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BY LAUREN (ROBIN) DERBY

Male Heroism, Demonic Pigs, and Memories of Violence in the Haitian-Dominican Borderlands¹



LAST JULY, I spoke with Gumercindo Sebala alias “el ranchero,” who told me the story of a harrowing trip home on his motorcycle to the tiny provincial central frontier town of Bánica, Dominican Republic. Bánica is located right on the banks of the Artibonite river, which is the official border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Like most residents, Sebala is a small-scale subsistence farmer who raises pigs, goats, and cattle. It was night and he was on his motorcycle when he was forced to stop due to a very large tree—perhaps a *Ceiba*—which had fallen across the road, blocking his way. He got off his bike confounded by the tree since it was a species that is not common in the region today, looked around, only to be accosted by a beast he could not immediately recognize. He had trouble identifying the creature that jumped onto the trunk. Resembling a dog or a pig, he finally concluded it must have been a *jabali*, a kind of feral boar with long whiskers that was common in the area into the 1970s. Thinking to himself *lo mato o me mata* (“I kill it or it kills me”), he grabbed his gun just as the animal disappeared, vanishing into the night as



quickly as it had appeared. When he arrived home, he told his landlady about the episode, who asserted with complete confidence that it had been a *bacá*, an evil spirit prepared by someone for purposes of sorcery.

This essay seeks to interpret a particular version of stories about a highly feared phenomena called *bacá*—imaginary hybrid beasts that steal farm animals, harvests, and cash through shape-shifting. Created by sorcerers, *bacás* are spirit creatures that enable people to become dogs, cats, pigs, and

goats and to amass wealth. Strongmen such as the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, the Haitian outlaw Charlemagne Peralte, and the notorious Tonton Macoutes have been said to have had such powers of transformation.² They are hot spirits, which are difficult to control, and often entail a sacrifice; they can even turn on their owners. In the Dominican central frontier town of Bánica, butchers told me stories about sheep that meowed, goats with pigs’ tails, person with pig ears, and bulls which cried like a baby—animals which were

Interviews, Bánica, Dominican Republic, July, 2009

TRANSLATED TRANSCRIPTION OF STORIES ABOUT CREOLE VS. GRINGO PIGS; SWINE FEVER MASSACRE 1979; AND A BACÁ SIGHTING, IN WHICH IT APPEARED AS A JARABALI OR CREOLE FERAL PIG.



Click on image to watch video.

Ramón Alcantara

- So was it the same to care for the two types of pigs?
- No, these (Gringo pigs) sometimes do not like to eat scrapings of yucca, mango. They (Creole pigs) ate everything. Sometimes these don't eat household leftovers.
- So like Gringos they are spoiled?
- Yes that's it!

"El Ranchero" Sebala

- The others were better quality?
- Exactly. Tastier. Let's take an example. The Gringo chicken and the Creole chicken don't have the same taste. One has to have an example. They don't taste the same. That's it. Those (Creole) pigs are the ones with the best tasting meat. Because the Creole pigs have such taste that if you taste some today, you want to keep on eating it. That's the truth.
- Like the Gringo chicken?
- Yes, and the Creole Guinea fowl. That's how they are, and that's how we are too. If I know someone's selling Creole chicken, I will buy it all up. If Pipil over there has killed a goat, I will ask him, Pipil, is it a creole goat or an Americano? Give it to me – even if it's only the feet, head, the liver, and I will buy it because I really like creole goat.
- The taste is really good.
- The swine flu has always existed here. We call it *cacedó*. But what happened was that the Americans wanted to sell their product. So they killed the ones here to replace them with white pigs.
- Were there protests, or did people hide their animals, because I would think that people were desperate, especially the poor?
- There were national protests and municipal protests. And some people hid them (their pigs) in the mountains, very hidden, and even today, there are people who have these pigs hidden in the hills. There was a path that not everyone entered – but they

know the mountains, and they know every corner, nook and crevice.

And they put them there, and even today that type of pig still exists.

- Are they wild?
- Not really – they are kept tied up. They tie them up or put them in a pig pen and they keep them there. And those are the best tasting pigs.

