Llorens, Hilda. Imaging the Great PR Family

Published by Lexington Books
An imprint of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706
www.rowman.com

Unit A, Whitacre Mews, 26-34 Stannery Street, London SE11 4AB

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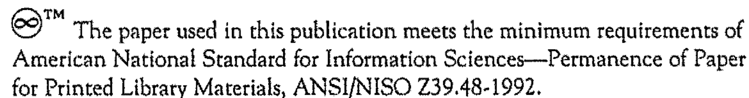
1975
.L56
2014

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Available

Cloth ISBN 978-0-7391-8918-4
Electronic ISBN 978-0-7391-8919-1



The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

Printed in the United States of America

For *Khalil Gerónimo*, my sunshine, with unconditional love.
You are the love and light of my life.

For *Carlosgé*, with love, admiration, and in solidarity.

Notes

1. In the digital age the screen (in the camera, telephone, or computer) has largely supplanted the printed photograph. The photograph, as printed object, is becoming a thing of the past.

2. I think of the home altar as a kind of evolving art installation in which images, candles, and saints are introduced and repositioned as the believer's particular needs or prayers change. Altars are thus dynamic installations.

3. "When we read pictures—in fact, images of any kind, whether painted, sculpted, photographed, built or performed—we bring to them *the temporal quality of narrative*. We extend that which is limited by a frame to a before and an after, and through the craft of telling stories (whether of love or hate), we lend the immutable picture an infinite and inexhaustible life" (Manguel 2000, 13; emphasis mine).

4. I explore this issue at length in my article "Dislocated Geographies" (2006).

5. I find Ayala and Bernabe's Table 1.1 particularly useful. It offers a brief yet astute encapsulation of Puerto Rican history at a glance (2007, 8–9).

CHAPTER ONE

Imaging Puerto Rican Natives, 1890–1920

> Cameras began duplicating the world at that moment when the human landscape started to undergo a vertiginous rate of change: while an untold number of forms of biological and social life are being destroyed in a brief span of time, a device is available to record what is disappearing.
>
> —Susan Sontag, *On Photography*

> Statistical details of number, sex, nativity, race and literacy. Excess of males. Small proportions of foreign people. Divisions into classes. The "Spaniards" (white Puerto Ricans). The gibaros, or peasantry. The negroes. Former conditions of slavery in Porto Rico.
>
> —Robert T. Hill, *Cuba and Porto Rico*

"Puerto Rican Natives, circa 1903." Sixteen children. Ten boys, four girls. Two boys' naked bodies and swollen bellies remind viewers of the poverty associated with "third-world" or "under-developed" countries: malnutrition, lack of health, poor hygiene, parasitic bodies. Pity. Two women, each holding an infant; one stands on the threshold of a *bohío* (straw hut), the other stands among a group of children. Unrestrained fertility? Five adults. Two men and three women fully dressed. Twenty-one souls, none wear shoes.

The lush vegetation surrounding the scene, especially the palm trees whose height betrays the camera's frame, situate the subjects in a coastal hamlet. The large leaves of the banana plant, the towering mango and avocado trees, the thin papaya tree, and the weeds depict the impetuous

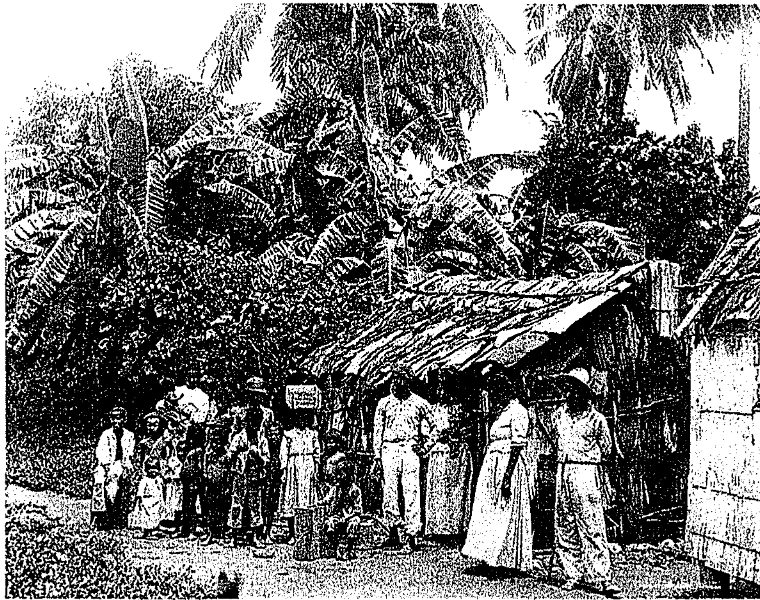


Figure 1.1. "Puerto Rican Natives, circa 1903." Courtesy of the Library of Congress, call number: LC-D4-16746.

nature of the tropics. The vegetation, like the people, suggests an "untamed wildness." Among the people and verdant vegetation, we see the products of their labor: small thatched-roof dwellings made from straw, wooden sticks, and planks. Primitive technology. Puerto Rico, circa 1903.

What do Puerto Rican and American pictorial representations reveal about Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans during the earliest years of colonial transition? To answer this question I juxtapose American-produced photographs credited to the Detroit Photographic Company, and specifically to photographer Henry William Jackson (1843–1942), against iconic paintings by Puerto Rican artists Ramón Frade (1875–1954) and Oscar Colón Delgado (1889–1968). I examine the ways in which cultural and racial politics frame the photographic and artistic representations of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans made during these early years of American occupation. White American and Puerto Rican men produced the works discussed here. Hence, when inquiring about the cultural products from this period, one must mark "whiteness" as central to the inquiry. Otherwise, as Coco Fusco has so rightly observed, one runs the risk of "redoubling its hegemony by naturalizing it" (Wallis 1995, 75 cf. Fusco, 1988).

These images are "sites of meaning" representing various and complex relationships (e.g., between insider and outsider, photographer and subjects, imperial metropolis and colonial outpost). Their ways of "seeing" at times co-exist in tension. I analyze these representational products in the context of the wider socio-political era in which they were produced and focus my close-up viewing on the details that make them iconic. These photographs of Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans produced by American photographers at the turn of the century illustrate that they are as much a depiction of the American obsession with race and blackness as they are about colonial expansion and Puerto Ricans more generally. Similarly, the paintings produced by Puerto Ricans at this time are as much depictions of the anxiety and trauma of U.S. colonial intervention in Puerto Rico as they are representations of a unique Puerto Rican reality. Finally, I untangle the ways in which Americans and Puerto Ricans *indexed* the Puerto Rico of the beginning of the twentieth century.

Indexicality is particularly relevant to this study because, as Bal and Bryson explain, this notion ". . . suggests that we do not only account for images in terms of their provenance and making, but also of their functioning in relation to the viewer . . ." (1991, 190–191). The images discussed here offer powerful documentary evidence because they *punctuate* Puerto Rican history. Barthes (1981, 51–60) defined the *punctum* as that detail in a photograph that wounds, pricks, and establishes a direct, personal relation between the viewer and that, which is represented. These images are also dynamic icons largely achieving their meaning in the world of discourse (Bal and Bryson, 1991, 192–193 cf. Derrida, 1978, 93). They have become significant historic documents precisely because they stand as witness to the history of Puerto Rico's colonial struggle.

"Puerto Rican Natives": Influences from the U.S.

The photo described at the beginning of this chapter, "Puerto Rican Natives," (Figure 1.1) is credited to the Detroit Photographic Company and is housed at the Library of Congress' digital archive. The Detroit Photographic Company (which became the Detroit Publishing Company in 1905, DPC hereafter) was in the business of postcard production and sales for the American mass market. While the vast majority of their photos depict the continental U.S., the public's interest in the Spanish-American War prompted a turn of the DPC camera's gaze toward the Caribbean—mainly Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the "West Indies." The portability of the photographic document, as well as its ease of reproduction, allowed it to become a significant instru-

ment in the global legitimization of U.S. colonial expansion into the former Spanish colonies. The extensive photographic and media coverage of the Spanish-American War marks it as "the first truly modern war" (Rice 2011, 1; Thompson 2010; Perivolaris 2007; Evered 2006).

The Detroit Photographic Company gained exclusive rights to the photochrom process in the mid-1890s. This allowed them to mass-produce color postcards long before the advent of color photography. The Library of Congress explains that photochrom prints are "ink-based images produced through 'the direct photographic transfer of an original negative onto a litho and chromographic printing plates' and that "The prints look deceptively like color photographs."[1]

Presently, the Library of Congress' American Memory Archive credits 292 photographs of Cuba, 42 of Puerto Rico, and 132 of the West Indies to the Detroit Publishing Company. Coincidentally, in "1898 American publishers were allowed to print and sell cards bearing the inscription 'Private Mailing Card, Authorized by an Act of Congress on May 19, 1898.'"[2] The same year, the U.S. post office released a one-cent stamp for the postcard and in 1902 the Eastman Kodak Company began production and sales of their postcard-sized photographic paper. These events gave rise to the "Golden Age" of the photographic postcard. Rogan estimates that during the years 1895–1915, "between 200 and 300 billion postcards were produced and sold" (2005, 1).

