

CULTURE CONTACTS AND THE MAKING OF CULTURES

Papers in Homage to
Itamar Even-Zohar



Edited by

Rakefet Sela-Sheffy and Gideon Toury

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Tel Aviv

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RAMÓN POWER Y GIRALT, FIRST DELEGATE TO THE CÁDIZ COURTS, AND THE ORIGINS OF PUERTO RICAN NATIONAL DISCOURSE

Wadda Ríos-Font

The island of Puerto Rico, which was discovered by Christopher Columbus on his second voyage in 1493, did not, like most other Spanish American colonies, attain independence in the aftermath of Napoleon's 1808 invasion of Spain. Together with Cuba, it remained part of the ailing Spanish empire through the Spanish-American War of 1898, at which point it became a colony of the United States of America, as indeed it remains to this day (although in 1952 this relationship was redefined as the *Estado Libre Asociado*, the Free Associated State or Commonwealth). Unlike Cuba, Puerto Rico did not engage in wars of independence. The only significant separatist revolt was the Cry of Lares of 1868: at 2:00 a.m. in September 24th of that year, a group of rebels proclaimed the Republic of Puerto Rico, but within twenty-four hours the Spanish military brought the ill-fated insurrection to an end. For the rest of the nineteenth century, especially after the appearance of political parties in 1870, patriotic sentiment was channeled through the currents of *asimilismo* [assimilationism] – which sought greater political and administrative equality between peninsular and overseas Spanish provinces without more differences than those imposed by geographical conditions –, and later *autonomismo* [autonomism], which went beyond *asimilismo* in recognizing a special situation in the colonies and demanding a high degree of self-rule, still within the greater national unity. In 1897, Puerto Rico was finally granted an Autonomy Statute establishing shared rule by a Spanish governor representing the monarchy and a bicameral local parliament. A provisional government was inaugurated in February of 1898, and elections were held in March of that year, but the newly-elected government did not have time to assume its functions before the July 1898 U.S. invasion.

The central phenomenon of the Puerto Rican nineteenth century is, then, the paradoxical coincidence of the emergence of nationalist consciousness and the absence of a significant independence movement. In

the narrative of this budding consciousness, one historical figure holds a particularly prominent position: Ramón Power y Giralt (1775-1813), Puerto Rico's first representative to the Spanish Constitutional Courts in Cádiz.¹ Power y Giralt's iconic place is probably best encapsulated by historian Lidio Cruz Monclova in his 1952 *Historia de Puerto Rico (Siglo XIX)* [History of Puerto Rico (XIXth Century)]. Referring to a ceremony held on August 16th, 1809 to honor Power on the eve of his departure for Cádiz, Cruz Monclova emphasizes how Bishop Juan Alejo de Arizmendi (the only native Puerto Rican to hold that office well into the twentieth century) gave the new deputy his ecclesiastical ring, consigning it to him "*como prenda segura ... que os afirmará en la memoria vuestra resolución de proteger y sostener los derechos de nuestros compatriotas, como yo mismo la tengo de morir por mi amada grey*" [as a firm pledge ... that will strengthen in your memory your vow to protect and uphold the rights of our compatriots, like I myself have made to die for my beloved flock] (Cruz Monclova I 20).² In this historian's account, the silhouettes of the two natural-born islanders take shape against that of the much-hated figure of Spanish Brigadier Salvador Meléndez Bruna, who had only weeks earlier replaced Toribio Montes in the multiple posts, linked in Puerto Rican government through most of Spanish rule (con-

¹ The Cádiz courts are, in essence, the origin of Spanish constitutionalism. In the aftermath of Ferdinand VII's abdication in Bayonne, and Napoleon's appointment of his brother Joseph as Spanish regent, revolutionary *juntas* were formed across the Spanish territory, each claiming to be the depositary of sovereignty in the absence of the legitimate King. Eventually they were replaced by a *Junta Central Gubernativa del Reino* [Supreme Central Governing Junta of the Kingdom], which itself gave way to the *Consejo de Regencia* [Regency Council] that in 1809 called the Constitutional Courts. Spanish liberals took advantage of this juncture to attempt the transformation of the absolutist monarchy into a constitutional monarchy, based on the principle of national sovereignty. The experiment was short-lived, as in 1814 Ferdinand VII returned, and quickly suppressed the Courts and the 1812 Constitution. A military coup would restore them for the period of 1820-1823, after which Ferdinand VII ruled again through his death in 1833.

² The italics in this quotation, as in others from the same source, are Cruz Monclova's. The historian often uses these, rather than quotation marks, to indicate citation.

stitutional periods excepted), of Civil Governor, Captain General, and Treasury Intendant (*Intendente*).

In transferring his emblematic ring to Power y Giralt, Arizmendi portrays him as a new savior, willing, like him, to die for the *beloved flock* (Power did die in Cádiz, during an 1813 yellow fever epidemic). To make the scene's importance absolutely clear, Cruz Monclova stresses that "manifiesta el concepto de patria circunscrito por la geografía y marca el preciso instante cuando ... cobra categoría rectora lo puertorriqueño" [it displays a concept of fatherland limited by geography, and marks the precise instant when ... Puerto Ricanness becomes a guiding condition] (I 20-21). The historians's statements appear, and are, exaggerated. As I will argue in this paper, Power and his Puerto Rican contemporaries' use of terms such as *patria*, *país*, and *nación* [fatherland, country, and nation], and consequently their understanding of their own allegiances, are quite complex, as well as thoroughly intertwined with changing notions of national identity in the Iberian peninsula. Nevertheless, Cruz Monclova's view is characteristic of a whole historiographical tradition. As Laura Náter and Mabel Rodríguez Centeno keenly observe, "la puertorriqueñidad emerge triunfante y consolidada a principios del siglo XIX, simbolizada por el primer obispo puertorriqueño – Juan Alejo de Arizmendi – y el primer diputado de la isla a las cortes españolas – Ramón Power y Giralt" [Puerto Ricanness emerges triumphant and consolidated at the outset of the XIXth century, symbolized by the first Puerto Rican bishop – Juan Alejo de Arizmendi – and the first deputy from the island to the Spanish courts – Ramón Power y Giralt] (5).

Ramón Power's own intricate standpoint on the national question can be extrapolated from his actions in his triple character as a member of the Spanish *Cortes* engaged in finding a constitutional alternative to the absolutist monarchy; as a *diputado americano*; and as a representative of Puerto Rico. His letters, speeches, and other papers reveal calculated choices regarding the problem of the relationship between natural origin and membership in a political community. Nonetheless, any analysis of his ideological trajectory has to begin with a discussion of his biographical background, which, at a more basic level, must have inexorably affected his developing thought. Without spending undue

time on Power's biography, it will be convenient to remember certain points:

1. His mother was Catalan, born in Barcelona, and his father, Joaquín Power y Morgan, was a Basque Country native of Irish descent. (The great grandfather moved from Waterford to Bordeaux, the grandfather from Bordeaux to Bilbao, and the father from Bilbao to Puerto Rico, as a factor of the *Real Compañía de Asiento de Negros de Cádiz* [Royal Slave Trading Company of Cádiz].)