Bacá Sighting

- I was coming on my motorcycle from San Juan to here, and I saw a large stick in the road – but not your average stick – it was huge – and I said how does a stick of that size appear in the road? Here there are no large trees – no Ceiba of that size. I stopped to see what it was. I thought, I kill it or it kills me – I am always prepared – it kills me or I kill it, right? So something is strange if I've never seen such a huge branch before, right? So I see it. And I say, ok, let's see what it is. I am always armed, not with any intention but – you never know – to defend myself. And I saw an animal – and I am looking at it and it at me – and then it hopped like this, like this – and I am thinking what is going to happen now? And on top of a huge stick. And afterwards, when I arrived here, Alicia, who still lived here, said, “well, that was a bacá.” This was Alicia's home then.
- Did you see the animal?
- Yes.
- What kind was it?
- That I cannot say – a dog, a goat. I could not tell. It was

pitch black.

- A pig?
- I could not say what kind it was. It was an animal but I could not distinguish what type. For example, you are here, and it goes “prrr” and away it goes. That's what happened to me.
- Like a chupacabra?
- Something like that. And it went like this...
- It flew?
- No.
- I had my gun ready to kill it. I always have my firearm just in case. If I go out during the day or at night – not with a bad intention, of course. It was a strange thing, though. It had a large snout (*pico*) as if it was a *jarabali* – one of those pigs – one of the wild pigs that had the whiskers.
- Yes, that has large teeth.
- That's it!
- And that has long hairs on either side of the mouth, those long whiskers.
- So maybe it was a wild Creole boar?
- That's what I say – that it was a wild boar. So I thought it was a *jarabali* – one of that kind of wild pig. That's what we call them. But it never stopped.
- A *jarabali* is a *cimarrón* pig.
- And that has long whiskers around the mouth. And I was watching it and it disappeared. I didn't know why. It must have left very fast. That's what I think.

really *bacás* or spirit animals. I heard haunting stories about how invisible visitors were eradicated and how virile men fought off these beasts during struggles in the bush. Ranchers and butchers told of *bacás* that eviscerated their herds and drained their cash. I even encountered a *curandera* (healer) who boasted that she could make one for me.

Bacases are a particular subset of shape-shifter lore in the Dominican *campo*; others include *galipotes* and *tuntunes*. The version of *bacá* narratives interpreted here are specific to the central frontier region, where they appear as a local variant of Haitian *lougrou* lore in which the core feature is the anthropomorphism of the object—the stick, rock, or dog is actually a person. In Haiti, such accusations that beef was actually human flesh landed several people in jail on cannibalism charges in the 1870s. *Bacá* narratives can be adapted to fit new rumor paradigms as they arise, for example, morphing into a version of the *chupacabras*, a black dog with a penchant for attacking goats when those rumors spread across Latin America.³ And rumors surfaced recently with a vengeance as tent dwellers amidst the post-earthquake ruins of Port au

Prince killed a woman said to have been a *lougrou*, poised to suck children's blood in the dead of night. These narratives are reflective of a highly tangible notion of evil, one evidenced as well in beliefs that bad dreams occur due to the entry of a wicked presence into the body, which is why it is considered preferable to sleep sideways or face down.

Wood and animals are key natural symbols in Bánica; the very name of the town derives from the Arawak term for ebony because of the rich forests that sheltered the area into the eighteenth century. The town's patron saint is Saint Francis, guardian of animals. Indeed, mahogany is the national wood and is considered sacred, as is the Mata de Piñon, which is said to be able to bleed like a person and can be used to protect a house from evil spirits and natural disasters (although in Haiti it is also used to capture spirits and bottle them into zombies).⁴ There is a mahogany (*caoba*) forest in los Haitises where if one tries to cut the trees, the earsplitting sound of drumming will emerge until stopped.⁵ Dogs seen swinging in hammocks or in rocking chairs are said to be *bacás*. While animals are the

most popular changelings in these tales, wood appeared regularly in the *bacá* narratives I have collected. In one story, a thief turned into a tree stump during a hurricane so as to avoid capture by the police. Such powers of metamorphosis are most often said to emanate from Haiti. Scholars have noted the effects of deforestation on Haitian peasant economies, but they have not yet considered how the decline of the wilderness (*el monte*) has created anxieties associated with diminishing access to everyday forms of magical protection from evil. Indeed, shape-shifter lore about demonic cattle arose in the early conquest period during another ecological crisis, when grief over Indian deaths in Mexico was channeled into Nahua narratives about Spaniards turning them into horses.

