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TRANSNATIONAL DEVILS: NICKNAMES AND DOCUMENT IDENTITIES AS SURVIVAL STRATEGIES IN THE CONTEXT OF DOMINICAN MIGRATION

Naming practices can be at the very heart of transnational existence. Drawing on multisited ethnographic fieldwork in Vicente Noble (The Dominican Republic), Passaic (The USA), and Madrid (Spain), this article discusses two contexts in which nicknames are used as a strategy to gain control in diasporic situations: on the one hand, the use of nicknames to maintain identity in the diaspora when a new document identity is purchased – analyzing nicknames as survival strategies when using multiple document identities – and, on the other, the use of nicknames in relation to religious practices, in particular to Folk Catholicism. By analyzing a Dominican proverb "nicknames are used in case the Devil comes asking for you", the author explores the mechanisms to subvert the different types of "Devils" faced by migrants.

Keywords: nicknames, false documents, migration, Dominican Republic, Spain

Tis but thy name that is my enemy;
Thou art thyself, though not a Montague.
What's Montague? it is nor hand, nor foot,
Nor arm, nor face, nor any other part
Belonging to a man. O, be some other name!
What's in a name?...

William Shakespeare. *Romeo and Juliet*. Act 2, Scene 2

In Dagbon here, we drummers know the family; we know the names of people's fathers and grandfathers, and we call the names. And all the names that drummers are calling,

> *they all have histories, (...) These names are like proverbs.*
>
> John Miller Chernoff (1979:68)

The question "What's in a name?" has been repeated in many contexts, and in the context of the "imagined globalization" (García Canclini 1999) of the early 21st century it might be posed again, this time rephrased as "What's in a name when it changes after migrating?" In Spain in recent years, far from witnessing a homogenization of proper names (a corollary one might expect from globalizing processes), the variety of first names is increasing. Migration – together with other factors such as the introduction of mass mediated products – has brought a new diversity to the previously mainly Catholic repertoire of names in Spain. The Marías, Carmens, Anas, and Cristinas now cohabit with Jennis, Ladys and Amarilis. Sometimes names are translated to their Castilian equivalents or cognates as in the case of some names of Slavic, Arab, or Asian origin as a strategy to facilitate relationships at school or at the workplace.[1] Nonetheless, increasing name diversity is the norm in any large city in Spain.

Name changes occur for many reasons. History shows some compulsory collective name changes, such as those of the Muslim and Jewish forced converts in Medieval Spain, or the name changes required in Turkey at the end of the Ottoman Empire.[2] In other cases, persons change their names in a conscious attempt to acquire power. For instance, the study of the name changes among Iranian migrants in Los Angeles by Betty Blair concludes that these changes are made mainly for three reasons: (1) to facilitate social, psychological and economic acceptance; (2) to build a barrier against ridicule, insult and conflict; and (3) to distance oneself and avoid being associated with the conditions of the country of origin (Blair 1991:123). One more reason to change one's name is to purchase or acquire false documentation in order to enter another country. This last motive – though it is employed by a minority – will be the focus of this article.

In either compulsory or more or less voluntary name change the process of changing one's name has a significant impact upon the identity markers of a person. Proper names and nicknames have social meanings which have long been the focus of scholarly attention (Lévi-Strauss 1966).

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[1] The case of the Americanization of names among migrants in the United States has been studied since the 1950s (see the journal *Names*, published since 1953). Researchers dealing with this topic have analyzed the name changes as a desire for assimilation. However, more recent studies explain these changes as an adaptation strategy that does not necessarily imply the rejection of one's own ethnic identity (Blair 1991). Among African-Americans there are currently name changes for the opposite reason: a return to names with African roots in order to reaffirm the identity aspect (Kahtib 1995:351).

[2] See Meltem Turkoz's University of Pennsylvania Ph.D. dissertation on the changes of surnames in Turkey (Turkoz 2004).