2. His family established a sugar plantation, which means they became wealthy land- and slave-owners. The *hacienda* was sacked in 1797 during the attempted British invasion. This is a very important episode in Puerto Rican history, since the islanders' victory over the attackers was widely regarded as proof of unconditional fidelity to the metropolis, earning the city of San Juan the epithet of *Muy Noble y Muy Leal* [Most Noble and Loyal].

3. Ramón himself studied in Bilbao and Bordeaux, and by 1792 had already begun his naval career in the Royal Marine Guards. He served under Squadron Chief Federico de Gravina (of later Trafalgar fame) and his allied Anglo-Spanish royalist forces – and against Napoleon Bonaparte – in the Siege of Toulon (1793).

4. He was also a captain on the *Costa Firme* mail fleet, sailing between San Juan, Puerto Cabello, and La Guayra.

5. Perhaps his most famous naval action is his distinguished service in the 1809 siege of Santo Domingo, which led to the reestablishment of Spanish rule on the colony.

In 1808, with Ferdinand VII in Bayonne, the *Junta Suprema Central Gubernativa del Reino* [Supreme Central Governing Junta of the Kingdom] assumes sovereignty. In Puerto Rico, the Governor General (still Montes) and the San Juan *Cabildo* [city council] resolve without delay to recognize its authority, making Puerto Rico the first American possession to swear allegiance to it. Soon, another order arrives calling for an elected local representative to the *Junta*:

Considerando el rey, nuestro señor, don Fernando Séptimo, y en su real nombre la Junta Suprema Central Gubernativa del Reino que esta isla no es propiamente una colonia o factoría, como las de otras naciones, sino una parte esencial integrante de la monarquía española y deseando estrechar de un modo indisoluble los sagrados vínculos que unen esta isla y demás dominios de América con los de España y corresponder al

mismo tiempo a la heorica lealtad y patriotismo de que acaba de dar tan decidida prueba ... , se ha servido su majestad declarar ... que los reinos, provincias e islas que forman estos dominios deben tener representación nacional inmediata a su real persona y constituir parte de la Junta Central Gubernativa del Reino por medio de sus correspondientes diputados, y que para que tenga efecto esta soberana resolución ha de nombrar esta isla un individuo que la represente. (Caro, Compilación 23-24). [Deeming the King, our Lord, Ferdinand VII, and in his name the Supreme Central Governing Junta of the Kingdom, that this island is not properly a colony or factory, as those of other nations, but rather an essential and integral part of the Spanish monarchy, and wishing to render unbreakable the sacred bonds that tie this island and other American domains to those of Spain, and simultaneously to correspond to the heroic loyalty and patriotism it has decisively proved. . . , His Majesty has seen fit to declare ... that the kingdoms, provinces, and islands that compose these dominions shall have national representation immediate to his royal person, and constitute part of the Supreme Central Governing Junta of the Kingdom through their corresponding delegates, and that so as to put into effect this sovereign decree, this island shall name an individual to represent it.]

Power y Giral is chosen for the commission, but two circumstances immediately begin to hinder developments: the arrival in Puerto Rico of Meléndez Bruna, who at once sets out to challenge Power's election,³ and the dissolution of the *Junta* itself in January of 1810. Nevertheless, the new Regency Council decides to convene the Cádiz *Cortes*, and Power y Giral is once again elected.

The facts of coming from a multicultural family, studying in Europe, traveling across three continents with the Spanish Navy, fighting on the side of French royalists in the battle that made Napoleon's career, frequenting pre-Independence Venezuelan society, and contributing to the *Reconquest* of Santo Domingo before being chosen to the *Cortes* can, at the very least, be assumed to have complicated for Power the question of what it meant to be Puerto Rican. Against their background, one cannot doubt he devoted great consideration to the riddle of what con-

³ According to Cruz Monclova, Salvador Meléndez Bruna addresses to the *Junta* "un largo oficio tachando e impugnando la reciente elección de Power Giral [sic], no obstante haberla aprobado antes" [a long communiqué criticizing and contesting Power Giral's recent election, despite having approved it earlier] (*Historia* 21).

stitutes national identity, and it is highly unlikely that he would have found a simple answer in what Cruz Monclova called the *naturales y amorosas relaciones que ligan al hombre con el medio geográfico y humano que presta abrigo a su cuna* [natural and loving relations that bind man with the geographic and human environment that shelters his cradle] (“Ramón Power” 37). In fact, Power inaugurates a long majoritary tradition in Puerto Rican thought of separating the questions of identity and of the state – a fact that has been obscured by limited attention to his own action in Cádiz, as well as to the history of Western nationalisms and the connection between Puerto Rican and metropolitan politics at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

In attempting to reconstruct Power’s ideas, it is interesting to contrast the language of the instructions he receives from Puerto Rico’s five *cabildos* to that of his own final proposals to the Courts. The ordinary text behind the different *Instrucciones* dates back to the aftermath of Power’s initial appointment to the *Junta Suprema*. Its author Pedro Yrisarri, San Juan’s *Alcalde de primer voto* [First Mayor], aims to describe meticulously the conditions of life on the island, and lays out a number of social and economic measures for their improvement. However, he frames them as part of a proto-nationalist discourse that, like Cruz Monclova’s, links land and nature with nationality. His *Informe* starts with an emotional reference to “¡Puerto Rico o amada Patria! a quien tan justamente se daba y merecía este ... nombre por ser un suelo en quien la Naturaleza pródigamente derramó la fertilidad” [Puerto Rico, or Beloved Fatherland! Who was so justly given and deserved this ... name, being a soil on whom Nature generously poured fertility] (45), and consistently uses the affective term *patria*, as opposed to *estado* [state] or *nación*, to refer to Puerto Rico. Although much of the more maudlin wording disappears from San Juan’s later instructions to Power – now as Courts representative –, Yrisarri’s outlook (as one of their authors) is clearly visible in them.⁴

The discourse deployed by Yrisarri and the *Ayuntamiento* conceals a highly wrought system of categorization along the axis of nativeness to foreignness. His *Informe* urges the city to demand “que no se consienta por ningún pretexto ni motivo el establecimiento de los extranjeros, ni

⁴ A lot of Yrisarri’s original language, however, makes it into the *Instrucciones de la Villa de Coamo*, to which it must obviously have been circulated.

en la Ciudad ni en el campo, y se extrañen de nuestra Patria todos los que no estén casados con españolas, principalmente franceses” [that the settlement of foreigners not be tolerated for any excuse or reason, either in the City or in the countryside, and that all those who are not married to Spanish women be banished from our fatherland, especially the French] (Caro, *Compilación* 67). The capital’s *Instrucciones* reiterate the same entreaty, requesting, in addition, “que la misma suerte corran los catalanes que ... se hallan tolerados ... con detrimento de los vecindarios, y señaladamente de esta Ysla” [that the same fate be incurred by Catalans, who are tolerated ... to the detriment of neighborhoods, and specifically this Island] (82-83).⁵ Elsewhere, the *Instrucciones* insist that members of regular and volunteer military forces be “naturales del país” [natives of the country] not only to remedy what is seen as an injustice, but also because individuals brought from Europe often turn out to be “hombres pervertidos y criminales” [perverted and criminal men]. In this spectrum, at one end are the *naturales*, paradoxically portrayed as *incautos* and *dóciles* [gullible and docile], and at the other the treasonous abductors of Ferdinand VII. The place of peninsulars is legitimate and legitimizing; but then again, they not only command positions that might be best filled by natives, but can also on occasion be perverted and pernicious, especially the *catalanes*, who “rara vez construy[e]n fábricas, foment[a]n haciendas, ni tom[a]n otro destino que la salida ... con el metálico que han grangeado” [rarely build factories, promote plantations, nor follow any course but to depart with the money they have made].⁶