"Puerto Rican Natives" (Figure 1.1) was taken sixty-four years after the advent of photography in 1839 and only five years after the United States acquired Puerto Rico in 1898. Susan Sontag has written that the photograph "furnishes evidence" (1977, 5). Similarly, Walter Benjamin remarked that photos are "evidence in the historical process" (Larsen 1999, 21 cf. Benjamin 1977). As an historic document, "Puerto Rican Natives" offers visual evidence of a people caught betwixt and between primitivism and modernity. The luxuriant tropical landscape matched by the humble dwellings and shoeless denizens (and the two unclothed children), stands as a vestige of the not-so-distant "primitive" past. Yet the clothed adults and children show they are a step above "naked primitives" in their "evolutionary station." Regarding the political history of the "Puerto Rican Natives," clothing stands as one signifier of Spain's failed modernizing mission.

In his 1898 technical report about Puerto Rico, the Texan geologist Robert T. Hill writes that, "The children generally don the garb of civilization at or near the age of ten or twelve" (1898, 168). "Puerto Rican Natives," however, shows that clothing was a matter of access rather than age.

The adults are clothed and the children are wearing torn rags—a sign of benign neglect on the part of the "motherland." Yet the fully clothed bodies of adults and female children depict the modesty of a Catholic nation. Clothing also signals that dressed in their best (if too warm) clothes, "the natives" are able to transact with the new colonizer in however unequal the terms. The formality of their clothes signifies self-respect and is one way in which "the natives" controlled this encounter, an encounter that, perhaps unbeknownst to the people depicted here, has become a signifying moment in/of Puerto Rican history.

Allegedly shot by an operator (as photographers were then known) for the DPC, "Puerto Rican Natives" reveals the asymmetrical terms of exchange between the "natives" and colonial interlocutors. Imagine how "the natives" might have experienced this exchange in 1903: a white American man wielding cumbersome camera equipment and traveling with an expeditionary entourage—no doubt consisting of both American and Puerto Rican assistants—scout a location, recruit subjects, and then arrange the shoot. They stage the subjects in relation to the landscape and to each other. After the initial arrangements the operator goes to work shooting the photograph. This alone could take hours.

Did the subjects get an incentive or a reward for appearing in the photo? Who are these women, men, and children? How did they come together for this photograph? Are the women the mothers of these children? Are the men, their fathers? Are they related to one another? Where exactly was this photograph taken? These are questions the image itself does not answer. Instead we are left to wonder, imagine, and interpret what we see. Certainly, there is more to the story of any photographic representation and a photographic image only tells part of a more nuanced story (What were the maker's intentions? How did he/she assemble the shot? Why must a scene be converted into a photograph in the first place?, and so on.).

"Puerto Rican Natives" is a staged photograph. We encounter the photos' passive subjects standing together in an unnatural arrangement solely for the camera's lens and the photographer's eyes. The group is not engaged in the events of daily life, making the portrayal of a girl uncomfortably balancing a wooden box on her head all the more awkward. The box this young girl holds precariously on her head is a telltale sign that the photographer likened Puerto Rico to the Anglophone Caribbean, where it was far more common for women to transport baskets, but seldom boxes, on their heads. The girl is dressed like a miniature adult, with a younger child standing so close to her it seems they are stuck together; she is like a little mother. This signals the

early age at which girls become mothers and are expected to work. Almost completely out of the frame, in the front of the photograph and at a distance from the people, is a dog's head. It is likely that the dog disrupted this otherwise human scene at the last minute, after the photographer had pressed the shutter button. The dog breaks the illusion of what appears otherwise to be a controlled stage-set.

The two adults on the right of the frame look at the ground, pensively averting the camera's gaze. The children betray that there are others in the background because their eyes focus in various directions. The boys sitting on the wooden boxes complete the look of staging. The man standing frontally with an arm on his hip and a woman and child beside him at the threshold of the dwelling, appears as the "man of the house." He seems to be the leader of this group, a man with a certain amount of authority. His clothing suggests that he is perhaps a stevedore or dockworker; this detail might help explain his relative position of authority. He might have also been the link between the photographer and the people represented in the photograph because dockworkers came into daily contact with foreigners emerging from the vessels docking in San Juan.

The photo's title suggests, surely without intending to do so, who exactly constitute so-called Puerto Rican natives. The people depicted in this photograph are natives to the extent that they are inhabitants of the island of Puerto Rico in 1903. José Luis González argued that, "the first Puerto Ricans were in fact *black* Puerto Ricans (1980, 10; emphasis in original). González writes that "it was the blacks, the people bound most closely to the territory which they inhabited (they were after all slaves), who had the greatest difficulty in imagining any other place to live" (10). Following this logic, "Puerto Rican Natives" is a representation of González's version of "the first Puerto Ricans." Certainly, the photo's subjects are "natives" insofar as the photographer and the company's titling professional is concerned. They are natives, though not indigenous to Puerto Rico. Puerto Rican historiography tells us that by this time the indigenous Taínos were culturally extinct. Only traces of their DNA remained in the gene pool of the island's inhabitants. To segregated American consumers, the intended market of these photographs, the people in the picture might appear to be a group of "poor Negroids." Yet to Puerto Rican viewers, the nuances in the skin gradations of each subject might tell another story. Strikingly, the man (dockworker?), the woman, and the child at the center of the photograph are phenotypically distinct from the rest of the group. Do their lighter skin and features explain their central position in the composition?

William Henry Jackson, the Detroit Photographic Company, and the Issue of Attribution

The photographs in the DPC collection are attributed to William Henry Jackson (1843–1942). Born in New York, Jackson spent his life traveling and taking/making documentary photographs. He produced an astonishing number of photographs, paintings, and sketches the majority of which represent the era of American geographic expansion into the western United States. Douglas Waitley, author of the biography, *William Henry Jackson: Framing the Frontier* (1999), writes that Jackson "saw himself as 'one of the fortunate,' because he was born in a unique era in American history, when the United States was about to break from its eastern orientation and become a continental nation" (1999, 1). Like many others who saw the West as a vast and available region, Jackson went west seeking fortune. Though he never found gold or other valuable minerals, as a gifted artist he spent the rest of his life creating a remarkable archive of visual documents. Waitley explains that,

> He [Jackson] had a feeling for history in transition. He was seeing the railroad replace the Oregon Trail. He was seeing the huge buffalo herds thin, then virtually vanish. He was seeing powerful tribes—like the Sioux who had been a threat when he bullwhacked through their territory—become harassed nomads, then humbled reservation Indians. And he felt he must be there to record those precious moments with his camera . . . before they vanished. (1999, 1)

Along with photographing and sketching the magnificent scenery of the American West, by 1869 Jackson had "secured a commission from the Union Pacific Railroad to take promotional photographs along its line" (Waitley 1999, 1). It was at this time that he developed an interest in photographing Native Americans. Part of his oeuvre, then, can be considered as "proto-ethnographic" because throughout his career he photographed hundreds of individuals who were meant to stand in as representatives of their "vanishing" cultures. As a prolific visual chronicler and observer of the West, Jackson was committed to capturing the "disappearing" Indians in his photographs.

Having distinguished himself as a gifted photographer, in 1870 Jackson was invited by Dr. Ferdinand Hayden, the man in charge of the United States Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories, to join him on his expedition to Wyoming and the adjacent territories. This region had been "Indian domain" but was now "earmarked for white settlement" (Waitley 1999, 97–98). In 1871, Jackson once again joined Hayden, this time with a much

larger contingent of men, as they set out to investigate, chart, and document Yellowstone. Jackson's photographs were the first ever taken of what is now known as Yellowstone (Jackson 1940, 196). Dr. Hayden's Yellowstone survey was so successful that Congress unanimously established it as a national park and on March 1, 1872, President Grant signed the law that "set it forever aside for the people" (Jackson 1940, 205). Jackson's well-crafted photographs were some of Dr. Hayden's strongest evidence in his presentation to Congress. Aside from publicizing the "newly" acquired regions, the photographs worked to bolster Dr. Hayden's position as an eminent scientist and to ensure the continued financial support for future expeditions.

