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Contextualizing Preface: “Syro-Lebanese Translational Narratives in the Caribbean: Hispaniola” is a paper excerpted from a dissertation in progress titled “Migration, Representation, and Social Formation between the Eastern Mediterranean and the Caribbean Basin, 1870-1950.” This larger project traces and analyzes the textual productions of and about Syro-Lebanese migrants to the Caribbean basin in Arabic, French, and Spanish. It surveys newspaper articles, advertisements, conference proceedings, and diplomatic papers from institutional vantages in addition to untranslated and uncirculating literary works, travelogs, lexicons, and handwritten letters. The dissertation demonstrates how representational tropes not only enter and metamorphose across cultural zones but also have tangible effects on the subjects whom they claim to represent. Part I, “The Nahda’s Transatlantic,” explores discourses of mass emigration from Beirut and Mount Lebanon and plans for return beginning in 1870 and lasting until the first decades of the 20th century as constitutive of Arab modernity. Part II, “Caribbean and Mediterranean Disorientation,” probes discourses of nationhood at the turn of the 20th century around the Caribbean and attempts by the national elite to racialize migrants into and out of them via textual representations and regimes of citizenship (particular emphasis is placed on Haiti, then celebrating its centennial of the Haitian Revolution, and Cuba, then fighting its war of independence against Spain and subsequently coming under a U.S. occupation). The following paper is mostly taken from Part III, titled “Itinerant Intellectuals and the Nahda’s Relocations.” It reads migrants’ later literary production from World War I to 1950 vis a vis changing political and cultural landscapes in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Caribbean basin. This excerpt analyzes migrant literary production in Hispaniola, the shared island of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, during the U.S. occupation of each country from the 1910s to the early 1930s.

Syro-Lebanese Translational Narratives in the Caribbean: Hispaniola

Introduction

On October 10, 1890 the French minister to Haiti wrote in a missive to France that ““a group of thirty Syrians,”” speaking ““a half-Spanish, half-Arabic gibberish,”” had disembarked at Port-au-Prince from a steamship that carried them from Marseille ““to sell small rinky-dink goods along the public roadway.”” At the time, Haitian law forbade foreigners from peddling goods under penalty of arrest and a fine of 300 piasters, which, if unpaid, would lead to confiscation of goods and deportation. Finding a number of requests for protection from the newly arrived migrants from the Ottoman Empire, most claiming to belong to the Maronite faith, the French minister found himself in an international dilemma. ““Though [the matter] seems to

crop up in the very text of the Capitulations,¹ Syrians or other Christians who enjoy French protection cannot invoke this protection except against Ottoman or Moroccan authorities.

Outside of Muslim States, Maronites along with the Jews from the Maghreb are nothing more than Turks or Moroccans as far as we are concerned!” While he begrudgingly secured complete remissions for the fines imposed on Syrian street vendors and an authorization for them to remain in the country for two months, selling their goods imported at the lowest customs tax, his sentiments and policy recommendations became more inflammatory. These peddlers, ““who have for so long infected Mediterranean bazaars with their junk,”” he said, ““descend *en masse* upon the States of Central and South America, where their complete ignorance of the laws and customs of the country sooner or later reserves serious inconveniences for them.”” One month later he sent another missive stating that the ships now brought hundreds, which, for him and select others from the local and foreign trading class, constituted ““a real invasion,”” and that ““this army of Mediterranean junk sellers,”” harboring ““singular illusions about the Haitian El Dorado,”” ought to be returned immediately (Diplomatic missives in Gaillard 196-8).² Though he ended his telegram stating that aid from the French legation would cease at the initial date set for the two-month sojourner’s allowance, Syro-Lebanese migrants from the Eastern Mediterranean continued to disembark in Haiti and made Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haitien in addition to les Cases, Petit-Goâve, Petite-Riviere-de-Nippes, Grand-Goâves and the department of Nord-Ouest their home. In fact, they made numerous regions in the Caribbean and across the Americas their home.

¹ The Capitulations, bilateral agreements between the central Ottoman government and European powers, had already set a precedent for French intervention in the affairs of the Ottoman Empire’s Maronite population. While the High Porte initiated such agreements, by which European traders would be granted certain privileges, to attract foreign investment in the region, the agreements subsequently allowed European consuls to intervene as ‘protectors’ in the affairs of non-Muslim Ottoman subjects, especially in the realms of religious and social, particularly educational, institutions.

² All translations of non-English texts are mine, unless otherwise noted.

The French minister's remarks, though burdened with Orientalist language, vividly portray an uncanny instance of what Mary Louise Pratt would label a "contact zone." In her formulation, the term signifies "the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations." Deriving the term from linguistics, which had used the word to indicate the site of "improvised language" between such peoples, often emerging as "pidgins" and later creolized, Pratt extends the meaning to discuss the "improvisational dimensions" such contact would have on cultural production more generally, and travel writing more specifically (7-8). However, the minister's remarks pose a curious twist; he convinces himself that he has seen the migrants before as peddlers across the Mediterranean, but their entry forces an improvised mode of relationality—not just in the French embassy but within the larger context of Central and South American societies.

While the contact zones Pratt observes are decidedly (post)colonial and operate between radically differently positioned subjects, my interests lie in migrant inflections of contact and the translation of contact zones across heterogenous and transforming modes of governance. Literary texts, operating between individual subjectivity as well as social cultural norms, provide unique insights into such inquiries. Moving away from the statist vantage point of the French diplomat, then, this paper analyzes the textual productions of two Arabic-speaking migrants to the Caribbean at the turn of the century in order to elucidate the specificities that migration as a mode of travel and translation has on cultural production. It considers Aquiles Nimer's novel *Dios lo quiere* [God Wills It] (1917), which was published in the Dominican Republic, and Salim Aun's translations of Syro-Lebanese émigré literature in Haiti throughout the 1920s and 30s. These texts, emerging more than three decades after the onset of migratory contact, refract

the codes of linguistic and metaphorical translation initiated by the Nahda, or Arab Renaissance, to render migrant subjectivities legible to a transforming elite under occupation.