⁵ “Island” in this sentence refers to the city of San Juan. The town of Coamo restates the provision regarding foreigners, perhaps moderating it somewhat to permit continued residence in Puerto Rico to “los casados en el país con españolas, los hacendados ya permitidos y conocidos igualmente que los que han jurado fidelidad a nuesro amado y católico soberano Fernando Séptimo, con absoluta renunciación de todo derecho a su país natal; siempre que no den un motivo que desdiga del concepto que se han formado” (96-97). At the same time, it considers it necessary “que circulen en el interior de la Isla sino con causa legítima y previo permiso” (97).

⁶ The attitude of the *Instrucciones*’s authors toward Catalans is paradoxical, as they criticize them both for staying longer than they should – “es de considerar que la mente de Su Majestad fué no alimentar o dar pábulo a la despoblación de España con la salida de los comerciantes y mercaderes para las Américas, y por

The language in Yrisarri's *Informe* and in the capital's *Instrucciones* arises from an incipient feeling of difference not only between different *kinds* of Spaniards, but between the "being" of a creole and that of a Spaniard – and so lays the foundation for a telluric vein of cultural nationalism. Nevertheless, the majority of the twenty or so proposals included in them concern material reforms that could allow the colony to achieve a level of development comparable to that of most peninsular provinces. San Juan authorities seek, among other things, agricultural stimuli; relief from a variety of taxes and other financial obligations; liberalization of trade and institution of a commercial oversight board; establishment of health and educational centers; award of certain positions to creoles; and more expedient channels for legal action. Absolutely nothing in the documents calls for either a restructuring of colonial administration or a modification in the political relationship to Spain, beyond that already effected by the much-celebrated institution of the *Junta Suprema* – that is, American representation.

Their brand of cultural nationalism is not unlike many formulations of non-Castilian Spanish nationalisms, which, especially in their early regionalist origins, conceive of allegiance to both a *patria* and a nation or state. In America, where differentiation from indigenous peoples and slaves is as important as the need for equity with regard to peninsular Spaniards, loyalty to the native soil not only coexists with allegiance to the monarchy, but also with an adamant insistence on Spanish identity. Yrisarri and his San Juan colleagues are most concerned with functioning at the metropolis as equal members with full participation in decision-making processes that nevertheless will continue to take place, for the most part, in the metropolis, and/or through colonial

esto sin duda se dictaron las providencias para su regreso" [one should note that it was His Majesty's intent not to feed or foster Spain's depopulation through the departure of traders and merchants for the Americas, and it was undoubtedly because of this that provisions for their return were made] (Caro, *Compilación* 82) – and for not staying to establish factories or plantations. Furthermore, although the document upholds the time-honored stereotype regarding Catalans' "cálculo comercial" [commercial mindset] (83), it does not consider this trait a potential aid in the island's business development, as "sus especulaciones... degeneran de las mercantiles a la regatonería frecuentemente" [their speculations... frequently degenerate from commercial [interest] into haggling]. In other words, the prototype of the Catalan is that of the traditional miser.

institutions such as the *Gobierno* [Government] or the *Audiencia* [Audience Chamber]. In this respect, they can be seen as precursors of nineteenth-century Puerto Rican *asimilismo*.

Most of the instructions issued by towns and villages closely echo the tone and contents of the San Juan document. Special mention should be made, however, of the *Instrucciones del Ayuntamiento de San Germán* [Instructions from the City Council of San Germán], the oldest and most important settlement other than the capital.⁷ These also establish a clear terminological distinction between Spain – “Nación,” “Estado,” or “Monarquía” [monarchy] – and Puerto Rico, referred to as “Patria” and “Isla” (Caro, *Compilación* 123-25). Nevertheless, they lack any sort of sentimental reverence for the native soil. In highly business-like language, they outline a list of commands addressed directly to Power y Giralt, in which the questions of sovereignty and form of government take precedence over social and economic recommendations.

The first order of business establishes that, given the delicate situation in Spain itself, the town’s adherence to the metropolis is strictly conditional:

Primeramente debe protestar que esta Villa reconoce y se sujeta a dicha Suprema Junta Central ahora y en todo tiempo que gobierne en nombre de Nuestro muy Amado, Augusto y Dignísimo Rey el señor don Fernando Séptimo y su Dinastía; pero si por Disposición Divina ... se destruyese ésta y perdiera la Península de España, quede independiente esta Isla y en libre arbitrio de elegir el mejor medio de la conservación y subsistencia de sus habitantes en paz y Religión Christiana. (123-24).⁸

[In the first place, he must protest that this Village recognizes and subjects itself to said Supreme Central Junta now and as long as it rules in the name of Our most Beloved, August, and Dignified King Ferdinand VII and his Dynasty; however, if by God’s Will ... the latter were destroyed and lose the Spanish Peninsula, this Island shall be left inde-

⁷ It was Juan Ponce de León who first divided the island into the *Partido* [District] *de Puerto Rico* (later San Juan) and the *Partido de San Germán*, around 1515 (Bayrón Toro 20).

⁸ Notice the ambiguity in the implicit construction of Power’s role as representative. Although, as a member of the *Junta Suprema*, he is part of the body to which the town pledges (conditional) allegiance – representative of, and *inmediato a, la real persona* -, the tone of the instructions casts him as a more traditional procurer mediating between local and metropolitan authorities.

pendent and free to choose the best means for the conservation and survival of its inhabitants in peace and Christian Religion.]

Such a stipulation makes it apparent that the landowners of Puerto Rico were aware of the justifications for independence already circulating in Latin America.⁹ The second item of the list calls for the formation of a *Junta Provincial* [Provincial Junta], to be composed of the Captain General, the Bishop, and one representative from each of the island's five *cabildos*, and have jurisdiction over "los asuntos concernientes a favor de la Nación y Estado, del bien y utilidad de la Isla y sus habitantes, refundiéndose en ella toda la autoridad Superior Gubernativa, Militar y de Intendencia de la Provincia" [matters concerning the Nation and State, the well-being and profit of the Island and its inhabitants, being recast upon it all of the Superior Governing, Military, and Administrative authority of the Province (124)].¹⁰ This document, then,

⁹ As José M. Portillo Valdés explains, the earliest American insurrections constituted an attempt on the part of American creole classes to establish themselves – as opposed to any metropolitan body – as the keepers of sovereignty given the monarch's incapacitation. Quoting an 1813 Mexican document, he writes that "al reivindicar 'el derecho que tiene de guardar estos dominios a su soberano, por sí misma, sin intervención de gente europea', no se estaba, en fin, sino sacando las últimas y extremas consecuencias de la idea del depósito de soberanía" [in claiming 'the right [Mexico] has to guard these dominions for its sovereign, by itself, without intervention from European people,' they were, in the end, doing nothing more than drawing the ultimate and most extreme conclusions from the idea of the deposit of sovereignty] (56-57).

