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Preface

by Laurence E. Prescott

We are pleased to present the first number of the *Publication of the Afro-Latin/American Research Association* (*PALARA*). The articles contained herein are based on papers originally presented at the first International Conference of the Afro-Latin/American Research Association (ALARA), held in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, 21-25 August 1996. With respect to topic, discipline, and geography, they reflect the variety, richness, and cutting-edge scholarship that characterize the association's aims. In reading these different articles the reader may begin to discover the common threads of historical and cultural experience which unite the far-flung peoples of the African diaspora in the Americas. The essays glossed here are representative of *PALARA*'s diverse content.

Recalling his first visit to Salvador da Bahia (1960-1962) as a Fulbright scholar, Russell G. Hamilton, in "Some Scholarly Recollections of and Personal Reminiscences about Afro-Brazilian Culture in the 1960s, with a 1996 Postscript," relates his experiences with students from both newly independent African nations and lands still under Portuguese control, and describes his personal and academic ventures into the interesting and complex world of candomblé. Hamilton's reminiscences offer an enlightening African American retrospective on the conflicts and misconceptions surrounding Afro-Brazilian religion; and his post-script comments illuminate the continuities and changes in popular expression, intellectual debate and scholarly writing related to Brazil's African cultural heritage.

In "Art for Life's Sake: Literature by Esmeralda Ribeiro, Sônia Fátima da Conceição and Miriam Alves," Carolyn Richardson Durham discusses three contemporary Afro-Brazilian writers who emerged during the decades of the 1980s, following the collapse of the military dictatorship. While the three authors share a commitment to creating literature that confronts and illuminates social and cultural realities of past and present Afro-Brazilian life, Durham reveals that they focus on different aspects of that existence and use a variety of genres to express both personal and collective concerns.

George Handley, in "Rereading the Nation as Family: Corrective Revisions of Racial Discourse in Martín Morúa Delgado and Charles W. Chesnutt," sees the novels of the Afro-Cuban Martín Morúa Delgado and the African American Charles W. Chesnutt as corrective revisions of the racial discourse inherent in nineteenth-century realism, Cuban *mestizaje*, and the expansionist policies of the United States following the Cuban-Spanish-American War of 1898. Handley finds similarities and parallels between the two writers' works, but he also discerns significant differences. He argues that while Morúa was eager to move beyond Cuba's history of slavery and racism, he often failed to acknowledge the continuing reality of that history. On the other hand, Chesnutt, while aware of the historical legacy of racism, seems to insist on the moral responsibilities which membership in the human family entails.

Stelamaris Coser's contribution, "Stepping-Stones Between the Americas: The Narratives of Paule Marshall and Gayl Jones," explores within the fiction of two contemporary African American writers, the complexities and paradoxes of reinforcing ancestral bonds while breaking down traditional boundaries of race,

gender, nation, and class. Drawing upon recent postcolonial theory, Coser shows how Jones and Marshall, moving beyond narrow borders, inscribe their gender and race into the literature of America (in the broadest sense) and reconnect the lives and culture of New World peoples to Africa and beyond.

Alice Mills' "'Signifyin' Ole Woman': American Theater and African Tradition" shows that through language and behavior the Old Woman character in twentieth-century African American theater parallels the role of the Yoruba deity Esu-Elegbara, or the Divine Trickster, who is the master of both disputes and reconciliations. Mills argues, for example, that the crises which the Old Woman provokes among family members are actually preparation for conflicts which they will have to face eventually. Drawing upon several such characters in plays by a host of writers, Mills finds that the wisdom, unabashed femininity, and creative fluidity that they embody, especially as grandmothers, ultimately link them to a tradition common to many other peoples.

Lourdes Martínez-Echazábal reports on the Fourth Afro-Brazilian Congress, which took place in Recife, Brazil, in April of 1994. Besides providing information about the different sponsors and backers of the event, she also informs about its many presentations and the diversity of its participants. Her remarks on the past and present tensions between practitioners of candomblé and intellectuals and her call for concerted political action between academics and militants reinforce observations and recommendations made by Hamilton.

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We wish to thank the Afro-Romance Institute and the Research Council of the University of Missouri, Columbia, and the Department of African and African American Studies of the Pennsylvania State University for their financial support. We also appreciate the generous contributions of our "Founders" as well as the expert technical assistance rendered by Dorothy Mosby and Mary Harris.

Brasil: passado, presente e as possibilidades futuras

by Gabriel Marques

O Brasil é hoje o país com a maior população negra vivendo fora da Africa. São cerca de 80 milhões de pessoas com alguma descendência africana. Isto significa um pouco mais da metade de toda a população brasileira; mas estranhamente não estão nas universidades, não ocupam postos de alto escalão, seja na política, nos ministérios públicos ou nas Forças Armadas; não são empresários nem grandes proprietários rurais; não figuram nas propagandas; não estão na televisão, exceto em segundo plano; não estão entre os profissionais liberais e também não são bispos nem padres... Constituem, na verdade, uma grande massa de "excluidos sociais."

Os antigos, bem como os novos dados e estatísticas mostram que os negros (no Brasil, chamados de pretos e pardos), compõem as altas taxas de analfabetismo, dos que recebem o salário mínimo, dos desempregados, dos que vivem nas favelas, das crianças e jovens precocemente no mercado de trabalho, revelando a existência de "um país, duas nações." Existe, mesmo do ponto de vista geográfico, uma linha invisível dividindo brancos e negros no Brasil. Os dados do Fundação Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), órgão vinculado ao Ministerio do Planejamento e Orçamento, de acordo com o censo de 1990, indicam que a população considerada Branca residente na região sul do pais era de 82,8%; na região sudeste era de 66,0%, enquanto no nordeste a população Parda representava cerca de 65,3% e na região norte chegava ao percentual de 71,0% (Cor da população 29). Contrariando a idéia de uma "democracia racial" no Brasil, todas as fontes de dados indicam uma outra realidade mais árdua e perversa, mostram a existência de "apartheid sem lei escrita" capaz até mesmo de definir a posição e papel dos individuos dentro da sociedade.

O Brasil, cuja Abolição foi em 1888, figura como o último país do mundo ocidental a abolir formalmente a escravidão, numa época em que a maioria das nações já haviam condenado tal prática. Mudou-se a Lei, mas não a prática. Assim, passado mais de um século após o festivo 13 de maio de 1888, ainda se pode ver muitas disparidades, incluindo a verificação de que o trabalho escravo ainda vinga no Brasil. Segundo a Comissao Pastoral da Terra (CPT), entre os recentes anos de 1991 a 1994 o trabalho escravo quintuplicou no país. Cerca de 25 mil pessoas estavam trabalhando em regime de escravidão nos estados do Mato Grosso do Sul, Minas Gerais e no Pará (Um triste 6). Igualmente o Conselho Indigenista Missionário (CIMI) relatou em 1993, que mais de 7.400 índios Guaranis do estado do Mato Grosso do Sul, estavam submetidos a trabalhos forçados (Relatório 12). Como se vê, não se mudam estruturas sociais com uma simples penada.

Na raíz destas disparidades estão os processos históricos de exploração econômica e humana, cujas estratégias de dominação incluiram a supressão da história do povo dominado, a queima e destruição de seus monumentos, o desaparecimento de seus heróis e de sua memória, a obrigatoriedade do aprendizado da história do colonizador. Ainda que não se encontre registros históricos de um plano previamente desenhado com tal finalidade, este foi o modelo amplamente

utilizado no processo de escravização dos povos africanos. Seus heróis, seus valores, sua cultura, sua concepção de mundo foram pulverizados e transformados em materia prima do folclore e da antropologia.

Uma visão essencialmente "eurocêntrica," por exemplo, faz com que os atuais livros escolares e enciclopédias registrem com maestria as civilizações egipicias e a história dos antigos povos europeus; mas com pouca ou nenhuma menção das grandes civilizações africanas, à exemplo do grande Império de Mali, de cuja influência se beneficiou metade do mundo civilizado do século quatorze. Seu ouro foi o principal combustível comercial do mundo, proveu metal para as primeiras moedas da Europa, desde os tempos de Roma. Timbuktu, a capital de Mali, foi descrita um século e meio mais tarde por Léo, o Africano, como a cidade do conhecimento e letras. Ele notou o grande mercado para livros manuscritos e relatou que mais lucro se fazia da venda de livros, que de qualquer outra mercadoria (UNESCO 13-14).

O mesmo modelo de obnubilação da memória e aniquilação cultural se repetiu nas Américas, no caso das civilizações Maya e Asteca; um processo que teve seu inicio com a chegada de Colombo (1492) e ainda se arrasta até o presente día. Repetiu-se também no caso dos índios brasileiros, os quais foram igualmente dizimados, sem qualquer chance de defesa, seja pelos sabres e armas de fogo, seja pelas doenças introduzidas em seu meio, seja pelos processos de exploração econômica e humana, os quais acabaran por destruir costumes, leis, ritos, línguas, enfim, a obliterar sua própria história. No Brasil, os pouco mais de 250.000 sobreviventes, de uma população inicial estimada em cerca de 5 milhões de indígenas, encontram-se agora acantonadas em pequenas aldeias, objetos de estudos antropológicos, pequenos "bichinhos de estimação" a serem preservados em seu habitat e condição natural.

Raramente se encontram nos atuais livros escolares e enciclopédias a simples menção do grande Império Asteca, cuja capital Tenochtitlán, tanto impressionou os primeiros espanhóis, tendo levado Bernal Diaz del Castillo a escrever que "aqueles que estiveram em Roma ou Constatinopla, dizem que, em termos de conforto, regularidade e população, nunca viram nada semelhante" (Meggers 96). Quando o pintor alemão Albrecht Duer viu, em Bruxelas no ano de 1521, os trabalhos de arte Mexicanos enviados por Cortez ao Imperador Carlos V, ele escreveu em seu diário, "Eu não posso me lembrar de ter isto nada em minha vida que me deleitasse tanto. Foram realmente prodigiosos trabalhos de arte e eu me maravilhei com o gênio sutil de homens em terras distantes. Eu não posso encontrar palavras para descrever o que tenho visto" (UNESCO 14).

Colombo, é verdade, havia escrito ao rei e à rainha da Espanha, declarando que "não há no mundo uma nação melhor. Amam a seus próximos como a sí mesmos, e sua conversa é sempre suave e gentil, e acompanhada de sorrisos; embora seja verdade que andam nus, suas maneiras são decentes e elogiáveis" (Brown 19). Mas como um europeu bem intencionado, longo se convenceu de que aqueles povos deveriam ser postos a trabalhar, plantar e fazer tudo que fosse necessário para adotar os costumes "civilizados" da europa e estarem a seu serviço. Igual pensamento foi seguido pelos portugueses.

Assim a ação e o efeito da chamada

aculturação foi a implantação das formas culturais das potências civilizadoras nos povos submetidos, obliterando e anulando sua religião, sua cultura, seus valores e sua concepção de mundo (Nascimento 13).

Uma Busca das bases históricas do racismo contra negros

A escravidão é uma das instituições mais antigas. Muitos povos na antiguidade foram feitos escravos e sua história encontra-se registrada em inúmeros livros. Assim, podemos recordar facilmente a história da escravidão dos judeus, sob o jugo do Faraó, de etíopes no mundo árabe, de germânicos no Império Romano, etc. Inúmeras populações foram feitas escravas durante longos períodos e, mesmo na Europa do século XV existiram escravos temporários. Na antiguidade, entretanto, a totalidade dos escravos pertenciam à mesma "raça" de seu senhor. Conforme a ponderada análise de Tocqueville, "So a liberdade os separava; dada a liberdade, confudiam-se facilmente. Por isso, tinham os antigos um meio bastante simples de livrar-se da escravidão e das suas consequências; esse meio era a alforria, e como o empregaram de um modo geral, tiveram êxito" (262).

É, entretanto, durante o século XV, diante do imimente encontro das civilizações européias e africanas e a necessidade de mão-de-obra grátis para o trabalho no Novo Mundo, recém descoberto, que a escravidão passou a agregar um novo e terrível elemento: trouxe a tona à antiga "mitologia cultural" sobre o Branco e o Negro: o branco como símbolo da pureza e reflexo de Deus; o negro como símbolo do diabo, das coisas negativas, do pecado. O fato é que a alegação de que os "gentios" pertenciam a um grupo sub-humano desprovido de alma, justificava a escravatura.

Estima-se que cerca de 100 milhões de africanos foram feitos escravos para atender à necessidade de mão de obra e ao sistema escravocrata. Para uma Europa cristianizada parece que não foi difícil encontrar os fundamentos morais, jurídicos e teológicos que pudessem justificar e legitimar a nova escravidão: a dos africanos pagãos. Mas afinal, como harmonizar os fundamentos cristãos com conceitos de superioridade e posse de homens sobre homens? A economia colonial precisava urgentemente do aval da Igreja para utilizar-se de mão-de-obra escrava.

Tais argumentos e justificativas teológicas já existiam, ou melhor, haviam sido criados pela Igreja Católica. Pela Bula Romanus Pontifex, do papa Nicolau V, de 8 de janeiro de 1454, conforme Chiavemato (1980), a Santa Sé autorizava como legitima a escravidão dos negros, e dava aos portugueses exclusividade no apresamento dos negros africanos. Outras duas Bulas merecem também um estudo especial. São elas as emitidas em 1456 e 1481, nas quais os papas Calixto III e Sixto IV "afirmam e reafirmam que o ouro e os escravos são os principais produtos da costa da Africa. E que somente Portugal está autorizado a realizar esse negócio, enquanto a Igreja não estender sua permissão a outros" (Chiavenato 44-46).

Como justificativa inicial para o aprisionamento e escravidão do negro, estava a crença de que o negro africano não tinha alma; que sua cor era resultado do pecado original, era um castigo. Posteriormente tal justificativa ganhou novos contornos e evoluiu para a crença de que o negro batizado e "resgatado" para a fé católica, ainda que escravo estaria salvo para a

eternidade. O fato é que por trás de todas as justificativas encontradas, o tráfico sempre representou um grande negócio, incluindo as muitas comissões pagas à Igreja.

Mas diante do questionamento interior, que tal tema constantemente fazia surgir, muitos teológos cristãos, especialmente os jesuítas, teriam que mais tarde reforçar a idéia da escravidão africana com novos fundamentos.

Dentre estes podemos citar alguns: uma primeira justificativa foi relacionar e justificar a escravidão, com base no pecado original, "donde se originou todos os males da humanidade;" assim era justo que alguns fossem senhores e outros servos. A escravidão estaria também relacionada com o mal de Cam, um dos filhos de Noé, e os pretos africanos foram logo identificados como descendentes de Cam, portanto, dignos de cativeiro.

Uma descrição original desta fórmula foi inicialmente feita por Santo Agostinho (Vainfas 96), e mais tarde no Brasil, por Jorge Benci, jesuita da Companhia de Jesus. Este eminente teólogo ao escrever seu livro Economia Cristã dos Senhores no Governo dos Escravos, parece que estava motivado por um genuíno interesse cristão em reformar as relações da escravidão. Seu trabalho, entretanto, como retrato de uma época, espelha não apenas a dureza da vida escrava, mas também o pensamento da Igreja naqueles tempos. Falando sobre a vestimenta que os senhores deviam prover aos servos, relembra ele:

> [Os escravos] deviam andar todos despidos, visto que a servidão e cativeiro teve sua primeira origem do ludíbrio, que fez Cam, da desnudez de Noé seu pai. Sabido é, que dormindo este Patriarca com menos decência descoberto, vendo Cam, e escarnecendo desta desnudez, a foi publicar logo a seus irmãos; e em castigo deste abominável atrevimento foi amaldiçoada do Pai toda a sua descendência, que no sentir de muitos é a mesma geração dos pretos que nos servem; e aprovando Deus esta maldição, foi condenada à escravidão e cativeiro...Justo era logo, que tivessem os escravos, e singularmente os pretos, em lugar do vestido a desnudez, para ludíbrio seu e exemplar castigo da culpa cometida por seu primeiro Pai. (Benci 64-65)

A cor preta veio a se tornar o principal fundamento para a escravidão. O digno de escravidão era o "preto africano," conforme as muitas indicações dos letrados cristãos dos primeiros séculos de nossa colonização. Na verdade, os escravos africanos sempre foram os preferidos pelos colonizadores, pois eram fácilmente identificados por sua cor e não tinham para onde fugir, como atesta Pero de Magalhães Gandavo em 1576:

> E assim há também muitos escravos da Guiné: estes são mais seguros que os índios da terra porque nunca fogem nem têm para onde. (Gandavo 75)

Conforme as inúmeras pregações do padre Antonio Vieira, os escravos deveriam ainda estar felizes por seu estado de padecimento; na verdade, o próprio cativeiro era ao mesmo tempo milagre e salvação. Diz ele:

> ...porque o maior milagre e a mais extraordinária mercê que Deus pode fazer aos filhos de pais rebeldes ao mesmo Deus, é que quando os pais se condenam, e vão ao inferno, eles não pereçam, e se salvem.
>
> Oh se a gente preta tirada das brenhas da sua Ethyopia, e passada ao Brazil,

> conhecera bem quanto deve a Deus, e a sua Santíssima Mãe por este que pode parecer destêrro, cativeiro e desgraça, e não é senão milagre e grande milagre?... Os filhos de Coré, perecendo ele, salvaram-se, porque reconheceram, vene-raram e obedeceram a Deus: e esta é a singular felicidade do vosso estado, verdadeiramente milagroso. (Vieira 305)

Reafirmando ainda a crença da superioridade branca e sua maior capacidade e em seguida reforçando a legitimação da escravidão com base na visão cristã, o jesuíta Jorge Benci, de forma mais clara, descreve o pensamento geral da Igreja naqueles tempos, pelo menos no Brasil:

> É o ócio (diz S.Bernardo) mãe de todas as leviandades e ainda das piores, que são os vícios, e madrasta de todas as virtudes. E se isto é o ocio geralmente para todos, muito mais o é nos escravos; porque sendo mau para todos, para os escravos é péssimo, por ser o único mestre de suas maldades... O ócio é a escola onde os escravos aprendem a ser viciosos e ofender a Deus... E como os pretos são sem comparação mais hábeis para o gênero de maldades que os brancos, por isso, eles com menos tempo de estudo saem grandes licenciados do vício na classe do ócio. (Benci 177-78)

Tornar os escravos dóceis, pacientes, resignados em seu sofrimento, parece ter sido claramente o papel assumido pelos líderes da Igreja no Brasil colonial. Conforme citado por Charles Hainchelin, em seu livro As Origens da Religião, Santo Agostinho havia concebido a escravidão como uma forma de expiação aprovada por Deus. Desta forma, "a missão da Igreja não era fazer os escravos livres, mas fazê-los bons" (202).

Assim, compreende-se por que a maioria dos religiosos possuiam escravos ou servos particulares, sendo também a Igreja dona de engenhos, de trapiches e grandes fazendas, canaviais e fabrico de açucar, sendo os escravos a força de trabalho gratuita.

Enquanto todas as colônias do mundo ocidental experimentavam sua independência e fim da escravatura, influênciados pelas novas ideias do Iluminismo (John Locke, Rousseau, Montesquieu), o Brasil continuava firme em sua resolução de manter a escravidão, apesar da forte e constante pressão da Inglaterra, a qual havia passado da condição de uma das maiores nações promotoras do tráfico negreiro, na principal interessada em seu término!

Para muitos analistas da historiografia brasileira, é dificil entender como foi possível redigir e aprovar a primeira constituição do país em 1824, e incluir que "a liberdade é um direito inalienável do Homem," quando cerca de 48% da população vivia em escravidão! O fato e que tais idéias abolicionistas custaram a ser aceitas pelas elites dominantes, e em especial faltava o apoio moral da religião oficial, o que levou Nabuco a lamentar:

> Entre nós, o movimento abolicionista nada deve, infelizmente, à Igreja do Estado; pelo contrário, a posse de homens e mulheres pelos conventos e por todo o clero secular desmoralizou intei-ramente o sentimento religioso de senhores e escravos. No sacerdote, estes não viam senão um homem que os podia comprar, e aqueles, a última pessoa que se lembraria de acusá-los. A deserção, pelo nosso clero, do posto que o Evangelho lhe marcou, foi a mais vergonhosa possível: ninguem o viu tomar a parte dos escravos, fazer uso da

religião para suavizar-lhes o cativeiro, e para dizer a verdade moral aos senhores. Nenhum padre tentou, nunca, impedir um leilão de escravos, nem condenou o regime religioso das senzalas. . . (67)

Abolição: o dia seguinte

As transformações mundiais da época, incluindo o desenvolvimento do capitalismo e a Revolução Industrial, foram talvez o mais importante impulso ao movimento abolicionista no Brasil. As idéias revolucionárias identificavam o trabalho escravo com o atraso e ignorância, enquanto o trabalho livre estava identificado com maior produtividade, com progresso e civilização. A pressão internacional, especialmente da Inglaterra, sobre o Brasil, aliado ao movimento e luta de quase meio século dos abolicionistas brasileiros, acabaram por culminar em 13 de maio na assinatura da Lei Aurea, a qual acabou ficando registrada mais como um ato de bondade da Princesa Isabel, que uma vitória do Parlamento, dos abolicionistas e do povo, incluindo negros livres e escravos.

De acordo com Viotti da Costa, "a campanha abolicionista pode ser vista como expressão da luta de classes que se travava no País no final do século. Para os intelectuais, o abolicionismo foi fonte de inspiração. Para os políticos, um instrumento de ascenção política. O abolicionismo deu ao intelectual um público e ao político, um eleitorado" (Costa 94). Para a maioria absoluta, entretanto, dos escravos libertos, a Abolição foi apenas a confirmação ao seu direito inalienável de ser livre; uma liberdade, duvidosa, já que não tendo os meios de subsistência, muitos preferiram retornar à casa de antigo senhor.

Para a grande maioria dos fazendeiros que consideravam haver perdido uma parte de seu patrimonio e riqueza com a Abolição, os recém libertos agora estavam em segundo plano. À nível Parlamentar, muitas das discussões já haviam se voltado para as oportunidades de receber grandes grupamentos humanos vindos da europa. Apenas entre os anos 1886 e 1887 "mais de 100.000 imigrantes, na sua maioria italianos e portugueses, entraram na Provincia de São Paulo. Entre 1888 e 1900, São Paulo receberia 800.000 imigrantes—número superior a população escrava em todo País no ano de 1887" (Costa 59). A imigração européia passou a ser vista não apenas como possível fonte de novo progresso econômico, mas, também, como aperfeiçoamento étnico. Para muitos era preciso dar novo ânimo ao corpo brasileiro; era preciso "colocar outra alma no corpo brasileiro." Essa alma viria das "raças virís do norte do globo"—germânicos, ingleses, irlandeses, escoceses. Esse era o caminho visualizado para a salvação econômica e moral do Brasil (Bastos 735-36).

Assim, após a Abolição, se do ponto de vista jurídico todos os cidadãos brancos e negros gozavam da mesma igualdade, no plano prático isso não aconteceu. Os negros foram deixados à sua própria sorte, sem nenhum apoio moral ou institucional. Pelo contrário, livres de seus antigos senhores, eram agora visto com desprezo. Populações inteiras sem nenhum recurso, deixadas à sorte de um sistema de mercado, vagavam em busca de qualquer coisa que lhes pudesse ao menos garantir o sustento mais imediato. Nessa condição, muitos preferiram retornar às senzalas e casas de seus ex-senhores continuando sob o jugo da escravidão, ainda que "livres." Aquelas condições acabaram por indicar as únicas

formas de ascensão social dos negros no Brasil: a pistolagem ou o embranquecimento da pele.