From a Dominican perspective there is a nationalist resonance to these *bacá* narratives since Haitians are renowned for their superior sorcery powers and are thus seen as ultimately responsible for *bacás* and their thievery. Located in Haiti for much of the nineteenth century and a central theater of war during the Haitian revolution and its aftermath, Bánica has long supplied meat products to

the Haitian side of the central frontier, which is too mountainous to sustain livestock; although today Dominicans sell beef and rice to Haitians who supply Dominicans with goat, pig, and guinea fowl. In addition to the disappearance of the forest, *bacá* narratives must be contextualized within cultural economies of difference that emerged within the broader history of transborder circuits of markets, migration, and religious pilgrimage in the Haitian-Dominican borderlands. The small-holder economies of Bánica and the corresponding Haitian town of Biassou are heavily reliant on pastoralism—cattle, goat, sheep, and pig—which informs the cultural meanings of animals where people reside intimately with their beasts and for whom animals occupy much of their imaginative and accusatory discourse; those who still harbor a view of themselves as at the mercy of natural forces, and thus an enchanted view of animals as representing the power of an often inscrutable nature. The *bacá* has several crosscutting genealogies since shape-shifter beliefs are prominent in African as well as Amerindian cultures such as the now-extinct Taino and Arawak who once inhabited this

area, as well as French-derived traditions of the *loup-garou*.

Given the fantastic nature of these shape-shifting beasts, I originally assumed that I would need to use a folklorists' methodology to interpret them and that I would be searching for story kernels, genres, and variations alone. But I want to argue that these stories can be read as a form of historical evidence, even if as a genre they are not oral tradition as such, since their historicity resides in their poetics—the historical meanings that have accrued to formulaic elements or key symbols, rather than their narrative.⁶ Witchcraft can thus provide a standpoint from which to reflect on different kinds of historicities.⁷ Following Carlo Ginzburg, one might read these key signs metonymically, as “the verbal condensation of a historical process.”⁸ Thus reading these texts as historical evidence requires removing elements from the narrative sequence within which they are embedded and tracing the historical context which over time has accrued certain meanings to key symbols like varnish on a brass plate. Drawing upon Freud, one might say that inadvertent or minor details in these stories

may provide clues which reveal resonances which are not available to the conscious mind of the informant.⁹

I would like to consider *bacá* talk as a genre of embodied historical memory of the past, one that is conveyed by the history and poetics of the particular forms these spirits inhabit, from dogs, pigs, cattle and extinct species of wood. As such they are popular recollections of a landscape and economy which came to an abrupt end with the USAID-induced swine slaughter of 1979 when U.S. officials feared that a swine flu epidemic could threaten the domestic pork industry and ordered that all pigs on the island be killed. If history is always a story about power, these haunting tales represent suppressed subaltern histories of a desire for a time and a place when life was far easier for the rural poor in the borderlands, as well as the surfacing of certain memories of trauma from the colonial past.¹⁰ These were animals might be termed what Rosalind Shaw has called “embodied memories” of the *montero* economy one that provided free access to the hunting of wild pigs, goats and cattle in the forested interior and which sustained this region and

its poor for centuries until the 1950s. These phantasmic ghosts represent popular desires to hold on to the last vestigial traces of the free range economy of *montería* which provided ready subsistence for the poor for centuries, while they are also vernacular histories of trauma from the colonial terror unleashed upon the free peasantry; while simultaneously channeling some of the virile pride freedmen felt as powerful hunters in the mountainous interior.¹¹ They are not unchanging static images, however, but represent a “process of historical sedimentation” that shapes a vision of moral community, yet one which is constantly revised to meet new circumstances.¹²