By the time Nimer and Salim arrived in the Caribbean, the Eastern Mediterranean had long witnessed a period of cultural revival known today as the Nahda, the phenomenon through which Arab modernity in the region is read. Historically, Samah Selim writes, the Nahda was “coterminous with the region’s integration into the imperial system and the capitalist world market, when new social and political movements, literacies, technologies, cultural forms and economic institutions and practices transformed the region.” However, as a discourse, the term “typically institutes a narrative of progress that begins, for better or worse, with Europe and ends in utopias of sovereignty (the authentic or liberal self, the nation-state, the ‘umma)” (Selim 3). Throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, Nahda intellectuals in the Arabic speaking Eastern Mediterranean became invested in appropriating what they saw as the West’s mechanisms for scientific and political advancement while also seeking to articulate an autochthonous expression that drew from local traditions. Selim’s framing of the Nahda as a phenomenon occurring between the Eastern Mediterranean and Europe, however, elides the role of trans-Atlantic migration and, concomitantly, the Americas as another node of contact that informed the makings of the Nahda, and, in many ways, exported it. I join Ilham Khuri-Makdisi in seeing a “special relationship” between “*nahda* intellectuals” that spanned Greater Syria, Egypt, Europe *and* the America (49). However, where her focus is on the prolific Arabic press that spanned such regions, I follow Christina Civantos and Camila Pastor³ who also consider the non-Arabic output by members of this intellectual *imaginaire*. Indeed, such intellectuals not only followed

³ See Civantos’ *Between Argentines and Arabs: Argentine Orientalism, Arab Immigrants, and the Writing of Identity* (2006) and Pastor’s *The Mexican Mahjar: Transnational Maronites, Jews, and Arabs under the French Mandate* (2017).

Arabic literary productions and developments but also participated in local discussions, debates, and movements in other languages and drew on the canons of both languages and regions to articulate new subjectivities within turn of the century liberalism whose privileges were often articulated through discourses of nationhood and citizenship.

While the onset of migration entailed the movement from a zone of empire to regions largely having attained independent nationhood—in some cases nearly a century before Syro-Lebanese arrival—the texts I consider emerged during an unprecedented moment of United States contact with the Caribbean. The Northern power’s expansionist visions, realized through a series of military occupations, forced Caribbean society, and particularly the Dominican Republic and Haiti, to grapple with claims to the land. To whom, many asked, did the nation belong and how would migration as both a phenomenon of the past and the present, largely through networks of forced and voluntary labor, be understood? In continental Latin America and the Hispanophone Caribbean, cultural responses to the U.S.’s attempt at hegemony built on notions of *criollismo*. While the term *criollo* originally referred to Africans and Europeans who were born and raised in the American hemisphere, it transformed over time “to refer to the new identities used to justify the state formation and cultural independence in Latin America and the Spanish Caribbean.” In nationalist formations, *criollos* traced their hereditary descent from Spain, but demonstrated attachment to the soil of the Americas (Antonio Mazzotti 88). As a nationalist literary movement, *criollismo* aimed to portray the people, popular customs, and language of the region. In the first half of the twentieth century in continental Latin America, *indigenismo* additionally sought to reintegrate “the Indian” into national discourse (Earle 184-5). While Caribbean modernity largely entailed the decimation of Indigenous populations through contact with European colonization, cultural re-evaluations of the nation prompted by U.S.

occupation in the Dominican Republic and Francophone Haiti solicited an engagement with such discourses especially as they intersected with evaluations of Africanness on their shared island of Hispaniola.

By exploring the contours of Nimer's and Aun's outputs that transculturated the Nahda with twentieth century Caribbean discourse, this paper argues that intellectuals narrated the Syro-Lebanese diaspora as politically naturalizable across Hispaniola. While the attempt to naturalize this community confronted both authors with questions of representation, particularly concerning the issue of Latin American and Caribbean Orientalism, the comparative analysis further demonstrates how each author differently positioned migrants within the hierarchies of a future national culture whose discourses of societal and racial belonging were re-negotiated during the period of U.S. occupation and its long afterlives.

Historical and Representational Contexts

From the late 19th century to the mid 20th century, hundreds of thousands of Syro-Lebanese migrants from what is now Syria, Lebanon, and Israel/Palestine boarded steamships to the Americas as their homelands transformed from Ottoman provinces and, later, European colonial mandates to individual nation-states, Palestine excepted. After a journey that lasted approximately one month, most found themselves in port cities across the hemisphere like New York, São Paulo, and Buenos Aires, though migrants made regions throughout the entire American hemisphere their home, including the islands of the Caribbean. Estimates from the French Mandate for Syria and Lebanon in 1926 place the number of migrants to the Dominican Republic and Haiti at 1,582 and 749 respectively. As points for comparison, migrants to Cuba

numbered 16,000 within such registers while those in Argentina, Brazil, and the United States each had more than 145,000 migrants (Hashimoto 105). Undocumented travels, the weak bureaucratic reach of the Ottoman Empire, and shifting forms of sovereign power, however, render exact estimates difficult. For example, it is not exactly clear if estimates from the French Mandates in Lebanon and Syria built on numbers from the Ottoman era. Further, as the Ottoman Empire did not have an embassy in every country in which migrants settled, some historians have relied on national data which have furnished drastically different numbers, such as in Haiti where migrants numbered 15,000 in 1903 (Bernard Jr. 20).

The reception and representation of migrants initially figured into xenophobic nationalist discourses that drew on the nuances of Orientalism in Latin America and the Caribbean. A phenomenon that has been treated as Hispanic-American iterations of Orientalism, representations of individuals, objects, places and ideas deemed ‘Oriental’ have circulated well before the period of migration within this geo-linguistic space and reach back to the dawn of Spanish colonization. While Edward Said’s formulation of Orientalism emphasizes the way the Orient was geographically and conceptually mapped to differentiate it from French, British, and US-American Selves in paradigms of domination, Hispanic Orientalism is problematized by what Susan Martin-Márquez sees as Spain’s Andalusian past when the Iberian Peninsula was under Muslim rule (711-1492). In the age of Western European empire and later nationhood, this history positioned Spain “on both ‘sides’ of Orientalism—as simultaneously ‘self’ and ‘other,’” or, in a word, a “disorientation.” Spaniards, though also “‘locat[ing]’ the Orient (namely, North Africa) as ‘over there,’” departed “from the rigorously differentialist logic of ostensibly Western constructions of subjectivity” (Martin-Márquez 8-9).

In recent years, scholars have considered this ‘disorientation’ from the periphery of Latin America and the Caribbean, many of whose regions have been, through their colonization by Spain, in early contact with the discourses and cultural topoi of Muslim Iberia. From the imposed association of Amerindian populations with Muslims and Turks and the “ideological continuity between the Reconquista and the Iberian conquest of America” to the lexiconical mapping of ‘Moorish’ space onto ‘New World’ architecture which, for instance, nominally turned temples and courts into mosques (Taboada 35-42), the exploratory and conquestatorial movements of Iberian subjects in the early modern period ensured the migration of topoi from Mediterranean.

Once unhinged from their original cultural and textual artifacts or intercommunal relations and in citational contact with other European Orientalisms, such topoi took on abundant afterlives. The excesses of a putative ‘Orient,’ ranging from North Africa to West and East Asia, for example, saturate Latin American modernist texts in ways that range from exoticism to “emancipatory projections” in the envisioning of “alternative cultural space” (Schulman 105). It is what allows the canonical Cuban figure José Martí, for instance, to affectively identify with the figure of the resistant ‘Moor’ when articulating a Cuban identity apart from the Spanish empire despite his previous experimentations in representational exoticization (Rodríguez Drissi 93) or other foundational writers such as Enrique Gómez Carillo to implement far ranging Orientalist tropes in his travel *crónicas* written not just physically from places like Fez, Cairo, Jerusalem, Damascus, and Tokyo but also within a discursive contact zone heavily influenced by the Orientalist traditions of other regions of Europe.