Os resultados negativos de todas aquelas políticas são agora as distorções sociais presentes. Poucos, entretanto, são os que relacionam tais disparidades entre ricos e pobres, com aquela linha divisória invisível que indica a existência de dois "brasis."

De acordo com Hasenbalg (7), entre os fatores que favoreceram a formação do mito da "democracia racial," estão o sistema de paternalismo tradicional e clientelismo, no qual a mobilidade social era quase que apenas o resultado de patronagem controlada pela elite branca, em vez da competividade de mercado, sistema esse que continuou em vigor mesmo após a abolição da escravatura; eliminando a necessidade de um sistema de segregação racial.

Existe uma grande dificuldade em se admitir que o Brasil é uma nação racista; afinal, o racismo é um mal inaceitável e, naturalmente, ninguém quer ser identificado com tal atributo; vide o recente repúdio mundial ao sistema de Apartheid da Africa do Sul. Além disso, o Brasil é um dos países onde ocorreu a maior mistura de raças, surgindo daí uma população multicolorida—pardos, mulatos, cafusos, mamelucos e outras mais de cem diferentes denominações de cor, com as quais a população se auto-identifica e também a idéia de "democracia racial;" isto é, uma sociedade com oportunidades iguais para todos. Tudo soa muito bom e bonito, não fosse a dessemelhança da realidade!

Abafada, escondida, incorporada de forma velada no cotidiano, a discriminação racial continua sentida, vivida e fazendo novas vítimas no dia-a-dia. A discriminação tomou uma nova forma e se cristalizou nas chamadas instituições invisíveis da sociedade; entre elas a literatura, a linguagem diária, jogos e piadas, padrão de beleza e as estruturas sociais e econômicas, as quais se mantiveram intactas no decorrer do tempo.

Assim, o negro encontra-se com imagem estereotipada na literatura escolar, onde não se vê retratado como cidadão, onde não encontra seus heróis, onde não tem história, não tem passado, reforçando a falta de auto-estima e sentimento de inferioridade observada no comportamento de crianças e jovens negros, revelando a existência de um "cativeiro dos livros."

Igualmente no mercado de trabalho, onde só acaba encontrando emprego no campo de trabalhos manuais, nos trabalhos que demandam esforço físico; estando fechadas as portas das atividades e ocupações técnicas, de direção, de comando, as quais estão ocupadas por brancos.

Também no mercado publicitário e na Televisão, onde aparece sempre em segundo plano, onde são retratados dentro de velhos padrões de preconceitos, estertotipados como dono apenas de forma física ou de talento musical.

Estabeleceu-se um padrão de beleza, que gerou o conceito de "gente bonita," apresentando o branco e especialmente o loiro como "o padrão." Este padrão de beleza já fez milhares de vítimas, entre elas muitos negros, que passaram por um processo de "vitimização," usando até soda caustica nos cabelos ou literalmente fritando os cabelos à ferro, para vê-los mais lisos, mais parecidos com o modelo branco, revelando a incorporação do mito da existência de um tipo de "cabelo bom" e de "cabelo ruim." Este mesmo padrão ganha agora novos territórios, chegando ao mundo oriental, de onde vem notícias de

que mulheres asiáticas estão fazendo pequenas cirúrgias estéticas, para perderem um pouco do formato alongado do olho, afim de ficarem mais parecidas com as mulheres ocidentais. E que quadro mais patético e desolador continuar vendo milhares de crianças negras, tendo como brinquedo, quase que exclusivamente, suas loiras bonecas de olhos azuis!

As estruturas sociais vigentes também fazem sua parte no "ciclo de opressão" e acabam levando o gerente de banco a não dar a merecida atenção ao cliente negro, levando-o a fazer exigências que não faria caso o mesmo fosse branco. Todas estas estruturas sociais estão enraízadas profundamente no inconsciente coletivo da nação e já foi internalizada pela cultura brasileira. Seus efeitos são devastadores. Um documento recente indica que "o racismo retarda o desenvolvimento das potencialidades ilimitadas de suas vítimas, corrompe seus perpetradores e desvirtua o progresso humano" (Casa Universal 18).

Reconhecer a existência de tal "ciclo de opressão" internalizado e cristalizado no âmago de uma cultura não é suficiente, é preciso quebrar tal ciclo, promovendo as necessárias mudanças em todos os níveis do relacionamento humano, para que tal problema possa ser definitivamente superado.

Promovendo as mudanças necessárias

Conhecida a história, a pergunta que se faz urgente é: como ajudar a transformar a atual realidade? Outro caminho não há, senão o de recontar a nossa própria história, reconhecer e valorizar todos os heróis, trazer à luz todas as nossas raízes culturais e tê-las em grande consideração. É preciso passar a limpo os currículos escolares e outros materiais didáticos, fontes que tem sido de uma imagem deturpada de negros e índios. Mais que isto, é preciso sobretudo resgatar a história destas populações oprimidas. Todas as ciências sociais modernas reconhecem que "quando um povo conhece seu passado e se nutre com histórias de atos dignos de louvor e de serem seguidos, isto lhe dá uma conexão transcendental, um sentido de tradição e de uma herança nobre, que há de se perpetuar," que "quando se quer ajudar um povo oprimido a sair da opressão, um passo importante é ajudar-lhe a recordar e valorizar sua história, seus heróis e seus valores culturais. Isto lhe dá um sentido de dignidade" (Hernandez y Anello 75-76).

Longe, portanto, de continuar a considerar determinadas populações como uma "subespécie," deveriamos vê-las em sua perspectiva correta. De acordo com Shoghi Effendi, é um grave equívoco acreditar que "porque as pessoas são analfabetas ou vivem uma vida primitiva, sejam desprovidas de inteligência ou de sensibilidade. Ao contrário, elas podem muito bem olhar para nós, com os males de nossa civilização, com a corrupção moral, com as guerras ruinosas, hipocrisia e vaidade, como pessoas que devam ser observadas tanto com suspeita como com desprezo" (O Indivíduo 46).

Os ditos brancos precisam rever seu sentimento inerente, e por vezes subconsciente, de superioridade racial. Mas se o racismo pode ser considerado uma doença, então os negros e índios estão igualmente infectados, pois carregam consigo um sentimento de inferioridade e de suspeita em relação aos brancos, feridas difíceis de serem fechadas. Em todos os casos é preciso não só uma política e legislação apropriadas, mas uma mudança dentro do coração.

Toqueville, destacado historiador americano, declarou, "O que havia de mais difícil nas nações antigas era modificar a lei; nas modernas, é modificar os costumes e, para nós. a dificuldade real começa onde a antiguidade a via terminar . . . A lei pode destruir a servidão; mas apenas Deus poderia fazer desaparecer as suas marcas;" creio que uma alusão ao papel moral das religiões (262).

Um eminente historiador chegou a descrever a religião como "uma faculdade da natureza humana," num reconhecimento de sua influência sobre as expressões vitais da civilização e seu efeito sobre as leis e a moralidade. Assim é que os atuais líderes religiosos, já que os antigos falharam, precisam ser chamados a repensar seu papel, deixando de lado ora a alienação, ora essa louca busca de dominação e poder terrenos e se dedicarem mais ao espirito de suas Escrituras Sagradas.

As antigas e conhecidas relações: dominador versus dominado, colonizador versus colonizado, senhor versus escravo, ainda está viva e operando em muitas partes de nosso mundo e parece ter ganhado novos contornos nestes tempos modernos, com a invenção e avanço de novas tecnologias. A mídia precisa assumir uma nova postura diante dos fatos. "Ela tem a responsabilidade de ajudar as pessoas a entenderem que a diversidade não precisa ser uma fonte de conflito; antes, a diversidade pode, e agora deve, servir como um recurso para o desenvolvimento das nações. A mídia poderá alcançar esta meta, focalizando em empreendimentos construtivos, unificadores e cooperativos que comprovam a capacidade da humanidade de trabalhar junto para vencer os enormes desafios que ela enfrenta, em vez de continuar a dar ênfase em aspectos e diferenças que, aparentemente, são insuperáveis" (Bahá'í, 5). É preciso reconhecer que a diversidade cultural é fonte de riqueza e beleza; nela reside a história, as conquistas não de um único povo, mas da humanidade como um todo.

A transformação da realidade pode se iniciar pela educação. Os currículos escolares precisam incluir e enfatizar os princípios da Unidade da Humanidade e Unidade na Diversidade. Enquanto um explica e expõe a unidade fundamental da espécie humana, já comprovada amplamente pela Antropologia, a Fisiologia e a Psicologia, ainda que infinitamente variada no que se refere aos aspectos secundários da vida; o segundo indica o quanto, em um mundo cada vez mais globalizado, é preciso reconhecer e valorizar os elementos culturais diversos, como uma fórmula única de afastar os antigos demônios das lutas étnicas e raciais, para o estabelecimento da paz no mundo e a sobrevivência da própria especie humana. "É a diversidade de cor, tipo e forma que enriquece e adorna um jardim, tornando mais agradavel o seu efeito," escreveu 'Abdu'l-Bahá, pensador e sábio persa.

De outro lado, um número cada vez maior de cientistas, geneticistas, paleontólogos, antropólogos, etnólogos, bem como religiosos, reconhecem exatamente o contrário daquilo que até agora havia se acreditado; em vez de raças divididas pela cor da pele ou textura do cabelo, etc....temos muito mais aspectos em comum que unem, que diferenças que poderiam nos dividir. Uma boa seleção destas declarações são mencionadas no trabalho de Montagu (1964).

Diante de um mundo com graves conflitos, poucos tem sido os cientistas sociais a lançar luz sobre tal questão

desafiadora e propor soluções de longo alcance. Um destes escreveu:

> A capacidade de construir unidade na diversidade busca integrar duas dinâmicas que historicamente tem sido evi-tadas. Por natureza, é mais fácil para as pessoas se sentirem unidas com outras que lhe são mais parecidas, e assim, muitos tem escolhido associarem-se com pessoas de sua mesma nacionalidade, raça, classe social ou religião, ou ainda com pessoas que compartilham dos mesmos interesses, valores e formas de pensamento. Igualmente, é comum sen-tirem-se incômodas, quando se tem que estar por algum tempo com pessoas que são diferentes de si mesmas. Assim, o que tem dominado o mundo até agora, tem sido a unidade na uniformidade e a divisão na diversidade. No âmbito político, quando se trata da superação dos paises ou de classes desfavorecidas, vemos as conseqüências destes enfoques. Quando um país ou uma classe dominante pensa em ajudar a outros; geralmente o faz baseando-se no modelo mental da unidade na uniformidade. Isto é, pensa em ajudar o outro a alcançar uma vida igual à sua, econômica e culturalmente. Não leva em consideração o fato de que o outro grupo pode ter uma cultura, a qual valoriza e que deseja conservar e que pensa desenvolvê-la de acordo com os seus próprios valores. Isto no melhor dos casos; no pior dos casos, o país ou classe dominante aplica o modelo mental da unidade na uniformidade de forma excludente, explorando a outra classe ou país em seu próprio benefício. (Hernandez y Anello 1)

Os resultados do modelo acima estão evidentes em muitas partes do mundo: diante do não reconhecimento e valorização das muitas culturas, diante da falta de respeito à identidade e vida cultural dos diferentes povos, muitas minorias tem lutado para se tornarem independentes, buscando forjar seu próprio destino; respondendo ao modelo de unidade na unifomidade, com sua contra-parte, isto é, com a divisão na diversidade.

As últimas décadas tem sido as testemunhas das guerras e fragmentação que se abateu sobre inúmeras populações através do planeta, seja nos países africanos, na antiga Ioguslávia e União Soviética. "Obviamente que cada extremo deste modelo, tanto o da unidade na uniformidade como o da divisão na diversidade, são inviáveis para um mundo com dezenas de milhares de tribos e etnias, as quais têm encolhido neste último século a uma vizinhança, onde os problemas de um, afeta seriamente os outros"(Hernandez y Anello 2).

O reconhecimento da diversidade cultural da humanidade precisa, portanto, ir além do simples multiculturalismo e do etnocentrísmo, onde cada grupo acaba se fechando em sí mesmo, criando guetos, perpetuando estígmas e privando o todo dos benefícios da interação cultural. É preciso ir além e despertar também a consciencia de que vivemos em um só mundo e que pertencemos à mesma espécie.

Já não é difícil visualizar este novo paradigma emergente, ou seja, o da unidade na diversidade, o qual pode ser comparado com uma orquestra. Uma orquestra é composta por um grande número de diferentes instrumentos. Em uma sinfonia cada instrumento emite tonalidades distintas umas das outras, mas quando bem coordenadas entre sí, o impacto do som resultante é muito mais belo que escutar um único instrumento, ou escutar todos os instrumentos tocando as mesmas notas.

De outro lado, um erro cometido por apenas um único músico, às vezes é sentido por todos e arruína a beleza do conjunto.

Para este nosso mundo em conflito e guerras há apenas uma única solução: a mudança do atual paradigma! Em antecipação a esta visão de cidadania mundial; da humanidade como uma família global e da Terra como uma pátria comum, escreveu Bahá'ulláh (1817-1892), "Ergueu-se o taber-náculo da unidade; não vos considereis uns aos outros como estranhos. Seis os frutos de uma só árvore e as folhas do mesmo ramo...Que não se vanglorie quem ama seu próprio país, mas sim, quem ama o mundo inteiro. A Terra é um só país e os seres humanos seus cidadãos" (140 -158).

Há finalmente que se perguntar: Sonho? Utopia? Não! Uma possibilidade real!

Endnote

Os conceitos e definições utilizados pelo IBGE para a classificação quanto à característica cor, incluiu na categoria parda, todas as pessoas que se declararam mulata, índia, cabocla, mameluca ou cafuza.

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The Comparative Significance of African Ethnicity in the United States and Brazil

by Daniel C. Littlefield

Two American missionaries residing in Brazil reported in 1857 that they "had often thought that the slaves of the United States are descended not from the noblest African stock, or that more than a century of bondage has had upon them a most degenerating effect." They admitted that in Brazil they had also come across Africans who were "inferior" and "spiritless" but had found "others of an almost untamable [and therefore quite admirable] disposition."[1] Reasoning partly from that observation (and partly from the work of Nina Rodrigues), Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre has written that his country got the best Africans the continent had to offer while North American planters got a lesser breed.[2] He was particularly struck by the so-called Sudanese slaves from West Africa, the American missionaries having written "The Mina negro [from the coast of modern Ghana] seldom makes a good house-servant, for he is not contented except in breathing the fresh air. The men become coffee-carriers, and the women *quitandeiras*, or street peddlers."[3] The missionaries went on to relate the role of these Africans in the Bahia uprising of 1835, and clearly suggest a certain nobility and accomplishment as well as ferocity in the rebels.

The missionaries' divergent attitudes towards Africans in Brazil and the United States derived from a nineteenth-century North American proslavery tradition. It sought to justify African American bondage with reference to the African's intellectual capacity and peculiar docility that rendered him eminently suitable to servitude. The same assumptions operated in free-labor areas of the United States, before and after slavery's demise in the American South, to deny citizenship rights to its survivors because they were presumably unworthy of its virtues and immune to its responsibilities.[4] This outlook formed part of what anthropologist Melville Herskovits would later call *The Myth of the Negro Past* that discouraged inquiry into the African background of black Americans.[5] The obvious inconsistency of what the missionaries saw in Brazil did not lead them to question their North American experience. Instead, they rationalized it. This short essay considers the historical context of their shortsightedness and of the variant Brazilian outlook. It is part of a larger study of the African background of American slave populations and of European reactions to Africans. It touches briefly upon ideas suggested in an earlier effort and lays the groundwork for further study.[6]

Freyre, developing an image of the Brazilian nation and civilization as resulting from a mixture of peoples, including Africans, obviously subscribes to the missionaries' characterization of Mina slaves, at least in some respects. He rejects the idea that they do not make good house servants (an illustration of just how elastic these characterizations can be, or, alternatively, and more likely, of the relative ignorance of the American observers). Indeed, the term "Mina" was used colloquially in Bahia to refer to just such a servant, who might also be a mistress or even a wife.[7] But Freyre latches onto the features of nobility, intelligence, and comeliness. If Brazilians were ever to

measure up to advanced nations in Europe and North America, it clearly would not do that they were composed of inferior stock.

However, he derides the notion of miscegenation as an evil, contributing to physical and moral degeneration, though he is obviously sensitive to the issue. He relates his discomfiture, for example, when, after several years' residence in the United States, he came upon a group of Brazilian sailors "mulattoes and *cafusos*—crossing Brooklyn Bridge." They impressed him, he said, "as being the caricatures of men, and there came to mind a phrase from a book on Brazil written by an American traveler: 'the fearfully mongrel aspect of the population.'"[8] While Freyre evidently feels that the image these seamen project is one of degeneration, he denies that such deterioration is the fruit of miscegenation. Rather, he blames malnutrition and other external circumstances of their existence. Freyre places a positive emphasis on race mixture, yet in the direction of "branqueamento" for in his preoccupation with Sudanese physical types, their approach to a European norm is implicitly valued. He elaborates an argument based on the presumed superior civilization of the Sudanese, whom he favors over Bantu-speaking peoples, and praises the Portuguese or Brazilian recognition of native African talents, particularly in mining (and, so far as physical attributes were concerned, in sexual attractiveness) that led them to better choose the people they took, and to better appreciate the people they chose. North Americans, less perceptive, and desiring slaves chiefly for field work, were neither as discerning nor as particular in their choices. And their ill-judgement showed in the slaves they got.[9]

If one looks at importation figures, the differences in ethnic proportions between the United States and Brazil are perhaps striking, but not in the way that Freyre could wish. He does not give a statistical breakdown of these groups in his country but seems to think that they came in about equal numbers,[10] because the trade from areas containing Bantu peoples went on for a longer period of time, and was larger than from other parts of the coast. However, the majority of Africans in Brazil were probably of Bantu origin. Indeed, in the period between 1701-1810, 70 percent of Brazilian imports were from Bantu-speaking regions.[11] If one looks at what was originally British North America, one finds a similar situation, though the disproportion was not as great: 46 percent came from regions containing what Freyre would call Sudanese—that is, the Gold Coast, the Windward Coast, Senegambia, and Sierra Leone, and 54 percent came from the Niger Delta and the Congo-Angola-Mozambique regions, containing Bantu- or semi-Bantu-speaking peoples.[12] By Freyre's own standards, North America comes out ahead.

The real differences between the two regions have to do with the length and volume of importation. The Brazilian trade was much larger and lasted for a longer period of time. Brazil received about 40 percent of the Africans imported into the New World while the United States received about 5 percent. In 1857 when the American missionaries made their contrasts between the two nations, the slave trade into Brazil was just ending while that into the United States had been over for forty years. There was little chance for the United States to receive a comparable Moslem influence brought by Yoruba and Hausa casualties of the nineteenth-century West African jihads, an influence that has

exercised so significant an effect on the culture of Bahia. Moreover, there was a close and specific eighteenth-century connection between Bahia and the Bight of Benin. Finally, there is in modern Lagos, Nigeria, a section of the city known as the Brazilian quarter, settled originally by returnees from servitude in Brazil and, in freedom, maintaining a trade relationship between the two regions. These circumstances make precise connections between Africa and Brazil more apparent. Consequently, a modern scholar can say with confidence: "The present-day African culture in Bahia, which is heavily Yoruba in origin, dates from the late eighteenth century. Before that, other African traditions existed."[13]

Even though ethnic preferences sometimes differed with area and changed over time, the extent and character of slave importation into Brazil permitted the formation or reformation of distinctive ethnic groupings and the recognition of these groupings by local authorities. Much earlier than in the United States, Brazilian scholars were prepared to consider distinctive African ethnic contributions to Brazilian culture and character, even if they did not always view them in the most positive light. The African presence, and often discrete elements of an individual African ethnic presence, were too great to be easily ignored, and this was all the more true because it was occasionally the subject of negative comments by the country's critics.[14]

Unlike the Brazilian situation, North American scholars for many years denied any distinguishable ethnic African input at all. North American racism was such that few seriously entertained the idea that Africans, in whole or in part, had much to contribute. Determined to deny even the degree of miscegenation that occurred, they saw little reason to concede to Africans any justifying accomplishment whatsoever. A few people, like the American missionaries in Brazil, have been mildly intrigued, even titillated, by the African origins of North America's black population, but seldom thought they had lasting influence worth considering. At an earlier date, blacks and southerners most often indicated concern. For example, historian Ulrich B. Phillips' racism did not blind him to ethnic and other distinctions among the black population, and a white North Carolina businessman published at the turn of the century a kind of picture-book exhibition of various "Negro types."[15] In 1940 a white South Carolinian even faced the prospect of mutual interchange between blacks and whites: "Negro entered into white man as pro-foundly as white man entered into Negro," W.J. Cash wrote in *The Mind of the South*, "subtly influencing every gesture, every word, every emotion and idea, every attitude."[16] This sounds very much like Freyre's assertion in his 1933 publication *The Masters and the Slaves* that "Every Brazilian, even the light-skinned fair-haired one, carries about with him on his soul, when not on soul and body alike...the shadow, or at least the birthmark, of the aborigine or the Negro. Along the seaboard, from Maranhão to Rio Grande do Sul, it is chiefly the Negro."[17] But Freyre could then proceed to talk about African regional gifts while Cash could not. As late as 1970, a quite sensitive North American anthropologist could nevertheless declare that "one of the most remarkable aspects of Afro-American culture in the United States is its relative lack of provable African content."[18]

In recent years this situation has

changed. American scholar Peter Wood's *Black Majority* (1974) has, among historians, at least, led the way, indicating that, unique among Englishmen in North America, South Carolinians had an ethnic preference related to an African skill, albeit an agricultural one. They desired slaves familiar with rice cultivation, and the suggestion is strong that they imparted that knowledge to Englishmen and not vice versa. Wood also finds African contributions to early cattle-raising in the colony, similar to what Freyre writes about in Brazil. Wood, Eugene Genovese, Charles Joyner, and other scholars likewise find black contributions to American cooking, language, religion, and outlooks comparable to, if not quite as extensive as, what Freyre finds in Brazil.[19]

But the distinct history of the United States presents special problems, all the more serious because the search for African cultural traits has now been embraced with unbridled enthusiasm. Melville Herskovits was most influential in pointing scholars towards the survival of African cultural attributes among the African American population at an earlier date, though in the 1930s, when he first wrote, many, even among blacks, dismissed his findings as irrelevant if not unsound.[20] Scholars formerly rejected his theories as too broad and far-reaching and more recently as too brittle and static. He was, they now say, insufficiently cognizant of the true meaning of black creativity.[21] Nevertheless, scholarship has turned in his direction, and while he has thus triumphed over his critics, modern-day successors make far-reaching claims with nowhere near his breath and depth of study. It is much more fashionable nowadays than in Herskovits's time to make claims to an African connection—claims that are often made with little study and less evidence. Having become attuned to the possibilities, some proceed blindly with gleeful certitude into assertions where deeper knowledge would provoke more caution. Thus, for example, although Peter Wood has suggested and I have extended the argument that South Carolinians learned rice cultivation from Senegambians, others have taken that and related arguments in directions that I, for one, would not be prepared to go.[22] What were advanced as strong probabilities have metamorphasized into unqualified assertions. These convictions are then applied without regard to geographical distinctions. So one person, after quoting an eighteenth-century ad extolling the virtues of newly-imported slaves, explains: "Here we find the African place of origin identified with the type of labor task to be performed in America. Anamabo was a village of the Gold Coast, an area inhabited by the Fanti, a major Akan ethnic group. That the majority of this cargo would be assigned to the field was directly attributed to their acquaintance with the cultivation of rice, South Carolina's principal crop during the colonial period."[23] But rice was not normally cultivated on the so-called Gold Coast and it is unlikely that the Akan there were initially skilled in its cultivation (though, of course, they could have learned it in America). The Bandama river, somewhat farther west is traditionally taken as the coastal limit of rice cultivation.[24] In fact, the ad specified the Africans suitability to field work in terms of their health.