Yet as we shall see, there is a strong gendered dimension to these stories. Mary Crain in her research in Ecuador has argued that similar devil pact tales are women’s stories of resistance to wage labor exploitation; women play a more veiled role in this case, however.¹³ Due to the strong presence of the Catholic Church, women are loath to locate themselves as protagonists or even narrators of these stories of the demonic. As in Sebala’s story in which his neighbor

throws her interpretation in obliquely from the margins, women are highly guarded about their *bacá* observations. This is probably due to the important role Catholicism plays in this community, and the fact that women typically run the *cofradías* or religious brotherhoods for San Francisco and other regional patron saints. Honorable personhood for women requires a discursive strategy of distancing oneself as far as possible away from these creatures and their stories, especially since uttering their name could conjure them into being. Bánica has one of the oldest Catholic churches in the country, and I have not yet met a woman who would confess publicly to believing in *bacás*. While loath to head on confrontations with the demonic, they will admit to being indirectly affected by them. This was apparent in stories I heard just after the Haitian earthquake (which some said had been caused by a *bacá*) that the presence of evil—in addition to the restless spirits of the unburied dead—were causing nightmares and keeping people awake at night.

The work of the Devil?

These narratives might be classed within the genre of Latin American devil-pact lore except for the fact that *bacás* are also said to protect one’s crops or beasts, so they are powerful but not necessarily negative, which is why I am hesitant to term them devil pact narratives which has a univocally negative moral timbre.¹⁴ In Bánica, there is another genre of *bacá* narratives in which wealth generation is more central which more closely conforms to the devil-pact model; like witchcraft narratives those accused are community outsiders either by regional provenance or class. Stories about export free-trade-zone owners and politicians fall within this rubric, or the dog of Consuelo Ingenio which was said to change form and size and was seen all over the place which many said was José Mota’s *bacá*.¹⁵ Or the assembly zone in Santiago owned by someone from the large regional town of San Juan de la Maguana which was found to have been the scene of mysterious deaths and blood in the toilets; or the tale of an *alcalde* (mayor) who was said to have had a “*muchachito*” or small black man who smoked and was actually a *bacá* which made his large herd of cattle

in Haiti grow while his neighbor's failed; his *bacá* eventually causing the suicide of his cousin who was his political rival. The centrality of blood imagery, desiccation and unnatural death—what Dundes calls the “bloodthirsty revenant” —render these stories a different substream of the *bacá* genre, however, one more akin to vampire stories than shape-shifter tales, even if the two forms are related. These tales also conform to Freuds' insights about why the “beloved dead” become “demons” since those accused are usually blood kin. By contrast, Dundes would describe *bacá* tales as “memorates” that is, personal stories of encounters with supernatural creatures told as true.¹⁶

Bacá stories clearly form part of a transnational genre of Latin American lore, and certain formulaic elements can be found from Colombia to Nicaragua, such as the highly suspicious bull with gold teeth. Stories in which the wealthy are said to have made their money by turning their workers into animals have surfaced in Colombia and Nicaragua, and Gould reports a tale of an enchanted burro which purportedly

helped generate wealth as well.¹⁷ Yet my *bacá* narratives are not always about wealth generation, and thus could also be seen as a vision of evil as wily and inscrutable. Early modern British witch trials also reported the devil appearing as a dog, cat or fly.¹⁸ Latin American tales about witches frequently involve their ability to transmute, often into birds, enabling them to locate children in order to suck their blood.¹⁹ In the British West Indies, women with supernatural powers are said to transform into animals, particularly cats or dogs by ingesting potions; not surprisingly, they are also wealthy and said to grow in power via eviscerating the life blood of others.²⁰ Scholars may be imposing a binary moral vision upon a corpus of belief that actually expresses a more complex vision, one which presumes the existence of a range of invisible supernatural forces, not invariably of the classic Faustian type.