¹⁰ María de los Ángeles Castro speaks of "peticiones para reformas políticas concretas, tales como la creación de las juntas provinciales sugeridas por los ayuntamientos de San Juan y San Germán" [demands for concrete political reforms, such as the creation of provincial *juntas* suggested by the city councils of San Juan and San Germán] (294). She thus attributes to both cities a mandate for autonomist reforms, a characterization that she extends to Power y Giral't's entire project. Nevertheless, the only language in the San Juan documents (Yrisarri's report and the instructions) referring to a *Junta* lobbies for what I have described instead as a commercial oversight board. The twelfth *súplica* of the *Instrucciones* calls for

una Junta en la Capital compuesta de cinco hacendados y tres comerciantes: los cuatro de aquéllos nombrados por cada uno de los Cabildos de las cuatro Villas; el quinto de los mismos, y los tres de éstos, por este Ilustre Ayuntamiento con un Presidente elegido por el Gobierno pero que sea precisamente uno de estos

proposes the creation of an organism that will replace the personalized and omnipotent powers of the military governor with a measurable degree of self-government. Ironically, although the authors of the San Germán proposals are much less concerned with the establishment of a creole birthright, they go much further than their San Juan counterparts in imagining the possibility of administrative separation between the colony and the metropolis. Their *instrucciones* are, perhaps, the earliest precedent of nineteenth-century Puerto Rican *autonomismo*.

Where, in relation to the San Juan and San Germán paradigms, does Ramón Power y Giralt stand? Power relayed Puerto Rico's proposals to the Courts in his "Exposición y peticiones" [Statement and Petitions] of April 7, 1811, and subsequently in writing to the *Consejo de Regencia* in the "Peticiones que hace al Consejo de Regencia de España e Indias el Diputado en Cortes por la isla de Puerto Rico" [Petitions made to the Regency Council of Spain and the Indies by the Courts Deputy from the island of Puerto Rico]. Other evidence of his political opinions has survived, including various letters and the record of his interventions in the Courts' minutes. An examination of these documents shows points of contact and divergence with respect to the two archetypes. At the most basic level, however, it should be noted that Power refrains completely from any rhetoric denoting a sense of cultural or telluric

Capitulares, cuyo instituto sea relativo principalmente a los conocimientos de agricultura y comercio, y con extensión a todo cuanto pueda ser concerniente a promover y progresar estos dos interesantes objetos; y sus facultades, autoridad y demás formales requisitos dependa y se describan según estime la Suprema Junta. (80)

[a Junta (Board) in the Capital composed by five landowners and three merchants: four of the former appointed by each of the four Village Councils; the fifth of them, and all of the latter, by this Illustrious City Council with a President elected by the Government but who should be precisely one of these Trustees, its institution relating principally to agricultural and commercial knowledge, and by extension to all that might concern promoting and advancing both of these interesting objectives; and its faculties, authority and other formal requirements shall depend on and be expressed at to the Supreme Junta's discretion.]

It is very important to note that the two *cabildos* are referring to different types of organisms – one political and one economic –, and consequently that their attitudes toward colonial administration are quite dissimilar.

nationalism. In fact, every time he uses the word *patria*, it is in reference to Spain; and repeatedly he brings up Puerto Rico's loyalty to the metropolis as the major virtue of that "benemérito Pueblo" [distinguished People] (Caro, *Compilación* 188). In contrast, he sometimes speaks of the island with a certain remoteness, as in the phrase "al acordarme de que pertenezco al Pueblo fiel de Puerto-Rico" [when I remember I belong to the faithful Puerto Rican people] (191), and claims for himself a cosmopolitan perspective: "el servicio de mi profesión me ha conducido ... a muchos de los principales puntos de ambas Américas, y esta concurrencia ... me ha hecho conocer el corazón y opiniones de sus naturales" [the exercise of my profession has taken me ... to many of the principal places of both Americas, and this coincidence ... has allowed me to comprehend the heart and opinions of their natives] (152). Perhaps this implicit distance determines his eclectic approach to Puerto Rico's constitutive issues.

This said, in his *Exposición* and *Peticiones* he remains very close to the spirit of the San Juan instructions. He begins the first of these texts by arguing that

tres siglos han corrido ya desde que Puerto Rico forma una parte del Imperio Español, y después de tres siglos esta Isla ... todavía se hallaría envuelta en la misma vergonzosa obscuridad que sucedió a ... la adquisición, si el bizarro denuedo con que sus naturales han sabido defenderla de cuantas naciones la han invadido y la fidelidad siempre acendrada que por decirlo así constituyen el carácter distintivo de que se honran no la hubiera justamente adquirido un nombre ilustre entre los Pueblos de ambos Hemisferios. Al considerarse el mérito distinguido de tantas virtudes cívicas y las pocas ventajas de que hoy gozan los habitantes de la Isla, ... el hombre ilustrado ... procura examinar ... de qué funesto principio ha podido nacer ... uno de los más extraordinarios fenómenos de la economía política. (165, my emphases).

[three centuries have elapsed since Puerto Rico forms part of the Spanish Empire, and after three centuries this Island ... would still be wrapped in the same shameful darkness that followed ... [its] acquisition, if the brave daring with which its natives have defended it from whatever nations have invaded it, and the always pure loyalty that, in a manner of speaking, constitute the distinctive character on which they pride themselves, had not justly earned it an illustrious name among the Peoples of both Hemispheres. Reflecting on the distinguished merit of so many civic virtues and the few advantages the inhabitants of the Is-

land now enjoy, ... the learned man ... strives to examine ... what ill-fated principle might have begotten ... one of the most extraordinary phenomena of political economy.

Indeed, Power devotes his efforts almost exclusively to issues of political economy. From among all the instructions he received, he transmits to the *Cortes* only those relating to trade and development: among them, the lifting of tithes and taxes; the relaxation of rules on import and export, the institution of a *Sociedad Económica* [Economic Society], and last, but most certainly not least, the establishment of an *Intendencia* separate from the military governorship.