Africa is a large continent and while there are certainly general concepts, attitudes, and practices that might unite Africans as a whole in contrast to other areas of the world, and that might, on the other

hand, distinguish one African region from another, such generalizations should be based on extended reading and intense study. Jack Goody's study of the LoDagaa in northern Ghana, for example (and the term he used is his name for them, not theirs), shows that they are separated among themselves by different inheritance practices and separate funeral customs. So he subdivided them based on their differences. People on one side of a dividing river followed one set of customs, people on the other followed another. Still, they held some things in common.[25] Rather than making broad general claims about African influence, the accretion of monographs and the growing collection of research materials make it now possible for scholars to push on towards more precise connections between Africa and the Americas. But these links must be firmly grounded in the evidence available. Almost twenty years ago, Forrest McDonald, in a critique of Herbert Gutman's *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*, warned that to "understand the process by which Africans were encultured in America...we must learn, tribe by tribe, which blacks came to America, and what the behavioral patterns of those tribes were: for, culturally speaking, the terms 'black' and 'African' are so general as to be meaningless." He was uncertain whether it would be possible to get that information and doubted that scholars had the patience to pursue it. "[A]nd yet without it," he counselled, "both study and speculation about heritage are futile."[26] Because of the larger and more immediate African presence, this is a process more easy to accomplish in Brazil than in the United States. Almost a generation later, however, McDonald has been proven wrong about the patience and ability of North American scholars to unearth a great deal of the necessary information, though absolutely correct about the dangers of speculation without the requisite dedication. The latter acts to discredit rather than advance the enterprise.

Gwendolyn Midlo Hall's recent *Africans in Colonial Louisiana* (1992) shows what can be accomplished, although she writes about an area initially settled by the French rather than the English. "The Louisiana experience," Professor Hall comments, "calls into question the assumption that African slaves could not regroup themselves in language and social communities derived partly from the sending cultures." Her study of the development of Afro-Creole culture in the French colony shows the prominence of Senegambians there, particularly the Bambara, and when she studies Bambara cosmology, therefore, it has a particular relevance. The Bambara, for example, organized a rebellion against the French in 1731 and tried to coordinate the uprising with an Indian attack. The revolt failed but the Bambara remained a distinctive cultural unit and a predominate influence. Thus a 1791 revolt, orchestrated by the Ewe, was doomed by their failure to secure Bambara support. French social attitudes facilitated African cultural survivals. The French practice of protecting slave families, for instance, meant that women had a high fertility rate. This, together with the fact that Africans who survived transport and seasoning tended to be long-lived, meant a generational structure to slave life that provided for the maintenance of cultural traditions and their transference to the young. Slaves often kept their African names. Runaways formed maroon communities developing subcultures of their

own with, of course, a significant African component. So while Africans became Americans in Louisiana, they maintained a sense of ethnic and cultural identity, even as they contributed to a new and developing Creole culture. Importantly for our purpose, that influence can be traced with some precision.[27]

In the South Carolina-Georgia low-country Africans also had durable influence. As in Louisiana, an African-based Creole developed whose precise sources have been the basis of contestation. The problem with analyzing the Gullah or Geechee language with a view to approaching African geographical specificity is that English North Americans did not have the same kind of interest in African ethnicity as did the French. They expressed ethnic preferences, and they frequently identified fugitives in ethnic or regional terms. But they dispensed with these identifiers as quickly as possible. Thus, an 1807 correspondent wrote that:

> Jim is an African and has been about two years in this country. He is a very sensible handy fellow and can turn his hand to any work but is a most notorious thief and as I wanted him on the wharf I found he would not answer that employ. Sambo is a new negro. I have had him about four months. In that time he ran away three times. When at home he worked well. The wench Jenny I cannot say much for. She can speak for herself.

The correspondent describes Jim as an African but he does not go beyond that. Sambo, a "new negro," who has presumably been in the country an even shorter time than Jim and is therefore also African, is not further identified either. Jenny is either "country-born" or has been in the country long enough, and was imported young enough, to be considered native.[28]

This inattention to ethnic detail makes reconstrucion difficult for scholars interested in these facts. They are forced to rely on importation and runaway statistics, among other things, including linguistic analysis. The latter, however, has not proven conclusive. Consequently, scholars still differ about the provenance of the Gullah cultural complex. Winifred Vass argues for the primacy of Bantu-speakers —a useful but distressingly general term. Moreover she traces the term "Geechee," which is essentially the same language as Gullah, to the Kisi of Senegambia.[29] Margaret Washington-Creel argues for the primacy of Senegambia among the Gullah, a case presented in the film "Family Across the Sea" and supported by African linguists from Sierra Leone.[30] It is instructive, however, that South Carolinians referred to the Stono Rebellion, in which Angolans were undeniably the largest component, as the Gullah War.[31] John Thornton has further elucidated the connection with Central Africa.[32] There were, of course, successive waves of Africans coming into the region and the major source of these Africans changed. I have tried to get a handle on the question by using the geographical distribution of ethnically identified fugitives as an index to total numbers. What these schemas suggest is a complex heterogeneity that might make it difficult to ever sort out precise lines of cultural devolution, a situation radically different from that in Brazil.[33] Nevertheless, at least North American scholars now have some idea where to look. Certainly the kind of work accomplished by conscientious scholars make it clear that

we can go farther in this regard than ever before, but only at the cost of sustained effort. Historical archeologists, such as Leland Ferguson, and students of material culture, such as Michael Vlach, have indicated important lines of inquiry.[34] At the same time, we need to resist facile analysis as deleterious.

In both the United States and Brazil there is now a new look at the contributions of Bantu-speaking peoples to the cultures of the two countries. In Brazil this is somewhat in the nature of a rehabilitation, pushing aside old notions of the inferiority of this segment of African culture, and the work of Nei Lopes (*Bantos, Malês E Identidade Negra*, 1988) is an example of this approach.[35] In the United States the process is one of discovery, burial practices among low-country South Carolina and Georgia blacks, in particular, and belief systems associated with these practices, having been traced, most prominently by art historian Robert Farris Thompson (*Flash of the Spirit*, 1983), to Central Africa.[36] Thompson has also isolated Central African elements in the verbal expressions of entertainers and the entertainment world, and likewise in music, leading some students to argue for the disproportionate influence of Bantu culture in the United States. Since there is so much less material evidence in the United States than in Brazil, one can well understand the enthusiasm of those who adopt this view. However, I am always struck by how easy it is for scholars who champion either West or Central Africa to find evidence for their particular position, even when looking at the same phenomena, and in the North American context, the likelihood of a great degree of African mixture is highly probable.

In any case, there is now in the United States, as in Brazil, a greater appreciation for the African component of our national cultures. Indeed, in the United States, an interest in African American history and culture has never been greater and it is the focus of some of the most exciting scholarship currently produced. In succeeding decades, I expect much more of the African ethnic past to be revealed there than we formerly thought possible.

Notes

[1]D.P. Kidder and J.C. Fletcher, *Brazil and the Brazilians. Portrayed in Historical and Descriptive Sketches* (Philadelphia: Childs and Peterson, 1857), 135.

[2]See Gilberto Freyre, *The Masters and the Slaves: A Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 299-301 and *passim*. Also see Nina Rodrigues, *Os Africanos no Brasil*, São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1945.

[3]Kidder and Fletcher, *Brazil and the Brazilians*, 135-36.

[4]See, for example, George Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914*, Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1987; John David Smith, *An Old Creed for the New South: Proslavery Ideology and Historiography, 1865-1918*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985; and Leon Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1961.

[5]Melville Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1941.

[6]See Daniel C. Littlefield, *Rice and Slaves: Ethnicity and the Slave Trade in Colonial South Carolina* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana

State University Press, 1981; reprinted Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), esp. 171-77.

[7]Donald Pierson, *Negroes in Brazil: A Study in Race Contact in Bahia* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967), 145-46.

[8]Freyre, *Masters and Slaves*, xxvi-xxvii.

[9]*Ibid.*, xxx-xxxi; 55-66; 285-344.

[10]*Ibid.*, 300.

[11]Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 211; Herbert Klein, *The Middle Passage: Comparative Studies in the Atlantic Slave Trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 25.

[12]Curtin, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, 157.

[13]Stuart B. Schwartz, *Sugar Plantations in the Formation of Brazilian Society. Bahia, 1550-1835* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 342.

[14]See, for example, John Codman, *Ten Months in Brazil; with Notes on the Paraguayan War* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1870), 81-82 and 131-32 who had a negative view of miscegenation. Joseph Burnichon, *Le Brésil d'aujourd'hui* (Paris: Perrin et Cie, 1910), 71-79, by contrast, had a more positive view of race mixture and even disputed some of Nina Rodrigues' assumptions about the extent of African superstitions among the Brazilian population, which suggested a negative viewpoint. He quotes a Brazilian acquaintance as arguing that "Cette population de sang mêlé constitue la véritable race brésilienne, plus vigoureuse, plus résistante, parce que mieux adaptée au climat que les éléments de race européenne sans alliage" (p. 75), anticipating some of the ideas of Freyre.

[15]Ulrich B. Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply. Employment and Control of Negro Labor As Determined by the Plantation Regime*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989; originally published 1918 and *Life and Labor in the Old South* (Boston, 1929), 190. Daniel A. Tompkins, *Cotton and Cotton Oil* (Charlotte, North Carolina, 1901), 48.

[16]W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965; first published, 1941), 49-50.

[17]Freyre, *Masters and Slaves*, 278.

[18]See Sidney Mintz, "Forward," in John F. Szwed and Norman E. Whitten, Jr, eds., *Afro-American Anthropology: Contemporary Perspectives* (New York: Free Press, 1970), 12; also in Mintz, *Caribbean Transformations* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1974), 12.

[19]See Peter H. Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion*, New York: W.W. Norton, 1975; Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made*, New York: Pantheon, 1974; Charles Joyner, *Down By the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984.

[20]Melville Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past*. The most noted African American critic of Herskovits was sociologist E. Franklin Frazier; see, for example, *The Negro in the United States* (revised edition, New York: Macmillian Company, 1968), especially 3-21.

[21]See, for example, the largely sympathetic critique in Sidney Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).

[22]Wood, *Black Majority*, 35-62; Littlefield, *Rice and Slaves*, 74-114.

[23]Joseph E. Holloway, ed., *Africanism in American Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 15.

[24]See W.B. Morgan, "The Forest and Agriculture in West Africa," *Journal of African History*, III, 2 (1962), 237; and Eva L.R. Meyerwitz, *The Sacred State of the Akan* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1949), 46-48.

[25]Jack Goody, *Death, Property and the Ancestors: A Study of the Mortuary Customs of the LoDagaa of West Africa* (Stanford:

Stanford University Press, 1962), 1-12.

[26]Forrest MacDonald in the *National Review* 28 (December 24, 1976), 1418.

[27]Gwendolyn M. Hall, *Africans in Louisiana: The Development of Afro-Creole Culture On the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), xiv.

[28]Daniel C. Littlefield, "'Abundance of Negroes of that Nation': The Significance of African Ethnicity in Colonial South Carolina," in David Chesnut and Clyde Wilson, eds., *The Meaning of South Carolina History: Essays in Honor of George C. Rogers, Jr.* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), 19-38.

[29]Winifred Vass, *The Bantu Speaking Heritage of the United States* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, 1979), 31-32.

[30]Margaret Creel, *A Peculiar People: Slave Religion and Community Culture Among the Gullah*, New York: New York University Press, 1988. The film "Family Across the Sea" was produced in 1990 by South Carolina Educational Television and directed by Tim Carrier. (Distributed by California Newsreel, 149 Ninth Street/420, San Francisco, California, 94103).

[31]See Littlefield, "'Abundance of Negroes of that Nation,'" 24.

[32]John Thornton, "African Dimensions of the Stono Rebellion," *American Historical Review* 96 (October 1991), 1101-13. Also see his *Africa and Africans on the Making of the Atlantic World. 1400-1680*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

[33]Littlefield, "'Abundance of Negroes of that Nation,'" 28-30.

[34]Leland Ferguson, *Uncommon Ground: the Archaeology of Early African America. 1650-1800*, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992; Michael M. Vlach, *The Afro-American Tradition in Decorative Arts*, Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia Press, 1990; and *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993.

[35]Nei Lopes, Bantos. *Malês e Identidade Negra*, Rio de Janeiro: Forense Universitaria, 1988.

[36]Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*, New York: Random House, 1983. A recent special issue of *Slavery and Abolition: A Journal of Slave and Post-Slave Studies*, 18 (April 1997) is devoted, among other things, to the issue of African ethnicity in the slave trade and its effects on New World societies.

Some Scholarly Recollections of and Personal Reminiscences about Afro-Bahian Culture in the 1960s, with a 1996 Postscript

by Russell G. Hamilton

I was pursuing a doctorate at Yale when I received the Fulbright fellowship that took me to Brazil for the first time. In June of 1960 I arrived in Rio de Janeiro as a member of that year's contingent of eleven Fulbright fellows who underwent three months of orientation in the "cidade maravilhosa." Rio de Janeiro's marvels notwithstanding, I was anxious to get to Salvador, Brazil's fabled "Black Rome" (I was the only fellow who had opted to spend what turned out to be a little over two years in Bahia). By late August I was in Salvador where I settled into the Palace Hotel on Rua Chile and awaited the arrival from the States of Cherie, my wife, and our three-year-old daughter, who would soon be affectionately known to our Brazilian friends as Cheriezinha.

I readily admit that Brazil in general, but especially Bahia, held a multitude of attractions for me as a young African American consciously or unconsciously seeking to affirm himself historically, culturally, and intellectually within the framework of an identity informed by Africa but uniquely fashioned in the Americas. Conversely, as is often the case with those who study and seek to know other cultures, my foray into an Afro-Brazilian world also reflected a desire to get outside of self.[1]

My studies as both an undergraduate and graduate student had convinced me that Salvador, Bahia was the place where I would find that African identity fashioned in the Americas as well as the intellectual stimulation and cultural exhilaration of getting outside of self. I hurry to assert that although I was not exactly a starry eyed romantic nor did I buy into the notion of Brazil as a racial democracy, and even though we did observe and personally encounter racism, overall my wife's, young daughter's, and my experiences in Bahia, during the early 1960s, were positive and enriching.

Based on both personal recollections and the advantage of hindsight, I believe that the 1960s were key in the formulation of much of the social, cultural, and political basis for the Brazilian black consciousness movements that emerged beginning in the mid 1970s. In the 1960s the short-lived (less than a year) presidency of Jânio Quadros and the longer, although also uncompleted administration of João Goulart, gave birth to some significant changes with respect to Brazil's relations with and attitudes toward a rapidly decolonizing Africa. One example of this reaching out to Africa was Itamarty's (the Brazilian State Department's) establishment, in 1961, of a fellowship program that brought students from the recently independent countries of Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal, as well as the then Portuguese colonies of Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau, to enroll in Brazilian universities. This first group of students spent several months in Salvador, the idea obviously being that Bahia was the ideal environment in which to orient these young Africans and provide them with a smooth transition into Brazil's pluralistic society.

Administrators at the Universdade da Bahia had recently established the Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais, and among a number of initiatives aimed at enhancing Bahia's African cultural heritage, Ebenezer Lasebikan, a Professor from Nigeria, was contracted to teach Yoruba language courses. Besides working at the Centro as a translator/editor for the English-language version of *Africa e Asia: Boletim de Informações*, the Center's official newsletter, I also befriended several of the African students, including Abiodun Oni, from Yoruba-land. Abiodun and I met on several occasions with Waldeloir Rego, the well-known Bahian ethnologist to translate into Portuguese Yoruba lyrics of a number of candomblé chants (I served as the language intermediary for Abiodun Oni, who spoke English but whose Portuguese was still rudimentary, and Waldeloir Rego, who at the time spoke little, if any English).

At the beginning of our stay in Salvador, my wife and I also had the good fortune of getting to know such artists and writers as Carybé, Mario Cravo, and Jorge Amado. I should also mention Silvio Robato, a Bahian architect who had studied at Yale and who introduced my wife and me to the late Norma Sampaio, a wonderful lady who gave us endless help and friendship. And I've already mentioned Waldeloir Rego, who became something of my mentor and cicerone with respect to Bahia's culture, including its cuisine, capoeira, afoxé, and especially candomblé. I, in effect, immersed myself in that world, and through Waldeloir I met a number of "gente de seita," including Camafeu de Oxossi, of the Afoxê Os Filhos de Ghandi, Deoscoredes Maximiliano dos Santos, aka Didi, son of the famous iyalorixa, the late Bibiana dos Santos, better known as Mãe Senhora, of Axê Opô Afonjá. I was also privileged to meet Mãe Menininha, and Olga de Alaketu, two of Bahia's legendary candomblé priestesses (iyalorixas).

As a student of Brazilian literature, I was deeply interested in the Northeast writers, including Jorge Amado. In fact, my first scholarly publication was an article titled: "Afro-Brazilian Cults in the Novels of Jorge Amado," which was published in the US journal *Hispania* (Vol. L, No. 2, May 1967).[2]

Another article of mine, this one titled "The Present State of African Cults in Bahia," was published in a special issue, dedicated to "black history and the history of slavery," of the *Journal of Social History* (Vol 3, No. 4, Summer 1970). This article deals with how candomblé functioned as a religion and how, in the 1960s, it was perceived by people from different strata of Brazilian society as well as by foreign visitors and scholars. Let me quote from the beginning of the article (I've taken some liberties with my original text): "Bahia has seen an upswing in its tourist industry. Officials have recognized that candomblé represents a cultural force as well as a commercial trademark among Salvador's major tourist attractions. Just as North American resort owners have taken advantage of place names and images from Spanish, Mexican, and Indian traditions in the west and southwest of the country, in the 1960s there appeared in Salvador the Hotel Oxunmaré, the Oxalá, the Yemanjá, and the Xangô, all named, of course, for African gods or orixás." I refer in my article to another article, this one titled "As linguas africanas da Bahia," by Yêda Pessoa de Castro, whom many will recognize as a professor at the U. da Bahia. In her article, published back in the

sixties, Professora Pessoa de Castro mentions apartment buildings named for the gods Ogun, Oxun, Airá, and Nanã, a gasoline station called Oxossi, and the beauty salons Yemanjá and Yansan. There was also an institute for the treatment of allergies and skin ailments whose façade was adorned with a large figure of Omolu, the god of smallpox, and, by extension, of all diseases.

Although somewhat appealing on the level of a regionalist cultural identity, such labeling might also be seen by some as emblematically trivializing and a blatant commercial exploitation of terms and images from the world of candomblé. At the time I wrote the article, I was aware, of course, that much of the visible projection, if not exploitation of the Afro-Brazilian cults, stemmed from the attractions of the strikingly picturesque, even the exotic, within the context of a city's trademark of cultural identity. On the other hand, my introduction to candomblé, back in 1960, also convinced me that the Afro-Bahian cults constituted a genuine religion with a code and credo. I also quickly discovered that candomblé, especially the major houses of Bahia, were in a way legitimized, within society at large, by the prestige that artists, intellectuals, politicians, and people from the world of business lent to them.

I should note that despite past repression, harrassment, and, until relatively recently, the requirement that the cults register with the police prior to all public ceremonies, by at least the early 1960s there was a growing tolerance of candomblé, even though I am sure there also existed, and still exist, pockets of condemnation and ambivalence among members of all of Bahia's socioeconomic strata and racial groups, some of whom consider the cults to be at best vestiges of primitive paganism and at worst a form of devil worship. But in the 1960s there was ample evidence of a growing tolerance of and even an acceptance of candomblé as a viable belief system, including among some Catholic clerics. In this regard, there are documented reports of Catholic priests who have incorporated Afro-Brazilian musical components into the liturgy of the mass. To my mind one of the most impressive displays of acknowledgement and, in effect, validation of candomblé occurred during the solemn mass commemorating the first anniversary of the death of the iyalorixa Bibiana dos Santos. In his eulogy, the presiding Catholic priest was quoted in the press as declaring that the "famous spiritual leader of the Candomblé Opô Afonjá is now among the archangels and the orixás." I might note in passing that the priest's avowal gives new meaning to religious syncretism.

There are documented cases of the media reporting on candomblé related events in the same way that they covered mainstream religious or social events. To give one example *A Tarde*, then considered to be one of Salvador's fairly conservative newspapers, carried an item, in its edition of August 13, 1968, announcing the grandiose festivities sponsored by a local shipping company to honor Yemanjá. The announcement noted that employees would cast offerings into the sea for the "mother of the waters."

In the 1960s and beyond, candomblé literally permeated the life of the city, influenced many forms of cultural expression, and left a sometimes curious imprint on the fabric of Bahian social life. I'd like to describe just such a curious, albeit not totally anomalous, candomblé ceremony that my wife and I attended on

June 29, 1968. Although by no means typical, this particular ceremony did contain many of the components that have assured the prestige of the major houses and at the same time confirmed what some feared with respect to the fragility of candomblé's liturgical authenticity and, as a consequence, its possibilities for survival as a viable religion.

This particular ceremony, which took place at Axê Opô Afonjá, was the first in a cycle of twelve festas for Xangô to be held on the terreiro. On this particular night, Senhorazinha, successor to Senhora, was to be confirmed as Opô Afonjá's mãe-de-santo. Moreover, on this same occasion Dorival Caymmi, the renowned singer and composer, was to be inducted into the ranks of the Obas, these being the twelve ministers of Xangô. (The post of Oba is an honorary one held exclusively by males, the overwhelming majority from the more privileged socioeconomic classes.)

The barracão, or hall, in which the ceremonies take place, was filled to overflowing with invited guests, tourists, and "gente de seita." The mãe-de-santo sat flanked on either side by dignitaries, all of them Obas: novelist Jorge Amado, artist Carybé, ethnologist Vivaldo Costa Lima, industrialist and president of the Sociedade Opô Afonjá Sinval da Costa Lima, lawyer Tibúrcio Barreiros, and several others, including a publisher and a banker. Some in attendance had travelled from abroad, as well as from other regions of Brazil. In the second row of dignitaries sat Ogans, an administrative post also held by males, the wives of Ogans and Obás, and others who were socially prominent, but with no official position in the sect. The mayor of Salvador arrived late and officials scurried to arrange seating for him and his party in an already crowded VIP section. With the arrival of still more important guests, officials brought in extra chairs and benches, and, as a consequence, the floor space for the ceremony became considerably reduced.

Finally, the ceremony got under way, but as the filhos- and filhas-de-santo danced, important guests came and went, greeted new arrivals, and at times some seemed oblivious to the ceremony in progress. A foreign scholar remarked, only half-jokingly, that there might not be enough room for the orixás to dance.

At a given signal the Obas left the barracão and returned a few minutes latter dressed in African robes and caps. They accompanied first Dorival Caymmi and then the mãe-de-santo back into the barracão for the confirmation services. One of the Obás delivered a brief, but emotional speech, in which he spoke of the suffering of slaves and the force of the African religion. At the end of the ceremony guests, dignitaries, "gente de seita," and orixás mingled and milled about. A rather bizarre situation ensued when the news arrived that the contestant from Bahia had been crowned Miss Brasil. A euphoric society matron spread the word as she went about embracing friends while, at the same time, sect personages paid homage, in like fashion, to the orixás. At the end of the formal ceremony guests and tourists repaired to a nearby building on the terreiro to be served plates of African food, "comida de santo."