Recent scholarship has called for sustained analyses of the socio-historical impact of Arab migration to Latin America on the permutations and treatments of the discourse. In the case of Argentina, Christina Civantos has demonstrated the dialogical encounter between nationalists

of European background and Arabic-speaking migrants in articulating national identity. Whereas European-descended authors represented the ‘Orient’ and ‘Orientals’ both abroad and domestically at the turn of the century to establish difference within positivist discursive hierarchies, migrants also engaged in auto-Orientalism by which they promoted the “essentialization of the self based on preexisting archetypes” that at times functioned as discursive violence and at others as “part of strategies of resistance” (Civantos 22, 210). In the Colombian context, some scholars have highlighted the xenophobic tones of the press ranging from initial complaints about new arrivals’ poverty and illiteracy to the Orientalist ethnification of crime and fears about migrant economic activity as one of predatory competition (Viloria de la Hoz 27-28; Mosquera Paternina 60-70). While little secondary literature has treated the presence of Syro-Lebanese migrants in the Dominican Republic, preliminary studies of the nation’s major newspaper *Listín Diario* suggests trends similar to those in other areas of Latin America.

The historical and representational situation in Francophone Haiti, while maintaining some overlap, diverged with regards to migrants who were collectively labeled “Syrians.” The period during which migrants moved from ambulatory vending to retail enterprise coincided with preparations for the nation’s centennial celebration of the Haitian Revolution, with many publicly asking what it meant to be Haitian and who had the right to enjoy the privileges of the constitution as citizens. Citizenship provided a particularly thorny topic as some migrants from the Ottoman Empire had initially acquired Haitian naturalization papers while others became naturalized as citizens of the United States, the neighboring Dominican Republic, France, and England and worked in Haiti as foreign traders (Plummer 520).

Newspapers from the period demonstrate nationalist anxieties about the new population's presence that quickly and ultimately resulted in xenophobia in the early 1900s. Incendiary newspapers like *Le Devoir*, later called *L'Antisyrien*, used the figure of the Syro-Lebanese migrant to mark distinctions between who could and could not be considered Haitian. Further, a regular inflammatory column penned by a contributor under the pseudonym Un Constitutionnel targeted the Syro-Lebanese migrant merchant sector in relation to Haitian law concerning commerce and foreign traders, whose restrictions had lapsed over the years since the revolutionary period. While Syrians and Haitian sympathizers offered rebuttals in other newspapers such as *Le Nouvelliste*, *Le Matin*, and *Le Moment* that had supported emulation of the Syro-Lebanese colony for its perceived savviness in commerce, the editorial boards of each soon adopted what would be the xenophobic hegemonic stance toward the migrant community in anonymously written articles and the cross-print column headlined "The Syrian Question"—even when paradoxically running ads for Syro-Lebanese migrant businesses.

The recurring, multi-paper column discussed ways to better implement the Syrian exclusion law of 1903 and identify those who transgressed it. Promulgated under the presidency (1902-1908) of Pierre Nord Alexis (1820-1910) and based on the Chinese Exclusion Act in the United States, the Law of August 10, 1903 characterized Syrian migration to Haiti beginning in the last decades of the 19th century as "taking on the proportions of a true invasion." The law further described Syrian migrants as a group that did not "provide any service to the nation deserving of the State's solicitude" and whose singular preoccupation was accumulating commercial wealth—wealth that, according to the press, was not spent according to the norms of conspicuous elite consumption, but rather used to enlarge migrants' own commercial establishments or send rents to kin abroad in the Ottoman Empire. Based further on the belief

that the state and its laws should protect nationals and provide “preferential treatment to national trade,” the law principally sought to prohibit the naturalization of migrants from the Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire into Haitian citizens. Additionally, it placed commercial limits on the migrants that prevented them from trading except on a cosignatory level, having more than one commercial establishment, and engaging in ambulatory vending. Warning Haitians facilitating any prohibited commercial activity for Syrians with a threatening fine, the law promised to publish a list of names of naturalized Syrians having already gained presidential licensure for commerce, lest any other Syrian attempt to break the law upon its promulgation by presenting to the Republic’s authorities new or fraudulent acts of naturalization (The Haiti Reader 150-152).

Despite the geo-linguistic differences between the Dominican Republic and Haiti regarding Syro-Lebanese migration, the experience of the U.S. occupation on their shared island Hispaniola created conditions in which migrants could articulate new representations of migrant subjectivities. On July 28, 1915, the United States Marines invaded Haiti. Acting on President Woodrow Wilson’s orders, they would begin, by imposition of a treaty, an occupation that was de facto military in nature. Treaty officials drawn from the Marine Corps were tasked with advising the capital city on governance and financial management. The ultimate result, however, was full control over the nation’s finances, customs houses, public works projects and the establishment of policing forces immediately used on insurrectionist activity which was brutally suppressed. Though U.S. expansionist dreams dated back over a century in the Caribbean, the pronounced impetus for invasion was multifold. The U.S. proclaimed that they would intervene lest the recent assassination of Haitian President Jean Vilbrun Guillaume Sam result in political and economic instability. This, according to U.S. fears, would allow for the re-establishment of

European control in the country. More concretely, the U.S. read Haiti's continued forced payments of debt from the post-revolutionary period to France and the country's German colony's more recently established control over imports and exports as threats to U.S. hegemony in the region. Treaty officials quickly transferred Haiti's financial reserves to U.S. banks and, in writing a new constitution, furnished U.S. citizens with the right to purchase and own land. Bodies of resistance fighters called *Cacos*, originally derived from enslaved populations who later exerted control around the country's mountainous regions, quickly met the occupation with sustained rebellions and guerilla attacks (McPheron 78-81).

In the following year, the U.S. imposed a nominally and characteristically military occupation on the Dominican Republic under similar pretenses of fears about political and military strongmen taking over the country in addition to European expansion, particularly the possibility of Germany using the nation as a military base during World War I. On May 15, 1916 the Marines landed on Dominican soil and seized control of port cities. Like the *Cacos*, groups of fighters called *Gavilleros* engaged in armed resistance to an occupation that had dismissed Dominican governmental officials from their posts, transferred the nation's finances to U.S. banks, facilitated the acquisition of land for American businesses to cultivate sugar, and imposed a nation-wide censorship on communication outlets like the press and the telegraph in the name of economic growth, development, and stability (McPheron 82-6). Perhaps the most long-lasting impact of the occupation, however, was the establishment of the National Guard, a US-trained army constabulary made up of Dominicans tasked with violently imposing order. Six years after the U.S. occupation came to an official close in 1924, Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina, a dictator who was trained with the National Guard, would rule the country, both directly and indirectly,

for 31 years in what became notoriously known as “la Era de Trujillo.” In the meantime, Haiti would continue to be an occupied nation until 1934.