To be named is to acquire existence, to be known and recognized, and, therefore, to be localized in time and place. One's proper name – used by others and rarely by oneself – identifies a subject and contributes to the identity construction of that subject. Thus names have the dual function of marking affiliation to the group and, at the same time, of attributing individuality (Collier and Bricker 1970:289; Goodenough 1965).[3]

Nicknames, as opposed to proper names, usually refer to particularities of their bearer. Sometimes nicknames are physical references, other times they catch on after an unusual episode in the life of the nicknamed person.[4] In the cases described in this article, however, this biographical quality of nicknames rarely appears. In the following cases, nicknames act as alternate names with the clear purpose of empowerment.

In the Dominican Republic the use of nicknames does not necessarily refer to particularities of the nicknamed. A person's first name might be María, for instance, and everyone might call her Lola, without any apparent reason for the change. Nicknaming is a widespread practice, which is reflected in certain changes in that most basic question "What is your name?" ("*¿Cómo te llamas?*" literally, "How do you call yourself"), which in Dominican Spanish is sometimes transformed into "what are you called?" ("*¿Cómo es que te llaman?*" o "*¿Cómo es que a ti te llaman?*" literally "How is it they call you"). The grammatical structure of "What's your name?" is, in Spanish, something like "what do you call yourself?" With the widespread use of nicknames, that question evolves into "What do other people call you?" implying a certain room for maneuver between 'your name' and 'what you are called'. The use of nicknames is so ubiquitous in the Dominican Republic that in obituaries it is published together with the picture so people can recognize the deceased (Davis 1987:117).[5]

In this article, I discuss two contexts in which nicknames are clearly used as a strategy to gain control: on the one hand, the use of nicknames to maintain identity in diaspora when a new document identity is purchased and on the other, the use of nicknames in relation to religious practices. First I will present an example to illustrate the kinds of name changes and use of nicknames among Dominicans in Spain, analyzing nicknames as survival strategies when using multiple document identities. With the term "document identity" I refer to the name and surnames that appear in passports or any other governmental documentation. My thesis is that the vernacular use of nicknames is one of the anchoring points in the con-

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[3] Goodenough points out that some societies use names to emphasize belonging to a group, while others emphasize individuality (Goodenough 1965:272-275). See Brandes (1974) for a study of nicknames in Navanogal, Spain.

[4] Stephen Wilson points out the descriptive function of nicknames, "unlike the first name, the nickname still records some real feature of the person named" (Wilson 1998:280).

[5] Davis mentions it in a section devoted to death rituals included in her book, *La otra ciencia* (Davis 1987:117).

struction of identity in diasporic situations: nicknames can be maintained in multiple locations, even when official names cannot be.

The findings presented in this article are based on fieldwork conducted in the Dominican Republic, Madrid, and Passaic (USA) between 2000 and 2002,[6] while studying the ways in which narrating was used as a strategy for the creation of locality and agency among Dominican women in Madrid (Sánchez-Carretero 2002). As my fieldwork progressed (and without thinking that the use of nicknames might be of interest for my research) I met several people with double document identities. The purchase of a passport with a valid visa and the acquisition of a new birth certificate with the name that appears in the passport are common strategies, verbalized to me only after two years of close contact with Dominican families in the island and in the diaspora. Dominican migration to Spain has been until the late nineties essentially female, dedicated to the domestic work, and, in the case of Madrid, coming from the southwest of the Dominican Republic. Migration nets were formed upon kinship, friendship, and godmother relationships. This situation favored that many women from Vicente Noble – in the Southwest of the Dominican Republic –, ages between 25 and 55, traveled to Madrid, specifically to the suburb of Aravaca, located to the North of the city.

I was present in several situations in which the existence of a double document identity was obvious; for example, when Luzmar Quiroga, intercultural social mediator in the neighborhood of Aravaca, asked some of my informants to tell her their names "exactly as they appear in your passports," so she could register them in courses, social services or any other activity. In these situations, I knew that the surnames of my informants, back in their home country, were not the same they were giving to Luzmar in Madrid. In the Dominican Republic as well as in Spain, women do not change their last names when getting married; therefore some of the names and surnames came from purchasing new passports in order to enter to Spain. Miraldina and Alexandra,[7] two sisters, whose parents I met in the Dominican Republic, gave different last names when they registered in a computer course in Madrid, while giving me a "please-don't-say-anything" look. When I asked them, they did not want to get into many details for obvious reasons.