Those who tended to decry the supposed lack of authenticity and the distortions, if not outright desecration, of ancient religious traditions, were undoubtedly appalled by much of what I have just recounted. Some undoubtedly confirmed that there was indeed a lack of religious

integrity on the part of certain sect members. I recall talking with visitors to Bahia who were convinced that these festive ceremonies were staged for tourists. After all, even the most prestigious candomblés had contacts with the Departamento de Turismo. Outsiders also confirmed their suspicions that condemblé was no longer an authentic Afro-Brazilian institution because of a preponderance of Caucasians and "amulatados" in high administrative and honorary posts in the "best" candomblé houses. Conversely, it often appeared as though some individuals born and raised in the African religion were more disposed to accept radical changes in the liturgy and the religious calender than the "converts." For many this perception was borne out in July of 1968 when doctors attending an international symposium of psychiatry in Salvador succeeded in arranging for a special ceremony at one of the most prestigious, presumably tradition-bound candomblé houses. A black cult official, apparently enticed by the prospect of financial gain, agreed to the unorthodox arrangement, much to the consternation of many of the sect's upper-class supporters, who showed their disapproval by boycotting the ceremony. The artists and intellectuals opposed the festa's lack of liturgical relevance.

Obviously, the debate that swirled around the need to maintain candomblé's integrity and inherent religious austerity continued well beyond the sixties. The year 1976 represents, in fact, a turning point in the contemporary history of candomblé. On the 15th of January of that year, Roberto Santos, then governor of Bahia, announced the suspension of the obligatory police registration of candomblé ceremonies. That act occasioned an interesting report and a revealing interview in the February 9th, 1976, edition of *Movimento*, a newspaper published in São Paulo. The article in question bears the provocative headline: "Candomblé: Progresso ou Sacrilégio?" And even more provocatively, the lead-in reads: "O governo tirou os candomblés da tutela policial. Mas ainda haverá tempo de salvá-los das pressões econômicas, do turismo, do comercio?" (The government removed the candomblés from police wardship. But will there be time to save them from economic pressures of tourism, of business interests?).

The interview published in that same issue of *Movimento* carries the intriguing headline "Mães-de-santo, Turistas e Intelectuais." And the lead-in reads, in overtly condemnatory terms, "Os inimigos do candomblé baiano, entre outros: o turismo ávido de novidades, a intelectualidade frustrada e interessada em promoção pessoal, os pais e mães-de-santo muito interessados em coisas materials." (Candomblé's enemies include: a tourism avid for novelties, frustrated intellectuals interested in their self-promotion, the cult leaders interested in material gain). I'm not sure whether the foregoing statement is attributable to the interviewee who was none other than Waldir Freitas Oliveira, the then director of the aforementioned Centro de Estudos Afro-Orientais. In his published interview Freitas Oliveira attempts to put the matter into socio-historical context with respect to candomblé as religion and candomblé as commodity.

Candomblé is, of course, a complex phenomenon that defies any narrow categorizations or simple definitions. To a greater or lesser degree, candomblé is the sum of all, both positive and negative,

that diverse groups and individuals perceive it to be. It is condescending or just plain naive to see candomblé as demonstration, entertainment, or folklore spectacle for tourists. Furthermore, to criticize cult members for effecting changes in the liturgy and ceremonies as a concession to requests by tourists or other outsiders is to ignore some social and political realities as well as economic imperatives. Moreover, to condemn artists and intellectuals for reputedly exploiting the cults for financial gain and/or personal aggrandizement is to throw the baby out with the proverbial bath water. What I mean by this is that much of the art work inspired by candomblé, even that of a decorative or ornamental nature, has its own intrinsic aesthetic value and contributes to a kind of transcendent cultural enrichment.

With respect to the fascination that candomblé has long held for me, I should note that I was not then, nor am I today, religious, at least not in the conventional sense of the term. But despite my agnosticism, or maybe even in part because of it, I was attracted as much by candomblé's belief system as I was by the combination of spiritual meaning, aesthetic elements, and by the religion's implicit statement of cultural resistence. For those very reasons I rather understand the involvement and commitment of those Bahian intellectuals and artists, most of whom were, and are, from a privileged socioeconomic stratum and who were not raised in the world of candomblé.

Although there was an inevitable measure of populism, to say nothing of paternalistism, inherent in the participation of some "outsiders," I also understand that there was a complex mixture of social, cultural-regionalist, and political factors driving the involvement of a majority of artists and intellectuals in the world of candomblé. I also understand that what some perceived to be materialistic motives on the part of certain pais- and mães-de-santo might have had less to do with greed and more to do with a pragmatism often predicated on the terreiros' very survival, to say nothing of the sects' spiritual leaders' and their flocks' livelihood. Moreover, at the risk of seeming presumptuous, I confess that by the end of my first stay in Bahia, from 1960 to 1962, I considered myself to be something of an "entendido na materia." And as a self-declared "sabichão," or member of the cognoscenti, I felt that I rose above the misconceptions of tourists, the ignorance of detractors, and the often well-meaning mystifications of those who tended to romanticize and exoticize Afro-Brazilian religions.

I have been aware of the debate, in the ranks of the contemporary black movement in Brazil, between the so-called culturalists and the political militants. My impression is that for the militants candomblé should play a role similar to that of the historical black church in the United States. That is, candomblé terreiros should be more than places of worship, spiritual renewal, and cultural affirmation. They should also be places for Afro-Brazilian social and political organization and mobilization aimed at eradicating racial inequities and challenging the hegemonic groups for the ultimate purpose of acquiring communal political power and economic viability.

Whatever the current state of candomblé and the nature of the debates that revolve around its ideological significance and social and political function, until convinced otherwise, I continue to believe

that the sixties were an important period for the sects and, indeed, for the whole of Afro-Bahian social and cultural dynamics, which have functioned in a multiplicity of aesthetically appealing, socially compelling, and politically meaningful ways. I should note in concluding this retrospective that my nearly three-year stay in Bahia and my involvement in and knowledge of Afro-Brazilian culture and social reality helped motivate my interest in Africa, where since 1970 I have visited or lived in twenty-two countries, including all five PALOP (the Portuguese acronym for African Countries whose Official Language is Portuguese).

Now, if you will indulge me my reminiscences on a pictorial level, I would like to share with you some photographic images of Afro-Bahian society and culture in 1960 through 1962 and again in 1968. I myself was the photographer.

Postscript

After an absence of twenty-eight years I returned to Salvador to make my presentation at the ALARA conference. (My wife Cherie and our granddaughter Ginga, Cheriezinha's daughter, accompanied me on this nostalgic "homecoming"). It goes without saying that after such a long hiatus a two-week stay is hardly sufficient to bring one's self completely up to date. On the other hand, through my readings on the subject I had stayed enough in touch with the relevant material so that although brief, my visit to Salvador, in August of 1996, did serve to confirm much of what I had perceived from afar, throughout the intervening years, about the evolving state of Afro-Bahian social institutions and cultural expression.

Things have changed indeed, but during those few, intense days in Bahia, it also struck me that "plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose." To put it another way, things are the same, only more so, which means to say that Afro-Bahian social institutions and modes of cultural expression have not so much changed as they have evolved.

Even the most casual visitor to Salvador cannot help but observe the degree to which much of the city's commercial identity is based on labels, trappings, and images from the world of candomblé. This identity has burgeoned since the 1960s. Thus, if three decades ago there were a dozen or so hotels and other business establishments bearing the names of orixás, today there are literally dozens. Oddly enough, more so than in the sixties, the very word "orixá" has become all but officially institutionalized as a term identified with Bahia. According to a Bahian friend, recently there was a campaign aimed at designating Salvador the "Cidade dos Orixás." Apparently, a group of influential artists and intellectuals prevailed on city officials not to desecrate the word "orixá" by emblematizing it as a touristic label, the officials reluctantly settled for "Salvador, Cidade da Felicidade." (This interdiction notwithstanding, today, in the upper city near Campo Grande, there is a mall whose marquee is emblazoned with the words "Orixá Shopping.")

As tourism has flourished in and around Salvador, so has the commercialization of Afro-Bahian cultural expression. Moreover, there has been a concomitant increase in the acceptance of candomblé as perfomance in the context of Bahia's rich musical and dance culture. Nowhere has this been more in evidence than at the

Solar do Unhão Restaurante, where, nightly, dozens of tourists savor typical Bahian dishes and watch a show that begins with performers, dressed in the costumes of Ogum, Xangô, Yansan, Omolu, Oxalá, and other orixás, executing highly stylized versions of ritual dances. Tourists are then treated to equally stylized "demonstrations" of capoeira, maculelé, and even the simulation of the rhythmic pulling in of the fishing net (puxada de rede). The show culminates with samba de roda, during which restaurant patrons are invited to dance with the performers.

In all likelihood, in the 1960s a cadre of influential socially conscious citizens of Salvador would have vehemently protested such shows. My sense is that today a greater tolerance for even that which panders to tourists' taste for the overtly picturesque and exotic comes about as a function of candomblé choreography as respectable "high" art. I am thinking of performances by such groups as the Balé Folclórico da Bahia, the Escola de Dance da Fundação Cultural do Estado, and the Grupo de Dança, a Odundê, the latter being associated with the University of Bahia's Escola de Dança. What I mean to say is that "art" performances on theater stages have paved the way for and lent a kind of respectability to ritual dances as entertainment in the city's cabarets and supper clubs.

I also sense that the political militants and the so-called culturalists have found common ground under the unifying banner of Afro-Bahian religion as cultural patrimony and a form of cultural resistence Although the conflict between culturalists and militants seems to have lessened, the aesthetico-ideological divergencies I observed in the sixties have continued into the nineties. If anything, some of the same artists and intellectuals who evinced more or less orthodox or conservative attitudes twenty five years ago have hardened their views. For example, one such intellectual characterized the annual Festa de Nossa Senhora da Boa Morte, with its substratum of religious syncretism, which takes place in August in the historic Bahian town of Cachoeira, as a spectacle put on for African-American tourists. Several prominent Brazilian scholars recognize that the traditional ceremony, with its procession and pageantry, has become a major attraction for foreign tourists of many nationalities, including, but certainly not exclusively, African Americans. A number of Brazilian intellectuals reject the notion, and I tend to agree with them, that the members of the Boa Morte sisterhood, even as they welcome the hordes of tourists, have abandoned their religious faith and fervor as participants in the colorful ceremonies.

With respect to terreiros de candomblé as tourist venues, last August Carybé, speaking in his capacity of President of the Sociedade Opô Afonjá, allowed as how at the major houses cult officials routinely schedule public ceremonies to start around dinner time so that tourists will be less likely to attend. Other supporters of the larger, established houses have censured the leaders of a growing number of smaller candomblés. These devotees of the more prestigious terreiros claim that the mães-and pais-de-santo of several of these smaller houses receive cash commissions from tourist agencies. Again, as I maintain in my 1960s retrospective of candomblé, I believe—and with all due respect and sympathy for those who decry a lack of liturgical authenticity—that the seeming venality of those sect leaders who aggressively court the tourist trade stems

from a certain pragmatism linked to the smaller houses' very survival.

Starting in the early 1980s, there has been a phenomenal dissemination of Afro-Brazilian and especially Afro-Bahian cultural expression. Certainly, recordings and videos by the bloco-afro Olodum and the afoxê Ilê Ayê have gained a world-wide audience. Some perhaps surprising Brazilian exports are candomblé, umbanda, and capoeira. Candomblé terreiros, some combined with Haitian vodun and Cuban santeria, have sprung up in US cities like New York. And in New York as well as Berkeley, San Francisco, and Los Angeles there are academies where Brazilians as well as black, white, and Asian Americans practice capoeira as a martial art and perform it as a dance form.

Serious, book-length studies on the Afro-Bahian religions date back at least to the 1930s. The last three decades have seen, however, a substantial increase in scholarly works, including master's theses and PhD dissertations, authored by Brazilians and foreigners.[3] And just as artistic performances have opened the way for candomblé dance as a form of entertainment, scholarly works seem to have served as the vanguard for a spate of popular books on the cults.[4]

Although there have been recordings, some of them now classics, and a few short instructional manuals, prior to and since the publication of Waldeloir Rego's magisterial Capoeira Angola: Ensaio Sócio-Etntográfico, Salvador: Editora Itapuã, 1968, there have been precious few works dedicated to capoeira.[5] In recent years, however, a few popular and semi-scholarly works on capoeira have appeared in print.[6]

In sum, the most salient manifestations of Afro-Bahian life and its various forms of cultural expression continue to flourish in the 1990s. Those artists and intellectuals who today steadfastly defend the way things were in the 1960s play an important and even needed role in safeguarding candomblé's and other Afro-Bahian cultural and social traditions and practices. On the other hand, I myself also agree with those who accept and even welcome the modifications and adaptations if not radical changes that continue to characterize the practice, configurations, dynamic, and social functions of candomblé as well as other forms of Afro-Bahian and, indeed, Brazilian culture and institutions in general. After all, any set of religious beliefs, despite its conservative, essential core, must adapt, for its very survival, to a fluid social and economic reality. And so it is with candomblé, capoeira, a Festa da Boa Morte, and all other manifestations of Afro-Bahian culture. The latter's continuing evolution and integration into the mainstream of Brazilian society are key to their survival and capacity to sustain a role of trans-cultural enrichment in a rapidly changing global context.

Notes

[1] Someone once observed, and I regret that I cannot recall where and by whom the assertion was made, that "the African American does not have sufficient detachment from self to create a viable mythology, but, on the other hand, he or she is too detached from self to feel a cultural tie with other peoples of African descent." It occurs to me that much of Brazil's and especially Bahia's appeal to African Americans is precisely the possibility of creating that viable mythology and forming cultural ties with a fellow people of African descent in an

American space.

[2]I might note that on August 22,1996, during a visit to the Fundação Casa de Jorge Amado, located in Salvador's historic Pelourinho disrict, I was surprised to discover, upon perusing the Foundation's library that my article had been reprinted, without my knowledge, in *Essays on Brazilian Literature*, Ed. John B. Means, New York: Selected Academic Readings Book, 1971.

[3]Especially noteworthy among the most recent works are Braga, Julio, *O Jogo de Búzios*. São Paulo: Ed. Brasiliense, 1988; Ligiero, Zeca, "Candomblé Is Religion-Life-Art." *Divine Inspiration from Benin to Bahia*, Albuquerque: U of New Mexico Press, 1992; Santos, Jocélio Teles dos. *O Dono da Terra: O Caboclo nos Candomblés da Bahia*, Salvador: Editora Sarah Letras, 1995; and Wafer, Jim, *The Taste of Blood: Spirit Possesion in Brazilian Candomblé*, Philadelphia: U. of Pennsylvania Press, 1991. Also recommended is the spectacular bilingual volume *Os Deuses Africanos no Candomblé da Bahia/African Gods in the Candomblé of Bahia*, 2nd. revised edition, Salvador: Editção Bruno Fueere, Editora Biograf, 1993, with over 130 stunning watercolors by Carybé, a forward by Antonio Carlos Magalhães, former Governor of the State of Bahia, introductions by Jorge Amado and Carybé, and texts by Pierre Verger, and Waldeloir Rego.

[4]The writers of several of the recent popular books about candomblé are themselves "gente de seita." Such is the case of José Ribeiro, author of *Magia do Candomblé*, Rio de Janeiro: Pallas, Editora e Distribuidora Ltda., 1985 (2nd edition, 1988) and Fred Aflalo's *Candomblé: Uma Visão do Mundo*, São Paulo: Mandarin 1996. One of the most readable of the popular books is Zeca Ligiéro's *Iniciação ao Candomblé*, Rio Janeiro: Coleção Iniciação, Distribuidora Record de Serviços de Imprensa S.A., 1993 (2nd. edition,1994).

[5]One of the earliest, if not the earliest, instructional manual is *Curso de Capoeira Regional: Mestre Bimba* (1957?). Sold along with a long play recording of capoeira music, the instructional booklet consists of fourteen illustrated lessons in the art of capoeira as practiced by the legendary Mestre Bimba. (The record jacket currently appears as part of a capoeira display in Salvador's Museu Afro-Brasileiro.)

[6]One such work is Almir das Areias's *O Que é Capoeira*. São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1983 (2nd edition 1984). A trio of rhapsodically fascinating works consists of Angelo A. Decanio Filho's A Herança de Mestre Bimba: *Filosofia e Lógica Africanas da Capoeira, A Herança de Pastinha: A Metafísica da Capoeira (Comentários de Trechos Selecionados do Mestre)*; and *Falando em Capoeira*. All three of these works, published by computer by the author, appeared in 1996. As Jorge Amado writes in his preface to the first volume, these are indeed a singular work.

Art for Life's Sake: Literature by Esmeralda Ribeiro, Sônia Fátima da Conceição and Miriam Alves

by Carolyn Richardson Durham

The freedom that came after the decline and demise of Brazil's military dictatorship enabled Afro-Brazilian writers to engage in the discussion of matters of race that had been prohibited for decades. Afro-Brazilian women writers of the 80's and 90's, went beyond merely attempting to produce works of art, aspiring to deal with issues that were essential to the survival of Afro-Brazilians as a people. This literature for life's sake proclaimed the worth of strong, assertive, black women, showing that the qualities of intelligence, independence, reverence for African cultural values, and love of family can empower women to successfully transform their lives. The appearance of numerous Afro-Brazilian women authors of poems, short stories, essays, novels and theater works in the 1980's was unprecedented in the history of Brazilian literature. Prior to this profusion of writers few black women had been included in the canon. With the appearance of this new group of writers came the expression of themes, perspectives, and concerns that had seldom been expressed before, inasmuch as these writers discussed matters not only of gender, but of race as well, showing how both these circumstances influenced their view of reality and their life experiences.

Three such writers—Esmeralda Ribeiro, Sônia Fátima da Conceição and Miriam Alves—are among the most influential voices of this emerging group. Their poems and short stories expose aspects of the lives of black Brazilian women that have seldom been part of a public discussion. They espouse actions that undermine the images and the life choices traditionally portrayed in Brazilian literature, offering instead, the possibility of new approaches to old situations. They write of the past, including how the legacy of slavery impinges on the present. The issues at the heart of their works provide insights into a new conceptualization of their identity, an identity which in the past had been defined by others. All three writers advocate that the Afro-Brazilian woman set her own agenda, striving for those things that are essential to her quality of life, and the well being of her family and community. While writers and social architects of the past, invariably not Afro-Brazilians, insisted on defining the black Brazilian woman in terms of her sexuality, subservience, and docility, Afro-Brazilian women writers reject those qualities, viewing them as the source of disdain that has stigmatized black women, and prevented them from acquiring the power to shape their own destinies.

Despite the fact that Ribeiro, Conceição and Alves share the desire to provide positive strategies for dealing with the challenges faced by Afro-Brazilian women, they discuss diverse aspects of life. Ribeiro focuses on the construction of black female identity, validation of black women as writers, and the recognition of the importance of the family. Conceição seeks the restoration of the strength of the black family and cultural values derived from an African past. Alves' works alternate between those with a lyrical, personal voice and those with epic concerns. Her lyrical poems often lament unfulfilled

potential. Her "epic" poetry addresses the absence of information about the history of blacks in Brazil and seeks to correct the record by recalling the events of the past that show the strength, resolve, unity, and purpose of Afro-Brazilians who were determined to achieve freedom.

Esmeralda Ribeiro seeks to reform the image of the Afro-Brazilian woman. She called for Afro-Brazilian women writers to write about themselves in order to provide an alternative identity to the one that others have written into the Brazilian literary canon. Her essay "A escritora negra e o seu ato de escrever participando" invites black women authors to "step from behind the curtain where they have long endured as domestics (61)" and to take up the pen and the assertiveness that the written word can provide. Furthermore, Ribeiro asserts that black writers must use their writing to "intervene in the political process, to help form a new national consciousness (65)." In her prose works she provides answers about whom she feels theAfro-Brazilian woman is, and can be.

Ribeiro cleverly addresses the topic of female authorship in her short story "Keep a Secret" by writing a story in which the main character has a special role in shaping the outcome of the narrative. "Keep a Secret" is the story of a teenaged girl who goes to live with her grandmother in Rio de Janeiro in order to free her parents to better make a living. She attends school every day until she meets a charming, irresistible young man who seduces her. Her grandmother, who is sometimes visited by an elderly man whose picture hangs in the living room somehow is aware of all of the teenager's activities. When the young man's mother comes to tell the girl to forget her son because she is just another black girl in a string of sexual conquests, the girl gets angry and kills both the mother and the son. The mysterious visitor speaks to her after the murder:

> "You killed Casey Jones" he interrupted my daydream. "I killed him: I responded." "How did he know about it?"
>
> I asked myself.
>
> "Bravo. That was the other end that I wanted for the lowdown Casey Jones. The writer pulled the paper from the typewriter, tore it up in little pieces and threw it in the garbage. He looked at Grandma and said. "Thank you. I thank you eternally." Then Grandma said this "You don't have to be like that, my granddaughter. We don't have to accept destiny with resignation." (501)

The story is a rewriting of *Clara dos Anjos* a famous work by Lima Barreto in which a young black woman is seduced and abandoned by a callous lover. In Ribeiro's story, in contrast, Clara takes revenge. Rather than being the passive, docile object, she becomes a subject who influences her own destiny. The ability to rewrite the story applies not only to the capacity that women can have in shaping their futures, but also is Ribeiro's narrative comment on the potential of black female authorship. Ribeiro states that in addition to wishing to portray an assertive, young black woman, unlike the passionate *mulatas* that are traditionally sexual objects in Brazilian literature, she wanted to write a story in which the concept of a supportive, loving black family, provides a foundation for the character's personal development. In this case, Ribeiro chooses to describe the sacrifice of the grandmother whose care of the grandchildren makes it possible for the

family to work and prosper. According to the author, this role as the provider of child care is typical of Afro-Brazilian grandmothers. She intentionally included this detail after observing that in the mass media and literature, Afro-Brazilians are seldom portrayed as having families. For this reason, she writes about the nurturance, love, and support of Afro-Brazilian families in many of her works.

Ribeiro addresses the need for a new national consciousness in her poem, "Serão sempre as terras do senhor?" ("Will These Always Be the Master's Lands?"). The poem examines the legitimacy of popular movements advocating that the poor lay claim to uncultivated lands in order to farm, manage natural resources, and live a better life. These issues are central to concepts such as the spread of democracy and empowerment of the disenfranchised. Apparently drawing on events in Brazil that involve poor people squatting on the untilled lands belonging to latifundistas, the poem shows parallels between the actions of the squatters and black culture heroes of past centuries. The poem asks if using these lands is consistent with the spirit of the *quilombos* where people cooperated for mutual good. The poet invokes the name of Luiza Mahín, leader of the last major slave revolt in Salvador da Bahía in 1835 to ask if striking a blow for freedom in the present day could be wrong. She wonders whether if it would be better to wait for a star from heaven to bring justice than to use uncultivated lands to relieve contemporary problems.

Questioning basic economic and social principles of latifundium upon which Brazil was built is not a traditional poetic topic. Furthermore, discussion of the ownership of the land implies numerous other topics that are relevant to the survival of Afro-Brazilians as a people, particularly in those regions where hunger and starvation result from the inability to participate in the economy. The economic displacement of people from agricultural regions that were once part of the plantation system, particularly in the northeast of Brazil, has had numerous repercussions in both rural and urban areas. Ribeiro suggests a solution to the plight of the landless in the final stanza of the poem stating that at some future time "gesteramos novos Zumbis.....para redesenhar a Nação." ("we will create new Zumbis to redesign the Nation") (*Cadernos Negros* 17, p.21). As the leader of the Quilombo dos Palmares, Zumbi led an independent nation of black people in the northeast of Brazil in the seventeenth century. By drawing this parallel, Ribeiro insinuates that revolutionary action on the part of black people is necessary to rectify their exclusion from the economic benefits of the nation.