Arriving in Hispaniola before the onset of U.S. occupation, both Nimer and Aun witnessed the impact of a changed contact zone and, amidst altered social relations and calls for new visions of the nation, attempted to naturalize Syro-Lebanese culture into the literary-scapes of each nation using the heritage of the Nahda.

Aquiles Nimer

Born in Tiberias, Aquiles Nimer traveled and wrote extensively before arriving in the Dominican Republic in 1910 at the age of 26. From Ottoman-ruled Palestine, he moved to Rome where he studied Latin and Greek literature in addition to publishing his first two novels in Italian. Far from the oppressed subject in Pratt’s contact zone, Nimer nevertheless maintained an uneasy status as a migrant in the Dominican Republic where constitutional modernity privileged the nation state’s citizens, one of which he would not become until 1929 (*Listín Diario*, March 1, 1929). With this nationalist modernity thrown into crisis by the U.S. occupation, however, I suggest that Nimer discovered an opening wedge to narrate Syro-Lebanese migrant subjectivities into a national project whose future was suddenly rendered uncertain. While using melodramatic intrigue, Nimer’s work extends the generative workings of contact zones beyond (post)colonial thinking and into the oscillating specificities of Syro-Lebanese migrant subject formation.

Published nearly one year after the U.S. officially declared its military occupation of the Dominican Republic, Nimer’s Spanish-language novel *Dios lo Quiere* tells the story of the Sahdas, a Catholic family living in Tiberias, Palestine on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. The

fisherman Pedro Sahda and his wife Myriam feel opprobrium due to their daughter Sara's unwed status, a result, we learn, from the fact that "young Catholic men (*los jóvenes católicos*) migrate to the Americas" (Nimer 64). Seeking guidance from the church whose patriarch in Jerusalem forbade interfaith and intersex marriages by an ecclesiastical law promulgated with the "holy end of multiplying parishioners," the family consults Father Anselmo Grossi who heads the church in Tabor, also within the Galilee region. The Italian priest suggests that Pedro seek an exemption from Bishop Caproni of Jerusalem who serves as the vicar of the Patriarch there, on vacation in Rome. With playfully titular providence, the bishop's nephew Ricardo Tancredi, who so happens to be on pilgrimage in Galilee and lodging in the hostel attached to the very church in Tabor, writes a letter on behalf of the Sahdas. In it, he inquires into the merciful possibility of a marriage between Sara and Calil, the Protestant baker Musa's son. The encounter, however, sets into motion an operatic drama through which readers are introduced to caricatures of Palestine's early 20th century world.

Though Nimer clearly represents an Eastern Mediterranean contact zone, it is one from which markedly male and Catholic coded individuals reach into another: a U.S. occupied nation in the Caribbean in which the work finds its production in print form. Far from evincing a Global South recognition of mutual subjugation resulting in transregional calls for solidarity, Nimer's novel instead translates Palestinian society under Ottoman rule and incipient European colonization in order to naturalize migrant subjectivities as ideal participants of a state-building project in the Dominican Republic. Though legibility is a feature of transcultural texts by which subjugated cultural producers incorporate the idioms of the dominant culture, often through works of autoethnography (Pratt 9), initial reception of the work pointed to the hesitancy of the *criollo* elite in permitting the naturalization of such migrants in the literary sphere.

In a front-page review of the nation's main newspaper *Listín Diario*, Juan Salvador Duran (pen name: Jacinto Silvestre), a prominent *criollo* author and participant in poetic *criollismo* in the Dominican Republic, writes that the work is a novel of the “customs” of “Oriental” society coupled with elements of realism, romanticism, and tragedy: “it is made up of snippets of life, of painfully lived daily scenes, of paintings of a certain and disconcerting realism.” Simultaneously approximating and distancing Nimer within the aesthetics of *criollo* nation-formation, Salvador Duran points to the author's preoccupation with the descriptions of village life, but for a distant village east of the Atlantic. The reviewer's description of Nimer also vividly portrays the contours of Orientalist discourse at the turn of the century with which the Dominican *criollo* elite was familiar: “[The novel's] author, a young Galilean—not to be confused with the Bethlehem Paraclete twenty centuries gone—is like almost all writers of his race (*raza*): Arab, a romantic dreamer, but also a passionate spirit, somewhat fanatical, superstitious, and fatalistic.” Though Nimer strategically implemented aspects of such Orientalism in his work, Salvador Duran resists reading them as critique, and folds them over onto the author's own person. Further, the review continues, stating that the novel was “originally (*primitivamente*) written in Arabic and then patiently translated (*vertida*) into Spanish by its own author” and that “perhaps because of this, [the work] strongly retains its exotic flavor, and at times resists (*se resienta*) the elegance and typical fluidity of Cervantes' language” (*Listín Diario*, November 15, 1917). Criticism of Nimer's translational procedure, placed alongside the foundational author of Spanish and Spanish-American literary modernity, however, bleeds ironic: Does not Miguel de Cervantes' magnum opus *Don Quixote* (1605-1615) claim to be a translation of an Arabic text written by the Moorish historian Cide Hamete Benengeli (201-5)?

What I illustrate by drawing out the deeply rooted moments of ambivalence in Salvador Duran's review is the unsatisfactory mode in which notions of foreignization and domestication, resistance and fluidity, seemingly occupy diametrically opposed strategies. Popularized in translation studies by Lawrence Venuti, foreignization has come to be seen as an alternate, more ethical stance to the "humanist assumptions underlying domestication" (24). However, reading for both friction and gloss in the novel by Nimer, who, according to Salvador Duran, occupies the position of both author and translator, we see how strategies of foreignization and domestication consort to approximate the migrant to the ideal *criollo* subject of the nation in the Americas.

Emblematic of writings from the late Nahda that allegorize female characters as the body of a threatened nation, the novel presents Sara as a nation in danger of foreign rule. While the title *Dios lo quiere* primes readers, through its title, toward the Orientalist perception of Arabic-speaking migrants as a fatalistic people, a widely shared trope within Orientalism in the Americas, Nimer displaces the phrase to push what becomes a two-sided allegory and its message forward. Though Sara's family perceive Ricardo's presence and ability to intercede on their behalf as God's will and repeatedly exclaim the titular phrase, subsequent repetitions of it project the status of foreign invader onto Ricardo who successfully seduces and subsequently abandons Sara. Representing the foreignization/ domestication dynamic of the phrase, the handkerchief in which Ricardo Tancredi leaves five gold coins (the price he pays Sara for her virginity), bears both his own initials and those of the book's title "D. L. Q." (27). The fatalism of the Sahdas, then, is translated into a topos of the Crusades whose rallying cry "Deus le vult" or "Deus lo vult" in Spanish translation is "Dios lo quiere." Ultimately, Nimer, though having domesticated a feature of Hispanic-American Orientalism in the text, creates a European subject

as the Oriental's fatalistic equivalent through a procedure that questions whether the author strategically foreignizes Europe to the Orient or domesticates it from the peripheral vantage of a migrant in the Americas.