On the other hand, Ladys, one of the key collaborators during the fieldwork conducted for my dissertation, shared with me intimate details regarding the purchase of a new document identity. She has always been called "Ladys" by her family and friends in the Dominican Republic and in Spain, though the name her mother put in her documents when she was

[6] I thank the Latin American Migration Project (U. Pennsylvania, USA, and U. Guadalajara, Mexico) and the Institute for North American Studies (U. of Alcala, Spain) for their financial support during my fieldwork; and the Real Colegio Complutense at Harvard and the C.A.M. for a research fellowship.

[7] I use pseudonyms for all the names and nicknames of my collaborators in the field.

born is Daniela. Ladys is from Vicente Noble and decided to migrate to Spain to "make a living" (*buscarse la vida*)[8] after her mother and eldest sister also had migrated to Madrid. In 1991, after two failed attempts to enter Spain, she decided to try another tactic, changing her name in the Dominican Republic, assuming her cousin Natividad's name and buying her cousin's visa. Natividad had acquired a visa to work in Spain but she had gotten sick and had been obliged to return to the Dominican Republic. By assuming the identity of Natividad and purchasing a "machete" – a Dominican expression that means "illegal documentation" – Ladys was able to reach Spain. In each of her two previous attempts, Ladys had spent 3,000 dollars to be part of an organized trip prepared by and for women from the Dominican Republic in order to enter Spain as tourists via Portugal.[9] At the beginning of the 1990s – the decade in which Dominican migration to Spain shot up – most of the immigrants from the Dominican Republic entered Spain as tourists, because it was not until 1993 that a visa was required. Later on, the highest number of entries took place through working and residency permits facilitated by members of the families who were already in Spanish territory. In the last years the situation has changed again and the majority of those who come to Spain for the first time enter the country using the system of the "*reunificación familiar*" (family reunion).

In 2001, Ladys took yet another step in her change-of-name strategy in order to facilitate the entrance of her brother Solito into Spain. Her brother and she (under her new document identity) got married by proxy so that he could apply for a visa as the spouse of a Spanish resident. The fact of a change of official name seemed to have no effect in the relationships that a person had before and after the change. For instance, after acquiring a new document identity Ladys kept the same acquaintances in Madrid she had known since she was a little girl back in the Dominican Republic. Her friends knew neither her original official name (Daniela), nor that she had acquired another document name (Natividad); they knew and used only her nickname, Ladys.

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[8] Gina Gallardo Rivas chooses this expression for the title of her book *Buscando la vida*. This expression is widely used among Dominicans to describe their reasons for migrating (Gallardo Rivas 1995). See Ninna Nyberg Sørensen for a comparative study on Dominican migration to Madrid and New York (1997).

[9] For information on organized trips as a way to enter into Spain see Gallardo Rivas (1995:71-73) Gregorio Gil (1998:130-140) and Sánchez-Carretero (2002:197-200). In the early nineties, the "organized trip" system was the main way to enter into Spain for women from the southwest Dominican Republic. The organizers (at least two women from Vicente Noble used to have that business) supplied their customers with passports, plane tickets, transportation to the airport, and some money in case the custom officers in Spain required it, as well as practical information to answer questions posed by Spanish custom officers in relation to their status as tourists. Carmen Gregorio Gil even mentions the existence of make-up sessions to transform these rural women into suitable international "tourists" (Gregorio Gil 1998:136).

The fluidity of personal naming strategies – in particular the ubiquity of nicknaming – makes the use of other names in the migration process relatively non-traumatic. Spanish anthropologist Liliana Suárez Navaz has called attention to the ritualization of document acquisition and the commercialization of residency and citizenship. What Suárez refers to as "document fetishism" can be internalized as a change of the self, the new life (in the destination country) materialized in new names (Suárez Navaz 2000). When nicknames are widely used, however, the self can be safeguarded through the continuity of the nickname.