For Sônia Fátima da Conceição, the strengthening of the Afro-Brazilian family is essential for the survival of the community. Conceição is a social worker employed by the state orphanage of São Paulo, FEBEM, whose life's work is to help abandoned children grow up to be productive adults. Much of her literature is directed toward explaining the circumstances that have produced the crisis that has resulted in the abandonment of thousands of children each year, and in describing what life is like for children who are institutionalized as well as those who survive on the street. In some works she examines the Afro-Brazilian family and the pressures that threaten the family structure.

Conceição's short stories have simple plots on the surface, but the richness of

the stories resides in the details which provide an understanding of the lives of some Afro-Brazilian people who live on the margins, struggling to survive. The story "In Cases of Love" tells of the woman who kills her lover. It explains the hostility that develops in a family when the woman is forced to be the principal breadwinner for the family because Afro-Brazilian men have been marginalized into a state or underemployment and unemployment. The story describes the psychological dynamics between the woman and her lover when he is placed in a position of dependence and she carries the burden of providing for both of them. Furthermore it tells of how such a situation leads to abuse, domestic violence and the loss of self-esteem.

Conceição shows the need to return to African cultural values and presents such a reaffirmation as a solution to problems suffered as a result of being a people captive in an alien culture in the poem "Quizilas." The text reads:

> Beija flor showww
> flies with all the friction
> accumulated in your belly button
> caste and castigation
> placed on the not initiated
> Children of Ham
> (*Finally. . .Us*, 225)

"Quizilas," a word from the African religious tradition meaning "friction," refers to a prohibition against consuming that which is forbidden in reference to the orishas. It describes a disequilibrium resulting from breaking a prohibition against using a material that represents the orisha that governs one's head. This poem deals with the Beija Flor Show—, what some would call a *mulata* show consisting, in part, of the commercialization of Afro-Brazilian religious elements for the consumption of tourists. During the show, beautiful scantily dressed mulatto women, parade, dance, and strut revealing their bodies to an audience made up primarily of foreigners. In the Bible, Ham and his children were black, and condemned to caste and castigation. Ironically, Conceição plays on the duality of the words not initiated. In this case, the children of Ham—black people—are condemned to caste and castigation, because of their lack of initiation within their own cultural context, the Afro-Brazilian religious traditions. With proper respect for those traditions, it is not likely that women would resort to displaying their belly buttons—a metaphor for denigrating the link to their ancestors and their cultural traditions. Thus, the idea of *quizilas*, or friction emanates from a lack of balance, a lack of thinking and action consistent with the well-being of the Afro-Brazilian community.

Another of Conceição's poems states "I belched the flavor of an infected fetus that grew deformed within me" (*Finally...Us*, 217). An alternate version of the poem reads "I tasted the rotten flavor of a decapitated fetus that grew deformed within my Fallopian tubes" ("Nefasto," *Cadernos Negros* 17, 76). Upon encountering these poems the reader is likely to consider what they tell about the status of health care for black women, although this is not the only possible interpretation. These brief poems bring once forbidden topics of social importance into the literary arena, highlighting issues of reproductive health that disproportionately affect Afro-Brazilian women. Thus, rather than a mere artistic expression, the poem is a statement directed toward interpreting the quality of

women's lives.

Miriam Alves' poetry describes the aspirations of black women on either a personal level or in epic proportions. While many of her poems describe her personal emotions and experiences, some of her most noteworthy works are epic in the sense that they describe the heroic actions of Afro-Brazilians of the past, who sacrificed their safety, their money, or their lives in the struggle to obtain freedom for Afro-Brazilians as a group. Miriam Alves' epic poetry provides a glimpse of the history of Afro-Brazilian people, a history that is usually omitted from the history books, or told from the point of view of the colonizer. Her poem, "Mahín amanhã," describes the Revolt of the Malês, the last major slave rebellion that took place in Salvador da Bahía in 1835 under the leadership of Luiza Mahín. Mahín, who was the mother of abolitionist and politician, Luiz Gama was later imprisoned for her participation. She is depicted as a woman whose leadership is respected by all and as the heroic force who provides the strategy for the revolt. Alves' poem paints a picture of Bahía, showing that Mahín orders to mobilize for the rebellion cascade down the slopes of the city's upper and lower divisions, passing from one African ethnic group to another. The poem describes the unity of purpose guiding the rebels, who despite differences in ethnic origins, worked together in the pursuit of freedom.

Alves' lyric poetry speaks of dreams deferred and potential waiting to unfold. Her first volume of poetry, *Estrelas no dedo*, published in 1985, enumerates many things that she has yet to do. The last poem of the book, "Quando," expresses the sense of longing to fulfill an important destiny.

Quando nada mais restar
ficam meus sonhos
dependurados vazios
presos nos prendedores de roupa

Quando nada mais restar
ficam minhas esperanças
de prontidão na curva
  da rua
tingindo o azul do horizonte
com meus gritos de fogo

Quando nada mais restar
ficam minhas lembranças
de mãos dadas
cirandando
com o que eu poderia ter sido. (50)

When nothing else may remain
my dreams go on
hanging empty
captive on the clothesline

When nothing else may remain
my hopes go on
ready at the curve
of the road
staining the blue of the sky
with my fiery shouts

When nothing else may remain
my memories go on
of hands
wringing
with what I could have been.
(My translation)

This poem, written with a highly personal tone, speaks of a goal that is not reached despite persistence. The dreams that are left dangling, the road surging endlessly toward the horizon that one never reaches, the hands wringing about what "I could have been" (50) suggest disappointment, disillusionment, unfulfilled ambitions and wasted potential. Line

10 in which the author writes of "meus gritos de fogo" ("my fiery shouts") not only expresses anger, but also resembles the opening lines from "Protesto," a poem by Carlos Assumpção, first published in 1958 that state "Even though they turn their backs on me, I will not stop shouting my fiery words" Assumpção concludes "I will shout the whole night long/ like volcanoes shout/ like storms shout/ like the sea shouts/ And not even death will be strong enough to silence me." (*Protesto*, 45, my translation.)

Assumpção's poem not only enjoyed a warm reception from the critic Sérgio Milliet (Camargo, 91), but also is tremendously popular with Afro-Brazilian authors and readers. In "Protesto" Assumpção recalls the victimization and sacrifice of his enslaved ancestors and laments their exclusion from the benefits of the nation, despite the fact that their labor and personal hardship contributed to building the foundation of Brazil. By including a similar line in her poem, Alves taps on the reader's likely familiarity with Assumpção's earlier poem and thus calls to mind the discrimination and the litany of suffering already enumerated in "Protesto." The Afro-Brazilian public, therefore, can place her poem into a context that allows them to infer that not only is Alves speaking of being alienated from the accomplishment of her goals, but that she is stating that the cause of this alienation is the racism and discrimination that characterize Brazil. Certainly, disappointment is a universal possibility. Yet, realizing the limitations placed on Black women by contemporary Brazilian society, the informed reader would understand why such a poem would have particular resonance for the author who writes for a reader who shares the same characteristics of gender and race.

In conclusion, Ribeiro, Conceição, and Alves tell things about Brazilian life that other authors are reluctant to address. Their iconoclastic, revolutionary, and assertive viewpoints challenge social, political, and artistic authority. Works by Ribeiro, Conceição and Alves are in the best tradition of the African diaspora. Their poems, recited in public forums, are internalized by the public who participates in the performance with call and response, echoing the most memorable verses. Their short stories, published by Quilombhoje, an Afro-Brazilian literary organization, reach a wider public with each passing year. In Africa, life and art were one. Conceição, Alves, and Ribeiro, likewise, produce art for life's sake.

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Political Voices from the Black Brazilian Newspaper **Quilombo**

by Doris J. Turner

When the black Brazilian movement known as the Teatro Experimental do Negro (African Brazilian Experimental Theater) published the first issue of its newspaper in 1948, a book of essays on race relations in Brazil in 1950, a dramatic work in 1957, and an anthology of black Brazilian plays in 1961, it was clear that the movement had become a center for its own publications.[1] These are not insignificant writings, for they provide primary documentation on the views, aspirations, and frustrations of many African Brazilians in their quest for self-affirmation, integration, and racial equality. They also reiterate some of the conflictual views on race that had been held by black and white Brazilians since the early 1900s. From among the writings, above, the movement's newspaper, *Quilombo Black Life, Problems and Aspirations*, perhaps best documents many of the daily racial concerns of black Brazilians as well as the kind of racial, cultural, and sociopolitical education that the black theater movement prescribed.

Published from December 1948 to July 1950, and consisting of nine issues, *Quilombo*[2] (the official newspaper of the Teatro Experimental do Negro) was created in the nation's capital at a time when the political climate in Brazil was generally tolerant of a variety of social and political views and activities. For those who interrogated Brazil's time-honored reputation as a racial democracy, however, tolerance quickly vanished. Thus when *Quilombo* raised its voice to contest Brazil's racial arrangement, especially through its attempts to educate and mobilize blacks politically, the weight of the dominant society's reprimanding voice was felt.

Because concrete examples of white hostility, especially to any suggestion of black political activism, can be culled from white mainstream newspapers of the period, the present paper examines *Quilombo*'s attempts to negotiate racial politics and some of the responses from the mainstream press of Rio de Janeiro to that kind of bargaining. First, however, a few comments on those journals that are *Quilombo*'s ancestors—the early black Brazilian press—are in order.

The first black newspaper to appear in Brazil is believed to be *O Menelik*,[3] published in São Paulo in 1915 and dedicated "to colored men" (Bastide 52). Although *O Menelik* debuted when the war in Europe was still being waged, that conflict was not one of its concerns. Rather the paper, like others, focused on social events, local gossip, black accomplishments, and black patriotism. An example of the latter is found in a 1918 issue of *O Bandeirante*: "Brazil is our country. Let us be Brazilians...first, above all else!" (qtd. in Ferrara 91). Intrinsic to that love of country, was the blacks' longing for the "fusion of the races," which was, for the majority of them, "the primordial condition of nationality." To challenge either ideal, one black newspaper asserts, "is to lack patriotism, is to wound and to stain our country's desire, and is to impede the formative evolution of nationality. It is a crime, it is perversity..." (qtd. in Ferrara 91).

Besides *O Menelik*, other journals that

participated in the first phase of the black press's development (1915-1923) are: *A Princesa do Oeste* (1915), *O Xauter* (1916), *O Alfinete* (1918), *O Bandeirante* (1918), *Kosmos* (1922), and *Getulino* (1923), to mention but a few.[4] Usually affiliated with local black social clubs or recreational associations, these early papers operated on a small scale and were either distributed gratis or sold for a modest fee to community dwellers. They "were not originally intended to be anything more than transmitters of local gossip and sources of information about the affairs of the clubs. However, they could not avoid incorporating the racial grievances expressed by club members into their own medium..." (Mitchell 126-127). *O Alfinete*, for example, is believed to have been the first black newspaper to express the grievance that in Brazil "the equality and fraternity of peoples, ... which the Republic implanted as a symbol of our democracy, is, as concerns the blacks, a fiction and a lie which until today have not been placed into practice" (qtd. in Andrews 139). However, the demand for equal rights began in the pages of the *Getulino*, founded in 1923, in the city of Campinas, São Paulo. That demand was first registered in a Campinas black newspaper, rather than in one from the city of São Paulo (as one might have expected), because Campinas was "a more racist city than São Paulo, where the pressures against the Negro were strong" (Ferrara 54). Clearly, the early black press covered events, issues, and problems that the white mainstream newspapers ignored about life and views in black Brazilian communities.

After the turn of the century, when African Brazilians (especially those in São Paulo) saw themselves marginalized by governmental policies and by the influx of European immigrants, black newspapers, like black clubs and associations, served as psychological buffers against the painful reality of race and color discrimination. Despite the daily injustices and humiliations endured by African Brazilians, the commentaries in their newspapers reveal that they opposed neither the political system nor the social structure. To the contrary, they supported both. They only asked that the dominant society permit, once they educated themselves, their assimilation and integration into the existing social order.

The second period in the evolution of the black Brazilian press (1924-1937), produced such newspapers as *O Clarim da Alvorada* (1924), *Elite* (1924), *O Patrocínio* (1928), *Chibata* (1932), *A Voz da Raça* (1933), and *A Alvorada* (1936). From among these papers, only two emerged as the most prominent voices for racial uplift and equality: *O Clarim da Alvorada*, created in 1924 by José Correia Leite and Jayme de Aguiar and *A Voz da Raça*, created in 1933 as the official organ for the first African Brazilian socio-political movement to operate on a national scale, the Frente Negra Brasileira (FNB, Black Brazilian Front). With the appearance of *O Clarim da Alvorada*, a new phase in the black press began. The paper not only gave attention to black literature and culture but "played a pioneering role in heightening the political and racial consciousness of Afro-Brazilians" in São Paulo (Mitchell 128). In fulfilling its role as a racial unifier and a voice of moral authority, the paper also registered the common sufferings of blacks: "Oh! heads of families, do not despair before the miseries and difficulties that we are confronting... Take courage!

Struggle with fervor, tell your loved ones that we must be more powerful, freeing our race from the terrible emblem, which aggrieves us innumerable times: 'Slave.' Friends and readers, do not despair, united we will accomplish all that we can" (qtd. in E. Nascimento 79). Despite such declarations, *O Clarim* was, at first, mainstream in orientation as it worked to establish closer relations with whites and to foster the belief that race prejudice was nonexistent in Brazil (Fernandes 196; Andrews 139). After 1928, however, the paper became more combative and more political, and during that phase it finally acknowledged that "in Brazil racial equality is a lie" (qtd. in Andrews 139).

A Voz da Raça, a bimonthly, published news for the Frente and supported its fundraising campaigns. The paper "sought donations to build a headquarters for the organization, a medical and dental center, and primary schools for Afro-Brazilian adults. [It] also encouraged the creation of literary clubs, theaters, and libraries. However, most of the journalistic campaigns were directed at exposing discrimination in southern Brazil and at building membership in the FNB" (Taylor 33). In 1936, the FNB celebrated its fifth anniversary with an address by its president, Justiniano Costa, over a nationwide hookup, which was later published in *A Voz da Raça* (Ramos 173). That same year, with membership numbering in the thousands,[5] the FNB registered as a political party. The following year, when President Getúlio Vargas established the repressive Estado Novo, all political parties were banned; so, too, were the Frente Negra and its newspaper, *A Voz da Raça*. Commenting on some of the differences between the two newspapers, *O Clarim da Alvorada* and *A Voz da Raça*, and those published by black social clubs, Andrews writes that the latter "preferred to focus on the dances and parties of the black elite, and did their best to ignore troublesome racial, social, and political issues. Inevitably, however, such issues intruded on the lives of upwardly mobile and ambitious blacks, forcing even the society papers into printing editorials, opinion pieces, and letters to the editor..." (128).

From 1937 to 1943, Brazilians lived in a tightly controlled society in which social and political behavior was monitored and, when necessary, purged. By 1944, with the war in Europe ending and because Brazil had sent troops overseas to help in the fight for democracy, the repressive Vargas regime was openly challenged. Everywhere in the country there was talk of a return to democracy. Political activity resurfaced and political parties flourished. Buoyed by the national political fervor, by the upcoming 1945 elections, and by thoughts of a new constitution, African Brazilians likewise envisioned themselves participating in a democractic society. In this ambience, black newspapers and black associations were reestablished by activists who seized the opportunity to work openly for civil rights.

The first significant black newspaper to appear in that 1945 period of democratic euphoria was *Alvorada*, the official organ of the new São Paulo community-based Associação dos Negros Brasileiros (ANB, the Association of Black Brazilians), directed by Fernando Goes and two black leaders from the old Frente Negra days: José Correia Leite and Raul Joviano Amaral. During its initial phase, the *Alvorada* gained many black supporters because of "its consistent advocacy of Black independence from the political

entanglements which proliferated in Brazil's multiparty system after 1945" (Mitchell 156). Despite its early popularity, the ANB, unable to attract sufficient membership, was forced to cease operations in 1948, which, in turn, brought about the end of its newspaper (Ferrara 78). Other notable black journals that were first published between 1945 and 1950, the year marking the limits of this present study, are: *Novo Horizonte* (1945), *Senzala* (1946), *União* (1948), *Quilombo* (1948), *Mundo Novo* (1950), and *Redenção* (1950).

A year before *Alvorada* and its parent organization first appeared, the Teatro Experimental do Negro (TEN) was created in the nation's capital. Founded and directed by Abdias do Nascimento, TEN became one of the most sustained, dynamic, and controversial black movements in Brazil. Under Nascimento's leadership, TEN worked to encourage blacks to be proud of their heritage and of their blackness and to facilitate the social, cultural, political, and economic integration of blacks into mainstream Brazilian society. To help realize those goals, TEN developed in three distinct directions: as a theatrical and cultural organization, as an organizer of national black forums, and as a center for its own publications. Throughout its precarious existence, TEN maneuvered through narrow openings in walls of resistance, which were constantly erected in its path. Despite obstacles, the black theater movement managed to stay active until 1968, the year when its founder/ director left Brazil for the United States.

In December 1948, after four years of training black actors and sponsoring theatrical performances, socio-cultural programs, and national black conventions, TEN was finally able to create its own newspaper, *Quilombo*. It was an attractive and professional black journal, published in an office of the mainstream Rio daily *Jornal do Brasil*. The paper's stated objective was: "To work for the valorization of the black Brazilian in all sectors: social, cultural, educational, political, economic, and artistic." That objective, along with a five point plan for realizing it, appeared in the first five issues of *Quilombo*, in the column called "Our Program." Its size was 11 by 17 inches; the length of the first two issues was eight pages, the remaining issues had twelve pages. Initially planned to circulate on the first working day of each month, *Quilombo*, like most community newspapers, was published on an irregular basis. "Supposedly, it was a monthly, but with neither money nor advertisements,[6] living on loans, it didn't have the means to establish a regular life. Guerreiro Ramos[7] was one person who got into trouble financially supporting the paper" (Nascimento and Nascimento 37-38).

Copies were sold by TEN members door to door, at dance halls, and at black associational meetings for 1.50 to 3 cruzeiros. Frequently, issues were given to community dwellers free of charge. To encourage a wider readership and help with operating costs, subscribers were sought from other black associations, from white friends of the movement, and from sources outside of Brazil.[8] Under Nascimento's editorship, *Quilombo* reached out to readers through a variety of discourses: editorials, photographs, biographries, illustrations, cultural and literary essays, and racial and sociopolitical commentaries. While commentaries related to black politics were minimal in *Quilombo*, nonetheless, they ignited strong resent-

ments from the mainstream press.

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In the front-page editorial of the inaugural issue of *Quilombo*, Nascimento discusses the purpose of his newspaper. It is not, he writes, to create a racial problem, since the problem of color and racial discrimination has already been noted and well documented by such reputable Brazilian scholars as Artur Ramos and Gilberto Freyre. Rather, *Quilombo*'s mission is to help blacks realize what they as Brazilian citizens already have theoretically: equality of opportunities and obligations. Despite constitutional guarantees, he continues, we must be vigiliant and "reject the 'color line' that day by day is growing in our social relations, trying to exile us in our country and in our spirit." Nascimento ends the editorial with a statement on *Quilombo*'s political stance:

> We have nothing to do with political parties, neither with the so-called democratic parties of the right nor of the left, which always exploit blacks at the polls...Even less are we advocating black politics, but rather, a black willingness to be Brazilians with the same responsibilities as all other Brazilians. (*Quilombo* 9 December 1948)

The only words in the second issue of *Quilombo* that echo that professed disinterest in politics are found in the paper's coverage of the TEN-sponsored National Black Conference of 1949. The conference, we are told, holds no "aggressive intention" or "connection with an ideology or with political parties" (*Quilombo* 9 May 1949). Such assurances, which frequently surfaced whenever black writers or spokespersons entertained troublesome racial discussions, were expressed to allay white fears that blacks might not be peace-loving Brazilian. For although black Brazilians knew that whites were accessible and usually willing to help them, they also knew that whites had a "horror of the black population's demonstrations that [whites] could not guide correctly and discretely" (Fernandes 141). Despite those understandings, issue three reveals Nascimento's determination to guide his readers on his terms. The first sign of that mind-set in *Quilombo* appears in Nascimento's front-page editorial, "The Succession and Us." Without endorsing or mentioning any political party, Nascimento writes that black Brazilians should unite as voters for the forthcoming elections of 3 October 1950, because blacks represent more than a million votes, thus they have the potential to decide an election. He urges blacks to seek out candidates who have "the daring to raise with us the banner of tangible opportunities for equality since our civil rights are safe-guarded only in the words of the Constitution, which controls our destinies" (*Quilombo* June 1949). Moreover, blacks should vote for black candidates "who speak to and defend the aspirations of those millions of Brazilians systematically banished from high office as if the Republic wished to keep them away from definitive integration within the country" (*Quilombo* June 1949). This theme would be echoed in other issues, for Nascimento was determined to make as many blacks as possible aware of their political responsibilities. But in a society where "black Brazilian leaders...have historically been quite sensitive to...white fears of

racial conflict, and have tried to avoid forms of political action which whites might perceive as threatening" (Andrews 186), Nascimento's pronouncements were lightning rods.

Responses to *Quilombo*'s attempt to mobilize black voters were immediate. After reading the third issue of *Quilombo*, the noted Brazilian novelist Fernando Sabino wrote in a mainstream Rio newspaper an article entitled "Semente de Ódio" ("Seed of Hate"). In it, Sabino denounced *Quilombo*'s call to blacks to organize as blacks as well as Nascimento's contention that black Brazilians had problems unlike those of other Brazilians:

> I don't believe that in our country Negroes have a separate life, specific problems or aspirations peculiar to [them]. To begin with, I don't really know who is a Brazilian Negro. In countries where the races are segregated —and thank God that is not yet...our case—the Negro is anyone who has African blood in his or her veins. If we were to apply such a discriminatory criterion in Brazil, whites would be a minority. That would be racial discrimination, abritrary as all are...And that is what *Quilombo* is doing.... I would prefer that *Quilombo* reflect the life, problems, and aspirations of the Brazilian people in general. To create a journal, patterned after its American kin, that is the spokesperson for only one race,...is to work, unconsciously, to implant in Brazil, definitively, that same problem. (*Diário Carioca* 16 July 1949)

Perhaps because other articles similar to that of Sabino's began appearing, the July 1949 *Quilombo* (issue four) was silent on the elections. Six months elapsed before the next *Quilombo* left the press, and when it appeared, in January 1950, it carried only one politically directed article, "The Negro and the Elections." Here the writer, mindful of the censure *Quilombo* would receive for a renewed attempt at black politics, merely reminds blacks that they have a secret ballot, that it is their obligation to vote, and that they should vote for candidates sensitive to racial problems. By issue six, racial politics resurface in *Quilombo*'s front-page editorial, "Black and Mulatto Candidates." Nascimento, again undaunted by the ongoing challenges to his movement, speaks of political parties' obligations to blacks and of the blacks' obligation to become politically involved: "We are almost twenty million mestizo Brazilians strongly characterized by our African ancestry, demanding, in the name of democracy, a corresponding number of openings for black and mulatto candidates interested in the patriotic and humanitarian task of elevating the social, cultural, economic, and political patterns of the black masses" (*Quilombo* February 1950). By drawing attention to the number of blacks in the nation, Nascimento attempts to make blacks and whites aware of the potential power of a unified black electorate. Further, encouraging blacks to run for political offices and to vote for black or white candidates who are known supporters of black advancement, directs them, implicitly, to envision themselves as potential leaders and lawmakers. To attenuate the boldness of his words, Nascimento ends the editorial on a conciliatory note, explaining that once black Brazilians achieve equality, it will no longer be necessary to focus on the skin color of political candidates.