Sara, however, is next presented as a threatened subject of an oppressive Ottoman governance, and though criticism of the Empire circulated in Nahda nationalist discourses, often in models of decay, ruin, and mismanagement, Nimer instead domesticates Euro-Caribbean Orientalism onto the figure of Ajmed-Efendi, the Ottoman governor of Tiberias who pursues Sara for his harem. Described as the "most Turk (*turco*) of the Turks" (Nimer 33), Ajmed-Efendi takes on the epithet cast on migrants upon their arrival to not just the Dominican Republic but most regions in Latin America who were mislabeled because of the Ottoman travel documents they carried (Civantos 6). In a mode of Orientalist resistance and repetition, Nimer creates an ontological distinction between the ruling classes of the Ottoman Empire and migrants whom he overwrites as Catholic and male (thus resembling the *criollo* elite) and whose flow from the land he attributes as the reason for Sara's inability to be properly domesticated.

However, this migrant with the capacity to produce the nation is exemplary not by virtue of being cast Catholic but by virtue of his claim to a culture of authenticity, another trope of the Nahda. Importantly, this culture of authenticity is derived from natural surroundings as even the landscape echos with reminders of it being the birthplace of Christianity: "Far below to the east the Holy River of the Jordan creeps through a bluish plain of crops...and there, the Mediterranean Sea borders the majestic paintings of the Galilean countryside like a silver frame...The sun, the great pontiff of the day, was hiding, already having closed the solemn mass of nature..." (11-12). Indeed, though a devout Catholic, Sara's father Pedro, completely controlled by the hierarchies of a European ecclesiastical class in the region, is her largest threat and the man who violently

stabs her to death at the novel's end. Foretelling this destructive end in the early pages during a reception held for Pedro on his return from Jerusalem, an elderly Muslim man rises and exclaims:

You Christians in the Orient are imbeciles. You allow yourself to be dominated by the whim of a handful of foreign priests, who, in the name of your Jesus, sow discord, religious intolerance and sectarian hatred in your country and destroy the basis of your national solidarity. Fools! Don't you see that they are abusing your ignorance, your blind fanaticism? Don't you see that they carry their insolent inquisition to the sacred sanctuary of the home, to your nuptial bed, to the inviolable asylum of the heart?
God (*Aláh*) is great and Muhammad is his prophet! (25-26)

Using “Aláh ” instead of Dios, Nimer foreignizes this elderly Muslim's speech as opposed to Christian characters' repeated invocations of God, whose name is translated in the text as “Dios.” And yet, it is precisely this character who draws attention to “foreign” elements derailing the project of nationhood. Further, he is the only figure outside the modes of allegorical relationality to Sara who diagnoses a national problem in spoken speech and attempts to raise national consciousness. In this regard, mention of an “inquisition,” is of particular interest. The term in the Hispanophone imaginary conjures the establishment of Spanish national modernity, whose conquest of the Americas was intimately tied to the Reconquest of al-Andalus through the expulsions and conversions of Jews and Muslims in addition to the establishment of the Inquisition as a judicial institution that consolidated power to a unified Spanish kingdom. Nimer,

however, recasts the idea of inquisition onto Italy, home to the foreign priests in the work. While ecclesiastical tribunals were originally established by Pope Gregory IX in 1232 in Rome targeting Cathars and Waldensians in France and Italy, Nimer's displaced imagery erases the discourse of the domination of al-Andalus, whose former height was a central chronotope to Nahda ideologies calling for a return to the Golden Age of Islam prior to Ottoman rule (Granara 63). No longer is Spain, the cultural elder from which *criollo* nationalism derived its authority, conceived as the historical conqueror of the Arabs, a process which later allows Nimer to develop the migrant as *criollo*'s filial equal rather than subordinate.

The most complex male character vis a vis Sara read as the nation, however, is the Arabic-speaking Kurdish Armenian dervish Abd-Enúr, who, I suggest, is ultimately domesticated onto representations of the Dominican Republic's class of insurrectionary forces to U.S. Marine hegemony. Referred to collectively as "bandits" by the U.S. Marines, Dominican *Gavilleros* were an array of disparate men ranging from the rebel forces of *caudillos*, or strong men wielding political and military power, and former Dominican government officials dismissed by the Marines to local hunters who participated in armed, guerrilla resistance to the occupation. However, the term *Gavilleros* was in use much earlier and first referred to the "mountain-dwelling highwaymen who had plagued the countryside" and often availed themselves of civilian provisions in the years preceding the U.S. invasion (The Dominican Republic Reader 243). Operating particularly in the eastern regions of the country, they had a particularly strong presence in San Pedro de Macoris where most Syro-Lebanese migrants had also settled at the turn of the century. The increased presence of both *Gavilleros* and migrants in the region was a direct result of industrialization, particularly in the production of sugar, which the U.S. increasingly controlled (Franks 161).

Though the novel at first foreignizes dervishes as an exotic element within the landscape of the novel, a process that includes citational footnoting from the French Orientalist Constantin François de Chassebœuf comte de Volney's *The Ruins* (1796), the work traces the domestication of Abd-Enúr, their main representative in the work, as a potential custodian of the nation. The characteristics of Abd-Enúr and the description of dervishes in the fictional account map strikingly well onto circulating representations of *Gavilleros* of the period: their spiritual leader is labeled a "general," and, though he is first represented as a member of a roaming band of men with a penchant for crime and being paid off, Abd-Enúr, as new general among them, experiences a moral "conversion" when confronted with the option to terrorize or protect Sara (Nimer 42). Transformed from backwoods bandit to leader with a political consciousness, he is the only male character who fights for and protects Sara without desiring to sexually dominate her, which at times requires rallying the dervishes and engaging in guerilla tactics of assault on Ottoman authorities when she is held hostage by them (157-70). And yet, Abd-Enúr can only be Sara's temporary custodian, never her bridegroom, for he is a castrated "eunuch" who falls short of saving her life at the novel's close (183).