1. On nicknames and transnational Devils

When I asked Ladys and others in the same situation about their own reasons for using nicknames, most of the answers were quite similar: "You need to use a nickname in case the Devil comes asking for you". I have encountered among Dominican migrants in the US exactly the same vernacular explanation for the use of nicknames. The expression "nicknames are used in case the Devil comes asking for you" constitutes a proverb repeated in any discussion I witnessed about nicknames among Dominicans in the Dominican Republic, Spain, and the US.[10] If the Devil wants to find somebody, the person's legal name is not the means of getting to that person: if one is only known by one's nickname one can only be found by one's nickname.

The metaphor embroidered in this proverb is particularly relevant. The Devil, in this image, becomes some kind of bureaucrat. Changes in that document identity do not really affect the essence of the social person, who is known in daily life only by her nickname. Therefore, when the "Devil" (here one can read bureaucrats, border patrols, police... all those that have access only to document names) comes asking for a particular person, only those who know the names that appear in somebody's documents will be able to give an answer. The more hidden a person's document identity remains from her friends and acquaintances (regardless of whether this document identity was acquired legally or illegally), the safer that person is. Thus one should keep one's document identity hidden from friends and neighbors; otherwise they might inadvertently (or deliberately) betray you to the Devil. This supports my thesis that the ubiquity of nicknames facilitates the use of new document identities; the names that appear on one's documents need to be hidden regardless of their legal condition, thus a change of document identity has no social impact. Official names remain in the realm of the official (and the diabolic) and social names in the realm of the social.

The Devil's access to the official sphere instead of to the unofficial – – that is, to one's document identity rather than to one's social identity – is also revealing in terms of the strategies of empowerment that it permits. If

[10] On proverbs see the volume edited by Wolfgang Mieder and Alan Dundes (1981).

the Devil has so much power, why isn't he able to access the daily life dynamics of those in less powerful positions? The official is the realm of those with power. The subalterns, however, have the strategy of opening an alternate realm (or identity) which is *not* official and cannot be accessed through the official. Thus the use of nicknames helps to subvert the structure of power and cheat the official/bureaucrat/Devil. Once this space of possible subversion outside of the official realm is opened through the use of nicknames – linking one's social identity to a nickname rather than to an official name – subjects find they can also maneuver better within the realm of the official: buying and changing document identities.

The Devils that affect transnational livelihoods can also be included in a transnational dimension. Transnationalism is a multifaceted, multilocal process widely used in academic discourses and transnational perspectives in the study of migrations are becoming widely accepted, with the risk of reaching a level in which the word transnationalism becomes an empty vessel (Guarnizo and Smith 1998:4-6). One of the solutions is the shift from "transnationalism" in general to the study of "transnational social practices" (Levitt, DeWeind and Vertovec 2003:567-571).[11] In this case-study, the protection against official Devils is a social practice taking place in a transnational space. In the case of Dominican migration, transnational ties remain strongly maintained over time and transnational paradigms question the notion that nation-states are the most important unit when analyzing migration (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc 1994) suggesting that it is not longer a sustainable reference frame (Appadurai 1996). Wimmer and Glick Schiller, for instance, argue that the parallel birth of the nation-states and the social sciences has forged the way in which migration is perceived. These authors introduce the term "methodological nationalism" to make reference to the assumption that the nation-state is the natural mode of social organization (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2003). The Devils – one needs to hide one's name from – maintain a methodological nationalism to keep the nation-state borders, while functioning as transnational patrol agents who control national rights.

2. Document identities and nicknames

Returning to Ladys' example, her official name is almost never used, neither her first document identity (Daniela), nor the illicit one (Natividad): just her nickname (Ladys). The only exception is in contact with the State, for example in the use of any public service. In those cases, she uses "Natividad" explaining, on the side, that she prefers to be called by her nickname "Ladys, because that's how everybody calls me". Using this

[11] Karen Fog Olwig and Ninna Nyberg Sørensen, in a recent edited volume, seek to solve some of the problems of transnational paradigms by calling "for a broader investigation of mobile livelihoods and the fluid fields of social, economic and political relations and cultural values that these livelihoods imply" (2002:2).

newly-acquired official name had more lasting implications once she decided to have a baby. Ladys did not hesitate to give her baby the surname she has in her official documents. Nicknames, again, help the porters of new identities to divide the spheres of usage: nicknames are the same back in the Dominican Republic and in Spain, and therefore nicknames unify identities *acá* y *allá* (here and there).