William Henry Jackson's proto-ethnographic inclinations crystallized in the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. Dr. Hayden was given a prominent location among the exhibitors and he entrusted Jackson with the task of organizing the exhibit (Waitley 1999, 161). In his autobiography, Jackson remarks that "Today every child learns about the Southwestern Indian villages before finishing the fifth or sixth grade, and I have nothing to add to the textbook descriptions. But in the 70s and 80s that civilization was not familiar to many people. I was therefore anxious to take all the photographs I could of subject matter that was intensely interesting at the time—even if it produces only yawns in 1940" (1940, 239).

By the time of the World's Columbian Exposition (also known as "The World's Fair") in 1893, the main attraction was no longer the "vanishing Indians," a topic now considered passé by Expo organizers.[3] Ethnology, a proper and legitimate science, had entered the European and American cultural landscapes, and it was deemed respectable to display the "natives" in photographs and in person along with their "objects" in museum-like dioramas (Rydell 1993; Tobing-Rony 1996; Duany 2002). The real marvels of this Expo were Thomas Edison's phonograph, Henry Ford's gasoline powered carriage, the Bell telephone, as well as other futuristic devices such as "electric stoves, hot plates, laundry washers, and carpet cleaners" (Waitley 1999, 184). Technological advances promising that machines would improve life coupled with the notion that the U.S. as an emergent imperial power should invest in technological progress, took center stage at the World's Fair. The Expo's subtext was not only that technology would transform the life of ordinary American citizens, but also that American entrepreneurs should capitalize on the "untapped markets" made available by colonial expansion.

In 1900–1901, Jackson made his first voyage to the West Indies, "principally to get views of Cuba and Nassau" (1940, 325). Because neither Jackson nor his biographers mention him ever setting foot in Puerto Rico, it is difficult to ascertain whether or not he was the "operator" behind the photographs of Puerto Rico housed in the DCP collection of the American Memory Archive. Certainly, an outline of the "known photographic trips" taken by Jackson does not document a return to the Caribbean after his 1901 trip (History Colorado). Regarding the issue of attribution, Waitley notes that

> During his travels Jackson sometimes purchased negatives from local photographers to expand his coverage of a subject or region. This was a common practice at the time, and the pictures were published under the name of the Photochrom Company or its parent, the Detroit Photographic Company. For this reason it is difficult or impossible to determine which pictures were actually Jackson's own. (1999, 192–193)

Moreover in his autobiography, Jackson mentions that the Detroit Publishing Company, of which he was part owner, employed about a dozen commercial travelers. He further writes that, "Our business was the production of color prints . . . in sizes varying from postal cards to the largest pictures suitable for framing. We specialized in photographic views . . . and our annual volume . . . was about 7,000,000 prints" (Jackson 1940, 324).

I contend that it is highly unlikely that William Henry Jackson took the photos of Puerto Rico that have been credited to him and to the Detroit Photographic Company. The fact that Puerto Rico is mentioned neither in his biography nor by his biographers as a place to which Jackson traveled does not alone discount his authorship. What makes his authorship unlikely is the accepted knowledge that operators and publishers actively traded negatives. Given that the Detroit Photographic Company was a prolific clearinghouse of photographs, postcards, paintings, and the like, it is very likely that the company bought a significant number of images from "ghost photographers" traveling throughout the world. In the brief "Jackson Collection History" authored by the History Colorado (formerly known as Colorado Historical Society), Part B, "Issue of Ghost Photographers," offers further evidence to bolster this claim.

> Although nothing is ever mentioned in the collection descriptions about Jackson employing other photographers or buying the work of other photographers . . . there is considerable evidence that this was, in fact, the case. A 1974 letter from photo historian Beaumont Newhall found in the files of the photography department states the following: 'I am convinced that the purchase of negatives or the outright pirating of photographs was much more common than we suspect.' (History Colorado)

The Waldrop Photographic Company, a medium-sized photo studio in San Juan, Puerto Rico, began a business partnership with the Detroit Photographic Company in 1903. In the same year a series of postcards of Puerto Rico copyrighted to and published by the DPC entered the market, with the Waldrop oval logo blind embossed on some of the postcards.[4] The Metropolitan Postcard Club of New York City details that the Waldrop Photographic Company

> . . . continued to publish sets of views and types that were manufactured by a number of different printers as both real photo cards and in printed form. The same images from earlier series were often reproduced later in other techniques. Their cards were oriented toward an American audience as the titles and backs were printed in English.[5]

In light of this, I hypothesize that most, if not all of the photographs of Puerto Rico attributed to the DPC were actually produced by an "operator" working directly with the Waldrop Photographic Company. The operator could still have been an itinerant photographer, but existing photographic evidence suggests that Waldrop was an important broker in the production of turn of the century photographs of Puerto Rico, in particular those attributed to the DPC. This still leaves unanswered the question, who was the operator behind the lens?

Yet another question that arises from the systematic analysis of the Detroit Photographic Company's and the Waldrop Photo Company's turn of the century photographs of Puerto Rico is that of location. Were photographers exchanging precise information along with their active exchange of negatives? At least one piece of evidence points out that photographers and publishers might have taken the liberty of misnaming locations. In a brief article entitled "The Role of the Postcard in Inventing Puerto Rico for Domestic Consumption" (2008), Aponte-Parés writes the following:

> "Porto Rico: A Bunch of Pickaninnies" was sent from Yonkers, New York, in October 1905. . . . (A)nother card, sent from New Orleans to Ohio in 1940, "Eight Little Pickaninnies in a Row," is a portrait of eight young men kneeling in front of a fallen palm tree. The similarities between both cards are puzzling, and the composition of the photos is almost identical.[6]

The two postcards to which Aponte-Parés refers ("Porto Rico. A Bunch of Pickaninnies," and "Eight Little Pickaninnies Sitting in a Row") demonstrate that photographers and publishing houses understood these photographs to be flexible products in a very profitable market. As Rogan notes, "The

postcard industry became a big business that quickly created finely mesh worldwide networks. It became a major economic sector . . ." (2005, 6).

The Waldrop Photo Company published four different versions of "pickaninny" postcard while the Detroit Photographic Company publisl three between 1900 and 1909. The Waldrop Photo Company postca entitled "A Bunch of Pickaninnies, Puerto Rico," "A Row of Piccaninni and two versions of "Porto Rico. A Bunch of Pickaninnies," appear to h all been taken in the same coconut grove with many of the same children pearing in the photo seated or standing across the fallen trunk of a palm tı Except for the postcard titled "A Row of Piccaninnies," all other Wald postcards in this series establish that the photo was taken in Puerto Rico

The Detroit Photographic Company's "pickaninnies" series incl "Eight Little Pickaninnies Kneeling in a Row," "Six Little Pickaninni and "Pickaninnies" taken between 1890–1903. The latter two photogra are representative of what is known in the U.S. antiquing circuit as "Bl Americana." The caption in at least one of these postcards states that it taken in St. Augustine, Florida. This leaves open the question of the stı ing similarity between Waldrop's "pickaninny" photographs and Detro "Eight Little Pickaninnies Kneeling in a Row." Were these photos, l turned into postcards, taken in the same place, at the same time, portray the same children—but claiming to represent Puerto Rico as well as Southern United States?

The Detroit Photographic Company knew the postcard market well a unlike Waldrop, was positioned as a global leader in the postcard prod tion market. As it specifically relates to "Eight Little Pickaninnies Kneel in a Row," the DPC did not specify a location for the postcard in its titl argue that the titling is meant to be generic in order to be sold and use representative of multiple locations, including Puerto Rico, Florida, and N Orleans.[7] The compositional resemblance between Waldrop's "pickaninn postcards taken in Puerto Rico and that of Detroit's "Eight Little Pickar nies in a Row" is striking because they appear to have been taken in the s location then packaged, and sold as representative of various sites (suc Puerto Rico and St. Augustine, FL). This marketing ploy in part explains use of the foreign word "pickaninnies" to refer to Puerto Rican children word not used by Puerto Ricans in Puerto Rico—as well as the idea t Afro-Diasporic folks could (at least from a mainstream "white" perspec from the States) interchangeably represent the circum-Atlantic (and spe cally the West Indies and the Southern United States).

The "pickaninny" trope is common in the English-speaking world offers one example in which these postcards represented more than Pu

Rico and Puerto Ricans; instead they represent an obsession in the U.S. with race and more specifically with Afro-descendants in the Americas. For if the Puerto Rican Creole elite were also obsessed with race, their obsession fiercely articulated the nation as "white." Their depiction did not include images of the 70,000 "negroes" that were counted in the first American census of the island in 1899 (Murillo-Alicea 2003). Writing about Puerto Rico, Loveman states, "Confronted with scientific theories that linked a nation's prospects for development to the racial make-up of the population, modernizing elites through much of the region sought ways to promote, publicize, the 'racial improvement' of their respective populations" (2007, 15). Using the U.S. censuses of Puerto Rico from 1899, 1910, and 1920, Loveman traces the marked increase in the white population of the island and argues that Puerto Rican census enumerators actively contested U.S. racial categories in part by using Puerto Rican racial classifications to "whiten" the population. Like the elite, census enumerators understood the real advantages of becoming "whiter" under U.S. colonial rule (Loveman 2007; Loveman and Muñiz 2007).