Within Nimer's novel, Sara's potential bridegroom hovers over the text as a noticeably absent figure, for he, as we have learned, is a migrant in the Americas. More crucially, his absence is one that permits a destabilizing translation of Sara's allegorical significations. Creating a link between this fictional representation of émigrés and reality, Nimer paratextually dedicates his work as such: "To the young intellectuals of my land (*tierra*), scattered (*esparcidos*) across the Americas" (dedication page). "*Tierra*" (land or homeland) as opposed to *patria* (homeland) saturates the dedication, like the transculturated allegory, with multiple sites of interpretation. Salvador Duran, perhaps sensing some resemblance, writes during the U.S.

occupation of his country and period of censorship that “Sarah, the protagonist, hardly speaks...she doesn’t surrender herself, but she doesn’t know how to defend herself. Could she be a symbol? Jerusalem....Jerusalem!” I suggest reading the synecdoche of Jerusalem, city in Ottoman-ruled Palestine *and* locality in the occupied Dominican Republic west of Santo Domingo, as an overture to understanding how the locutions of Nahda discourse are translated as they migrate to site-specific areas of the Americas. Characterizing the migrant as an intellectual and writerly subject capable of producing and maintaining the nation, Nimer calls for a distinctly pedagogical practice of building the nation whereby the naturalized migrant and the *criollo* can claim, through their writings, Dominican authorship.

Though *Dios lo quiere* was Nimer’s only novel during the period of occupation, later writings in the press position him as an advocate of the dictator Trujillo who presented himself as a force of progress that increased literacy rates, proliferated public works projects, developed the economy, and reduced foreign public debt. These, of course, came at the expense of democracy and the spread of a regime of racialized brutality, as evinced by the massacre of Haitian migrant workers in 1937. Upon Trujillo’s ascent to power, Nimer was living in the south of France where he worked in Marseille in a diplomatic capacity for the Dominican Republic. There, he sent letters back to the press detailing what he saw as the progress of the country’s economic development via agricultural production and its exportations of commodities like coffee, sugar, and tobacco that appeared in Marseille (*Listín Diario*, November 19, 1932). Additionally, he wrote *La vengeance de l’Abbé Cristobal* (1934), a customs novel about the Dominican Republic in French that, based on reviews of the work, drew on *criollismo* and *indigenismo* during a time when the regime was developing its anti-Black positionality.⁴ Nimer ultimately returned to the

⁴ This work will be analyzed in a larger version of this project that traces the development of migrant thought diachronically outside the period of U.S. occupation.

Dominican Republic and was designated as a high employee of the Ministry of Education where he worked on curriculum development. After viewing Nimer's trajectory, it is worthwhile to go back to *Dios lo quiere* as an artifact of migrant thought before the consolidation of the dictatorship and the co-optation of its author, as it did not fully conform to what would become the regime's racialized and positivist stances on migration, which preferred the migration of Europeans over others.

Despite the ambivalences of the book's reception and its entanglements in a politics of foreignization and domestication, the Dominican elite threw a reception in Nimer's honor at Versailles, a restaurant owned by a Syro-Lebanese migrant on the coastal side of the capital city of Santo Domingo. Dominican women prepared a French menu, some of whose dishes took on new names, for the occasion: "Hors d'Oeuvre classique – Soupe litetaire [sic] – Poisson à la Mayonnaise – Poulet Villeroi-Filet: *Jacinto Silvestre* – Salade: *Dios lo quiere* – Pastel: *Versailles* – Vins – Liqueurs – Gâteaux – Champagne – Cigars – Café" (*Listín Diario*, November 20, 1917). More interesting than the altered names of these dishes, though, was the name of the restaurant's owner: Salim Aun.

Salim Aun

Salim Aun's writings and those about him published around the Caribbean inform us that he had attended Collège de la Sagesse in Beirut, where he received a degree in Philosophy and Letters, before arriving in Hispaniola in the 1910s. We learn, too, that in addition to spending time in Puerto Rico, he lived between the Dominican Republic and Haiti where he worked as a journalist, translator, and writer but also as an Arabic and Spanish language instructor,

photographer, advisor to civil migrant societies, and a businessman in the hospitality sector, specifically cafes and hostels. Choosing to publish in Haiti rather than the Dominican Republic, Aun by-lined from 1927 to 1931 society papers, short stories, and poetry in addition to translating Arabic works written by Jibrān Khalīl Jibrān and Mīkhā'īl Nu'ayma, both Syro-Lebanese émigrés, and Maḥmūd Taymūr, a pioneer of prose fiction in Egypt. Like Nimer, Aun uses processes of transculturation and translation from the Nahda to stitch a Syro-Lebanese migrant subjectivity into the fabric of the nation during a period of crisis onset by U.S. occupation. Also like Nimer, the politics of legibility in his project are directed toward the national elite rather than occupying powers within this contact zone. However, whereas Nimer's project of migrant naturalization positioned the figure as one capable of educating the nation's masses toward progress, Aun's work naturalized migrants by domesticating their representation into a valorized discourse of Haitian peasant culture, even if he was the former owner of a business called Versailles.

Close examination of Aun's works situates the author within Haiti's Indigenist movement, a humanistic project that sought cultural, social, political, and economic freedom from North American imperialism. The movement is most closely associated with the publication of *La Revue indigène* (1927-1928). In a programmatic overview of the magazine and the Indigenist movement as a whole, the co-founder Normil Sylvain opens with an auto-critique, or, better yet, a medical diagnosis, of the nation and asserts that "It is not only at the heart but also the head that our country is ill." He then posits "a remedy of national renaissance" that could engage with ideas circulating in Spanish-speaking Latin America as well as the Francophone world alongside contemporary Haitian thought to create "the man who comes, the citizen of the future, the citizen of humanity, of a renewed humanity (Sylvain, *LRI* July 1927).

Though only running six issues in total, *La Revue indigène*'s contributors had long been publishing on such ideas before the magazine's appearance and had taken inspiration from the instructor, writer, and diplomat Jean Price-Mars' (1876-1957) seminal ethnography and folk-lore study of Haiti entitled *Ainsi parla l'oncle* (1928) [*So Spoke the Uncle*]. The work, though not invoking U.S. hegemony, targeted the related issues of cultural dependency on France and the possibility of autonomy from it. In it, Price-Mars specifically deplores the Haitian elite's tendency to look upon the peasantry with disdain while miming French habits, tastes, and customs, a condition which he called "collective bovarism" (Price-Mars, *Ainsi* 8). A more scathing reproach is found in *La vocation de l'élite* (1919) [*The Vocation of the Elite*], which bemoans the social division whereby the elite operate as an "alien organism, superimposed on the rest of the nation and living in relation to the people in an equivocal state of parasitism" (Price-Mars, *La vocation* 60). As a remedy, Price-Mars calls for a re-formulation of national culture based on the African-derived components of Haiti's peasant communities. While some have retroactively read Price-Mars' contribution as the basis for *noirisme*, a racist ideology which developed after the U.S. occupation and advocated for a control of the state by singularly black representatives, others have insisted on the cosmopolitan undertones of this early and classic version of Indigenism.⁵ Indeed Price-Mars not only surveys influences from various parts of Africa and Europe on the Haitian peasantry but also world encounters with Africa that, through slavery, became embedded in the cultural legacy of Haitians. While such encounters include the figures of Muslim travelers, Arab historians, and Phoenician traders, the centerpiece of his analysis is the urgent appeal to institute Haitian *Kreyol* and Voodoo, forms of culture that highlighted African-derived components of expression while also syncretizing the encounter of

⁵ See Valerie Kaussen's *Migrant Revolutions: Haitian Literature, Globalization, and U.S. Imperialism* (2008).