Keeping these different spheres apart is not problematic in Ladys' daily life, as it follows the familiar system of nicknames used on the island. The ethnographer, on the other hand, was very worried about possible future complications in Ladys' documents: Ladys not only has a false name herself, her baby also holds an illicit one, and her brother (the only brother who remains in the Dominican Republic) is already married "on paper" (*en los papeles*) with Ladys (or at least with the person whose name appears on Ladys' papers).[12] Therefore, once he enters into Spain as Ladys' husband, the document identities of both will be reinforced and it will become more improbable that Ladys gets back to her original document identity. I expressed to Ladys my concern that if something happens and this false identity is revealed she will lose her visa and her baby girl will lose any opportunity of getting Spanish citizenship. She asked me what would be the path to get her old document identity restored. I checked with a lawyer who specializes in immigration and she said that a person in this situation should go back to the Dominican Republic and solicit a visa under her old name. When I told Ladys about this mechanism, she replied: "No way! after all I've gone through, I'm not gonna go back to Santo Domingo to start all over again. My other name is not a problem, because I'm always Ladys".

Her nickname "Ladys" maintains the unity of her self before and after migration. When her brother arrives, no one will know how they got the papers, Ladys explains, "They will just know that we paid a lawyer back in Santo Domingo and he arranged the papers for him". The researcher saw the problematic consequences of Ladys' new document identity, but the bearer of that identity did not experience the same anxiety. "I'm always Ladys", summarizes Daniela/Natividad/Ladys, suggesting that her nickname functions as an identity unifier both for her and her baby, "and my Lainis will always be Ladys' daughter".

The use of a variety of names is interpreted by James Scott as a strategy of the subordinates:

> How are we to interpret the fact, for instance, that lower-caste men in the pluralistic culture of the Punjab are likely to use any of several names, depending upon whom they are talking to? Confronted with a Hindu, they called themselves Ram Chand, with a Sikh they called themselves Ram Singh, and with a Christian, John Samuel... We also learn that black miners in Southern Rhodesia had several names which arose not simply from the confusion of languages but because the

[12] For a study on marriages of convenience in Spain see Rocío García Zúñiga (2001).

> confusion could plausibly excuse a delay in responding to a summons or an otherwise unexplained absence (Scott 1990:32).

James Scott (1990) uses examples from a variety of disciplines and geographical locations to analyze different means of resistance among the oppressed. His conclusion is that every subordinate group creates a hidden transcript to critique the dominant behind their backs. The powerful also develop "a hidden transcript representing the practices and claims of their rule that cannot be openly avowed" (Scott 1990:xii). Scott defines 'public transcript' as a "way of describing the open interaction between subordinates and those who dominate" (ibid.:2) and he uses the term 'hidden transcript' "to characterize discourse that takes place 'offstage,' beyond direct observation by powerholders" (ibid.:4). Among the hidden transcripts this author includes verbal practices such as rumors, gossip, folktales, songs, jokes as well as non-verbal actions such as gestures. The illuminating analytical frame of public and hidden transcripts which Scott applies to situations in which groups are or were clearly oppressed – such as slavery, serfdom, or caste system – may not be so clear when the roles of dominated and dominant cannot be so clearly distinguished. Between the two poles of dominant-dominated are innumerable possible interconnections. Dichotomies may be useful to help us structure our thoughts but they do not contribute much to the understanding of reality. Hidden and public, dominant and dominated, insider and outsider are terms that need a lot of elaboration and refinement if we want to make them meaningful.