"The Peopled Landscape"

At the turn of the twentieth century, cameras were signifiers of power, wealth, and even race. It is not a coincidence, for example, that wealthy Puerto Rican families today tend to have extensive ancestral photographic records while poor families do not. Access to cameras was limited to the elite, which in light of Puerto Rico's class-race configuration meant white Creole elites (González 2007). Thus purchasing a camera, learning how to operate it, and having a safe place for storing it were all factors limiting camera ownership and photographic production, as was the storing of images for subsequent generations. The camera as the product of modern European technological innovation is a thoroughly racialized object/machine (Sekula 1986; Fusco 2003). Sontag fittingly remarks that "Photographs are perhaps the most mysterious of all the objects that make up, and thicken, the environment we recognize as modern" (1977, 3). Whiteness represented civilization and technological innovation, and was concomitantly the universal symbol of imperial power, modernity, and progress. Lanny Thompson writes that, "White males, who embodied the fittest in the evolutionary struggle, were the agents for social progress" (2010, 45). Furthermore, as Fusco, citing Michael Banton, notes,

> . . . theories of white superiority were most prevalent between 1890–1920, a period when European colonialism was at its zenith; Jim Crow reigned in the American South, the U.S. government's genocidal campaign against Native Americans had been completed, and the Spanish-American War brought Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines under U.S. control. (2003, 35 cf. Banton 1987, 76)

From its inception, photography was part of a system of social ranking that in Sekula's words worked as "a double system: a system of representation capable of functioning both *honorifically* and *repressively*" (1986, 6; emphasis in original). The late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century photographic archive is made up of images that fall into two main categories: the family photograph and the classificatory image. The family photograph establishes lineage, context, and filial stories or histories. Family portraiture establishes personhood as well as rightful belonging in society, a "ceremonial presentation of the bourgeois *self*" (Sekula, 1986:6; emphasis in original). In the specific context of the U.S., Mirzoeff notes that, ". . . discourses of race came to rely heavily on photographic representation" (2003:111).

A classificatory image such as "Puerto Rican Natives" is pseudo-scientific in nature and is an example of images produced at the turn of the century by information professionals (e.g., colonial administrators, photographers, and scientists). These classificatory images are now a part of the historical inventory of places, landscapes, peoples, nature, etc. It is no accident that many of the authors of Puerto Rico's photographic archive are American photographers. At a time when the United States was in the midst of colonial expansion, photography became an important aid in introducing the new acquisitions (the places, landscapes, flora, fauna, and people) to citizens on the mainland. Robert T. Hill's illustrated book, *Cuba and Porto Rico with the Other Islands of the West Indies: Their Topography, Climate, Flora, Products, Industries, Cities, People, Political Conditions, etc.* (U.S. Geological Survey), first appeared in 1898, with a second edition printed in 1899. It is an example of the descriptive and typological character of the textual/photographic production of the era.

I consider these photographs, however, to be examples of a "representational colonialism," which Wallis defines as "fundamentally non-reciprocal" (Wallis 1995, 54). The emphasis on the landscape renders the subjects mute, their individual stories forever denied. The "Puerto Rican natives," thus, are "already positioned, known, owned, represented, spoken for, or constructed as silent" (Wallis 1995, 55). Moreover, as historic documents these photo-

graphs are believed to represent objective reality, and both authorship as well as the process of creation are largely ignored.

A significant theme in the representational products (e.g., photographs, political, and satirical cartoons) of American empire during and immediately after the Spanish-American War is the depiction of the United States as a disciplining, "courageous, civilized, sagely, and charitable adult;" places and people under its purview, such as Puerto Rico, appear "as orphaned children" (Evered 2006, 109). Deploying environmental determinism as scientific fact in political and popular discourse characterized the people of the tropics as unable to govern themselves, as lacking meaningful histories, and as unable to "rise above" a tropical climate that promoted "indolence and inactivity" (Mintz and Price 1976, 34 cf. Nugent 1939; Guerra 1998; Evered 2006; Thompson 2010). For the tropics to benefit from universal progress, the temperate and civilized North must charitably endow them with civilization, technology, hygiene, medicine, and democratic government (Evered 2006; Thompson 2010). The images I examine here were produced against this socio-historical backdrop.

The landscape is a dominant theme in the Detroit Photographic Company's Puerto Rico photographs. This includes depictions of both "the tropics" (e.g., coconut groves, the ocean, the countryside), as well as "the natives" near their dwellings or at work (e.g., bringing bananas to market, doing laundry, cradling infants). I call this representational trope the "peopled landscape." While landscape photography has not traditionally included the depiction of whites or those deemed "*historifiable*," it has included the "*ethnographiable*" (Tobing Rony 1996). The DPC photographs portray the "exteriority of life in the tropics," underscoring the fact that daily-life takes place mainly outdoors and that the inhabitants of the tropics have not successfully subdued neither their internal not external natures.

I define the "peopled landscape" as a system of representation that articulates the *ethnographiable*, the poor, and other "embodiments of the unworthy" (Sekula 1986, 10) at a safe and comfortable distance using the outdoors to effectively locate its subjects as part of the "natural" world and environment. These photographs stand as evidence that these "others" do in fact cohabitate closely and naturally with/in nature, as if they fail to have other identities or participate in exchanges that might occur elsewhere (e.g., in a living room, an office, a store). In her valuable critique of ethnographic film, Fatimah Tobing Rony, citing historian Michèle Dutchet, asserted that Enlightenment thinkers "located the study of non-Western indigenous peoples as a subfield of natural history . . ." (1996, 7–8). Similarly, Michael Dettelbach explains that, "Tropical peoples were

condemned to remain mired in nature, while the peoples of Europe contemplated that nature in their glass houses" (Dettelbach 2005, 52–53).

As an iconographic inventory of Puerto Rico, the Detroit Photographic Company's photographs craft a Humboldtian "tropicality," showing seemingly meek and docile subjects dwarfed against the powerfully lush vegetation with which they cohabit. Several master tropes of historical and philosophical significance are implicit in these photographs. First, a brief historical detour: early in the 1800s when Alexander Von Humboldt and Aimé Bonpland presented their American herbaria to the Institut National of France, they presented a palm tree as the emblem of the tropics (Dettelbach 2005, 46). Underscoring Humboldt's importance, Mary Louise Pratt writes in *Imperial Eyes* that "Humboldt . . . existed and exists . . . as a Man and a Life . . . he did not write or travel as a humble instrument of European-knowledge-making apparatuses, but as their creator" (1992, 115). Pratt further tells us that Humboldt "reinvented South America first and foremost as nature. Not a nature that sits waiting to be known and possessed, but a nature in motion, powered by life forces many of which are invisible to the human eye; a nature that dwarfs humans, commands their being, arouses their passion, defies their powers of perception" (1992, 120).

In the American Memory archive, out of the forty-two photographs of Puerto Rico attributed to the Detroit Photographic Company, seven are representations of the "cocoanut palm."[8] The presence of the palm tree in the collection's photographs is in part due to do their ubiquitous presence in the island's vegetation, and in part is a result of the focus of the photographer's optic. This spelling of "cocoanut," a variant of the contemporary "coconut," appears in Arnold Guyot's *Physical Geography* (1885) in an evocative illustration titled "Aspects of Nature in Different Latitudes." In Guyot's rendering the "Cocoanut Palm" stands as the iconic representation of the zero latitude, which he labeled "Singapore." "Aspects of Nature in Different Latitudes" names iconic cities such as Singapore, Madras, Calcutta, Cairo, New York, Paris, London, Edinburg, St. Petersburg, and Hammerfest as representative of climate and temperature at various latitudes with the resulting flora and fauna. In his work Guyot celebrates the glorious fecundity of tropical vegetation, yet in line with Eurocentric notions of his time, claims that "The human family appears in its highest physical perfection, not within the Tropics, but in the Temperate Zone . . ." (Cosgrove 2005, 210). As Denis Cosgrove writes, "Guyot's tropical geography is by no means unique. Indeed, as a school text, its significance lies precisely in demonstrating how culturally broad and deep was the convergence of Humboldtian science and colonial ideology in framing 'tropical space' at the dawn of the twentieth century" (2005, 210).