The February 1950 publication also ran a special section called "Political Forum,"

which appeared only once before, in issue three. In both of these sections, almost full-page coverage was given to two prominent white individuals, both of whom were planning to run for the office of deputy from the Federal District. In the "Political Forum" of issue three, the wealthy Rio industrialist Jael de Oliveira Lima was interviewed. When asked his views on the racial situation in Brazil, the industrialist replied: In "Brazil there is no racial problem. Here individuals of all races (mixing blood, sweat, and work for the good of the country) live together harmoniously." The second prominent white figure, presented in the "Political Forum" of issue six, was Eurico de Oliveira, founder of the mainstream daily, *Diário Trabalhista*. *Quilombo* encouraged blacks to vote for both men: for Oliveira Lima, because of his efforts to improve the living conditions of slum dwellers; for De Oliveira, because of his work for the poor and because he created a section in his newspaper—"Problemas e Aspirações do Negro Brasileiro" ("Problems and Aspirations of the Brazilian Negro")—for blacks to air their concerns.

There was no March issue of *Quilombo*; therefore, to suggest continuity, the April edition was released as the March/April 1950 issue, number 7/8. Now, with only six months remaining before voters would go to the polls, this edition gave relatively more space than any of the previous issues to the elections and to the presentation of black candidates. The increased political coverage coincided with Nascimento's having been nominated to run for alderman. In the lead front-page editorial, Nascimento discusses the importance of his candidacy, stating that his running for a municipal office in the capital marks "a logical and natural stage in the development of [TEN's] search for the means to accelerate the integration of blacks and whites in Brazil..." Photographs capturing celebrants at a political gathering honoring Nascimento cover the entire final page of the April issue. Another article tells readers that, at the affair, Guerreiro Ramos and several others spoke on Nascimento's sustained contributions to the black community and on the importance of his being elected. The article ends assuring readers that black support for black candidates is absolutely unrelated to segregation, "rather it relates to the contribution of the Negro in various sectors of national life. To give value to the human element, whatever the color, is to value Brazil." Nowhere in this or any other issue of *Quilombo* is it mentioned that Brazilians will also be voting in October for a president or that one of the presidential candidates is the ex-dictator, Getúlio Vargas.

The strongest political voices in the March/April 1950 issue came from two articles, each a transcription of two letters that had already been sent to the political parties. The first was written by Nascimento; the other, a political manifesto, was drafted by a black commission. Nascimento's letter asked party leaders to send to the *Quilombo* printing office the names, addresses, and party affiliation of black and mulatto candidates running for political offices in the capital. Once the information arrived and the candidates interviewed, the results, he wrote, would be disseminated in the black community by way of *Quilombo*. By publicizing information on African Brazilian candidates, Nascimento reasoned, TEN would fulfill one of its objectives: to stimulate the political development of blacks by informing them of their

political responsibility and of the merits of racially enlightened individuals running for political office.

The manifesto, written by a group called the "Democratic Commission for Raising the Moral and Material Level of the Negro and to Combat Prejudices against Colored Men in the State of Rio," opens with a challenge to political leaders. "We bring to the attention of the directors of political parties that colored men and women, affiliated with this commission will never vote in the forthcoming elections for candidates whose party does not include at least the names of three colored Brazilians of known competence" (*Quilombo* March/April 1950). The unnamed columnist introduces the manifesto, which bears the names of three members of the commission, with words of praise for the courageous commission members "who give us the most beautiful testimony of the political maturity of the colored population of the state of Rio." The writer's introductory words, which focus on politically enlightened blacks, seem to have been written to prompt more blacks to emulate the racial assertiveness of the members of that black commission.

During the month of April, with racial politics in *Quilombo* increased, responses to the paper, by the mainstream press, seemed more hostile. This appeared clear when, on 13 April 1950, the Rio daily, *O Globo*, published a two column, front-page article with headlines exclaiming: "Racismo, no Brasil!" ("Racism, in Brazil!"). Beneath those dreaded words was a photograph of Nascimento and the caption "Abdias do Nascimento ...wants to be the candidate of blacks." The anonymous writer registered disbelief that in Brazil anyone would suggest that a black Brazilian would run as a black candidate:

> Black theaters, black newspapers, clubs for blacks...But this is imitation, pure and simple, of the pernicious type. Now one hears of black candidates for the October elections. Can you imagine a worse and more harmful movement against the indisputable spirit of our democratic formation. (*O Globo* 13 April 1950)

The incensed columnist advised readers to combat such a movement immediately: if not, "instead of white prejudice we will have black prejudice."

During the same period, other mainstream Rio newspapers also registered alarm to Nascimento's attempt to raise the political consciousness of the coloreds. The *Vanguarda* implied that Nascimento was a racist black fascist, using TEN and his newspaper to elevate himself politically. To those accusations Nascimento, in an interview with a *Vanguarda* reporter, said: "My realizations, as leader of the Teatro Experimental do Negro, since 1944, and as director of the newspaper *Quilombo*, amply bear witness to my firm and fearless position against racism." TEN was never created to foment a class struggle, he continued, "rather it was inspired by cooperation. It did not have as its motto segregation; rather, unification" (*Vanguarda* 18 April 1950).

When issue nine of *Quilombo* was released, in May 1950, two counter-responses to *O Globo* appeared on page five along with a reprint of the original 13 April *Globo* piece. The three articles, covering almost half the page, were positioned in parallel columns, side by side. The first response, in English, was a reprint from the *Pittsburgh Courier*, written by the Brazilian correspondent to

that African American newspaper, João Conceição.[9] The article, in English, was placed between the *Globo*'s and the third article, written by Nascimento about three weeks after the appearance of the *Globo* piece.

After providing a résumé of the *Globo* article for North American readers, Conceição states that the *Globo*'s verbal aggression surfaced simply to silence blacks and to prevent their participation in politics. Nascimento's article, a reprint from the mainstream *Folha do Rio*, denounces the *Globo* for insisting that black citizens organize only "to separate from whites, to fight whites, and to create a nonexistent racial problem." Although Nascimento states that racial hatred is nonexistent in Brazil, he also states: "deny color prejudice? Never!" His article ends with a plea to the powerful for support and understanding: "It is neither just nor honest that a balanced movement for black affirmation [TEN], inspired by the idea of cooperation [and] an ever more perfect integration of blacks and whites, be defamed, disrespected, and violated by the powerful who ought to be the first to help morally and materially a cause with such high and patriotic goals" (*Quilombo* May 1950).

Challenges to *Quilombo* and to Nascimento's political ambitions continued to appear in the mainstream press. Newspapers like *O Mundo*, for instance, sought, through ridicule, to neutralize any popular appeal that *Quilombo*'s editor might have garnered in black communities through his social activism. Thus, a few months after the *Vanguarda* had suggested that Nascimento was a black fascist, *O Mundo* ran two brief articles on political candidates. The first lamented the thousands of political aspirants in the nation's capital, some of whom were "absolute illiterates." The second focused exclusively on Nascimento, mocking his political ambitions, while besmirching his character:

> Abdias wants to be an alderman. But it's all really about a gentleman toasted by the sun, who through skill, goes around speaking on racial prejudice while exploiting the good faith of black Brazilians .... In truth, this Abdias is a totally crafty individual, disguised as an artist and leader, but he's actually a leader of unwary brunettes who believe his line of "discoverer" of talent for the theater.... Now tired of deceiving "mulatinhas," Abdias has resolved to exploit colored men also by developing an insincere and abusive campaign in a land where blacks have the same rights and obligations as whites. (*O Mundo* 7 June 1950)

Even the well-known black poet and founder of the Teatro Popular Brasileiro (Popular Brazilian Theater), Solano Trindade, participated in these verbal assaults.[10] In the August 1950 issue of the Rio paper *Tribuna da Imprensa*, Solano said he believed that Nascimento was involved in socio-racial activities for political gain. Moreover, Solano claimed, "Senhor Abdias has been doing everything to discredit the original spirit of our movement, as one can perceive throughout his writings in *Quilombo*. Abdias is on the road to becoming a true 'Rei do Congo'" ("King of the Congo").[11]

When the June/July 1950 issue of *Quilombo* arrived in homes and at black associational meetings, it must have been clear to the readers that the paper had lost none of its political tone. On page three, they read: "Our struggle did not begin today. There can be no truce and we will not rest as long as we have not achieved all of the high objectives to which we

have guided the campaign for the readjustment of the Brazilian Negro." The article asked the black community to vote in October for "the valiant director of the movement for the social integration of blacks and whites," Abdias do Nascimento. A few pages later, *Quilombo* spotlights and endorses Nascimento and four other political candidates. But the most provocative piece on the same page is a political cartoon of two scenes. In the first scene, a tall white man, with his right arm upraised, speaks smilingly to a short black man. In the nearby background is a *favela* (slum homes on a hill). In the second scene, the white man angrily lifts his right foot as if to kick at or step on the black man, who looks at his aggressor in surprise. The caption beneath the cartoon reads "Antes e Depois Das Eleições" ("Before and after the Elections"). For readers, blacks and whites, who affirmed, in 1950, that their society was racially harmonious and who, therefore, eschewed contentious racial opinions, the cartoon was surely viewed as one of the most divisive statements from the pages of *Quilombo*.

After July of 1950, *Quilombo* was published no more. When election day arrived, Nascimento lost at the polls as did other black activists. Apparently black voters—despite the social, cultural, and political education provided for them by black newspapers, black organizations, and black experiences—were still unprepared to see blacks in the role of political leadership. At that time, they knew that the voice of power and authority came from whites, so they voted for whites. Six days after the elections, the black activist José Pompílio da Hora summed up the situation in his newspaper column, "A Voz do Negro" ("The Black Voice"): "When election day arrives, our votes immediately lose their color—black, and elect the wizards of our never attained equality, fraternity, and justice... My race, educate your sons and daughters, even if with sacrifices and privations, educate them for the good of Brazil" (qtd. in Pinto 264). As for Nascimento's failure at the polls, Brazilian sociologist Luís Costa Pinto suggests that, along with the black Brazilians' propensity to vote for white candidates, Nascimento lost because of a political maneuver by his own party (234).

Andrews, considering the black Brazilians' tendency to vote for white rather than for black candidates, writes that many blacks and black organizations veered away from any semblance of black confrontational politics because of fear, preferring to support innocuous cultural, educational, and racial uplift programs. But even when they they opted for the latter, according to Andrews:

> fears of black militance persisted, even during a period like the 1950s, when such militance remained very limited in scope and made virtually no impact on the Brazilian political system. The weakness of black movements at this time was partly the result of the bitter experiences of the Black Front, which dissuaded many Afro-Brazilians from trying to mobilize the black population along racial lines. (186)

TEN's official organ, *Quilombo*, lacking funds and offering racial messages and opinions that frequently collided with those of the dominant society, lasted less than two years. *Quilombo* may be viewed by some as just another black Brazilian newspaper whose racial and political voices helped to hasten its demise. But as

an historical document, the newspaper continues to live as it unveils, throughout its 100 pages, social, cultural, and political views on black/ white relations in the Brazil of December 1948 to July 1950. *Quilombo*'s voices, like the troubled, hopeful voices from the early black Brazilian press, can still be read and heard. In numerous ways the voices from *Quilombo* reflect the black Brazilians' ongoing conflicted quest for racial identity, cultural pride, and uncompromised equality. In numerous ways they also reflect the racial hopes, anxieties, and frustrations of many presentday African Brazilians who yet struggle for an audible political voice.

Notes

[1]The referred-to works are, respectively, *Quilombo: Vidas, Problemas e Aspirações do Negro* (Rio de Janeiro: Teatro Experimental do Negro, 1948-1950); *Relações de Raças* (Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca do Instituto Nacional do Negro (Orgão de Pesquisa do Teatro Experimental do Negro, Edições *Quilombo*, 1950); *Sortilégio: Mistério Negro* (Rio de Janeiro: Teatro Experimental do Negro, 1957); and *Dramas para Negros e Prólogo para Brancos: Antologia de Teatro Negro Brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Teatro Experimental do Negro, 1961).

[2]The word *quilombo* refers to communities of runaway slaves that were formed in colonial Brazil. The movement's newspaper was given the name *Quilombo* to symbolize the continued struggle for freedom by Africans and their descendants.

[3]According to Roger Bastide the *Menelik* was named "in honor of the great king of the black race, Menelik II, who died in 1913" (52). José Correia Leite, the black activist and founder of several black Brazilian newspapers, states that the *Menelik* owes its name "to the fact that Ethiopia was the first independent country of Africa, and...in Brazil, principally in São Paulo, the Italians nicknamed the blacks 'menelik'" (qtd. in Ferrara 52). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.

[4]In her book, Ferrara studies the black Brazilian press of São Paulo from its beginning, in 1915, up through 1963, one year before the Brazilian military took control of the country. She divides the black press in three distinct periods: 1915-1923; 1924-1937; 1945-1963 (51).

[5]See Andrews's comments on the number of members in the FNB (149).

[6]All issues of *Quilombo*, except numbers one and six, carry some advertisements, albeit limited.

[7]African Brazilian sociologist, writer, and scholar, Guerreiro Ramos was born 13 September 1915 in Santo Amaro, Bahia. In 1939, he moved to Rio; in the late 1940s, he accepted Nascimento's invitation to work with TEN. Along with Nascimento and Edison Carneiro, Ramos planned and participated in TEN's 1949 Convenção National do Negro and its 1950 Congresso do Negro. In 1949 he was named director of the then newly created Institute National do Negro. (For more information on Guerreiro Ramos, consult "Cartaz: Guerreiro Ramos," in *Quilombo* May 1950) 2.

[8]In the *Quilombo* May 1949 section called "Cartas" ("Letters"), the acting curator of the New York Public Library (Jean Blackwell) and the New York editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier* (George S. Schuyler) wrote separate letters to Nascimento to thank him for having sent them the first issue of *Quilombo*. Blackwell and Schuyler requested receipt of all future copies of the paper so as to have, eventually, all issues. Further attesting to outside promotional support for *Quilombo* is the January 1950 issue of the paper that carries a translated reprint of an article, originally written in English by George S. Schuyler of the *Pittsburgh Courier*. In the article, Schuyler addressed Negro high school and college students and encouraged

them to learn Portuguese and to subscribe to *Quilombo*.

[9]The announcement that João Conceição had become the Brazilian correspondent to the *Pittsburgh Courier* appears in the January 1950 issue of *Quilombo*. Prior to assuming that position, Conceição had been serving as general director of *Quilombo*.

[10]Solano Trindade (1908-1973), is today one of the best known African Brazilian poets. His principal book of poetry is *Cantares ao meu povo* (São Paulo: Fulgor, 1961); his most cited poem, "Quem Tá Gemendo?" For additional information on Solano Trindade see *Quilombo* (July 1949) 2; David Brookshaw, *Race and Color in Brazilian Literature* (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, 1986) 217-221; Zilá Bernd, *Negritude e Literatura na América Latina* (Porto Alegre: Editora Mercado Aberto, n.d.) 86-96.

[11]According to the *Tribuna*, the expression "King of the Congo" refers to a black selected by high government officials to confuse and suppress liberation movements by the slaves.

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Tropes of the Talking Book: Olaudah Equiano Between Three Worlds

by Alessandro Portelli

"We'll make a book out of you!"
"Ah!" he replies with his vanishing voice, grateful for the line she has, in her wisdom, thrown him. "But a talking book mamma! A *talking book*. . . !"
Robert Coover, *Pinnocchio in Venice*[1]

The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African (London, 1789)[2] is generally recognized as a founding text of both the African American tradition and the genre of the slave narrative. It is, however, much more: a narrative that straddles three continents, Africa, Europe, and America. Born in Benin, Equiano is one of the few early writers who testify to a vivid memory of Africa; on the other hand, unlike subsequent slave narratives, he does not end his story with his emancipation, but goes on to describe his life and travels as a free man. On one occasion, these travels also take him to the coast of Central America, where he attempts to establish a plantation for his English employer and has an intense cultural encounter with the Musquito natives.

In this paper, which is part of a more general study of Equiano's work, I will discuss a specific image, that of the "talking book," which occurs twice in Equiano's book, as an example of the author's complex cultural identity and of his ambivalent, crucial position not only between Africa and Europe, but also between Africa, Europe, and America.

1. The Indian in the Book

According to Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the trope of the talking book is the "urtrope of the Anglo African tradition."[3] It first appears in the narrative of Albert Ukasaw Gronniosaw (1770): the narrator puts his ear close to the book he has seen his master read, "in great hopes that it would say something to me." When the book remains silent, his reaction is that "every body and every thing" despised me because I was black."[4] The silence of the book is, then, the equivalent in language and sound to the visual mortification experienced by Equiano when, comparing himself with the rosy face of a childhood friend, he became aware of his color: both the mirror and the book reflected back to the narrators the acquired meaning of their blackness.

By the time we find the trope of the talking book in Equiano, it had gone through the revisions of John Marrant and Ottobah Cugoano, and lost some of its emotional impact. The book does not speak to Equiano, but he does not think this silence is a response to his blackness. Indeed, he relegates the episode to the naïveté of childhood by carefully separating the time of the story from the time of discourse:

> I had often seen my master and [his friend] Dick employed in reading; and I had a great curiosity to talk to the books, as I thought they did; and so to learn how all things had a beginning. For that purpose I have often taken up a book, and talked to it, and then put my

> ears to it, when alone, in hopes it would answer me; and I have been vew much concerned when I found it remaining silent. (44)

As Gates has demonstrated, the trope of the tally book is one of the ways in which Equiano, like other Anglo-African authors, "names his relation to Western culture."[5] The trope, however, is not exclusive to African tradition: it is embedded in the form of catachesis in the very fabric of most Western languages (the book "says," "tells," "speaks about"), and is used by white authors to name, in turn, their relation to non-Western cultures. The African American use of the trope reactivates the metaphor as a memory of the transition from a speech-oriented to a print-oriented environment, both in chronological terms (the evolution of printing) and in geographical ones (the confrontation between literate and non-literate cultures in both Africa and America).

Three out of the first four Anglo African and African American occurrences of the talking book also include a reference to the Indians. The trope of the talking book, therefore, is rooted in the violent beginnings of the contemporary world: slavery and colonization. It outlines the map of a triangular relationship between white and red, black and white, black and red. Indeed, we do not grasp the full meaning of the black narratives of the talking book unless we consider the role of the Indians.

The Indian presence in the narratives of the talking book is a founding myth of the European conquest of America. As Equiano knew through the work of his friend Cugoano, the trope of the talking book originates in the narratives of the encounter between Francisco Pizarro and Inca Atahualpa. When the Spaniards told them that the Bible was the foundation of their claim over his kingdom, Atahualpa asked to see the book; he then put his ear to it and threw it on the ground saying that it did not say anything to him. The Spaniards seized on this "sacrilege" as an excuse to seize him on charges of blasphemy.[6]

An attenuated and often overlooked reference is to be found in another influential ur-narrative of European-Indian encounter leading to conquest, John Smith's *General History of Virginia*. Taken captive by the Indians, Smith manages to send messengers with a note to Jamestown, asking for goods to exchange for his freedom. The message is delivered and the messengers return with the goods, "to the wonder of all that heard it, that he could either divine, or the paper could speak."[7]

It is no wonder, then, that the first African American occurrence of the trope[8], in the narrative of John Marrant (1785), reads as a "curious inversion" of and "capping" on Gronniosaw (as Gates notes), but also as a repetition and revision of Smith, including the Pocahontas motif. Like Smith, Marrant is taken prisoner by the Indians; like him, he is on the point of execution. The king's daughter, standing at Marrant's side, opens and kisses his Bible "and seemed very much delighted with it." Marrant reads from the Bible, and explains to the king that the "Being" whose name is in the book "made heaven and earth":

> I then pointed to the sun, and asked him who made the sun, and moon, and stars, and preserved them in their regular order? He said there was a man in their town that did it. I laboured as much as I could to convince him to the contrary. His daughter took the book out of my

> hand a second time; she opened it, and kissed it again; her father bid her give it me, which she did; but said, with much sorrow, the book would not speak to her.[9]

The king's daughter and the appointed executioner are overtaken with religious enthusiasm, and the execution is stayed; ultimately, Marrant converts the king himself by curing his daughter: rather than by the king's daughter, like Smith, he is saved through her.

The Bible would not talk to Gronniosaw because he was black; it will not talk to the Cherokee princess because she is Indian, but it talks to John Marrant because, though black, he plays the role of the literate, English-speaking Christian missionary and "substitute white man."[10] As in the story of Atahualpa, the Christian missionary shows the book, and the book doesn't speak to the Indian, but while Atahualpa interprets the silence as a reason to reject the book, the Cherokee princess (like Gronniosaw) sees it as a sign of the book's rejection of her, and adopts the book's religion. It is not by accident that Ottobah Cugoano revives the story of Atahualpa to revise Marrant's —and that Equiano, as we will soon see, also includes a revision of both Atahualpa and Marrant in his narrative.

2. Tales of conjecture and tales of persuasion

In order to understand the trope of the taming book less superficially we need to analyze its form more in depth. Talking book narratives are not all the same; in fact, they may be divided into two typological variants: a "conjecture" type, in which (as in the narratives of Gronniosaw and John Smith) the illiterate enslaved or colonial subject imagines that the book talks to the white master or colonizer; and a "hegemonic myth" type, in which the literate colonizer and master persuades the subaltern that the book talks to him (the master) in order to awe him (the subaltern) into submission. The fullest expression and criticism of this form is in the narrative of John Jea (1815):

> My master... took the Bible and showed it to me and said that the book talked with him... My master's sons also endeavoured to convince me, by their reading in the behalf of their father, for it surprised me much, how they could take that blessed book into their hands, and to be so superstitious as to want to make me believe that the book did talk to them.[11]

In the "conjecture" type, the talking book trope embodies, among other things, the slave's effort—to "understand [as Frederick Douglass put it] a most perplexing difficulty—to wit, the white man's power to enslave the black man.''[12] The "mythopoetic" type, on the other hand, illustrates the white man's power to manipulate the slave's imagination through his control over the means of communication—and (as Jea's convoluted wording indicates) the painful unmasking of this ploy in the slave's writing.

Now, if we return to Equiano's narrative, we can see that the trope of the talking book occurs not once, but twice; and that each of the occurence belongs to a different type. The first and most famous scene, analyzed in depth by Gates, is a conjecture: Equiano thinks that his master and his friend Dick talk to books, and attempts to do the same. The second and

usually disregarded scene, however, is a conscious mythopoetic use in the service of power, and is revealingly situated in the context of Indian colonization. Equiano, acting as a surrogate white man in the interest of his English employer, pacifies rebellious Musquito Indians by manipulating their relationship to books and science:

> Recollecting a passage I had read in the life of Columbus, when he was among the Indians in Mexico or Peru, when, on some occasion. he frightened them by telling them of certain events in the heavens, I had recourse to the same expedient and it succeeded beyond my most sanguine expectations. When I had formed my determination I went in the midst of them, and taking hold of the governor, I pointed up to the heavens. I menaced him and the rest: I told them God lived there, and that he was angry with them and they must not quarrel so; that they were all brothers, and if they did not leave off and go away quietly, I would take the book, (pointing to the Bible) read, and tell God to make them dead. This operated on them like magic (157).

This final, tongue-in-cheek reference to "magic" traces the distance between the terrified and astonished Equiano of his first encounter with whites, when he attributed all their wonders to "magic" and the knowledgeable and experienced one of his encounter with the Indians. Equiano has been on both sides of the divide of literacy; like Marrant—a black missionary from the white man's religion to the Indians—he represents the uprooted black subject as a third central term between the red and the white.