In the Dominican case it is clear that the codes relating to the use of nicknames in order to prevent the social use of document identities are strategically deployed. Nicknames are a well known survival strategy in the Dominican Republic. As an extreme example, consider a young man I met at a *picapollo*[13] in Santo Domingo who used up to eight different nicknames for different purposes. "Why would anybody want to give one's real name? If I have a problem I can just go ahead and leave, and if that person asks for me, he will not be able to find me, cause I gave him a new nickname." The topic came up by chance. He was introduced to me under one name and while we were having lunch together, somebody stopped by and called him by a completely different name. After that person left, I asked him about the name change. His first answer was a simple "It's a nickname I have", but when we continued talking about the issue and I promised confidentiality, he explained to me that he has had many jobs, and when he starts a new one, he introduces himself with a different nickname. In this case, the use of nicknames is related to being a trickster and being located at the margins of delinquency.

[13] A generic term to name Dominican restaurants specialized in fried chicken.

3. Nicknames and the misterios

The religious explanation described above relating nicknaming to evading the Devil has deeper implications in the context of Afro-Dominican religious practices. In the Dominican Republic, Folk Catholicism that incorporates elements of Vodou is a widespread religious practice. The word employed by most of the researchers who study Afro-Dominican Creole religions to refer to these practices is Dominican Vodou;[14] although practitioners prefer the expression *creer en los santos, seres* or *misterios* (we believe in saints, beings or mysteries).[15] Like any other Afro-Creole religion of the Caribbean, such as Santería, Palo Monte, Haitian Vodou, Brazilian Camdomble or Umbanda, the Dominican Vodou includes healing practices and trance episodes, in which the "porter of mysteries" receives in her body different saints.

Lundius and Lundahl (2000), in their socioeconomic study of the Palma Sola movement in the Dominican Republic,[16] mention that in the southwest of the Dominican Republic – the area of my study – some people never allow their official names to be known in their daily lives because they are afraid of witchcraft:

> Hidden messages are common to many religions. Among the people living in the southwestern parts of the Dominican Republic it is quite common that certain individuals, out of fear of witchcraft, do not reveal their names during their entire lifetime (Lundius and Lundahl 2000:271).

In Dominican Vodou, if one wants to have "a job" (*un trabajo*) done to produce an effect on oneself or somebody else, the official name of the person to be effected has to be written down on a piece of paper. See, for instance, figure 1 with a *servicio* – a type of offering made to the saints or the mysteries – made to protect a person traveling from Spain to the Dominican Republic: the paper with the name of the person is placed in the center, over a sunflower, floating on olive oil which allows one to light a wick. Figure 2 shows another center of Dominican Vodou where, at a prominent place in the main altar, a collection of paper strips with names of people who have been attended for consultation is placed.

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[14] Some anthropologists, such as Martha Ellen Davis (1987; 1996), Carlos Esteban Deive (1981; 1996), June Rosenberg (1979) and José Francisco Alegría-Pons (1993) talk about Dominican Vodou to describe these practices. Others, such as Dagoberto Tejeda (1998), refer to it simply as "folk religion" because of the deep intertwining of Catholicism and African religions.

[15] See Sánchez-Carretero (2005) for a study of the revitalization of Afro-Dominican religious practices in the diaspora and the use of saints or mysteries as communication agents.

[16] The Palma Sola Movement is a Messianic cult rooted in Dominican Vodou practices (followers of Olivorio as a God), which ended in a massacre.

Figure 1. An offering at a center in the Dominican Republic with a name written on top of a sunflower. Both sunflower and paper are soaked in olive oil.

Figure 2. Altar at a Dominican vodou center with names written underneath the candle-stone.

As the above illustrations show, the alternate use of official names and nicknames is not limited to protecting one from bureaucrats and other administrative devils but also from dangers of the spiritual world.[17] There-

[17] The nickname system can be used to explain the construction of dualism between African deities and Catholic saints. Despite the studies on correspondences between saints and

fore, the knowledge of document identities is a powerful weapon with many applications both in the physical and the spiritual worlds. Some of my informants insist that a similar dynamic of nicknames extends to the spiritual world; they describe the correspondence between African deities and Catholic saints as a matter of nicknames. Altagracia, the priestess of a Dominican vodou center in the neighborhood of Salamanca in Madrid, explains that, for instance, the Virgin of Sorrows (*Virgen de los Dolores*) is also called Metre Silí, "it is like her nickname, so we can understand each other". Altagracia, like most porters of mysteries, employs another level of nicknames to relate to the saints, mysteries or spiritual beings when talking to them in a colloquial way. For instance, *La Virgen de los Dolores* is called *La Dolores*. The use of these nicknames produces a close relationship between the saints (also called mysteries) and their followers, reducing protocol and shortening the distance between believers and the spiritual world which exists in many other religions.