Raced Geographies and Iconic Puerto Ricans: Imagery from Island Artists

By the first century of Spanish colonization of Puerto Rico, the island had been divided along a sort of tropical-temperate axis that mirrored Guyot's proposition. The Puerto Rican coast, which extends the entire periphery of the island, was the location on which slave plantations were established because it made the transportation of sugar cane to the docks shorter, more efficient, and cost effective. Climatically, the Puerto Rican coast is hotter than the cooler interior-mountainous region.[9] And the north-Atlantic coast is cooler than the warmer more arid southern-Caribbean coast. These climatic and geographic divisions have had real and long-standing social implications (González 1980; Scarano 1984; Torres 1998; Findlay Suárez 1999; Figueroa 2005; among others).

As the territory of the plantation, the coast was understood mainly as the place where the enslaved lived. The coast developed unevenly: the mangroves, swamps, and generally less habitable locations were left entirely for the black population to manage and settle. Manageable and/or desirable parts of the coast were set aside for the recreation of the elite, for government, and for commerce. For example, Old San Juan originally settled as a port on the Atlantic coast and was later fortified to defend the island from attacks. It eventually became a cosmopolitan enclave where foreigners, the island intelligentsia, and the governor resided. Elite satellite enclaves such as Miramar, El Condado, and later Isla Verde, which were located away from the depravities of the port but close enough to the social life of the city, began to emerge in the outskirts of the fortified "old" city. In contrast, on the southern-Caribbean coast, the town of Ponce—the nation's enclave of a strong, white, creole, provincial elite—did not develop along the lines of San Juan. In Ponce, a stronghold of plantation society, the elite settled away from the coast and instead put their resources into developing an architecturally significant *pueblo* or town center from which power radiated from the inside of town out towards the coast/port. As William Mitchell puts it, "Geography is destiny; it constructs representations of crisp and often brutal clarity" (1996, 10).

Elsewhere, I have called this racialized settlement pattern and perceptual practice "geographic blackness." Geographic blackness refers to common spatial, speech, and behavioral practices that segregate and marginalizes blackness (and black people) from national and territorial conceptions of the Puerto Rican nation. Translated in spatial-geographic terms, I claim that race is used to demarcate physical spaces thereby certain geographic-locations are deployed as simply being "Puerto Rican," to signify Creole and/or white, while others are marked as exclusively inhabited by blacks (i.e. black spaces such as Loíza, for instance) (Lloréns 2005, 160; Lloréns 2008, 204; Lloréns and Carrasquillo 2008, 110).

On the one hand, the widely held notion that the skin color of Africans made them better suited than whites to the tropical heat and sun naturalized their position as the enslaved, and later as workers constrained largely to residence on the coast. On the other, the belief that whites were unable to tolerate the heat of the tropical coast created a residence pattern in which they either settled in the temperate interior of the island or, if belonging to the upper class, retreated to their mountain estates during the intensity of the summer months and holidays. In the specific case of Puerto Rico, as elsewhere in the tropics, Eurocentric notions of both climate and race have informed all aspects of life from settlement patterns and public uses of space, to official history, to artistic renderings of icons of the national body.

It is in regard to this last statement that "Puerto Rican Natives" creates "friction" in the national narrative about who constitutes the iconic, essential Puerto Rican (Tsing 2005, 5). The colonial transition from Spain to the United States created ambivalence in the island's social reality because competing narratives about who and what constituted the Puerto Rican nation emerged. This "frictional" reality—between colonial and local governments as well as between Puerto Ricans themselves—has been an essential part of the Puerto Rican experience throughout the American century.

A significant narrative constructed by Puerto Rico's elite is the constitution of the *jíbaro* as the icon of the "national soul" (González 1980, 56; Pedreira 1934; Babín 1973). The *jíbaro* archetype is the white-Creole subsistence farmer who draws sustenance from the land and lives in the island's interior mountains. In her brief book, *La Cultura de Puerto Rico*, Maria Teresa Babín (1973, 61–76) writes that, "It is in the person of the *jíbaro* that the essence of a Puerto Rican nationality is made truly concrete" and ". . . they are what holds Puerto Rico's ideological and cultural history together, the soul of our insular *criollismo*. What is a *jíbaro*? . . . he is the white Puerto Rican peasant." Babin's eulogy to the *jíbaro* is widespread in Puerto Rico. Many ordinary Puerto Ricans from the island and the diaspora are quick to proclaim their *jíbaro* roots with pride.

Ramón Frade's *El Pan Nuestro* [Our Daily Bread] 1905, (Figure 1.2), is an oil painting in the *costumbrista* tradition that exemplifies Babin's description of the *jíbaro*. The *costumbrista* tradition, a nineteenth century Hispanic

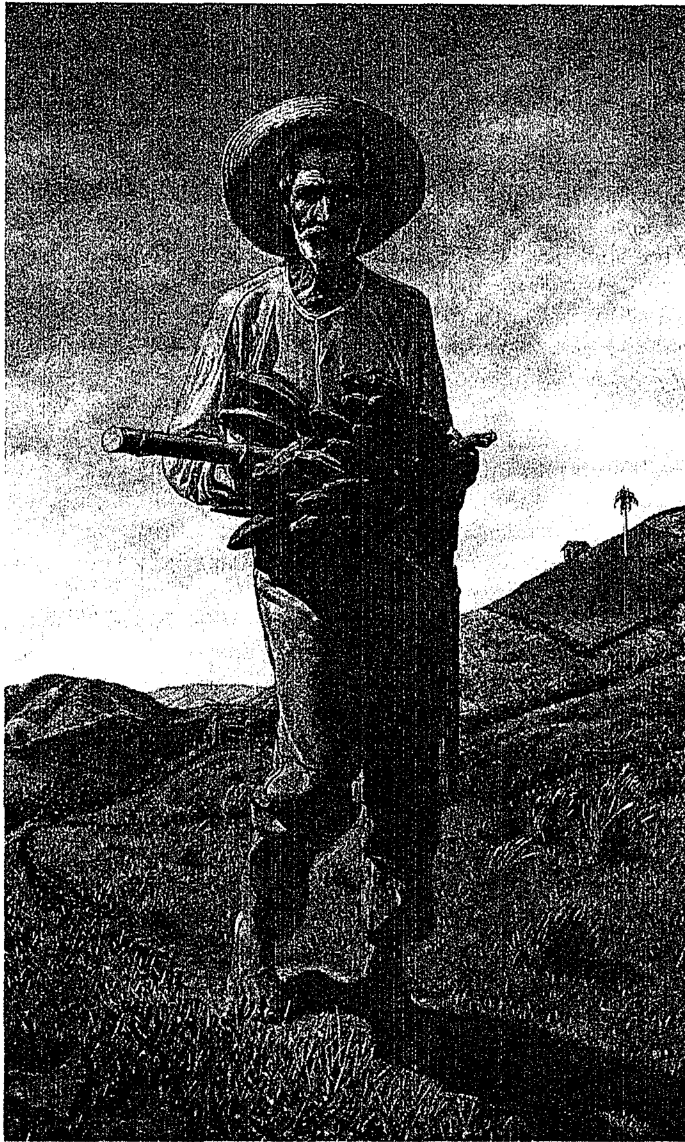


Figure 1.2. Ramón Frade, *El Pan Nuestro [Our Daily Bread]* (1905). Ramón Frade, c. 1905, oil on canvas, Instituto de Cultura Puertorriqueña.

artistic-movement, was concerned with offering realist rendering of local everyday life, tradition, and customs.

Ramón Frade's *El Pan Nuestro*, which he produced only seven years after the American intervention in Puerto Rico, was meant to depict self-reliance and Puerto Rican patriotism. Ramón Frade was a cosmopolitan man. He was born in Cayey, Puerto Rico, a town characterized by its interiority—located in the center of Puerto Rico in the mountains that make up the Central Mountain Range. Adopted by a Spanish man and his Dominican wife in his youth, Frade traveled in Europe and lived in Madrid and Santo Domingo. As an adult he traveled through and painted in Haiti, Cuba, Jamaica, and South America. In 1903 he settled in Cayey, Puerto Rico where he spent the rest of his life (Ramírez 1987; Delgado 1989, 1998a; Torres Martinó 1998a).

Frade's birthplace is a defining element in his paintings. Ramírez notes that nineteenth-century Puerto Rican literature and art is characterized by a concern with portraying "a realist and naturalist exaltation of local manners and traditions" (1987, 18). Although Frade and his contemporaries were well aware of the art currents in vogue at the time such as symbolism, art nouveau, and fauvism, they chose to heed Francisco Oller's call for making art that engaged the social, political, and religious reality of its time (Ramírez 1987, 17). For Oller, "the artist must participate in the epoch in which he lives; he must be of his country, of his people, if he wants to be authentic" (Ramírez 1987, 17 cf. Boime 1983, 41–42). Referring to his later piece, *Paisaje Campestre en Cayey* [Country Landscape in Cayey] 1949, Frade writes in a letter to a friend that "Es cosa íntima mía . . . algo de mi corazón puertorriqueño. . . . Y como todo lo puertorriqueño se lo está llevando el viento . . . en mi deseo de perpetuarlo, lo pinto" (It is an intimate thing to me . . . something that comes from my Puerto Rican heart. . . . And since all things Puerto Rican are being blown away by the wind . . . I wish to preserve it, so I paint it" (Torres Martinó 1998a, 76–77).