From the San Juan recommendations, gone is, most notably, any reference to ethnic categories, either foreigners or Catalans – a predictable exclusion on the part of Power y Giralt, of all people. Where Yrisarri and his San Juan colleagues insisted on the *naturales*, Power makes many of his claims in the name of a more general “habitantes” [inhabitants] (183). What is more, one of the indirect results of Power’s groundwork in Cádiz – achieved through Alejandro Ramírez – was the 1815 *Real Cédula de Gracias* [Royal Bill of Graces], which built on a previous 1778 *Cédula* to authorize the entry of foreign settlers of agricultural skill, who would swear allegiance to King and Church. This measure allowed the mass arrival of Spaniards from the peninsula (including a veritable wave of Catalans) and from former or disputed territories, as well as other continental Europeans (French, Corsican, Italian, Dutch, British, German, Portuguese), immigrants from all over the Caribbean (including freed slaves), and North Americans. Power y Giralt’s early elimination of the capital’s propositions regarding foreigners paved the way for the *Cédula*, and indicates his awareness of the potential contained in Puerto Rico’s multicultural character – of which he himself was living proof.¹¹ Nevertheless, the Puerto Rican deputy’s

¹¹ There is one sense in which the “graces” granted by the Royal Decree respond to the capital’s, and particularly Yrisarri’s appeals. Recognizing the need for greater manpower to devote to agriculture, but wary of increasing the slave population to a degree that might propitiate events similar to those of the Haitian Revolution, the mayor in his *Informe* recommends the import of white laborers, especially from the Canaries:

Como los sentimientos de mi corazón no tienen tan estrechos límites sino que se extienden a procurar la felicidad presente y futura de mi Patria, nada me aco-

greatest deviation is from San Germán's recommendations. He leaves out all political statements – most notably those on the contingency of loyalty and the proposal for a *Junta Provincial*. It is not that he dismisses these issues; but at this juncture, he deliberately decides that the *Exposición* and *Peticiones* must be *economic* in character.

barda para opinar que con igual número de hombres libres, jornaleros (traídos de Islas Canarias y del reino de Nueva España y de una y de otra parte sin desmembrar sus poblaciones) [sic] al que hay de esclavos en el día, se fomentaría entonces la agricultura al doble que ahora: porque si a este igual número de españoles e indios, se añade la multitud de hombres libres patricios, que en la actualidad no quieren emplearse en los oficios de la labranza, en que se ejercitan los esclavos, porque juzgan que desmerece su estimación, guiados del buen ejemplo de los jornaleros de afuera pondrían los de adentro las manos a todo trabajo de labranza... Deben descartarse aquéllos que remotamente pueden ser perjudiciales al Estado y a la Patria y dar la preferencia a los que desde sus progenitores están marcados con el brillante sello de españoles. (Caro, *Compilación* 53)

[Since the feelings of my heart lack such narrow boundaries, but extend to procuring the present and future happiness of my Fatherland, nothing prevents me from observing that with an equal number of free men, (workers brought from the Canary Islands and from the Kingdom of New Spain and from one place and another without breaking down their populations) to the present number of slaves, agriculture would advance twice as much as now: because if one added to this number of Spaniards and indians the mass of free patrician men, who currently refuse to engage in the farming labors exercised by slaves, because they think it detracts from their repute, led by the example of the newcomers, these natives would take all farming jobs in their hands... Those who might remotely be a threat to the State and to the Fatherland should be ruled out, and preference given to those marked by their ancestors with the brilliant brand of Spaniards.]

Given his participation in the Dominican *reconquista*, Power might have agreed with this part of Yrisarri's outlook; on the other hand, as the son of a slave trader, he might have disagreed. At any rate, he is silent on the issue of slavery. What is, perhaps more relevant, is the contrast between the way Yrisarri envisions these immigrants – as subordinate workers – and the attitude that finds its way into the *Cédula*, which invites their participation in the island's economy as plantation owners. In the first instance, the existing *patricios* would retain social control; the second would – and did – radically alter the composition of the ruling classes.

One wonders why Power resolved to take this route despite the fact that his electors evidently saw the opportunity to present their demands as an opportunity to further embryonic nationalist agendas, either cultural or administrative (autonomist). The answer is right there in his *Exposición*. He starts out from the basic fact that Puerto Rico's material fortunes are not what they should be, and observes that, for the monarchy, the island has become "un punto oneroso, conservado más bien ... por sólo la circunstancia militar de tener allí un baluarte avanzado de defensa o protección ... [para] las ricas posesiones inmediatas de ambas Américas" [a burdensome point, retained chiefly ... for the single military circumstance of having there a first bastion of defense and protection ... for the nearby rich possessions of both Americas] (168). This is the result of a lack of foresight in appreciating that Puerto Rico is *unlike any other Spanish-American colony*: "no se calculó que *el local* de Puerto Rico; *su vecindad a las Colonias extranjerias*, y otras particulares circunstancias hacían *una excepción tan principal*, que constituyéndola en *un caso singularísimo*, era preciso adoptar medios casi del todo opuestos para obtener los favorables resultados a que se aspiraba" [it was not taken into account that the *locale* of Puerto Rico; *its proximity to foreign Colonies*, and other particular circumstances made for *such a major exception* that, turning it into *a most singular case*, required almost entirely different measures to achieve the favorable results desired] (167, my emphases).

For Power, a Caracas native could become an *homo politicus* because he already was an *homo economicus*. If, as Benedict Anderson proposes, Latin American nationalisms arise from earlier "administrative units" and "market-zones" (53), at the point when creoles sharing a common "language-of-state" (56) experience the reality of a glass ceiling, Puerto Rico's considerable distance from that situation explains much of its trajectory. There was, in fact, limited administrative apparatus in an island where almost all local authority was concentrated in the person of the Governor General, and whose ties to the viceroyalty of which it formed part were tenuous. And there was little agricultural production in a site that, as Power himself stressed, had always been treated chiefly as a military stronghold. Although it is a fact few Puerto Rican historians like to highlight, the island's delayed and unstable colonization cast it in the triple character of, in the words of historian Tomás Blanco:

a) “puesto militar de choque” [military post], b) “estación auxiliar de las conquistas continentales” [auxiliary station for continental conquests], and c) “jardín de aclimatación para hombres, animales y plantas” [acclimatization patch for men, animals, and plants] on their way to the New World (Blanco 29-30). So it was only late in the eighteenth century that “se había ido organizando la colonia como tal” [the colony as such had begun to be organized] (52). Only this stark scenario explains Power’s *positive* references to “esta hermosa Colonia” [this beautiful colony] (Caro, *Compilación* 168), when the very decree that sent him to Cádiz declared the island *provincia*. In Power’s eyes, though, becoming a *colonia* or *factoría* is evidently a necessary stage of progress; hence the audacious statement that “el Ministerio de Hacienda ... es casi privativamente el que puede hacer florecer aquella hermosa posesión” [it is almost exclusively the Finance Ministry ... which can make that beautiful possession blossom] (179). Consequently, he privileges above all else the establishment of the *Intendencia*, and the limitation of the despotic governor’s powers. The happy ending Power y Giralt envisions is literally something like a *commonwealth*: “ocupando un lugar distinguido entre las provincias Americanas, [podrá retribuir] en riquezas a la Madre-Patria lo que reciba de ella en beneficios” [occupying a distinguished place among American provinces, it will be able to return in riches to the Mother-Land what benefits it may receive from her] (209).

Power y Giralt’s conviction that Puerto Rico was unlike all other Spanish territories allows him to stand in solidarity with his fellow American delegates, while reserving the right to make different choices for the island. One example of his attitude is paradigmatic. The biggest point of discord between peninsular and American deputies was the battle over appropriate representation of the overseas empire in the *Cortes*. No sooner had these met, than the few American delegates who were present – all of whom, except for Power himself, were substitutes – asked for confirmation that their territories were indeed *parte esencial integrante de la monarquía española*, and for measures ensuring full and proportional representation. As James F. King explains, this generated a conundrum for the Europeans: “on the one hand the *Cortes* recognized the need to grant colonial participation in the central government ... On the other, it was clear that fifteen or sixteen millions of people in

the Americas and the Philippines would hopelessly swamp the ten and a half million Peninsular Spaniards" (33). Their strategy was to undertake the exclusion, not of indigenous peoples, already recognized by the *Leyes de Indias* [Laws of the Indies], but of the colored castes (Africans and their descendants), not only from voting, but also from the population counts on which representation would be based.