Altagracia describes her own life as an uncontrolled force directed by the mysteries (saints that possess her body during ceremonies). She talks about the control the mysteries have over her personal relationships. Altagracia's protector and the most prominent of the mysteries that Altagracia can carry in her body is Anaísa (Saint Anna). In various ceremonies, Anaísa and Metré Silí (*Virgen de los Dolores*) talked to each other using Altagracia as a medium. Through these talks, as well as through revelations, Altagracia knows that Metre Silí has a dispute with Anaísa for the control of Altagracia's life. Anaísa wants Altagracia to have a stable relationship with Vladimir, a recent lover, and Metré Silí does not. Altagracia uses the nickname "La Dolores" when referring to *La Virgen de los Dolores* or Metré Silí in the following excerpt:

> Anaísa is the one who wanted... Anaísa is the one who wants it, but then one of them interfered, it was Dolores. She said no, no way, that she didn't... until she came and said that she was going meet with all the men and she was going to take him away from Anaísa. And that's what happened, that's what I'm living; she said it and that's what she did.

The use of nicknames with the saints is another level in the process of humanizing the gods. The meeting with all the deities to decide a future for Altagracia is a classic epic motif, similar to the meetings described by Homer:

> C(ristina): And when did she [Metre Silí] say so?
>
> A(ltagracia): She said that right here in my head. She came crying and said that she was going to have a meeting with all the men because Anaísa couldn't be my only boss, controlling my life, and she didn't want it.

African deities (Deive 1974; 1981), anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Martha Ellen Davis insists, nevertheless, that they are not the same (Davis 1987:128).

> C: Who were the men she was meeting... with the male mysteries?
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> A: With the male mysteries [silence], until she had that meeting. And from then on, it has happened... everything's upside-down, because he [Vladimir] was okay here with me, living here, everything here. From work to my apartment, and from here to work, until that happened. Then, problems started, they started... and here we are (...) And I say 'How can I live with this situation? A man who goes away, in a month does not come around or anything. Oh, my! This is not going to end, because this has to do with the mysteries, and what mysteries join... even when one of them opposes it, what mysteries join is very difficult to... to undo, but I say that I don't want to end my life like this, they have to think what they do, to make a decision about me, cause I cannot end up living like this. I'm a young woman, and I cannot live like this. Why? What do *they* want?...

In Altagracia's life story, there is another interesting episode in relation to naming strategies and the ways in which the spiritual world interacts with her daily life. In this case, the mysteries visit Altagracia in dreams to tell her the name that her youngest daughter should have. Altagracia went through a difficult period when she had the baby because her husband said that he was not the baby's father and did not recognize her as his daughter. Altagracia decided to leave her husband and moved to the capital, Santo Domingo, with her five children:

> Before my daughter was born, they put on her right arm a name: L, N, yes, G, D. And I asked what that meant, in my dream I asked why they were putting those initials on my baby's right hand and they answered "Her name is '**L**a **N**e**G**a**D**a Bienvenida' [Welcome Denied]. Negada Bienvenida is her name". – "But, why? I won't give that name to my daughter". – "Even if you don't give her that name, that's the name she will have". So I said "Oh, my God, what are people going to think?" Well, my daughter was born and I didn't give her that name. If she has it, it's with them, the mysteries, not with me, because I was ashamed of people using that name. And people told me "give her that name" but I didn't want my daughter to carry that name. I promised the father of my children that that girl would never use anything from him, not even a diaper or anything, and I've never allowed that. To take care of my baby, they gave me in revelation numbers of the lottery, so I could dress my baby, and I never needed anything from him.