Representationally, *El Pan Nuestro* is laden with meaning. Like the *jíbaro* (the Puerto Rican-born son of Spanish immigrants who makes a living from the land and brings the nation her daily sustenance), Frade's subject is undoubtedly white. Rather than carrying bread he carries plantains, a quintessentially Caribbean food staple. The plantains he so gently cradles in his arms, as well as the palm tree standing tall in the distance, locate him in the tropics, specifically the Caribbean. An aging farmer wearing the iconic straw hat of Puerto Rico's peasants, his wrinkled face illustrates that time, and perhaps even worry, has weathered his face. He is not a wealthy man, for he wears no shoes; his bare feet suggest that he is rooted in the land.

El Pan Nuestro proposes more than just the *jíbaro* as central to Puerto Rican nationality; it offers the plantain as the nourishment of the nation. These plantains are plump, green, and healthy. The motherland is fertile and generous, and by ingesting her plantains her children simultaneously ingest the nation. The nation then, more than cultural or political, becomes biological. The plantains also point out the regenerative nature of vegetation. The painting underscores the very cycles of life by juxtaposing an aging peasant holding a young *racimo de platanos* [bunch of bananas] in lieu of a baby. No doubt Frade was also nodding to his artistic predecessor and one of Puerto Rico's foremost painters, Francisco Oller. Oller (1833–1917) is known as the most important painter of his time, whose masterpiece *El Velorio* [The Wake] 1893, is widely considered a landmark in the Caribbean artistic repertoire (Ramírez 1987; Delgado 1998b; Poupeye 1998; Mirzoeff 2011; Cortés 2012). Oller is regarded as the most significant predecessor of Puerto Rico's master *costumbrista* painters. Oller studied art in Madrid and Paris where he befriended Camille Pissarro, Paul Cézanne, and Armand Guillaumin and his art was influenced by French impressionism. By 1884 Oller abandoned Impressionism "to dedicate himself to the creation of an art of Puerto Rico for Puerto Ricans," work that became associated with late nineteenth century nationalism (Ramírez 1987, 53).

Oller places plantains at the center of the canvas in *El Velorio* and in other compositions.[10] If Frade uses the plantain to represent the cycle of life, juxtaposing youth and aging, Oller in *El Velorio* uses the plantain—which, as a "national" foodstuff like corn and rice, symbolizes life—to oppose death, the painting's major theme. The food produced by the national territory is a "potent symbol of personal and group identity, forming one of the foundations of both individuality and a sense of common membership in a larger, bounded group" (Wilk 1999, 244).

The photo "Puerto Rican Natives," produced in 1903, and *El Pan Nuestro*, painted only two years later, are each icons of the Puerto Rican nation in the earliest years of American occupation. At stake here is the definition of the national icon. Nations are built by creating the illusion of sameness and hence unity among inevitably diverse peoples. Excluding historically derogated populations (blacks, indigenous people, and other minorities) from the nation's core unifies the remainder under a common, unmarked identity (Roediger 1999, 2002). Under American colonialism, Puerto Ricans who considered themselves the rightful representatives of the nation—the white creole elite—felt a greater need to assert a national identity in the face of the threat of cultural assimilation to the imperial metropolis. As Arlene Torres remarks, "The image of *la gran familia* became further solidified in the early twentieth century as members of the Creole elite sought to establish their Puerto Rican identity in opposition to the new colonial power, the United States" (Torres 1998, 294). According to Torres, *la gran familia* as a national ideology harks back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when the Creole elite conceived of Puerto Rico as a "great *jíbaro* family, with the *hacendado* as the paternalistic and benevolent head who provided for his children . . . for the good of the nation" (1998, 294).

Nation building requires concise definitions of which persons best represent the nation, of which precise bodies make up the essential body politic. In the early years of the American occupation particularly, white (Hispanic Catholic) Creoles deployed the *jíbaro*—that essential rooted peasant, son of mother Spain, shaped and sustained by the fruits of the tropical Puerto Rican soil—as the iconic representation of the Puerto Rican nation. The 1898 American occupation complicated Hispanophile assertions about *who* constituted the Puerto Rican nation. As Jorge Duany puts it, "Since 1898, national identity in Puerto Rico has developed under—and often in outright opposition to—U.S. hegemony" (2002, 16). The upper classes were invested in representing the Puerto Rican nation as white, but they claimed that Puerto Ricans inherited their whiteness from the "Iberian race" as opposed to the "Anglo-Saxon race" of the American colonizers (Carrión 1997, 177).

Yet real class and racial fissures pervaded the aforementioned national project. Puerto Rican workers and blacks, the "others" that the Creole elite attempted to subsume under the discourse of "*la gran familia*," were less concerned about the U.S.'s arrival on the island. In fact, Carrión writes that "Blacks and mulattos had less reason than whites to identify with the Hispanic imaginary of the Puerto Rican nationality, they had suffered slavery and discrimination under Spain" (1997, 177). In a similar vein, Eileen Findlay Suárez remarks that, "Working people also celebrated the U.S. occupation. . . . Overall, they saw the United States as a liberator from Spanish (in which they included local elites) oppression. . . . [A]nd for Puerto Ricans of African descent, the principles of the United States Constitution seemed to hold out a radical promise of social and legal equality for all people" (1999, 116–117).

In nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Puerto Rican literature, blacks came into view, if at all, as supporting actors from the confines of the plantations, the kitchen, the cane fields, and the coast, and as drummers and dancers (González 1980; Rodríguez-Juliá 1983; Flores 1993, 2000; Torres 1998; Ramos-Rosado 1999; Godreau 1999, 2008; Lloréns 2005, 2008, among others). In contrast, in Francisco Oller's master paintings, *La Escuela del Maestro Rafael Cordero* [Rafael Cordero's School] ca. 1890–1892, *Jibarito Tocando*

Guiro [Jibarito playing the gourd] 1892, and *El Velorio* [The Wake] 1893, he depict blacks as part of Puerto Rican society. Delgado explains that "A su vez Oller es valedor del negro y no desperdicia oportunidad de señalar sus virtudes" (At the same time Oller valorizes blacks and he does not waste any opportunity in pointing out their virtues) (1998b, 44). He further notes, "El sentido de integridad racial y de emociones y pensamiento entre los elementos que conforman la puertorriqueñidad lo significa Oller cuando convierte al negro en su *alter ego*" [Oller signifies a sense of racial integrity and emotion and thought that form part of the elements that make-up puertoricanness when he makes the black man his *alter ego*] (1998b, 45). Similarly, Oscar Colón Delgado's painting *Lavanderas* [Washerwomen] 1916, portrays as its protagonist a black woman. Thus in Puerto Rican artistic production, it is the painters, not the writers, who first and most prominently portray blacks as central to the Puerto Rican nation.

In American photographs at the turn of the century, blacks are often the protagonists. American photographers created a proto-ethnographic archive of the black Puerto Ricans who had long been hidden from view in literary production. The themes of Puerto Rico rendered in this photographic archive, however, shadow very closely the iconic representations deployed on canvas by Puerto Rican painters.

Paintings such as Fracisco Oller's *La Ceiba de Ponce* [Ponce's Ceiba Tree] 1887–1888, Oscar Colón Delgado's *Lavanderas* [Washerwomen] 1916, and Miguel Pou's *Escena del Rio Maragüez* [Scene in Maragüez River] 1948, depict washerwomen at work. Similarly, dozens of postcards printed between 1890–1950 depict women laundering clothes in Puerto Rican rivers. "Puerto Rican Laundry" c. 1903, was issued jointly by the Detroit Publishing Company and Waldrop Photo Company, and is an example of the washerwoman theme.[11]

The presence of women hard at work in the rivers of Puerto Rico appears to have been so striking that artists—painters and photographers—immortalized them as significant icons of this era. For example, in Colón Delgado's *Lavanderas* [Washerwomen] 1916, (Figure 1.3), the protagonist is the black woman on the left. Her hands are sunken in water containing the clothes she is laundering as she looks at the painter/viewer with apparent curiosity.