Scholars of devil pact narratives have identified the genre via the plot or moral of the stories—the wealth or “bitter money” that is generated which carries a satanic cast. They thus classify the tale on the basis of its narrative genre rather than its constitutive

motifs.²¹ This perspective also reduces the essence of these tales to a popular commentary on markets and inequality, thus indicating the presence of a culture of “generalized reciprocity.”²² Yet this view avoids the question of the specificity of the demonic vehicle—why are one particular set of beasts are invoked rather than others? What is it about certain animals—dogs or pigs in particular—that make them more prone to emplotment in demonic tales than other beasts? Michael Taussig has urged scholars to attend to the vivid detail of devil pact narratives, yet no one has yet taken on the centrality of the beast itself in new world representations of evil, a fact with particular salience in contexts in which pastoralism provides the backbone of economic life.²³

An important context for *bacá* tales is the forest itself, a space of enchantment cast as feminine, and one which harbors alluring female wood sprites. As in France, where Peter Sahlin reports the woods were anthropomorphized as a “feminine supernatural being,” Dominican forests have long been inhabited by *ciguapas*, for example, which are mute indian women with long

hair who walk with their feet backwards.²⁴ They appear to be wereanimals but in a different sense than the *bacá* since they are themselves hybrids; people without language or clothes covered with long hair or fur, innocents who live in a pre-edenic state. They are mischievous and kidnap people often using them to sire offspring. Upon their return, then, their victims are blessed with “*poderes*” thus they maintain a connection to *lo mas allá*—the world of the spirits. Trees are gendered as *hembra* and *macho* and female is the unmarked category, a fact that indicates that the forest is a feminine space.²⁵ *El monte* (the wilderness, the bush) is associated with fertility, and menstruating women can ruin a harvest, cause disease in livestock, and spoil eggs, just as lesbians are said to cause earthquakes.²⁶ Since mountains historically have been wooded, they are also seen as sacred, and can demand cash or goods.²⁷

It is important to note, however, that these stories are the subject of a particular form of story telling. *Bacá* tales are resolutely male drinking stories. As such they are most often told at night, in private, among groups of men, and accompanied by plenty of beer or *kleren*,

potent home-made Haitian rum. They are private because people are aware that they are not rational explanations, which is why they are termed *boca del chivo* or *disparates*, stupid beliefs. They are male not only in performance setting, but also in content. They are prototypically stories of bravery in relation to an adversary of untold proportions since the *bacá* at first glance appears to be a creature but it is actually of the spirit world, a small demon able to wreak untold havoc. They are also traveler’s tales, usually cast as encounters on roads; yet as Hyde has noted, given his abilities to vanquish a demon, the protagonist is not a mere mortal but rather himself divine.²⁸ Thus in telling these trickster tales, notwithstanding the comraderie of his mates (since these stories are not told in public but rather among close friends) the protagonist is also engaging in “crab antics” which cast him above his peers.²⁹ In a context in which the logic of conjuring is taken for granted—that uttering the name of Satan can invoke it—these are stories told in private.

As male stories, they also span the class spectrum in this rural community, from the descendents of the founding cattle ranching

families who constitute a kind of local aristocracy, to their field hands. I have heard *bacá* stories recounted by former *síndicos* (rural mayors), as well as elementary school teachers, pig farmers, day laborers and the military. Class marking in this poor rural community is not altogether clear, however, since, for example teachers are poor but have symbolic capital. Sebala for one, is today an indigent pig farmer, but he named his children after his favorite philosophers, including Socrates, Thucydides, and Hegel, a cosmopolitan gesture. Of course, men have a wider spectrum of movement than most women do, and these stories take place on the road and cast the narrator as a virile protector of family and nation from diabolical forces.³⁰ Men are also intimately linked to their animals, whether they are cattle ranchers or raise fighting cocks or pigs; it is the men who are primarily responsible for herding the animals from pen to savanna, and men slaughter the animals when its time to butcher them. For the poor whose lack of income means that they cannot adequately provide for their family these narratives may also help heal a “wounded masculinity” by

casting the protagonist in a heroic mode.³¹ Given the preponderance of female out-migration from the Dominican *campo* today, combined with the lack of available land, livestock and well remunerated work for rural men, one could also say that these stories enable men a heroic performance one that aims at persuading the audience that the male protagonist may be immobile but they are still capable of male virtues such as protecting their families and communities from danger.³² For this reason, the performative dimension of *bacá* storytelling and the genres of male self-fashioning it enables is as important as their content.³³