Even though Altagracia decided not to follow the saints' advice, they keep using the name "Welcome Denied" when they refer to the girl: "If she has it, it's with them, the mysteries, not with me". With this conditional – "if she has it" – Altagracia implies that it is possible to have other names, even the mysteries can use more than one. In addition, Altagracia demonstrates that her own agency can overcome that of the mysteries, and the fact of having a life dedicated to the mysteries does not mean being completely dominated by them.

Nicknames circulate in various directions through the different levels of reality: from human beings to spiritual beings, from spiritual beings to

humans, among humans, and among spiritual beings. In the religious sphere as in the political sphere document identity is not revealed so the "Devil does not find you".

4. Some conclusions on transnational Devils

The changing of names in order to evade the transnational Devils does not take place in all social classes and the strategies based on hidden transcripts are most developed among those with limited access to power. Returning to the epigraph of this article, if Romeo's surname were unknown and irrelevant to his friends and enemies, Juliet would not ask herself, "what's in a name?". If the lovers were from a rural area in the Dominican Republic, they could purchase a "*machete*" (false documents), change their names and migrate (probably to the US). However, among upper classes surnames are a kind of cultural capital and are not frequently substituted with nicknames.

In this article I have rephrased the Shakespearian question "what's in a name?" as "what's in a nickname?". The use of nicknames "in case the Devil comes asking for you" is taken to its ultimate conclusion by those who acquire new document identities. The user of the new (and false) document identity keeps her official names (both the original and the new one) hidden for various reasons: to avoid suspicion among those who know her previous document identity; to maintain her personal identity before and after the change of official name; and to evade the Devil, "in case he comes asking". Thus the person who changes her name maintains a certain degree of control over her identity. If it is in her interest, she can use her document identity (for instance, in situations dealing with public health system, public education for her children, etc.); otherwise, nicknames should be used as much as possible. The fewer the people who know one's official name – that is, the name that appears in one's documents – the better.

Hiding names is a strategy that can be analyzed among the "arts of resistance" (Scott 1990). The responses individuals develop to the "transnational Devils" – migration police, border controls, etc. – are built, in this case, upon the base of vernacular system of various levels of nicknames already in existence for religious purposes. Nicknames as carriers of identity permit persons to maintain continuity in the diaspora, while serving as a strategy against the Devil. The powerful Devil, with its kingdom among bureaucrats, files of papers, and migration legislation, is fought with simple nicknames as strategies of resistance.

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TRANSNACIONALNI VRAGOVI: NADIMCI I LAŽNI IDENTITETI KAO STRATEGIJA PREŽIVLJAVANJA U KONTEKSTU DOMINIKANSKE MIGRACIJE

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SAŽETAK

Prakse davanja imena mogu biti u samome središtu transnacionalnih iskustava. Oslanjajući se na multilokalno etnografsko istraživanje u mjestima Vicente Noble (Dominikanska Republika), Passaic (Sjedinjene Američke Države) i Madrid (Španjolska), autorica razmatra situacije u kojima se migranti koriste nadimcima ne bi li u dijaspori održali kontrolu nad svojim identitetom. Da bi uselili u Španjolsku, dominikanski migranti često pribjegavaju kupovini putovnice s lažnim imenom. Tako imigriraju u Španjolsku, gdje su vlastima poznati samo pod novim no lažnim identitetom. Istodobno, u krugu prijatelja i poznanika i u zemlji naseljavanja i u zemlji podrijetla zadržavaju i rabe isključivo nadimke. Autorica smatra da je takva praksa strategija preživljavanja u migracijskoj situaciji. Analizirajući dominikansku poslovicu "Nadimcima se koristi ako te potraži vrag", autorica istražuje mehanizme pomoću kojih migranti izbjegavaju različitim tipovima "vragova" koji na njih "vrebaju" u migraciji. U drugome dijelu teksta pokazuje da uporaba nadimaka u religijskoj praksi, osobito u pučkoj katoličkoj religioznosti, može imati slične funkcije kao uporaba nadimaka u migraciji.

Ključne riječi: nadimci, lažni dokumenti, migracija, Dominikanska Republika, Španjolska