Africa and Europe on Haitian soil, as cornerstones of national identity rather than treating them as taboos in preference for singularly French linguistic expression and the regulations of European Catholicism.

The founders of *La Revue indigène*, then, answered Price-Mars' call for an indigenous cultural and literary expression, the inaugural edition closing, even, with the postface of Price-Mars' *Ainsi* in which he presents a lay ethnographic overview of local peasant customs relating to marriage and social reproduction. And yet, as others have noted, a modified understanding of 'indigenous' took shape in the magazine under the specificities of the U.S. occupation. The term newly reformulated was not singularly bound to the population's connection to Africa via transatlantic enslavement as Price-Mars set out to establish. Instead, it saw itself affiliated with populations from other geographic locations and linguistic traditions that sought freedom from various forms of subjugation. In addition to resonating with Price-Mars' use of the word 'indigenous,' the selection of the titular term *indigène* approximated the journal's cultural vision to notions of *indigenismo* in Latin America, for example, that provided "salutary alternatives to Western desacralization" (Kaussen 36). Further, it presented a coded French translation of the slur "native" that rampantly circulated in the "rhetoric of the U.S. occupation" throughout the period (Perry 51). Emphasizing the ethnographic, the founders of *La Revue indigène* drew from local, regional and international modernist traditions in their presentation of poetry, essays, short stories, and translated works to sternly reject the hegemonic project of the United States.

Appearing in two issues, Aun's translations of portions of *The Prophet* (1923) by Jibrān Khalīl Jibrān, a co-migrant then living in the United States, formally initiated the Syro-Lebanese

émigré population⁶ into Haiti's avant garde Indigenist movement. However, Aun's translations of other segments of *The Prophet* and works by Jibrān appeared in the daily newspaper *Le Matin* during and after *La Revue indigène*'s run. Collectively, most of these translations, either attributed to the original author directly or opening with a quote by him, focused on anti-materialist themes which easily resonated with circulating critiques against the U.S.'s imposition of harsh modes of extractive labor during the occupation. However, later translated writings by Jibrān focused on domesticating the Syro-Lebanese migrant community into a discourse of Indigenous syncretism, such as in a transfer of a portion of Jibrān's *al-Ajniha al-Mutakassira* (1912) or *The Broken Wings* which appeared under the title "Rêverie" into French. The nearly verbatim translation recounts the tragic tale of a young woman who, though already betrothed to a rich man, falls in love and secretly meets with the narrating protagonist in an old temple iconographically honoring both Ashtarot, the goddess of love and sexuality, and Jesus on the Cross with his mother Mary and Mary Magdalene at his feet. While the account is largely faithful to the original text, Aun strips the characters of their names and includes ethnographic digressions explaining the syncretism of the temple's images. He writes, for instance, that the "the presence of Jesus beside Ashtarot in a primitive and pagan construction is not the least surprising, because temples in the Orient are transformed into churches or mosques according to the evolution of time or space,—spiritual transformation without any profanation that left to posterity the care of judging Art and beliefs" (*Le Matin*, November 6, 1928). Taking on the role of lay ethnographer, Aun replicates, then, Price-Mars' method for elucidating an Indigenous subjectivity while drawing upon the corpus of Syro-Lebanese émigré literary production.

⁶ Interestingly, though Aun knew Nimer and provided linguistic training in Spanish to Haitians, he chose not to translate Nimer's work and, instead, focused on the literature of migrants in the U.S. or on the literature of prominent Egyptians.

Though the translations of Jibrān figured generally into the Indigenist movement, Aun's later publications in *La Presse*, a daily newspaper which explicitly challenged U.S. imperialism in its daily coverage of Haiti during the late 20s and early 30s, allowed him to most dramatically rewrite Syro-Lebanese migrants as co-authors of a future Haitian nation independent of imperialism. Aun's translation of Mīkhā'il Nu'aymah's short story "*Sā'at al-Kukū*" ["The Cuckoo Clock"] (1925) particularly merits analysis in this regard. Nu'aymah, who was born in Baskinta, then part of the Syrian provinces of the Ottoman Empire, studied in Nazareth and Poltava, emigrated to New York where he joined Jibrān in re-establishing an Arabic literary society called The Pen League, and, ultimately, returned to Lebanon in 1932 after it had come under French colonial rule.

Though Nu'aymah did not have any direct connection to Haiti, Aun's publishing of "*Sā'at al-Kukū*" in *La Presse* in 1930, brought the return émigré's work to a Haitian audience. The story is an allegorical encounter between the East and the West in which a peasant named Khaṭṭār discovers his betrothed Zumurrud seduced by Fāris, a return émigré arriving from the U.S. who fills villagers with awe when he shows them the objects he brings, including a mechanical cuckoo clock. Zumurrud elopes with him to the U.S. on her and Khaṭṭār's wedding day, and, depressed, the peasant falls disenchanting with his life in the countryside and decides to migrate to the US. Though first experiencing difficulty, he becomes an owner of a retail empire once he recognizes that the "key" to success is the "dollar" (Nu'ayma 25). He marries Alice, the daughter of a migrant and, rather than experiencing a much hoped-for joy, he finds his new life bereft of authenticity. Though finding fleeting moments of authenticity in the life of his hired servant Sa'da, a woman migrant from his village, an argument between himself and Alice results in Sa'da's death. Hovering over this gruesome scene, the titular cuckoo bird exits from behind its

doors and announces the hour. Importantly, this story uses the trope of the frame story in Arabic literary heritage (particularly the *Thousand and One Nights* from which the name *Zumurrud* is even taken) and demonstrates ways Nahda authors returned to classical literary canons to articulate their own modernity.

In the first frame an unnamed narrator receives a letter whose provenance is unknown. Comprising the second frame, the contents of the letter tell a story of “an American man named Thomson” who was born in Lebanon but journeys “behind the sea” and returns to the Lebanese countryside from the perspective of an anonymous village narrator. Thomson, an enigmatic figure at first, draws the curiosity of villagers, young and old, who subsequently grow attached to him for the knowledge he imparts—so much so that the youth nickname him “Bū Ma‘rūf” or “He who knows all” (Nu‘ayma 10-12). More than anything, Bū Ma‘rūf succeeds in instilling in the people a love for the arable land through a series of proverbs which ultimately stops the youth from seeking employment in the cities of America and, consequently, becoming émigrés. One day, the village narrator and Bū Ma‘rūf find themselves out in nature when the latter hears ravens and praises the natural order of birds in which the raven does not envy the nightingale for its song nor the nightingale the raven for its strength, which he sees contrary to the tendency of humans who pine after the characteristics of others. After a period of silence Bū Ma‘rūf enters into an epileptic episode. Though he is able to recover, his body soon enters into another state of shock at the sound of a cuckoo bird, after which he shares not only the story of Khaṭṭār but that he is Khaṭṭār himself. From its invocation of imitation and authenticity to concerns over mass material production and the gap between peasant and elite culture, the story maintains clear resonances with circulating themes of Indigenist discourse.