The free range boar hunting economy of *monteria* continued into the 1970s throughout the country until the arrival of swine flu in 1979, when it struck in the Artibonite valley.³⁴ USAID spent \$30 million dollars in the slaughter of all pigs on the island, hoping that this would curtail the disease from spreading north to the U.S..³⁵ Given the importance of feral swine to poor subsistence farmers in the border, it should not be a surprise that this region was devastated more than any other by the pig eradication program in 1978. The

southern border towns of Pedernales and Jimaní were central to the effort in 1978, while later outbreaks occurred in Dajabón and the province of Elias Piña where Bánica is located.³⁶ Worse still, the pig slaughter arrived after a series of draughts that had left the population even more dependent on livestock than ever.³⁷

Until then, creole pigs had been the mainstay of the peasant subsistence economy. Not only was the black boar a key symbol to Haiti, the chosen sacrificial object at Makandal's bois caiman vodoun ceremony, the event which started the Haitian revolution. The French term *marron* which became maroon for runaway slave came from the *puerco cimmarón* (wild pig) who was the originary primordial forest creature on both sides of the island.³⁸ Creole pigs were extremely well adapted to their environment, thriving on palm fronds, worms and grubs, they disposed of household food remains, their excrement providing fertilizer for the *conuco* or garden plot, and their rooting loosening the soil for planting. For an initial cost of less than \$10 their offspring could sell for \$250.³⁹ For virtually no cost in

maintenance, they were an ample and secure protein source; they also could be used as credit to secure a loan.

Although hunting was prototypically a male pastime, interestingly the creole pig massacre had an important gendered component to it. Irrespective of the popular prohibition against killing female swine, especially the pregnant and their offspring (which are taboo to eat), many of these were killed, a fact which outraged owners who railed that "this was the only thing to sustain a family."⁴⁰ Moreover, some of the most strident resistance was from women who were outraged at the governments' orders and preferred to kill and eat their own pigs rather than hand them over to the troops.⁴¹ Women, of course, were the primary care takers for the family hogs which were tied up in the patio and lived off household leftovers, and probably stood to lose more from their husbands from this source of family income. (See *photograph on page 1.*)

During the swine fever slaughter, women may have been particularly irate since they had fewer other options for generating cash than men and thus were even more

dependent on their pigs than their menfolk. In their pitiful complaints to the authorities they wrote that “we are women who live off pig production” who are now destitute. The pig assault cut to the heart of the family, perhaps even more so since the rate of serial polygyny and thus female-headed households in the border was higher than elsewhere, so there were more women headed households with a single income stream. One woman from Villa Vasquez wrote that she had received a voucher for reimbursement for the loss of her pig but when she went to the Agricultural Bank she was told there was no money left and she wrote “please pay as soon as possible, I am a poor widow with seven children to take care of.”⁴² Nearly a half of all those who wrote in to complain were women, primarily from the largest segment—the “humildes” and “gente pobre” (the humble poor) who owned fewer than ten hogs.⁴³ Which is why the governmental campaign to explain the rationale of the slaughter and eat more pork was aired on the Dimensión Feminina (Feminine Dimension) and Nosotros en su Hogar (We at Home) programs, alongside Radio Guaracuya, and on popular rural radio

stations in border towns such as Barahona, Pedernales, Neyba and Jimaní.⁴⁴

This essay asks that we read these *bacá* visions as embodied historical memories, which like dreams, require deciphering. They are flashes of memory which seek to repossess elements of the past and reanimate or reemplot them in historical time.⁴⁵ These *bácas* may have been embraced during the food crisis that developed right after the creole pig slaughter in the 1980s, as Reagan’s Caribbean Basin Initiative intended to transform the Caribbean from a food sustaining economy into one that produced nontraditional products for export, a vision in which cheap labor was the comparative advantage of Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Even USAID admitted they knew this shift would cause tremendous rural urban displacement, increasing urban populations by 75%; one which would generate an ample reserve army of labor which would keep its price down.⁴⁶ As Haitian labor was supposed to shift to export free trade zones in the capital, lower tariffs imposed by IMF “shock treatment” eventually displaced Haitian staple foods as Haiti—the poorest country in the