The reference to the episode in which Columbus awes the Indians by foreseeing an eclipse and threatening to steal the moon if they did not accede to his wishes[13] indicates that Equiano has literally taken a page off the white man's book, locating himself in the history of European colonization of America. By misplacing the episode in Peru instead of the Caribbean where it actually took place, Equiano also indicates that he has in mind the story of Atahualpa. On the other hand Equiano's text also looks forward to other American narratives that also use the episode of Columbus and the eclipse, such as Washington Irving's *Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* and Mark Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court* (a book replete with parallels to white-Indian relations).[14] In this way, Equiano's narrative occupies a central position in a tradition that goes from the time of the conquest to the industrial revolution.

The colonizer's knowledge of "certain events in the heavens, " on the other hand, is ambiguously juxtaposed to the talking book also in the narratives of John Smith and John Marrant. Smith's Indian captors "marveled" at the sight of his "round ivory double compass dial," much as Equiano had been astonished at the quadrant on the slave ship. When Smith "demonstrated by that globe-like jewel the roundness of the earth and skies, the sphere of the sun, moon, and stars, and how the sun did chase the night round about the world continually... they all stood as amazed with admiration."[15] While Smith's display is ostensibly scientific and secular, Marrant uses almost exactly the same wording but shifts the discourse from astronomy to religion: "I asked them who made the sun, and moon, and stars, and preserved them in their regular order?" (the Indian king's

answer, incidentally, sounds like a masterpiece of irony). Once again, Equiano combines the two levels of discourse, referring to "events in the heavens" both in the astronomical and in the religious sense. Marrant "pointed to the sun" as evidence of the existence of God; Equiano "pointed up to the heavens [and] told them God lived there." But immediately after this, he also "point[ed] to the Bible": rather than "reading" the presence of God from the sky, he will read to God in the sky through the book.

The fact that the trope of the talking book occurs twice, in two different forms, once among the English and another among the Indians, reinforces, then, Equiano's position in the center of the three-fold exchange of Africa, Europe, and America. In the rest of this paper, then, I will discuss the two sides of Equiano's mediation. I will first look at other aspects of Equiano's experience among the Musquitos, and then, returning to the talking book, look at the meaning of his metaphor in the context of the European culture of his time.

3. The Raw and the Cooked

Equiano's adventure on the Musquito shore, where he was employed by the English in attempting to establish a plantation, is an amazing ethnographic document: an African's description of a Central American Indian culture in the context of European colonization. The relation between Equiano and the Indians begins in the process of conversion: the books he is even for instruction are a "Guide to the Indians" (53) and "The Conversion of an Indian" (139). For the Europeans, Indians are the paradigm of an otherness on its way to christianization, and the African Equiano is assimilated to them in the eyes of his mentors. On the other hand, he dwells at length on his own effort to convert an "Indian prince" to Christianity and literacy (153-54): he is like an "Indian" to the Europeans, but he is a European to the Indians.

In his description of Musquito society, he immediately spots analogies to his native culture: the Musquitos build their houses "exactly like the Africans, by the joint labour of men, women, and children"; like the Ibo, they practice polygamy with moderation[16]; like in Africa, men and women work together but eat and dance separately. Like the Africans he described earlier, the Musquitos are "simple in their manners," use "little ornament in their houses," have no words "expressive of an oath," are "singular, in point of honesty."

Their vices and faults, however, are directly or indirectly linked with European influence:

> The worst word I ever heard amongst them, when they were quarreling, was one, that they had got from the English, which was "you rascal." I never saw any mode of worship among them; but in this they were not worse than their European brethren or neighbours.

From the Europeans, the Musquitos also get the "strong liquors" of which, unlike the Africans, they have become "great drinkers."

At first, Equiano identifies himself with the Europeans ("we used...") and locates himself in their space ("like the judge *here*", meaning England). Gradually, however, his position and his pronouns shift. Though he dislikes the music and the motions, he ultimately identifies with the Musquitos in the dance. "The musical

instruments," he observes, "were nearly the same as those of any other sable people", and "the males danced by themselves, and the females also by themselves, as with us" (158). The first person now designates Africa: in the talking-book scene, Equiano was the Christian representative of the conquerors; in the description of the dance soon afterward, he and the Indians are both "sable", and regulate male and female space much in the same manner ("*nearly* the same"—but then, he is "almost an Englishman"). As a Christian, he reads the white man's book to (against) the Indians; as a person of color, he understands the Indian dance while whites cannot: a member of his expedition starts to dance among the women, but, "perceiving the women disgusted," changes sides.

That Indians may be disgusted at white behavior is important, because the scene begins with Equiano's disgust at Indian eating habits: "I cannot say the sight of either the drink or the meat was enticing to me." The food is unsavoury, and, like the Europeans, the Musquitos do not wash their hands before touching it. In conclusion, he "went home not a little disgusted at the preparations."

Revolting eating habits are a way of casting the other outside humanity, beyond the civilizing boundary between the raw and the cooked.[17] On his first encounter with whites, Equiano could not eat because of the loathsome environment and was flogged for it (33-4). Now, he is as disgusted at the sight of the alligators that the Musquitos set aside for eating as he had been shocked at the fact that the white sailors neither ate all the shark meat, nor gave it to the black captives. Eating alligators and sharks, ferocious animals not generally used for food by civilized people, marks both the Musquitos and the sailors as savages, and is reinforced by hints of cannibalism in both cases: the same phrase "they were to be eaten," "we were... to be eaten"—designates the alligators now, and Equiano himself then.[18]

Just as he had thought that the whites were bad spirits and cannibals, only to discover that they were humans, he now suggests that their eating habits cast the Musquitos out of the human race, only to deny it soon after by making the disgust mutual. At the end of the feast, after he has seen that the Musquitos are capable of roasting their meat, Equiano holds "a raw piece of the alligator" in his hand; he likes the aspect and the smell of it but he "could not eat any of it" (159). Unlike Natty Bumppo, he actually takes up the raw meat; unlike Mary Rowlandson, he is not hungry enough to eat it.

"Nearly like" the Indians, "almost" an Englishman, Equiano recognizes the common humanity and the cultural differences of both and is fully identified with neither. The conclusion of the episode reads like a primer in pluralist multiculturalism: "This merry-making at last ended without the least discord in any person in the company, although it was made up of different nations and complexions" (159). In the temporary, utopian equality of the feast, difference results neither in mutual assimilation, nor in mutual aggression.

Equiano's narrative, then, is less about the binary opposition of black and white than about the triangular trade of identities between Europe, Africa, and America. In the European invasion of America, the black presence occupies a shifting ground of mediation, well represented by the wilderness where John Marrant meets the Indian hunter after stepping across the fence out of town and by the Indian garb

that makes him unrecognizable to his own people on his return. In separate sets of binary oppositions—white vs. black, white vs. Indian—whites are the connecting element; but in this triangular relation, the center is black. On the slave ship, in London, and on the Musquito coast, the humanity of the whites and that of the Indians is tested and then recognized. The only one whose humanity is never in discussion, the one who questions and judges, is Olaudah Equiano, the African.

4. The Art of Book-Making

Let us now go back to the meaning of the talking book in Equiano's other context, Europe. Here, the encounter between oral and literate cultures over the book is doubled in the interplay of orality and writing within the book. The trope of the talking book is generated, in the first place, by the awareness of a difference (writing and orality) rooted in a common ground (language). It is therefore enmeshed with the experience of transcribing and with the experience of reading aloud: writing as representation of speech, reading as representation of writing. The talking book then embodies an experience of language temporarily suspended between a transcribed orality and a voiced text (books "gave tongue," says Douglass)[19]. Both transcription and voiced reading are ways of transferring, transporting language from one sphere to the other —which sends us back to the original meaning of *metaphorein*, to transfer.

If we place the trope in another historical context, on the other hand, we perceive that the metaphor coexists with metonymy. In Coover's postmodern sequel to Collodi's fable, the Good Blue Fairy accedes to the dying wish of the talking puppet Pinocchio to be returned to the woodpile; going further, she suggests that he will be made into pulp, paper, and finally into a book. She thus evokes the technological, material process of bookmaking, and the book as a reproducible, marketable industrial object and commodity. Pinocchio's plea to be made at least into a talking book voices the nostalgia of personal individuality in a mass production age.

When books, as other commodities, are produced into thousands of indistinguishable copies, each book strives to protect its (her, his) individuality and difference from all others. In fact, the sameness of the copies of the same book is a metaphor for the banal, repetitious, second-hand sameness of much literary production in the industrial age. The sameness of books, then, becomes a metaphor for the commodification and massification of individuals. The book's desire to retain a voice becomes the expression of a concern over the relation between language and the individual. The trope of the talking book, then, can be seen as a variant of another, broader trope that frames the age of Equiano: the trope of the personified book.

This trope occurs before Equiano, in Jonathan Swift's "Battle of the Books," as well as after, in Washington Irving's "The Mutability of Literature" and "The Art of Book-Making." But it is to a certain extent implicit in Gronniosaw's deduction that "every body and every thing despised me because I was black": the juxtaposition of people and things (in this case, the book) paves the way for the suggestion that the book despises him, and is thus endowed with a subjectivity of sorts.

The personified book is a metaphor because it hinges on the analogical chain

of voice/breath/soul/person. But its main import is metonymical, insisting on the spatial nearness of speech and body. In both Swift and Irving, the trope is embedded in a discourse of intellectual property vs. market ownership, and originality vs. plagiarism. Behind both oppositions is the sense that in the printing age and in market economy the book—and, therefore, language—is becoming detached from the person, and vice versa.[20] In Irving's story creative authors are despoiled and replaced by voracious, "predatory" hacks. Metaphors of gobbling up other people's intellectual food and donning stolen clothes denounce the age-old crime of plagiarism; but they are placed now in an industrial context of "bookmaking," "manufacturing books," "book manufactory," of "constructing" books that will be "purchased... placed on a conspicuous shelf...but never read.[21] It is Swift's "Bookseller" that evokes the metaphor of the talking book by denial in the introductory matter to The Battle of the Books;[22] Irving in turn speaks of a prosperous-looking "author on good terms with his bookseller." In the manufacturing and mercantile age, the bookseller is the alpha and omega of bookmaking, standing at the beginning of the text and as its ultimate destination. The very act of book production becomes plagiarism and theft and the act of book buying a gesture of conspicuous consumption.

Personification and the talking book, then, are ways of restoring the contiguity of book, author, and reader; the book is once again an extension of the person's voice, just as the voice is an extension of the body. We might go one step further, and suggest that these figures express the writers' reaction to the increasing awareness, generated by print, of the relation of writing and absence. The personified and talking book is a nostalgia of the presence of the voice.

Both in Irving's "The Art of Book-Making" and in Equiano's Life, the personification of the book is accompanied by the animation of a portrait: "I [...] observed a picture hanging in the room, which appeared constantly to look at me" (39). Equiano fears that the portrait (and the ticking watch hanging on the chimney) will report his actions to the master; in Irving's sketch, "lo! the portraits about the wall became animated!" and "looked down curiously" before stepping out of the frames to retrieve their stolen and plagiarized "clothes." In both cases, the portrait is a figure of watchful and omniscient authority. Irving's animated portraits stand for the claims of humanistic tradition over mechanical book-making; in Equiano, the book, the portrait and the watch are extensions of the white man's eye and ear,[23] ancestors in a genealogy of communication as control that culminates in George Orwell's Big Brother watching us.

This leads us to another possible implication: the book is a talking commodity, and so is the slave. Language is detached from the person in the age of commercial book making, and is detached from the uprooted and silenced slave. It would be stretching the text to say that this parallel is made explicit by Equiano or his contemporaries. On the other hand, all of these writers are fully aware of their own condition as marketable goods;[24] furthermore, the presence of objects of gold in most occurrences of the talking-book trope suggests that monetary, economic implications are not entirely absent from the scene. Most suggestive, however, is the fact that Equiano's description

of the talking watch and portrait follows immediately upon the description of the "iron muzzle" imposed on a slave woman, "which locked her mouth so fast that she could scarcely speak." In the magical wonders of the mechanical age, things speak while humans are silenced.

Making the book speak and making the slave speak, then, are parts of the same process: rehumanizing language. This is exactly what Equiano sets out to do. One important and often disregarded difference between Equiano and the rest of the African American tradition of the talking book is that, while Atahualpa, Gronniosaw, Marrant's Cherokee princess, and John Jea want the book to talk to them, Equiano "*had a great curiosity to talk to the book*" (my italics). Only after he has "taken up a book, and talked to it" does he try to listen. This is a crucial reversal: rather than a silent figure of black absence craving for the words of the book, Equiano is an already voiced subject yearning to fill the book with his own words. After all, his name, Olaudah, means "having a loud voice and well spoken" (20).

When the book does not talk to him, somehow one senses that this is more the book's failure than Equiano's. Equiano will not be a reader, at best repeating God's words, like Jea; he will be a writer, he will put his words in the book and make the book "tell God" what he, Equiano, wants God to hear.

On the cover of the first edition of the *Life* are Equiano's double name and a portrait of him with a book in his hand. In the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, Walt Whitman placed his own picture, and no name. These are both efforts to reconstruct the metonymic relation of the person and the book, but they place their subjects in a different relation to the the art of book making. Whitman, a professional printer and a creature of the age of typography, endeavours to retrieve the speaking body in opposition to the silent book: "Camerado, this is no book,/Who touches this touches a man": one has to go beyond the book to find the man, the lost original conection between language and body.[25] In Equiano, the book and the person are portrayed together, legitimizing each other. The book derives the authority from the man: it was "written by himself" and tells the authentic "FACTS" (6) of his "life."[26] But the man, "a private and obscure individual" (11), derives his authority from the fact that he, "himself," can make the book talk.

Notes

[1]Robert Coover, *Pinocchio in Venice* (London: Minerva, 1991), 329.

[2]*The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written By Himself* (1789) in Henry Louis Gates, Jr., ed., *The Classic Slave Narratives* (New York: Penguin, 1987), 33. All subsequent quotations will be taken from this edition and designated by page numbers in the text.

[3]Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey* (New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 131.

[4]*Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars of the Life of James Albert Ukasaw Gronniosaw* (1770; repr. Leeds: Davies and Boots, 1814), 11.

[5]Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, p. 158.

[6]Anita Seppilli, *La memoria e l'amenza* (Bologna: Cappelli, 1979).

[7]John Smith, *The General History of Virginia, New England and the Summer Isles* (1624), Third Book, Chapter 2; in Nina Baym et al., eds., *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* (New York: Norton, 1989), 18.

[8]Gronniosaw lived and published in England. By the time Marrant wrote his own narrative, however, there had also been American editions.

[9]"A Narrative of the Lord's Wonderful Dealings with John Marrant, a Black," in Dorothy Porter, ed., *Early Negro Writing 1760-1837* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 439.

[10]Gates, p. 150. Marrant defines himself as a black man in the title page, but never refers to his color again in the text.

[11]*The Life, History, and unparalleled Sufferings of John Jea, the African Preacher*, 1815, quoted in Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, p. 160.

[12]Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* in Gates, *The Classic Slave Narratives*, p. 275.

[13]The episode took place February 29, 1504. Tzvetan Todorov, *La conquista dell'America. Il problema dell' "altro"* (Prias 982; it. transl. by Aldo Serafini,Torino: Einaudi, 1984), p.23, mentions the episode and points out that Columbus' only viable communication with the natives is always based on his knowledge of the stars.

[14]Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur's Court* (Harmondsworth., Midds.: Penguin, 1971) 71 ff.; an Indian allusion in this novel, see Beniamino Placido, "Uno yankee alla corte di Re Artù," in Alessandro Portelli, ed., *Interpretationi di Twain* (Roma: Savelli, 1978), 81-93.

[15]*The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, 3rd ed., vol. 1, ed. Nina Baym, p. 17.

[16]The Ibo have "seldom more than two" wives, and Equiano does not "recollect any of them [Musquitos] to have had more than two wives" (13, 155).

[17]"Without any aid from the science of cookery," Cooper's Mingos eat a "revolting meal": "every thing is raw, for them Iroquois are thorough savages," says Natty Bumppo: James Fenimore Cooper, *The Last of the Mohicans* (Harmondsworth, Midds.: Penguin, 1986), 100, 119. "Revolting" and "disgust" are associated terms that extend from the eating habits of the Iroquois to sexuality and violence. Magua proposes to Cora to be his wife, Cooper writes: "However revolting a proposal of such a character might prove to Cora, she retained, notwithstanding her powerful disgust, sufficient self-command" (104); on the massacre at Fort Henry, "We shall not dwell on the revolting horrors that succeeded.—Death was every where, and an his most terrific and disgusting aspects," (176). Likewise, being forced to eat half-cooked liver "with the blood about my mouth," and learning to find it "savoury," is Mary Rowlandson's first step toward the savage life: *Mary Rowlandson, A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, in Nina Baym et al, eds., *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* (New York: Norton, 1989), 151.

[18]Equiano had been told ("in jest") that he was to be eaten, and hoped that the shark "would serve the people to eat instead of eating me." Thus, the theme of revolting food practices alludes to the frequent references earlier in the text to the most non-human of eating habits, cannibalism In the encounter between Europe and Africa, everyone assumes that the other is a cannibal: Equiano takes at face value the sailors' jokes because he believes that whites are cannibals, and the sailors harp on cannibalism because they assume that he is one.When the captain tells him that black people "were not good to eat" and asks him "if we did not eat people in my country," he fears that his friend and interpreter Richard Baker will be eaten in his stead (41). White expectations of cannibalism are confirmed when, on landing at the Barbados, the captain sees flamingoes in the distance and "swore they were cannibals" (112).

[19]*Narrative*, p. 278.

[20]Derrida's discussion of Rousseau ought also to be seen in this context.

[21]Washington Irving, *Thee Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon*, Gent. (1819; repr. London: Dent, 1963), 6971.

[22]"I must warn the Reader, to beware of applying to Persons what is here meant, only of Books in the most literal Sense. So when Virgil is mentioned, we are not to understand the Person of a famous Poet, called by that Name, but only certain Sheets of Paper, bound up in leather, containing in Prints the works of the said Poet, and so of the rest": "The Bookseller to the Reader", in The Battle of the Books (1710), in The Writings of Jonathan Swift, ed. by Robert A. Greenberg and William E. Piper (New York and London: Norton, 1973) 374. The consequence of this disclaimer is that when we later read such passages as "Plato was by chance upon the next shelf and observing those that spoke to be in the ragged Plight mentioned a while ago... he laugh'd loud, and in his pleasant way swore..." (374) the laughing and swearing are uttered by the "Sheets of Paper" themselves—a circuitous way of approaching the image of the talking book.

[23]"His master's surrogate overseer": Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, 155.

[24]"I have often seen slaves, particularly those who were meager, in different islands, put into scales and weighed, and then sold from three-pence to six-pence or nine-pence a pound" (79).

[25]Walt Whitman, "So Long," in *Leaves of Grass*, in *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, ed. by Justin Kaplan (New York: The Library of America, 1982), 611.

[26]In the first edition of Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, she also appears with a book in her hand; but the name on the cover is not her own. The literary and historical authority of Jacobs's book was not recognized until it was proved that it had been "written by herself."

Rereading the Nation as Family: Corrective Revisions of Racial Discourse in Martín Morúa Delgado and Charles W. Chesnutt

by George B. Handley

Cuba, the United States, and Racial Difference

By the end of the nineteenth century, the fear of africanization loomed large for both Cuba and the United States. Because of the recent Haitian Revolution, such fear had played a significant factor in Cuba's reluctance to participate in Simón Bolívar's wars of independence in 1810 (Helg 47). In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the rhetoric of Cuban *mestizaje* proved intolerant of Afro-Cuban claims for political and economic considerations of a distinctly lived history and culture. Africanization signified that blacks had developed a radically separate cultural tradition than that of Cuba's Creoles and that integration and assimilation had therefore failed. The racist violence in Cuba of 1912 and thereafter was a response to the anxiety that africanization produced. In the U.S., fear of africanization had led to public segregation during the latter decades of the nineteenth century in order to forestall the effects of racial intermingling. Celebration of such mixing and of the resultant transculturation of white and black cultures in the U.S. were apparently premature and politically useless. In the wake of Reconstruction's failure, the majority of whites had "conceded the central conservative argument that social discrimination was unavoidable.... black and white racial difference appeared to be the most sensible way to bring order to an unruly social scene" (Warren 108). Fear of africanization was also one of the factors in the U.S. decision to intervene in Cuba's war of independence in 1898 when it became apparent that a mostly black military force in neighboring Cuba was gaining the upper hand against Spain (Helg 89).

Thus, when it was apparent the future of Cuban racial democracy imagined by Martí was imminent, a new imperial force found its way into the Cuban psyche. The U.S. intervention of 1898 served to prolong Cuba's blindness to the contradictions of this imagined future and allowed Cuban patriots to cast responsibility for racial conflicts within the nation onto its colonial past and its neo-colonial present. The intervention also provided the United States with an opportunity to extend its profound ambivalence regarding its own history of miscegenation and of racial difference towards an even more Southern "South" than the "New South" proposed under Reconstruction: towards the lands of racial hybridity in Latin America. The American victories of 1898 gave new life to paternalistic plantation ideologies as the U.S. came into neo-colonial relations with other races and cultures abroad. As C. Vann Woodward has argued, the South used 1898 as an opportunity to advance Jim Crow legislation by pointing out the paternal custody of exotic races the Union had assumed.

Cuba and the United States, then, found their destinies intertwined at the turn of the century, but perhaps in ways that they did not fully understand. Certainly, they understood the dimensions of their economic and political relationship, especially after the passing of the Platt Amendment

in 1902, but their own contradictory practices of democracy in a post-slavery context blinded them to their dependence on each other as backdrops, or as points of contrast, with which to placate their own consciences. In the critical attention given to U.S. racial politics, Cuban politicians frequently failed to recognize how race relations on the island were fast resembling those in the land of their northern neighbor, including increasing lynchings in the early decades of this century. Their sometimes violent rejection of black separatism was frequently defended by pointing to racism in the U.S. as an example of where such politics would lead. For its part, the United States all too often neglected to consider the ways in which its culture was irrevocably delineated, if not outrightly infused, by black culture much like the lands to the south which the U.S. so frequently denigrated for their hybridity.

In a rush towards a national identity in the later decades of the nineteenth century, the literary tradition of realism in both countries emerged as critical of slavery, but the signs of racial injustice in this fiction were so frequently used to denote the *colonialism* of slavery, rather than its mere inhumanity, that the cry of racial injustice went unheeded once slavery was lifted. Thus, despite the desire in both nations to move beyond the history of slavery in order to found a national identity, the criticisms of that history frequently collapsed, perhaps from the pressure of a conflicted future, into a national longing for the more clearly defined racial categories of the slavery system. As Kenneth Warren has observed of U.S. realism in the nineteenth century, "what began as an attack on slavery and caste threatened to metamorphose into an attack on the idea of African-American culture" (85).[1] In the fictions of such writers as George Washington Cable from Louisiana and Cirilo Villaverde from Cuba, significant predecessors to Charles Chesnutt and Martín Morúa Delgado, blackness provides the stepping stones to the construction of a new national identity but ultimately the difference of blackness, what Cable calls "the shadow of the Ethiopian," must be discarded.[2]

Nineteenth century literary realism's attraction to regionalism and local color in both countries was partly due to a paradoxical white fear that racial difference would disappear and would thereby signify the infiltration of blackness into the national family. Several factors contributed to this fear: the collapse of slavery, the possibility of increasing and more varied social mobility especially for blacks, and the tremendous advances in transportation and technology which threatened to make regional differences obsolete, all of which created the possibility that blackness was less remote and hence more mixed with white Cuban and U.S. culture. At the turn of the century, capitalist America was busy industrializing the South and centralizing sugar mills in Cuba. This contributed greatly to black flight to urban areas where blacks and whites would be in greater physical proximity and, in turn, led to social practices, even legislation, designed to stave off the potential effects of this proximity. So literary realism contributed to each culture's need to codify difference politically, culturally, and socially. Kenneth Warren has further argued that nineteenth-century realism depended on a static, unchanging world of differences so that the reading of blackness slips into a representation of that which is

unassimilible (84). As Homi Bhabha has argued, the nation is always constituted at the margins where centers of power forever call forth new sites of difference in a paradoxical, insatiable quest for the end of difference. The sites of difference most frequently exploited in realist fiction at the turn of the century in Cuba and in the U.S. are black cultural expressions that bear the mark of their African origins and hence constitute a radical break, even a threatening alternative nation, to the one imagined. In the early decades of the twentieth century, both countries launched a vitriolic attack on africanization, demonizing African secret societies and cultural practices as beyond the bounds of their democracies and insisting that blacks assimilate Western ways. The frantic attempts by whites to identify racial difference, motivated by the desire to protect property claims, often led to simplistic solutions to racial categorizations, solutions which harked back to a mythical earlier time under slavery when a black person was more simply and easily identified as the one enslaved.