The ensuing debate was fierce, and Americans' own ambivalence about mixed races was not the smallest of obstacles. Finally, as King notes, they reached a compromise decree, *based on a formula presented by the proprietary deputy of Puerto Rico*, which was finally adopted on October 15 [1810]. It confirmed 'that the Spanish dominions of both hemispheres form a single monarchy,' stating in studiously ambiguous terms that ... 'los naturales *originarios* de dichos dominios europeos ó ultramarinos' [the natives originally from said European or overseas dominions] are equal in rights to those of the peninsula" (45, my emphases).

Power y Giralt's wording allowed peninsulars to consider the matter closed and Americans to consider it open for the future. It permitted further debates to take place, leading to the December 1810 "Proposiciones que hacen al Congreso Nacional los Diputados de Asia y América" [Proposals made to the National Congress by the Delegates from Asia and America], the first of which declared that overseas representation "debe ser y será la misma en el orden y forma ... que tienen hoy y tengan en lo sucesivo ... la Península e Islas de la España Europea" [must and will be the same in kind and form ... enjoyed today and in the future ... by the Peninsula and Islands of European Spain] (Caro, *Compilación* 139). After much discussion, the proposition was voted down, and Power y Giralt was one of several deputies who subsequently stepped forth in protest.

In his "Reflexiones ... acerca del estado presente de la América y sobre las medidas que deben adoptarse" [Reflections ... on the Present State of America and on Measures to be Adopted] and his "Voto ... sobre la igualdad de representación" [Vote ... on Equality in Representation], Power backs the *principles* defended by the American delegates. Nevertheless, he does not go into details about what particular shape equal representation should take. Instead, he asks the *Consejo* generally to eliminate any "diferencia de derechos entre el ciudadano español de

la Península y el ciudadano español de las Américas” [difference of rights between the Spanish citizen of the Peninsula and the Spanish citizen of the Americas] (144) – a phrasing that still potentially excludes inhabitants who are not citizens –, and to forgive any rebellious actions that may have already occurred. Notwithstanding his moral support, it is notable that throughout the lengthy debates about equal rights and representation, Power y Giralt was notoriously *silent*; although he was the author of the original “compromise decree,” the Courts *Diarios* [Minutes] do not record any intervention on his part. This was clearly not an issue he saw fit to argue as vehemently as others, and in fact his original contribution was one of *mediation* between both sides. One might speculate on whether his family’s slave-trading past played a part in his stance; but in truth, Puerto Rico, which boasted a relatively small slave population, by then had no indigenous groups to speak of,¹² and was overall sparsely inhabited did not have much to gain in the battles over representation. Thus, having paid due respect to his fellow American deputies, Power chooses his own way.

More compelling than Power y Giralt’s silence is of course his speech. Particularly, the way in which he literally and figuratively *represents* his province not only shapes his ideas, but serves to put them into effect, constituting a bona fide speech act. For example, in the *Exposición* and *Peticiones* he makes his case in the name of a concrete *dramatis persona* mentioned *dozens* of times: “el Labrador [que] sufre” [the Farmer {who} suffers] (177). Evidently, the farmer whose tax and trade burdens Power aims to alleviate is not the poor white laborer (of which there were plenty), but rather the plantation owner who is, in addition, a local leader of relative wealth. This makes Power’s characterization all the more significant. For one, it is obviously related to the *jíbaro* [peasant] which the privileged Puerto Rican classes were just beginning to fashion as an archetype of ethnic self-identification.¹³ Speak-

¹² As reported by Tomás Blanco, Puerto Rico’s *taíno* population upon its discovery did not exceed 30,000 individuals. It had been decimated by the mid-sixteenth century, owing not only to imposed labor, but to lack of immunity to European diseases and miscegenation (28).

¹³ Scarano compellingly analyzes the archaeology of the *jíbaro*: The Puerto Rican-as-*jíbaro* trope was initially tied to the politics of a historically young, ascendant elite; as such, it formed art of the arsenal that this group used

ing for the *labrador* also helps Power emphasize the precarious conditions he wants to improve, and justifies his decision to exclude political arguments from his petitions. The needs of this iconic struggling peasant concern, first and foremost, agricultural and commercial expansion.

As a corollary, this vocabulary reverses Power's symbolic relationship to his electors. As he morphs from their agent or ambassador into a protector of disadvantaged laborers, he becomes, not *their* representative before what he himself calls "Congreso Soberano" [Sovereign Congress], but its representative before *them*. His figurative transformation is not a small matter, for two reasons. In the first place, as Power promotes an agenda for Puerto Rico, he insists on having it implemented on the basis of his newly-acquired authority. When challenged by a San Juan *Cabildo* now dominated by Meléndez Bruna, he does not hesitate to invoke "la inviolabilidad declarada a los diputados representantes de la nación" [the inviolability granted to the deputy representatives of the nation] (189, my emphasis). He also increasingly discriminates between his actions "no ya como Diputado de Puerto-Rico, sino como Representante nacional" [not just as Deputy for Puerto Rico, but as national Representative] (162). In the second place, such lexical shifts need to be read in the context of discussions taking place in Cádiz. The issue of whether deputies represented the nation (and thus, it was one and indivisible), or their particular territories (and thus, it was

to advance a particular socioeconomic and political – that is, class – project... In the 1810s and 1820s... its meanings proved a bit opaque and difficult to decipher by those whom the masqueraders assumed to be the 'natural' audience, that is, other constitution enthusiasts, among whom liberal creoles predominated, and their absolutist rivals, a group dominated by conservative Spaniards. But, in time, the masquerade's intent became more widely understood, and the Puerto Rican-as-*jíbaro* trope assumed a key role in the liberals' protracted struggle to fashion and solidify a Puerto Rican ethnicity, a proto-nation. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the trope had acquired the transparency and clarity necessary for its symbolic anchoring of the nation. Thus, when in 1849 Manuel Alonso published, under the pen name of El Gíbaro de Caguas..., a collection of vignettes about customs (*cuadros de costumbres*) filled with rich imagery of Puerto Rican traditions, he donned the mask without complications or misunderstandings. Although the title of Alonso's vignettes was, significantly *El jíbaro*, the customs described in the book were clearly not of rural plebeians but of the more privileged groups ("Jíbaro" 1403-04).

plural and potentially federal) divided the writers of the 1812 Constitution – and, as could be expected, deputies of different origin tended to fall on different sides.