western hemisphere—became the largest net food importer in Latin America. Given the dramatic erosion in food security since 1979, it might not be a surprise that the creole pig continues to haunt the border, a poignant reminder of better days for the *campesinado*. In over 50 hours of interviewing I have not yet met one person who received a white U.S. replacement pig, although I have been told that these were much more difficult to handle than the *mansa* or gentle *jabali*. Indeed, I was told that due to their viciousness, you had to watch them constantly; they were so ruthless, they would even eat a small child. Indeed, these tales of gringo man-eating pigs are reminiscent of the vicious attack dogs brought to hunt down runaway slaves and ravage them in the colonial period. These tales of the *bacá*, as Luise White has said, can thus uncover intimate layers of personal experience and emotions such as anger and betrayal which are not always apparent in the cold historical archive.⁴⁷ They also reveal the central place that items such as wood and pork have played in the social history of the central frontier, as commodities which formed the basis of the subsistence economy,

while maintaining the magic of the gift.⁴⁸ As elsewhere in Latin America, in Bánica the “hearth defines the home,” and indeed bonds of family are indexed through where one eats and who feeds you, and most of all, what’s for dinner.⁴⁹

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NOTES

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2. See my *The Dictator’s Seduction: Politics and the Popular Imagination in the Era of Trujillo* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); and Robert Debs Heinl and Nancy Gordon Heinl, *Written in Blood: The Story of the Haitian People, 1492-1971* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin

- 1978), 602.
3. For more on *chupacabras* in Puerto Rico, see my essay “Imperial Secrets: Vampires and Nationhood in Puerto Rico,” in *A Religion of Fools? Superstition in Historical and Comparative Perspective*, edited by Steven Smith and Allen Knight, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 290-312.
4. Ken de Pree, *Beware of the Baca! Folklore of the Dominican Republic*, Samaná, Dominican Republic: K. Du Pree, 1989, 25.
5. Juan Guaroa Ubiñas Renville, *El Mensaje de los sabios: Historias y leyendas educativas dominicanas*, Santo Domingo: Editora Manatí, 2002, 101-103.
6. Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.
7. Englund cited by Rosalind Shaw, *Memories of the Slave Trade: Ritual and the Historical Imagination in Sierra Leone*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002, 205.
8. Carlo Ginzburg, *Clues, Myths and the Historical Method*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992, 103.
9. Ginzburg, *Clues*, 101.
10. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1995.
11. Benjamin quoted in Fisher, *Modernity Disavowed: Haiti and the Cultures of Slavery in the Age of Revolution*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2004, 140. For more on *montería* see Richard Turits, *Foundations of Despotism: Peasants, The Trujillo Regime and*

- Modernity in Dominican History*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003.
12. Shaw, *Memories of the Slave Trade*, 226.
13. Mary Crain, “Poetics and Politics in the Ecuadorian Andes: Women’s Narratives of Death and Devil Possession,” *American Ethnologist* 18, No. 1 (Feb., 1991): 67-89.
14. This was underscored to me in discussions with informants about how to classify the *bacá* which I would term sorcery yet which flattens into far more morally dubious term withcraft in Spanish, a label they rejected as inappropriate. For a more devilish interpretation of the *bacá*, see Christian Krohn-Hansen, *Political Authoritarianism in the Dominican Republic*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
15. Juan Guaroa Ubiñas Renville, *Mitos, creencias y leyendas dominicanas*, 193.
16. Alan Dundes, ed., *The Vampire: A Casebook*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998, chapter 11, esp. 165, 159.
17. Michael Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in Latin America*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980; Marc Edelman, “Landlords and the Devil: Class, Ethnic and Gender Dimensions of Central American Peasant Narratives,” *Cultural Anthropology* 9, No. 1 (Feb, 1994): 67089; Jeffrey Gould, *To Lead as Equals: Rural Protest and Political Consciousness in Chinandega, Nicaragua, 1912-1979*, University of North Carolina Press, 1990.
18. Norman Cohn quoted in Elaine G. Breslaw, ed., *Witches of the Atlantic World: A Historical*