Similarly, a photograph sold as a postcard titled "Lavanderas Negras" [Black Washerwomen] published by A. Guilot (date of publication unknown) appears to take its representational cue directly from Delgado's painting. Depictions of women at work break the script of the Caribbean as a paradise in which people spend their time lazily enjoying the sun and surf. They show instead the remarkably difficult tasks in which poor women,

Figure 1.3. Oscar Colón Delgado, *Lavanderas [Washerwomen]* (1916). Courtesy of Carmen E. Colón Juarbe.

and specifically black women, engaged. Still, the "washerwoman" motif reinscribes the black woman as worker and servant.

The "Straw Hut"

> For that we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories.
>
> —Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value"

"Typical Puerto Rican Hut" c.1903, was first created as a black and white photo on a glass negative (Figure 1.4). This photograph, credited to the Detroit Photographic Company (photographer not specified), names as its subject: "Taino Indians—Structures—Puerto Rico. Huts. Puerto Rico—San Juan." Like the corpus of images in the Detroit Publishing Company under study here from the American Memory Collection, the photograph exemplifies the "peopled landscape" trope, even as the title highlights the native's material culture. The large straw abode at the center of the image frames a woman holding two toddlers on her lap while seated on a palm tree trunk. The image's composition insinuates to viewers that the people in the picture are the dwelling's inhabitants, though we will never know if this is true. A

Figure 1.4. "Typical Puerto Rican Hut." Courtesy of the Library of Congress, call number: LC-D4-16745.

chicken roaming the premises appears on the left side. The "hut" stands in a clearing amid luxuriant tropical vegetation and palms, suggesting the dwelling's proximity to the coast.

There are dozens of postcards depicting varying versions of a "native hut" in locations all over the colonial world. About Puerto Rico alone, the Detroit Photographic Company, the Waldrop Photo Company, and Raphael Tuck & Sons, Ltd. published several versions of the "native hut" or "natives and hut" between the 1890s and 1940s. Permeating this representational trope is a pseudo-ethnographic interest in how the "natives" lived, which works to situate the viewer, collector, or sender of these postcards as irrefutably modern. Postcards representing the "native others" thus trained the cosmopolitan to deploy an "ethnographic gaze" that "constructed modernity by picturing the primitive as its defining other" (Desmond 1999, 463). Hut-themed postcards indexed "native" technology as primitive and "native" people as part of the "natural world." Another key characteristic of this representation is that the "natives" are always pictured standing or sitting beside their dwellings, co-mingling freely with animals, dirt, and vegetation, and using rudimentary materials such as tree trunks as furniture.

The depictions of Puerto Rican turn of the century dwellings are not unique to American photographs and postcards. In fact, several iconic paintings made by Puerto Rican artists represent the thatched roofed dwellings typical of the era. These include José López de Victoria's *Las Cuatro Estaciones* [The Four Seasons], date unknown, Francico Oller's *Paisaje de la Finca El Guaraguao* [Landscape from Guaraguao Farm] 1884, *Bohío Junto al Mar* [Hut Beside the Sea] c. 1913, *Campesina* [Peasant Woman] 1915, Ramón Frade's *El Pan Nuestro* [Our Daily Bread] 1905, Oscar Colón Delgado's *Paisaje con Bohío y Ropa* [Landscape with Hut and Clothing] 1916, and Miguel Pou's *Paisaje de Montaña* [Mountain Landscape] 1923.

Oscar Colón Delgado's masterpiece *Paisaje con Bohío y Ropa* [Landscape with Hut and Clothing] 1916, offers a particularly dignified rendition of the same theme that is diametrically opposed in several ways to the "hut" photographs taken by American photographers. Like other *costumbristas*, his paintings confirm his ardent love for Puerto Rico—a nation he felt deserved a sovereign destiny. In *Paisaje con Bohío y Ropa*, Colón Delgado offers the viewer a soft, hazy, and romantic Puerto Rican landscape. This landscape signals interiority—that is, a sense of being away from the island's coast—and places at the center the large and lush vegetation of Puerto Rico's *campo* [countryside]. The dwelling—large, clean, orderly, and venerable—is framed by vegetation, including at least two plantain trees. A peasant man dressed in white stands halfway between his door and a line of white clothes drying freely in the breeze. This bucolic scene has a spiritual affect—an affect that has marked the nationalist endeavor—calling for Puerto Ricans to fight to maintain their uniquely Puerto Rican identity and essence in the face of the modernizing customs of the powerful colonial metropolis. As Torres Martinó puts it,

> . . . if art is to effectively collaborate in resisting the cultural push from the North it must be able to engage in an aesthetics of communication. Without communication it is very difficult to rally the Puerto Rican nation to fight for its survival. It is proven that art forms an important part of the spiritual reserve that Puerto Ricans need to maintain their cultural identity (1998a:81; author's translation).[12]

The man in Colón Delgado's painting stands confidently without shoes, his arm on his hip. Like the black woman in *Lavanderas*, this *jíbaro* regards the viewer from a distance. It is remarkable that Colón Delgado's subjects stare back. They meet the viewer's gaze as if to tell us that regardless of the time that has elapsed, they are the masters of their destinies, they witness their

stories as active participants in them, and they, too, have the power of vision. The white clothes, both worn and hanging on the line, signify purity, comfort, and simplicity much like the clean landscape over which this man presides. He is clearly the architect of his domain; the vegetation surrounding this "hut" has been carefully and lovingly pruned. He cohabitates with nature because it is a way of life, an active choice this *jíbaro* has made—not the result of an inability to control it but as the acknowledgement of his supreme love for his land, his nation. Finally, beyond the commanding wooden frame of this dwelling's front door is a stool, a proper piece of furniture is depicted one that was typically used by poor Puerto Ricans during this time period. It is noteworthy that unlike many of the master painters of the era, Colón Delgado was from a poor family. Yet, as Torres Martinó notes, his work is esthetically similar to that of his contemporaries and he appears to have identified with the creole elite's ideology (1998a:76). By the early decades of the twentieth century, Colón Delgado declared his nationalist inclinations and his fervent admiration for don Pedro Albizu Campos, a venerated leader in Puerto Rico's independence struggle.

From Photograph to Postcard: Whose Culture is Depicted?

"A Typical Puerto Rican Hut" (Figure 1.4), copyrighted in 1903 to the Detroit Photographic Company, became color postcard #7417. The DPC marketed their color postcards, upon licensing them, as offering a "truer" rendition of reality. The Library of Congress notes that

> At a time when color photography was still rare, demand for these color images was high. The Detroit Photographic Company reportedly produced seven million photochrom prints in some years. As many as ten to thirty thousand different views were offered.[13]

As a souvenir, the postcard is a "snapshot" meant to encapsulate in abbreviated format some essentially iconic aspect of local reality. When a tourist or a traveler purchases a postcard (once a photographic object) and sends it by post to another, he/she is forwarding an extension of an experience, the representational icons depicting what the traveler's eyes may or may not have seen. For the traveler, the postcard establishes the "having been there" aspect of travel (Desmond 1999). The motifs encapsulated inside the frame of the postcard are believed to be unique representations of a place.

The postcard is emblematic of the modern experience, which is marked by technological progress, the rise of a European and American middle-class, and unprecedented access to both commodities and leisure travel (Rogan 2005; MacCannell 1976). For travelers the postcard is a light and portable medium with which to convey a brief message while engaged in the motion that is travel. It is an object imbued with multiple meanings, including medium of communication, commodity, memento, and gift (Rogan 2005). The postcard is thus a signifier of status, travel, leisure, wealth, and even cosmopolitanism. As transmitters of perceptions of culture, the photographs taken by outsiders, later turned into postcards and offered as commodities, beg the question: whose culture is transmitted? Is it the culture of the colonial agent, or of those whose reality has been apprehended in the image?

"Typical Puerto Rican Hut" (Figure 1.4), intends to offer the viewer a "backstage" glimpse of the lives of Puerto Rican people (Goffmann 1959; McCanell 1976; Larsen 1999). Issues surrounding authenticity permeate studies about tourism and the tourist experience, including the material culture produced and sold under the auspices of tourism. How "authentic" is the image found in a postcard? Are tourists even concerned with authenticity? Some scholars suggest that tourists' notions of what constitutes authenticity during a travel encounter stem from the stereotyped notions they already possess of a place (Wang 1999; Silver 1993; Laxson 1991; Duncan 1978; Bruner 1991; Adams 1984). In effect, when touring the "native other," tourists project a "Western consciousness" when deciding what constitutes authenticity (Wang 1999; Silver 1993; Bruner 1991). Aponte-Parés has deemed postcards of Puerto Rico at the turn of the twentieth century to be significant aids in the "invention of Puerto Rico" (2008).[14] Following this lead, I contend that the postcard is as much a product of colonialism as a witness to it.

