The phenomenon of the search for legitimization on the part of creole intellectuals during the colonial era can be extrapolated to Latino intellectuals and writers currently living in the United States.

In the case of Dominican-American writers, the appropriation of the primitivist discourse and abjection by means of “dirty realism” with respect to the subaltern Other constructs them as a hegemonic subject, at the same time that they seek legitimization on the part of the Anglo subject. They do this by appropriating the language of the hegemonic subject, surpassing him in the mastery of the language -all of them write in English- as well as also obtaining literary prizes and publications in the publishing companies of the hegemonic centers.

In his story “The Sun, the Moon, the Stars,” Yuniors expresses the following with respect to his friend: “You never met more opposite niggers in your life. . . (What is it with us niggers

and our bodies? Not even *Fanon* can explain it to me.” (Díaz, 1998, 106). And it is precisely Frantz Fanon who can shed light not only the subject of racism but on the psychological pathologies of the colonized subject as well. In *Black Skin/White Masks*, Fanon states:

Every colonized people -in other words, every people in whose soul and inferiority complex has been created by the death and burial of its local cultural originality- finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation; that is, with the culture of the mother country. The colonized is elevated above his jungle status in proportion to his adoption of the mother country's cultural standards. He becomes writer as he renounces his blackness, his jungle. (18)

It would be necessary to make a few adjustments to this forceful affirmation in order to apply it to Dominican-American writers. First, although the United States is not the “mother country” of these writers, this country has come to displace/substitute Europe in terms of its political and cultural hegemony in Latin America. Second, these writers are mestizo, but as Hispanics, trapped in the American racial polarization, they would be considered black, not Anglo. And third, as Bhabha comments in his introduction, Fanon uses the word “man” and the masculine pronoun to refer to humanity, which leaves the complications of gender completely aside. The majority of Dominican-American writers are women, and so their representation of their home country's culture necessarily includes a criticism of patriarchy. Even so, a representation of what Chambers calls the “violence of alterity” is not included in the representation of Anglo men, because in this case it would be a double “violence of alterity”, because as women they have to confront not only the patriarchal culture of the United States, but racial and cultural domination as well. Therefore, male and female writers appropriate the white mask, which as a phallogentric Anglo discourse is a double mask: white and male.

## Forum on Public Policy

In his introduction to Fanon's book, Bhabha states that difference -in this case cultural as well as gender-based- is erased with the colonizer's invitation when he says: "'You're a doctor, a writer, a student, you're *different*, you're one of *us*.'" It is precisely in that ambivalent use of 'different' -to be different from those who are different makes you the same- that the unconscious speaks of the form of Otherness. . ." (1986, xvi). Upon the erasure of ethno-racial difference, Dominican-American writers construct themselves as hegemonic once they are recognized as equals.

With respect to the people of the Caribbean, Fanon is more specific when he writes: "Everything an Antillean does is done for the Other. . . The Other who corroborates him in his search for self-validation." (212-13). On the one hand, Dominican-American writers seek and need the recognition of the hegemonic subject -white European- in order to construct their humanity (Fanon, 1967, 216-17). This search is translated into desire and identification with the hegemonic subject whom they consider superior. On the other, the hegemonic subject legitimizes the self-valorization of the postcolonial subject. The white subject (European or American) then becomes the expert who will determine the value of the work of art and will put a price on it, through publication in prestigious publishing companies and literary prizes in the hegemonic centers.

Fanon analyzes the master/slave dialectic in which Hegel proposes that the necessity of recognition is reciprocal, that both the master and the slave need mutual recognition for their existence (Ibid., 220). These master/slave relations are translated within the frame of the postcolonial relationship between the United States and Latin America as desire: "As soon as I *desire* I am asking to be considered" (Ibid., 218). If it is certain that the Dominican-American writer desires the Anglo subject and seeks his recognition, the Anglo subject also needs to be

desired and recognized as lord and master, as superior, an owner of the language. This recognition is only possible as far as the author's language approaches that of the master's and as the topics in question include the representation of some significant aspect of the dominant culture and the depreciation of the home country's culture.

### **Conclusion**

The privileged place that Homi Bhabha and Gustavo Pérez-Firmat give to the concepts of "third space" and "hyphen culture," respectively, with respect to the hybrid fails insofar that the hybrid lives out a doubly marginal condition unless he renounces his original culture and not only assimilates to the host culture but surpasses the host in skillful mastery of the language. Only in this way can he achieve the hegemonic subject's recognition. The characters Yo and Soledad are two examples of how, although in permanent struggle with the family which represents Dominican culture, one has become a successful writer and the other an employee in an art gallery in an Anglo neighborhood of New York. In the same way, Yuniors, the narrative alter ego of Junot Díaz in the story "The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao" goes to college and succeeds in "overcoming" the abjection of the spaces of social marginalization, becoming only a witness of them. At the same time, he becomes the narrator of Oscar Wao's vicissitudes in the Dominican Republic, which end in Oscar's death at the hands of a soldier, which proves that return is ultimately impossible.

The process of assimilation/resistance in the hybrid is not void of anguish, anxiety, and fear, faced with the pressure to assimilate to the host country's culture. In a 1997 interview with Heather Rosario-Sievert in *Review: Latin American Literature and Arts*, Julia Álvarez, with regard to the collisions between the two cultures, said, "It creates confusion and conflicts that get

worked into the writing, but my eyes see certain things because I am that mixture.” (36). Thus, even though she sees her hybridity as a source of conflict, she also believes, like the cultural theorist Homi Bhabha, that the third space created by this hybridity is a privileged one, in that it allows her to change positions as subject. Álvarez appears to have overcome these cultural conflicts by following the Polish poet Czeslaw Milosz in choosing language -although I would rather say writing- over culture, as her place of residence. Also, Junot Díaz seems to agree with this position when he says in an interview: “I always lived in a situation of simultaneity” (Lewis). But in the story “The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao”, Yvon, Oscar’s girlfriend, tells him: “A person can’t have two [homes].” (Díaz, 2001, 116). So, one cannot dwell in two languages, because even if residence in a second language can free one from the prison of the mother tongue, language “does not merely reflect culture, history and differences but also produces them.” (Chambers, 1994, 12). The balance of life in the hyphen, of life in the in-between, is broken and the scale tilts toward the hegemonic language and culture. In this way, Homi Bhabha’s “neither the one nor the other” becomes rather “one more than the other.”

Translated by Scott Cooper

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Published by the Forum on Public Policy

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