However, Aun's implementation of *naql*, a specific practice of translation during the Nahda, helps us theorize Aun's decision to present this specific text to a Haitian readership. The semantic connotations bound in the term's tripartite root include 'transfer,' 'translocate,' and 'transplant' but also 'transmit,' 'convey,' 'communicate,' 'deliver.' Significantly contained in its meanings are also 'pass on,' 'copy,' 'translate,' 'spread,' and 'infect.' The person engaging in *naql*, the *nāqil*, was, depending on the context of operation, considered a translator, copyist, narrator, and transmitter of folktales and traditions (Hans Wehr). In the literary history of the term, to "invoke *naql* as a cultural-literary concept is to stake a claim to authority, tradition, and legitimacy, as reflected in the phrase *naqlan 'an*," which means to render literally from a source and appears in the opening of classical Arabic texts as part of the *isnād*, or "attestations of transmission history" (Paul 104). Though Nu'aymah's "*Sā'at al-Kukū*" does not open with such an attestation, he incorporates a train of transmission throughout: the narrator receives a letter from the village narrator who in turn has received the narrative from Khaṭṭār. Further, though *isnād* "does not necessarily specify a written versus an oral mode of transmission, classical scholars tended to privilege oral transmission as more reliable and authoritative," even when written material became more dominant. Notably, Aun's rendition provides no explicit indication that the text is a translation, but does open with the words "Mikail Naime, a Syrian writer, says [*dit*]" before continuing into the narrative. The use of the verb *dire* instead of *écrire*, situates the writer's work within a frame of orality and incorporates Nu'aymah into a train of transmission as an authorial figure who pronounces a truth derived from the peasantry that can be read as a folktale in the context of the U.S. occupation of Haiti. Despite such classical resonances with the term *naql*, the term during the Nahda connotated a practice of translation through which meaning

was read not by its fidelity to the original but by the very mutations that movement into a new context necessitated (Selim 67).

Placing the layered literary alterations of *naql* in the work alongside Aun's own experience of movement, we see how the translator couples Nahda and Indigenist aesthetics to naturalize Arabic cultural texts and migrant subjectivities into Haiti's revival of national culture. Changing the title to "A Letter (*Une lettre*)," Aun commences a series of shifts as the story is transferred into the Haitian context. The changing of the names of Khaṭṭār and Fāris to Hassoun and Nassour, for instance, signals the Manichean duality of the allegory. Hassoun, whose name in Arabic derives from the root connoting that which is good, stands in opposition to Nassour, the representative of unquestioned American imitation whose name in Arabic aptly reflects a US-driven capitalist modernity that seeks to 'triumph' over the world. Most noticeably, however, all references to the titular cuckoo in both its artificial and natural contexts are removed. What is the story, though, absent its most potent symbol? When Nassour arrives from the U.S. to the village in "Une lettre" he, like Fāris, brings with him similar material objects but the cuckoo clock that once fascinated onlookers turns into a "large wrist watch (*grosse montre*)." The commodity, moving from one bound to a wall to one bound on the wrist, ties Nassour to the United States and its temporality of capitalist modernity via potent symbols of enchainment in a post-slavery and later occupied nation. In this regard, the ending of Aun's translation also diverges from Nu'aymah's story as Hassoun explicitly states that though he "freed [himself] and was trampled over, [he] was cured." The remedy, while recalling Sylvain's use of medical language, appears in the proverbial figures of speech he shares with fellow villagers, which, for instance, include phrases like "from the land is your life and fertility. Ignorant is the one who

searches for happiness and tranquility without ever touching it” (*La Presse*, January 17, 1930). Such sayings, scattered across village episodes, recall circulating criticisms of the Haitian elite.

The quote particularly resonates with Price-Mars diagnosis of elite mismanagement of the post-revolutionary nation, by which the privileged classes, having been allotted land, preferred to live in the city and managed their estates haphazardly. The “first great fault of the elite,” he writes, is “desertion of the land” (*La vocation* 62). It also recalls the *Cacos* rebellion of 1918, which was a peasant revolt against the U.S. occupation led by Charlemagne Peralte who had resigned from the army in 1915 to cultivate family-owned land in his hometown of Hinche, was arrested two years later and sentenced to five years of hard labor for his involvement in an attack on a U.S. officer. Escaping captivity, he rallied thousands of peasants angered over the U.S. military’s agriculture policies which entailed the resuscitation of the unpopular *Code Rural* of 1826 by which authorities could coerce peasants into a *corvée* system. Instead of paying taxes, peasants were forced away from the land and forcibly placed into hard-labor public works projects such as road construction. Though not a direct inheritor of the initial slave revolts and battles led by Toussaint Louverture and Jean-Jaques Dessalines, as early xenophobic representations of Syro-Lebanese migrants reminded their readers, Aun worked toward the articulation of a renewed sovereignty in the face of a different colonizer through the prism of those very migrant subjects. The translated story, then, more in line with its own adjusted title, is better read as an open letter marking the Syro-Lebanese migrant as a naturalizable Indigenous subject within new articulations of Haitian nationhood.

Conclusion

This paper, in addition to familiarizing readers with global Syro-Lebanese literary production in the Caribbean, has attempted to extend Pratt's notion of contact zone and the translational practices associated with it into the cultures of travel linked to migration. It argued that through the national uncertainties initiated by U.S. occupation migrants extended Nahda thought to their local contexts and, through it, translated their communities for an elite audience with the power to determine who could and could not be naturalized as citizens. Pratt's notion of transculturation, a phenomenon of the contact zone, is taken from the anthropologist Fernando Ortiz' coinage of the term in *Cuban Counterpoint* (1940), which asserts that Cuban society and culture are formed by all the people involved willingly or unwillingly in the nation's enterprises. While more attention is allotted to the interplay of Indigenous, European, African, and Asian markers of identity, it is instructive to recall that the author looks at subsequent forms of national identity after the period of colonization and independence: "in the first waves of immigration" he writes, "came Genoese, Florentines, Jews, Levantines, and Berbers-that is to say, representatives of the Mediterranean culture, an age-old mixture of peoples" (Ortiz 100). "Levantines," one of the many different monikers placed on the collectivity of Syro-Lebanese migrants, represented a migratory component of societal formation in Cuba that inaugurated the term transculturation. By looking at their migration to the larger Caribbean, we have much to learn about population flows to regions outside of the Global North.

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