According to Joaquín Varela Suanzes, the Cádiz delegates were split into three clusters. Conservative royalists considered the nation the conjunction of, on the one hand, the King, and on the other a collection of unequal estates distributed through territories and kingdoms with distinct political traditions; they supported differential (in fact, bicameral) representation. For the most part, American deputies had a similarly corporatist idea of the nation, now chiefly conceived as the aggregate of its “provincias o pueblos componentes” [component provinces or towns] (Sec. 3). In their scheme, every one of the individuals composing the nation was a holder of national sovereignty; consequently, the Courts held a “mandato imperativo” [imperative mandate], and important acts (like the Constitution itself) had to be ratified by every territory. Peninsular liberals, in contrast, considered the nation an indivisible whole exceeding the sum total of free and equal individuals within it. In such a view, sovereignty *resides* in the *composite* nation, and is *exercised* by the Courts’ elected representatives. As Agustín Argüelles maintained, “[es] necesario insistir en desvanecer cualquiera idea de representación que se pueda suponer en las diputaciones de provincia ... La Representación nacional ... está refundida solamente en las Cortes” [it is imperative to insist on dissipating any idea of representation one might attribute to the province deputations ... National Representation ... is deposited only in the Courts] (qtd. in Varela Suanzes, Sec. 4). By assigning sovereignty to an abstract and unitary body, in addition to conjuring what they saw as the “peligro federalista” [federalist danger] (Sec. 5), Spanish liberals paved the way for the exclusion of the castes and the consequent relegation of Americans to a representative minority. Against this background, Ramón Power assumed the identity of a *representante nacional*. His proximity to the liberal peninsular view is patent in statements such as “la nación, ... siendo ella soberana, ... es únicamente la que puede dictar leyes, imponer contribuciones y ejercer los demás atributos de la soberanía [por su] Congreso deliberante” [the nation, ... being herself sovereign, ... is the only one who can dictate laws, impose taxes, and exercise all attributes of sovereignty {through its} debating Congress].

As mentioned before, Power systematically uses the word *patria*, as well as the corresponding term *nación* to allude to Spain or, more exactly, *las Españas* [the Spains]. In comparison, he calls Puerto Rico by the names of *posesión*, *colonia*, *isla*, *país*, and *pueblo*. With the exception of the descriptive *isla*, each of these terms has a complex political etymology. Most interesting here is the use of *país* [country] and *pueblo* [town or people], which now capture the affective community Yrisarri had designated as *patria*. While Power's own concept of nation remains very close to the liberal notion of an association of individuals under common law, he is nevertheless allowing a space for the telluric, proto-ethnic perspective of the San Juan proposals. Power is definitely aware of the emergence of a distinctive cultural collectivity around a shared geography. Acknowledging it without equating its limits with those of the political unit he is engaged in creating is certainly a foundational gesture, but not one understandable from the strict domains of either cultural or civic nationalism.

Power y Giralt reserves the passion characteristic of oratory for avowals of Puerto Rico's loyalty to Spain. When, in the aftermath of the Caracas revolt, the *Consejo de Regencia* grants Salvador Meléndez Bruna even wider authority than he already had, encouraging him to exercise all the power "que puede atribuir la *soberanía*, para remover de sus destinos a toda clase de empleados[,] ... proceder a la detención de toda clase de personas[,] ... confinarlas y trasladarlas a donde más bien le parezca" [that *sovereignty* can grant, to remove from their positions all manner of employees, ... carry on the detention of all types of persons, ... confine and transfer them wherever he likes] (158, my emphasis), Power vigorously protests that Puerto Rico's proven and unquestionable fidelity commands the the abolition of "esta orden bárbara, ... [por la cual] cada ciudadano trémulo y consternado ... teme verse cruelmente arrancado del seno de su patria ... para ser confinado a una región de horror" [this barbarous order, ... {due to which} each tremulous and shocked citizen ... fears seeing himself cruelly torn from his land's bosom ... to be confined to a region of horror] [158-59]. To insist on Puerto Rico's patriotism, Power repeatedly goes back to the 1797 British attack. By returning precisely to this episode, he places the island's inhabitants on equal footing with the *pueblos* of the peninsula who rose against the French invasion. Puerto Ricans not only have a *natural* right to a just

and equitable government; they deserve these things on the basis of patriotic *merit* for the Spanish cause, the one entitlement to which no other Spanish American territory has an equal claim at that point. This is why at the end of the *Exposición* Power places in the hands of the monarchy “la felicidad de doscientos-mil habitantes que ... por su acendrado amor a la causa de la Patria, deben merecerla su *particular* protección” [the happiness of two hundred thousand inhabitants who ... for their pure love toward the Fatherland’s cause, should merit its *particular* protection] (179, my emphasis).

Are Power y Giralt’s political choices a betrayal of his American colleagues? In reality, Power was one – possibly the most successful – of a group of New World deputies whom Rafael Estrada Michel has labeled *provincialistas*. They opposed the *regnícolos* [“Kingdom-ites”] who favored parliamentary representation along divisions corresponding to the old vicerealties. Conversely, *provincialistas*, most often coming from “una intendencia o provincia menor” [a minor superintendence or province] (20), saw an opportunity to sidestep the structures that had most directly been oppressing them; they were also, in Estrada Michel’s words, “más cerca de la idea europea de una nación transcontinental, pues no compartían con sus pares regnícolas el independentismo protonacionalista” [closer to the European idea of a transcontinental nation, as they did not share with their *regnícola* peers the proto-nationalist secessionism]. While Power’s position on issues often has to be inferred from his vocabulary, one thing is always loud and clear: he considered Puerto Rico’s failure to thrive a direct result of its economic stagnation, caused by the political mishandling of the Captain Generals. No possible goal could have surpassed, for him, that of destroying their claim to sovereignty, and having it exercised instead by a Puerto Rican representative in the national Congress.

While other American deputies were in fact demanding a “descentralización autonomista” [autonomist decentralization] (Chust, “Insurgencia” 12), Power was pursuing full participation in the central government. Therefore, it is only in the context of national discussions that some of the political issues brought up in the San Germán proposals are resolved. For example, Puerto Rico gets a *diputación provincial*, but it is not the autonomous body conceived by the *sangermeños* – as declared in the Constitution, all major business is still to be decided in the penin-

sula. While some of his original electors may have seen these as defeats (undoubtedly giving rise to the undercurrent of separatism that would lead to Lares and beyond), Power y Giralt saw them as a major victory. The Constitution, for him, fully represents his ideals. He rejoices in it, above all, because it saves Puerto Rico from despotism, whether that exercised by the Governor General or by other imperial systems. And the terms in which he expresses his delight are, again, full of significance: “si algo puede dar ... una idea de la dignidad a que acaba de elevarse la Nación Española, son las sublimes palabras del ilustre obispo de Mallorca, que yo me complazco en repetir a ese Consejo. *Ya somos libres y ahora indudablemente seremos españoles*” [if anything can give ... an idea of the dignity to which the Spanish Nation has just risen, it is the sublime words of the Illustrious Bishop of Majorca, which I take pleasure in repeating to this Council. *We are already free, and now we will undoubtedly be Spaniards*] (216).

If Ramón Power y Giralt represents the crystallization of a national sentiment, that national sentiment is not what Lidio Cruz Monclova assumed it to be in his *Historia de Puerto Rico*. The historian himself seems to have realized this, as in a 1962 article (thus published ten years after the *Historia*), he rephrases his interpretation of the episode of the *anillo del Obispo*:

En aquella mañana memorable del 16 de agosto de 1809 ... halla su primera expresión el sentimiento regional ... Cobra categoría rectora el sentido colectivo. La palabra nosotros conquista entre los hijos de la Isla un sentido gentilicio ... Y, en fin, al llamarnos y tenernos por puertorriqueños, ... toma ser y presencia nuestra personalidad de pueblo. (“Ramón Power” 39).