- Reader and Primary Sourcebook*, New York: New York University Press, 2000, 55.
19. Edgar martin del Campo, "The Global Making of a Mexican Vampire: Mesoamerican, European, African and Twentieth-Century Media Influences on the Teyollohcuani" *History of Religions* 49, No. 2 (2009), 107-40, stresses the primacy of European and African-derived belief in his account of the origins of the Nahua Teyollohcuani.
 20. I.e. duppy women; see Jane Beck, *To Windward of the Land: The Occult World of Alexander Charles*, 1979, 205 and passim.
 21. Robert A. Georges and Michael Owen Jones, "Folklore as Genre and Type," in *Folkloristics: An Introduction*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995.
 22. Brackette Williams, *Stains on my name, War in my Veins: Guyana and the Politics of Cultural Struggle*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1991, 110.
 23. Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism*, 17.
 24. Peter Sahlins, *Forest Rites: The War of the Demoiselles in Nineteenth-Century France*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994, 48. Pérez describes *ciguapas* as either male or female but the example in his book is female and I have never heard of one appearing as male; Juan B. Pérez, *Geografía y sociedad*, Santo Domingo: Editora del Caribe, 1972, 242-243.
 25. José Schiffino, *Riqueza Forestal Dominicana*, Ciudad Trujillo: Montalvo, 1945.
 26. Labourt, *Sana, Sana*, 117.
 27. Labourt, *Sana, sana*, 162.
 28. Lewis Hyde, *Trickster Makes the World: Mischief, Myth and Art*, New York: North Point Press, 1998.
 29. Peter J. Wilson, *Crab Antics: The Social Anthropology of the English-Speaking Peoples of the Caribbean*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1973.
 30. Mathew C. Gutmann, ed., *Changing Men and Masculinities in Latin America*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2003, 137.
 31. Gutmann, *Changing Men*, 127.
 32. Light Carruyo, *Producing Knowledge, Protecting Forests: Rural Encounters with Gender, Ecotourism and International Aid in the Dominican Republic*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008, 82.
 33. Roger D. Abrahams, *The Man-o-Words in the West Indies: Performance and the Emergence of Creole Culture*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983, chapter 5.
 34. "Proyecto Eradicación F.P.A.: Actividades para los Proximos 30 Dias," Ministerio de Agricultura, Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter MA, AGN), Santo Domingo, 1979.
 35. CPTC_07-02.pdf (web document).
 36. In 1997; see GUAOO_34_CSFSurvDomRep.pdf (web document).
 37. Letter to the president and Secretary of State of Agriculture, from a group of 105 petitioners from El Guayabal de Postrer Rio, MA, 21 Mar. 1979, AGN.
 38. Carlos Esteban Deive, *Antología de la flora y fauna de Santo Domingo en cronistas y viajeros, siglos XV-XX*, Santo Domingo: Editora Amigo del Hogar, 2002, 333.
 39. Michael Dash, ed., *Haiti Anthology: Libete*, Princeton: Marcus Weiner, 1999, 105.
 40. Letter to the president from Cornelio Florian Recio, Sección de Boca de Cachón, Jimanó; Letter to the president from 32 petitioners, Tamayo, 21 Jan. 1979, MA, AGN.
 41. Interview, Bánica, July, 2010.
 42. To Secretary of State for Agriculture, Informe sobre el Sacrificio de Cerdos, from Héctor Inchausteguí Cabral, Secretario de Estado sin Cartera, 19 April 1979, MA, AGN.
 43. Most pig farmers had less than ten, about a third had 25-30, and a handful had 70-80 hogs (estimate from a sample of lists of "personas que perdieron sus cerdos," MA, AGN).
 44. Receipt for \$300 RD, Fondo Especial Para el Desarrollo Agropecuario, 12 Feb., 1979; \$240 and \$375 RD, 23 April 1979; MA, AGN.
 45. For more on this approach, see Andrew Apter, "Introduction," *Activating the Past: Historical Memory in the Black Atlantic*, London: Cambridge Scholars Press, in press.
 46. Dash, *Libete*, 228.
 47. Luise White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, 85.
 48. Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction," *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, New York: Cambridge, 1996, 12.
 49. Mary Weismantel, *Food, Gender and Poverty in the Ecuadorian Andes*, Ill: Waveland Press, 1998, 169.