In the late nineteenth century, postcard collectors the world over began to seek out and trade postcards representing places, people, technology (real or imaginary), landscapes, and architecture. For the middle-class European and American viewer, the postcard depicting the "ethnic," "savage," "native," and/or "primitive other" showed the "other's" pre-modern state while affirming the viewer's own modern, civilized station. As a melancholic object, the postcard pictured the "natives" before their unrecognizable transformation into modern citizens, a direct result of the sweeping changes brought by the various colonial agendas at work throughout the world.

In the summer of 2012, I located an original unsent postcard of "Typical Puerto Rican Hut" for sale on the online auction service, Ebay. The seller, Heather, noted in her description that the postcard was from her grandmother's collection. I purchased the postcard for about $8.00 and contacted the seller using the Ebay message tool to ask her if she would be interested in speaking with me about her grandmother's life and postcard collection.

Heather agreed and we proceeded to engage in several telephone and email conversations on topics that ranged from biographical details to what she imagined were Fanny's (her grandmother's) reasons for amassing a collection of 30,000 postcards representing a wide range of regions and themes. Coincidentally, Rogan has noted that turn of the century postcard collecting was a fad started by women (2005, 3). What made Fanny become such an avid collector? And how did she acquire "Typical Puerto Rican Hut?"

Heather explained that her grandmother, who was born in 1890, began collecting postcards at a young age and by the early 1910s had a sizable collection. Fanny was born in Astoria, Oregon and lived in Seattle until she moved to Honolulu in 1953. Her early life was characterized by her father's lengthy absences from family life—he was a sea captain. Every time he traveled his four daughters, including Fanny, looked forward to receiving letters and photos of faraway places. In her youth, Fanny's father took her and her three sisters, "all of them tomboys," on a month-long sea voyage to Alaska. This trip made an impression on Fanny and set her on a path of discovery. Heather describes Fanny and her sisters as "very independent women." Fanny completed two years at the University of Oregon before World War I but dropped out to help at home. At thirty, she married Merv, a local heir to an iron works company, and they spent the rest of their lives together in Honolulu where Fanny died in 1976.

Fanny was a modern woman. She played the piano, wrote poetry, and enjoyed traveling by rail and by ship. Heather recounts that Fanny enjoyed history, travel, and art, and remarks that the postcards "combined all three." She was a social person and sent "a lot of postcards." It was her way of keeping in touch with her loved ones, and also a way to trade with other collectors in distant places. Heather believes that her grandmother may have obtained "Typical Puerto Rican Hut" from another collector, perhaps someone on the east coast. Heather noted that postcards of the Caribbean, the Bahamas, and Puerto Rico in Fanny's collection are rare. The collection is comprised mostly of views of the American West, the Pacific, Black Americana, and other thematic genres like Halloween and Christmas. Fanny also collected plates, spoons, and antique greeting cards. As the heir to these collections, Heather, who is in her sixties and makes her living mainly from her Ebay shop, feels she is doing a service by making the collection available to people who may find special meaning in these antique documents.

When I acquired "Typical Puerto Rican Hut," I engaged in more than an economic transaction or exchange. I was interested in understanding the biography of this object. I understood this postcard "as a social actor . . . that constructed and influenced the field of social action" (Gosden and

Marshall 1999, 174 cf. Gell 1998). In terms of its context (Appadurai 1986), it fulfilled its initial intention of working as a representation of Puerto Rico made for the U.S. mass market. Along with thousands of other such representations spanning the globe, "Typical Puerto Rican Hut" became part of an American woman's postcard collection. This postcard, which originated in Puerto Rico, made its way to the Pacific Northwest, then to Honolulu, and after this woman died, back to the Pacific Northwest where her granddaughter sold it online. Now it lives with me, a diasporic Puerto Rican woman of Afro descent in the east coast region of the United States. This postcard, as an object, has endured a series of re-contextualizations. Made originally for American spectators/viewers, the postcard makes its way back "home" to the possession of a displaced national who is trying to understand the contradictions, erasures, and exposures of a colonial history. These historic postcards more generally have become nostalgic and evidentiary historic documents.[15] As Gosden and Marshall put it, "objects become invested with meaning through the social interactions they are caught up in. These meanings change and are renegotiated through the life of an object" (1999, 170).

In a Barthian sense (1981), I feel *pricked* by a "Typical Puerto Rican Hut." A connection between this postcard and myself is conclusively established first by the referent in its title to "Puerto Rican," that colonial nation to which I ascribe my diasporic identity. The title as referent has effectively hailed me. Now that it has my attention, I examine first the vegetation and conclude that it represents that essentially Caribbean landscape, the one in which my very ancestors—mostly African, who arrived in Puerto Rico variously as enslaved and free people—once settled. My senses are activated. I recall the tropical scent of the sea, the greenery, and the humid air. I recall the gritty feel of sand sticking uncomfortably to my feet. I hear the chicken's call. The nostalgic longing for this landscape—for my dead relatives, for my youth, for a homeland that ejected us to the North so long ago now—overwhelms me. Who is the woman and children posing in front of this "hut?" Are they my ancestors? I want to recuperate their story, I want to return them from the dead and hear their names, learn their lineage. I want them to cease being the silent representatives, the main actors, in a stereotype. I want to properly inscribe them in the very history that made them into silent images, denying them the word. I am writing them into history.

Notes

1. http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/pgz/process.html.
2. http://www.emotionscards.com/museum/historyofpostcards.htm.

3. Waitley writes that "Buffalo Bill Cody had tried to get a space at the Expo for his Wild West show but was turned down. . . . Undaunted, Cody leased fifteen acres directly opposite the fair's entrance, put up a grandstand that held eighteen thousand people, and ran two performances a day. Cody and his partner had made a cool million by the end of the summer, at which time the Indian performers were sent back to their reservations" (1999, 184–185).

4. www.metropostcard.com/publishersw.html.

5. http://www.metropostcard.com/publishersw.html.

6. http://www.plannersnetwork.org/publications/2008_spring/aponte.html.

7. There is evidence that this specific card was mailed and presumably bought at local shops in at least Puerto Rico, Florida and New Orleans.

8. The DPC published several other postcards entitled "cocoanut palms" and "cocoanut grove" that are not housed in the American Memory Archive.

9. There is a range in temperature and while it maybe a balmy 90 degrees on the coast, in the mountain region it maybe a comfortable 80 degrees.

10. Other works by Oller that feature plantains centrally include *Platanos Amarillos* (Yellow Plantains) ca. 1893 and *Platanos y Bananas* (Plantains and Bananas) 1893.

11. Library of Congress, call number: LC-D4-16744.

12. Original: . . . si el arte ha de colaborar efectivamente en la resistencia cultural contra la pujanza de la cultura norteña apenas puede hacerlo desde una estética que limite la comunicabilidad. Sin comunicación resulta difícil congregar la voluntad del pueblo puertorriqueño para la lucha por sobrevivencia. Y está probado que el arte forma parte importante de la reserva espiritual qué necesitaban los puertorriqueños para mantener su identidad (1998a, 81).

13. http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/pgz/process.html.

14. http://www.plannersnetwork.org/publications/2008_spring/aponte.html.

15. These photographs and postcards are used routinely in Puerto Rican history classrooms as visual aids (e.g., Trinity College's History 378: "Puerto Rico and Puerto Ricans: Colony, Nation, and Diaspora" http://www.trincoll.edu/classes/hist378/archivo/prpics1.htm). Online historic photographic archives also feature and sell these postcards (e.g., http://archivofotograficodepuertorio.com/).

CHAPTER TWO

Building a "Photographic Case" for the Rehabilitation of the Colony, 1930s

> Although there is a sense in which the camera does indeed capture reality, not just interpret it, photographs are as much an interpretation of the world as paintings and drawings are.
>
> —Susan Sontag, *On Photography*

Edwin and Louise Rosskam disembarked in San Juan, Puerto Rico "on assignment" for *Life* magazine in December 1937. Edwin Rosskam had initially secured the project to interview and photograph Pedro Albizu Campos, the Harvard-trained lawyer and World War I veteran who led Puerto Rico's fledging pro-independence and nationalist movement. But destiny had other plans. Earlier that year Albizu Campos had been jailed in an Atlanta prison for conspiring to overthrow the U.S. government. So instead, the Rosskams focused their cameras on the trial of the nationalists who had survived the 1937 Palm Sunday Ponce Massacre. Their picture-making mission took them through the island where they witnessed widespread poverty, people suffering from malnutrition and preventable diseases, and rampant political corruption. This Puerto Rican trip, the first for the recently married pair, helped establish their place in the canon of American photo-documentarians.

The photographs they produced between December 1937 and January 1938 are housed in the Library of Congress's American Memory collection. My goal in examining them is to extract "relevant sociocultural meaning" (Scherer 1992, 32),[1] to uncover the multiple and complex significances entailed and situate the work within a broader historical context. I aim to