[On that memorable morning of August 16, 1809 ... regional sentiment finds its first expression ... Collective feeling becomes a guiding condition. The word “we” achieves among the Island’s sons a sense of family name ... And, lastly, upon calling and seeing ourselves as Puerto Ricans, ... our personality as a people acquires being and presence.]

What happened between Cruz Monclova’s first and second statements is, of course, the establishment of the *Estado Libre Asociado de Puerto Rico* (July 25, 1952). Ever since then, many political uses have been made of Power’s figure, not only on the occasion of the Courts’ sesquicentennial, but also notably in 2002, when talk began about repatriating his remains, and each of the major parties in Puerto Rico sought to claim him

as the first *estadista* [statehood advocate] the first *autonomista*, or the first *independentista*.¹⁴ On March 29th, 2009, the day Puerto Rico's former Popular Democratic governor, Aníbal Acevedo Vilá, was acquitted of charges of political corruption filed against him at the opposition's instigation during the last election, a news item in a major local paper described how "cuando [se] pronunció la frase absolutoria ... el ex Gobernador miró hacia arriba, se persignó y besó el anillo que le obsequió el obispo de San Juan, Roberto González Nieves" [when the phrase of acquittal was pronounced ... the former Governor looked up, crossed himself, and kissed the ring given to him by the bishop of San Juan, Roberto González Nieves] (Hopgood Dávila). The current Bishop gave Acevedo Vilá the ring in 2000, when he was first elected Resident Commissioner in Washington, obviously relating this role to Power y Giralt's action in the Spanish Courts.¹⁵ It is, of course, as tempting as it is useless to try to "read" Power y Giralt as the inaugural, and legitimizing, figure of any present-day political party, not least because Puerto Rico is not a colony of the United States *in the same way* that it was a colony of Spain – the question of assimilation vs. autonomy or independence is now marked by the development of a cultural nationalism, and the clear perception of ethnic and cultural differences between Puerto Rico and its current metropolis.

What should be stressed is Power y Giralt's firm belief in the Cádiz liberal project, and in the concept, derived from Emmanuel Sieyès, that a nation is an aggregate of associates bound by common law and represented by a common legislature. In this respect, he was much closer to Basques and Catalans in the peninsula – no doubt partly to his Basque and Catalan background, and his educational and military experiences

¹⁴ Presently, there are three major political parties in Puerto Rico, each defining its platform according to the status it favors regarding the relationship with the United States: the Partido Nuevo Progresista supports statehood; the Partido Popular Democrático defends continuation of the current commonwealth status in some form; and the pro-independence Partido Independentista Puertorriqueño. The latter lost official recognition after the 2008 election, when obtained it 2.04% of the gubernatorial vote.

¹⁵ In the current organization of the *Estado Libre Asociado*, Puerto Rico does not have senators or congress representatives; the Resident Commissioner is a non-voting delegate to the latter chamber.

in Spain – than to the majority of his fellow American delegates. While the latter were demanding autonomist reforms, and even approaching the ideal of independence, despite a kinship of “*religión, leyes y costumbres*” (Arbos Marín 149) with the metropolis –, at that time the former were, for the most part, putting aside ethnic and historical differences in order to invest in a common national project: “per als liberals ... el grupo s’anomena nació per la identitat de lleis que li dóna homogeneïtat. No sorprèn, doncs, que ... vegin la unificació jurídica des d’una perspectiva ‘nacional’. El substrat cultural o lingüístic no era tan rellevant com la unitat jurídica” [for liberals ... a group is designated as nation because of the identity of laws that provides it homogeneity. It is not surprising, then, for them to ... see juridical unification from a ‘national’ perspective. The cultural or linguistic substratum was not as relevant as juridical unity] (138). This project, while centralist, was also modernizing – based as it was on the concepts of national sovereignty and citizenship. What was clearly a *choice*, and a significant one, on Power’s part, followed his understanding of the possibilities offered by Puerto Rico’s stage of development, as well as a conviction that the island’s situation was *singularísima* – unlike that of any other American colony. The path to the future was clearly a pragmatic one, and required a process of becoming *españoles*. The Puerto Rican delegate seems to have believed, from the perspective of political economy, that “not all states would coincide with nations” (Hobsbawm 24), and that “small, and especially small and backward, nationalities had everything to gain by merging into greater nations” (34).

If Power’s choice led to a “failure,” it was not exactly that of Puerto Rico to become a nation, but that of the entire Spanish liberal (nationalist, constitutionalist) project:

El fracàs liberal és el fracàs del primer nacionalisme espanyol ... Els liberals espanyols del començament del segle XIX ho van intentar ... però els nuclis burgesos, més susceptible d’acollir el liberalisme, no van donar el suport suficient. La societat a què els liberals s’adreçaven va presentar resistències massa fortes. Els sectors vinculats a l’antic règim varen aconseguir la indiferència o l’adhesió de capes populars contra el liberalisme, que no havia sabut, o no havia pogut, integrar-les. El liberalisme va néixer d’una majoria parlamentària que va donar a la llum la Constitució del 1812. Però la majoria parlamentària de Cadis no esdevingué una majoria social ... Amb ells va apagar-se la idea nacional que defen-

saven, i el camí de l'homogeneïtzació nacional havia de continuar sense l'aval del sistema representatiu. (Arbós 240-41)

[The liberal failure is the failure of the first Spanish nationalism ... Spanish liberals of the early XIXth century tried their best ... but bourgeois groups, the most likely to adopt liberalism, did not lend enough support. The society liberals addressed put up too strong a resistance. Sectors connected to the ancien régime obtained the indifference or adherence of popular strata against liberalism, which had not known how, or been able, to integrate them. Liberalism arose from a parliamentary majority that gave birth to the Constitution of 1812. But the Cádiz parliamentary majority did not become a social majority ... With them, the national idea they defended was extinguished, and the path of national homogenization would continue without the guarantees of the representative system.]

In Latin America, the breakdown of these liberal ideals gave birth to independence movements; in Spain, it led to the birth of peninsular nationalisms. In Puerto Rico, its aftermath was much more complicated. The island's trajectory through 1898 can only be explained through the intricate interaction of myriad economic, ethnic, and political factors that nevertheless always revolved around the pragmatism of Power y Giralt's originary choice. While the development of cultural nationalism and its repertoire – in which Power himself participated, through his construction of, for example, the *Labrador* – was already under way, the idea of the nation would always retain an administrative substratum. For the delegate himself, the matter was quite simple: “si es verdad que he podido en algo mejorar la suerte de mis compatriotas; si la generación presente y las venideras serán más dichosas que lo fueron hasta hoy los habitantes de esta Isla, todas mis penas desaparecerán al presentarse a mi imaginación esta dulce idea” [if it is true that I have in some way been able to improve my compatriots' lot; if the present generation and future ones will be happier than this island's inhabitants have heretofore been, all my sorrows will disappear upon imagining this sweet idea] (Caro, *Compilación* 207).

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