Martín Morúa Delgado from Cuba and Charles Chesnutt from the U.S. expose the alliance between the omniscient narrative gaze of realism and white social power. They loosen white social power's cognitive grip on the racial signifiers apparent on the black body and thereby transform the terms upon which racial difference is identified and imputed moral meaning. Ultimately, more than simply giving the lie to white claims of racial purity and genealogical rights to ownership, these writers open up avenues for identifying alternative claims on the national inheritance that are inclusive of various and divergent genealogies. Their novels place the impersonal and omniscient narrative points of view, typical of much realist fiction at the end of the century, in the eyes of particular characters and thereby expose the political personality of such a gaze. They demonstrate how white genealogies have been constructed on the basis of the black family's subjection to *being seen* from the outside. As Lorna Williams has argued, after slavery the issue "was no longer how to reconcile abolitionist sentiments with holding slaves... but rather, how to overcome the tendency to equate the signs of slavery with the signs of blackness in the interest of national independence" (311). To do so, these writers relentlessly expose the social construction of race which they see as a vestige of a colonialist, slave-owning discourse.

Negotiating Race in Morúa Delgado

The setting for Martín Morúa Delgado's serial novels *Sofía* (1891) and *La Familia Unzúazu* (1901) is the turbulent years 1878-1880 that followed the first failed attempt to establish Cuban independence and that preceded the emancipation of the slaves. In the novels, the father of the family, Sr. Unzúazu, is a slave trader in the Canaries who dies shortly after his wife passes away and leaves to his son-in-law the care of three of his children. A fourth child, Sofía, is born to a different mother from the Canaries who is reportedly a prostitute and who ends up in New Orleans. Unzúazu never publicly names her as his child; he merely instructs his Spanish son-in-law, Acebaldo, to look after her (*Sofía* 212). After his death, the papers proving Sofía's white identity are missing, although Acebaldo later finds them and proceeds to inform no one.

Consequently, Acebaldo perpetuates the myth that Sofía has black blood. Acebaldo, as a symbol of Spanish colonial rule, holds on to the inheritance that Sofía is due. The absent or unnamed father, rather than being the essential enigma to a mulatto's racial and social identity as is the case with previous realist fiction, becomes in Morúa's fiction a space that is usurped by the ideological needs of the white plantation family who create out of the material of lost paternity the fictions of racial difference and slavery.[3] Deathly ill after childbirth, Sofía learns that she is the daughter of Sr. Unzúazu and a sister to the siblings she has served as a slave and in particular to the brother who has illegitimately fathered her child. This knowledge, in true oedipal fashion, kills her.

Morúa Delgado expressed his desire to rewrite in these two novels the incestuous story of *Cecilia Valdés* of which he was publicly critical. Morúa was particularly critical of Villaverde's use of realism because he believed that realism did not allow the author the imaginative freedom to critique society. Additionally, realism was a form of deception that disguised its ideological and social positions and thereby allowed its representations of customs and local color potentially to "pass" as real. He takes aim in his fiction at realism's dependence upon visual reliability for the success of its representations of society, specifically of race. Realism, although highly dependent on registers of difference for its representations of reality, also depends on the similarity between its representations and what might be perceived as real. Thus, realism is a kind of insularity, a hermetically sealed world where all we hope to see and to represent to others is what is real. According to Morúa's logic, the threat of incestuous realism is that it gives birth to the hybrid genre of the historical novel which, by virtue of the rhetoric of realism, is able to disguise Cuban nationality's ideological alliance with white society (*Impresiones* 15-80).

As if to announce his intentions to parody Villaverde, Morúa begins the novel with a description of the fictional city of Belmiranda that cannot help but recall Villaverde's tourist descriptions of Havana.[4] As the novel opens, the narrator exclaims: "What an enchanting sight! What a beautiful panorama! We are on the sea, at the entrance to a port on the north coast... [¡Qué vista más encantadora! ¡Qué hermoso panorama!....Estamos en el mar, á la entrada de un puerto de la costa norte...]."(*Sofía* 9).[5] Very intentionally, he opens our eyes to the city "from the point of view of a foreign observer [a la vista del observador extranjero]" only then to abandon this technique and ascribe such ability to paint scenes before our eyes to particular characters with considerable social power.

Those who obtain power in Morúa's Cuba are those who successfully manipulate appearances and thus control the public's perceptions of identity. Plantation families like the Unzúazus perpetuate their colonial power by means of constructing social, racial, and genealogical myths. For example, Acebaldo, the Spanish usurper who marries into the family, feels his authority threatened by Sofía's striking physical resemblance to the family and her potential claim to an inheritance, so he endeavors to color the public's perception of her. For this reason "whenever the subject of Sofía came up, he would then come undone with shows of antipathy against the girl, *painting her in*

the most detestable colors [siempre que se trataba de Sofía, y se desetaba luego en demuestros contra la muchacha, *pintándola con los más detestables colores*]" (49).

The mulatto family slave, Liberato, flees the home because Ana María threatened to punish him for his sexual advances. Meanwhile, Federico, the oldest son, has squandered all of his inheritance, and in desperation, uses Liberato's escape as a means to extort money from the family. By threatening to return the slave to the plantation, Federico forces Liberato to write a ransom note claiming that he is holding Federico captive. The ransom money, of course, ends up in the hands of Federico and his friend Perecito who then regain their high social status and throw gala parties in the city. The two intend to recycle the threatening trope of an angry runaway slave as a means to extort more money and to finance their extravagant lifestyles. Racial difference, according to Morúa, is a fiction constructed to sustain the otherwise baseless legitimacy of white social power. Indeed, as members of the "idle youth of the city," given to profligate gambling and financial wastefulness, they represent the final decay of the plantocracy. This description of Perecito represents the essence of this decay:

> His was smooth and white skin; he had a hairless face with a good profile; ... He had hair as black as his eyes that was pleasingly curly; a smallish mouth even though it seemed large because of the insinuating thickness of his lips, which often showed his healthy and white teeth envied by not a few beautiful women.... The popular Perecito, who enjoyed showing off his round and pronounced womanish forms, with Federico,... made himself up, not as Adonis, not even as Narcissus, but as the inviting Sensualina, which was more in conformity with his moral perversion.
> [Era de blanca y tersa piel; de faz lampiña y bien perfilada;... de pelo como los ojos negro, y graciosamente rizado; de boca no muy grande; pero que lo parecía un tanto por el insinuante grosor de los labios, que a menudo mostraba una sana y blanca dentadura por no pocas bellas envidiada; ... El popular Perecito, que gustaba de lucir sus redondeces y pronunciadas formas de mujer fuerte y hermosa, en union de Fico,... disfrazóse, no de Adonis, ni siquiera de Narciso, sino de incitante Sensualina, lo que estaba más acorde con su perversión moral] (*Familia* 82-83).

The description resembles many of the racist stereotypes concerning mulattos: the thick lips on an almost thin mouth, the black curly hair, and the emasculated feminine aura. Here Morúa turns the trope of the emasculated mulatto on its head by creating symbols of moral decay out of the physical signs of racial mixture. Morúa initially represents the power to manipulate perception as the means of the plantation family's sustenance only to demonstrate further how it becomes the sign of their moral decay. That he would propose this opposition along moral, and not racial, lines is telling of his intention to move beyond the discussion of race in the national debate.

When a *ñáñigo* stab wound turns up on Acebaldo's murdered body, investigators convict Liberato. However, we doubt Liberato's guilt because the narrator reminds us that public intention has been "to subjugate further, if that were possible, the disenfranchised... either for being the most different in their obligatory

social circumstances, or for their ethnic nature, or for both differences at the same time [subyugar más si más era posible, á los desheredados... ya por ser la más disímil en sus obligadas circunstancias sociales, ya por su naturaleza étnica, ó por ambas diferencias á la vez]" (*Sofía* 208). Liberato is later set free because of lack of evidence, and his judge declares: "not everything we see is true [no todo lo que se ve es verdad]" (285).

Morúa represents how the *ñáñigo*, without any evidence as to his identity or guilt, functions as a circulating metaphor of white fear and suspicion of the colored classes. *Ñáñigos*, along with black *brujos*, were members of Abakuá secret societies of African origin who frequently identified themselves by means of secret signs and emblems such as the one referred to in the novel. In the era of increasing racial tension following the war of independence in 1898, *ñáñigos* were frequently the target of indiscriminate arrests because of the suspicion that they were engaged in conspiracies against whites and against the government. Thus, in Cuba's effort to unify as a nation, these groups were frequently demonized for their radical cultural and religious differences. As critics have pointed out, Morúa astutely undermines the essentializing rhetoric of racism that sees social and moral meaning in mere skin color. Williams writes that Morúa moves "from the representation of blacks as constitutively other to an analysis of the relationship between the free and the unfree in a domain beyond ethnicity" (311-312).

However, in his eagerness to move beyond the history of enslavement and racism in his country, he frequently and paradoxically neglected to acknowledge the continuing reality of that history. As Cuba's first colored senator, he outlawed the formation of political parties on the basis of race and thereby gave the nod to whites who with adequate social power could control the terms of the battle over racial signifiers. By denying the right of those on the defensive end of such racism to counter with their own alternative classifications, he emptied the ring of any opposition. That is, although Morúa was attentive to the social constructions of race, he ignored the lasting historical legacies of those constructions which had become central to black identity and experience in Cuba. Precisely because definitions of race are always contextualized by historical conditions and in fierce competition, a premature insistence on complete neutrality may inadvertently blur or entirely erase the historicity which has framed the debate in the first place; pulling the political rug out from under attempts to give blackness political representation only led to Cuba's racist war of 1912 in which blacks were wantonly killed by government forces for their falsely identified insurrectionist aims. Indeed, Martí's vision of racial brotherhood had become the myth of Cuban nationhood and to aver, as did the thousands of blacks in turn-of-the-century Cuba, that racism remained a problem was believed to be tantamount to heresy and racism itself. Thus, in his desire to move his readers beyond race in his discussion of Cuba's future, Morúa seems at times to wish away altogether the separate history lived by so many of the colored classes in Cuba.

If the prejudice against *ñáñigos* hurts anyone in Morúa's mind, it is the mulatto who is grouped together with *el negro*, a lumping together of different colors which in his mind is the tradition of the United

States and is "of slaveowning origin [de origen esclavista]" (*Integración* 213). In his extensive efforts to point out the hypocrisies of the white elite and the chimeras upon which their authority is based, Morúa has almost entirely neglected to represent black subjectivity that is not a product of white corruption. In his mind, racial difference is a product, not of different lived histories of people of color, but only of the machinations of divisive social powers that must be expelled for Cuba to achieve true independence; that is, he leads us to a vision of a raceless future, one in which racial difference must be dismissed in order for Cuba to fulfill its national destiny.

By choosing a white protagonist who is blackened by those in power, Morúa exposes naked white social power, but we are seduced into believing that no original difference exists or at least is worth preserving, let alone on what terms. Kutzinski is rightly impressed with "the precision with which Sofía attends to the sociosexual construction of race in nineteenth-century Cuba and the consistency with which the novel links those issues to slavery and sugar production" (12). However, Sofia's tragic ending, in which she discovers that she is white and the mother of her brother's child at the same time, is cathartic for Morúa's white readers but entirely empty of redemptive value for his black readers. Kutzinski further argues that "Sofía's genealogical whiteness of course breaks apart the unholy alliance of incest and miscegenation. Not only does racial purity offer no protection whatsoever against the dreaded possibility of incest in Sofía; ironically it creates that very possibility....The desire for racial purity is revealed to be incestuous in that it is a (sexual) desire for someone of the same blood and social position" (129). However, what this potentially implies is that the road to Cuban integration is through miscegenation and whitening and not through some form of racial integration and a mutual respect for difference.

Morúa's reluctance to name difference and give it representation in his novel means that the presence of difference is always accounted for by moral corruption. To account for the disparate differences in Cuban society, then, he must continually spread tales of uncontained moral contamination seemingly beyond his narrative control. It is as if the narrative, in its frantic drive to catalogue and bandage the many moral illnesses that afflict the plantation family, has left behind the one character who might have offered some redemption: Fidelio, the mulatto activist who is undoubtedly an image of the author but who plays virtually no role in the family drama. The narrative, one might say, has become infected, tainted by the corruption it seeks to name, because it betrays its best intentions; it becomes obsessed with the need to spin off endless tales of intrigue and corruption. It is not hard to see why currently in Cuba the television soap opera "Sofía," based on Morúa's novels, is enjoying national popularity. The only redemption to this obsession is that the author appears to indicate that if there is to be a solution to the *cuestion antillana*, it will have to come from a social perspective constituted independently of the legacies of the colonial plantation experience.

Disentangling Genealogies in Chesnutt

In his fiction, Charles Chesnutt insists

on our attention to the distinct lived history of blacks under slavery and in a racist society. In Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901), two doctors are seated together on a train. Chesnutt writes: "looking at these two men with the American eye, the differences would perhaps be the more striking, or at least the more immediately apparent, for the first was white and the second black, or, more correctly speaking, brown" (49). Indeed, Chesnutt in his political writings was obsessed with marking the tragedies that inevitably followed visual apprehensions of race. He showed little faith that an "American eye" that is trained by realism to perceive differences could ever learn to see human equality beyond them. As in Morúa's writings, Chesnutt's seeing eye is never neutral but in the words of John Ernest "disciplined by culture—shaped by a history of social prejudices and racial domination" (209).

Chesnutt's pessimism that the "American eye" would ever learn to see beyond differences ran deep. In his controversial essay of 1900, "The Future American," he implies that as long as racial difference exists, there will always be those with American eyes who will create social and political inequalities on the basis of that difference. Even George Washington Cable, Chesnutt's one time mentor and employer and a champion of anti- Jim Crow legislation, had shown himself to be fearful of the proximity of blackness. In the 1870s, Cable declared the South to no longer be the South as such, that Americans might imagine the "New South" to be Latin America and the Caribbean, regions overcome, in his mind, with racial confusion because of miscegenation.[6] The paradox here is that, for Cable, racial hybridity is the ultimate sign of blackness because it signified that blackness had contaminated whiteness. Despite his opposition to Jim Crow legislation, Cable implied in his essays that if equal, blacks and whites would choose to remain separate. Thus, whiteness would remain visible, and by virtue of the consequent invisibility of blackness, whiteness could also remain the reigning sign of American identity. What also contributed to Chesnutt's pessimism was that the prominent black figure, Booker T. Washington, whom Martín Morúa Delgado and other conservative blacks in Cuba admired, was encouraging this type of segregation. Thus, when Chesnutt witnessed U.S. expansion into Latin America and the Philippines, he saw an opportunity to argue that denial of racial difference at home was only running the U.S. headlong into racial difference abroad and that eventually the color line would disappear because of inevitable miscegenation. Chesnutt insinuates into the American racial debate "the various peoples of the northern hemisphere of the western continent; for if certain recent tendencies are an index of the future, it is not safe to fix the boundaries of the future United States anywhere short of the Arctic Ocean on the north and the Isthmus of Panama on the south" (*Future* 97). We see, then, how the imagined boundaries of the U.S. shift according to one's position regarding the "negro question." Chesnutt's "New South", as opposed to Cable's, is inclusive rather than exclusive of Latin America racial practices. His reasoning is that

> ...the adding to our territories of large areas populated by dark races, some of them already liberally dowered with Negro blood, will enhance the relative

> importance of the non-Caucasian elements of the population, and largely increase the flow of dark blood toward the white race, until the time shall come when distinctions of color shall lose their importance, which will be but the prelude to a complete racial fusion (106).

As Arlene Elder argues, this kind of reasoning clearly implies an ambivalence, not unlike Morúa's, towards the blackness of what Chesnutt called "genuine blacks" (Elder). It was also a moment of over-zealous desire, like Morúa's, for the disappearance of race altogether.

Curiously, in the very year that Chesnutt witnessed the expansion of the U.S. into territories of racial darkness to which he alludes, he was also witness to the internal process of segregation and disenfranchisement in the U.S., the ultimate aim of which was the whitening of America. White supremacist race riots took place in Wilmington, North Carolina in 1898, events which he fictionalizes in his novel *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901).[7] In this novel, then, Chesnutt is less contradictory; he is more reluctant to make his case for the future amalgamation of races perhaps because such events proved to him that the long historical legacy of racism was too immediate in the past and too contingent upon the immediate future to ignore. Rather than writing at a historical moment prior to violent racial conflict like Morúa, Chesnutt's fiction unavoidably responds to historical violence; his dream of future racial amalgamation was perhaps just that, a dream of escape from the reality of violent discrimination in the here and now.

In the novel, Mr. Merkell marries one of his slaves, Julia Brown, but its legality is kept secret for the sake of preserving Merkell's reputation and social standing. The papers that substantiate the marriage and declare Julia's daughter, Janet, a legitimate heir to a portion of the property are burned by Janet's white half-sister, Olivia Carteret. The novel demonstrates the weakness of the written law, manifested in the marriage and inheritance papers, to overthrow white prejudice and social power. Major Carteret is the surrogate father who, like Morúa's Acebaldo, has stepped in by marriage to take control of the white family's resources and genealogy and who subjugates the power of the law with his "gold pen" as editor of the town's newspaper. Chesnutt suggests that such power is maintained precisely on the basis of its attempted erasure of black legitimacy.

Chesnutt's realism does not reify difference but rather shows the eluctability of difference. Reminiscent of Morúa's Federico, we know that Tom Delamere, the oldest son of a white landowning family, has incurred gambling debts and has dressed in the clothes of his family's black servant, Sandy, and stolen from and murdered a prominent white woman in order to frame Sandy. Thus, visual deception enables Tom's crime because the black witnesses—Sara, the Delameres' maid; Josh Green, who spent that evening with Sandy; and Sandy himself—are all without the social power necessary for their testimonies to carry weight. Consequently, as in Morua's novel, the murder of a prominent white allows us to appreciate how legal truth is determined by a negotiation between various forces within white society.

Another curious parallel with Morua's novels is the narrator's description of Tom

which is reminiscent of Perecito. Tom has a

> ...symmetrical face, dark almost to swarthiness, black eyes, which moved somewhat restlessly, curly hair of raven tint, a slight mustache, small hands and feet, and fashionable attire...But no discriminating observer would have characterized his beauty as manly. It conveyed no impression of strength, but did possess a certain element, feline rather than feminine, which subtly negatived the idea of manliness (16).

Chesnutt uses white racist rhetoric about mulattos to indicate Tom's moral inferiority. We are told that Tom Delamere, like Federico Unzúazu, is a "degenerate aristocrat" who possesses "a keen eye for contrasts" (95, 24). With his quintessential American eye, Tom is able to manipulate racial categories just as Federico and Perecito do. Tom is "a valiant carpet-knight, skilled in all parlor exercises, great at whist or euchre, a dream of a dancer, unexcelled in cakewalk or 'coon' impersonations, for which he was in large social demand" (96). Like Perecito, his talent for deception allows him to take advantage of the American eye's vulnerability to illusion. He plays on subtleties of difference not normally noticed by others in order to survive financially and socially. Chesnutt's intention is to disassociate from the visual markers of race and genealogy their traditionally assigned social and moral meanings. John Ernest explains that Chesnutt "responds to [his] cultural reality not by looking for new materials for the construction of identity but rather by reworking the available materials" (209). Not unlike Morúa's response to Villaverde's novel, Chesnutt expressed concern that white writers, often from the north, gained considerable popularity from their representations of local color in the black rural South, representations Chesnutt believed he and other colored writers would be more qualified to produce. Specifically, Chesnutt was first motivated to be a writer after reading Albion Tourgee's novel *A Fool's Errand* which for him demonstrated the limitations of white representations of black culture despite his appreciation for the novel's political aims (Chesnutt, *Pioneer 20)*. Chesnutt's Tom provides us with an interesting reading of white exploitation of black culture for its own identity. White writers' ability to imitate the speech and style of black American culture could be read in this light as an unholy alliance that provided white cultural products, such as literature of "local color," a flourishing "American" identity. That Sandy is almost lynched because of Tom's mimicry suggests whence comes the guilt for which Sandy becomes the scapegoat; it is the dependency of white identity on an appropriation of its "shadows."

Ironically, because of their obsession with maintaining their family name and its social power, the Carterets find themselves forced to acknowledge their kinship to the Millers in order to obtain Dr. Miller's help when their son and only heir falls ill. This irony displays clearly the dependence of the Carterets' social position on a false maintenance of separate genealogical trees between the races. Because of past insults and the riot instigated by Carteret which led to the death of the Millers' only boy, Dr. Miller refuses to help them. In a desperate effort to soften their stance, Olivia admits to Janet that she is her lawful sister and therefore has a legal claim to half the Carterets' estate.

Janet refuses the admission of kinship because it was "not freely given, from an open heart, but extorted from a reluctant conscience" (328). She explains that "now, when an honest man has given me his name of which I can be proud, you offer me the one of which you robbed me, and of which I can make no use" (327). Chesnutt suggests that if there is to be a reconciliation between the races, it must be not on the basis of a common genealogy but of a common humanity. Dr. Miller decides to see the Carteret child because "Olivia was a fellow creature, too, and in distress" (325).

Thus, the sin that plagues the polity is not miscegenation, as some white fiction had implied, but the fratricidal impulse of Jim Crowism which seeks to erect white social power on the basis on black disenfranchisement. According to Eric Sundquist, Chesnutt's narrative subordinates genealogical secrets to the "ideological significance that can be attached to [them], whether privately in the form of inheritance or publicly in the form of economic and political power" (397). For Chesnutt, the entanglements of genealogy are pehaps too complex and painful to advocate a redemptive model of interracial kinship. Genealogy is useful for him to expose the sins of Jim Crow, but ultimately for Chesnutt the wounds of Jim Crow and of slavery will heal if we move beyond a social organization that follows the biological determinants of race and nurses instead the historical contingencies of ethnicity. Whereas Morúa uses incest to expose the fratricidal impulse of racial categorization, Chesnutt reverses the sentimentality of family romance to expose the fratricidal impulse of segregation.

The affiliative ties of the human family are substitutes for the genealogical ones whose meaning has been eroded by violence and injustice. Chesnutt demonstrates that the community and family name that blacks have had to build in response to their disenfranchisement cannot be revoked just to regain what has been denied. So unlike Morúa, even though he does not seem to argue for racial essentialism, neither does he wish to erase in the name of color neutrality the history that has aided the construction of a black racial community. He offers no false promise of a sentimentalized family reunion between the races; rather, as the Millers ultimately show, the best hope of reunion will be based solely on an acceptance of the moral responsibilities towards one another as fellow members of the human family. As Hortense Spillers has argued, "kinship loses meaning since it can be invaded at any given and arbitrary moment by the property relations" (74). African Americans have frequently revised the meaning of kinship under these conditions because as she notes, "the captive person developed time and again, certain ethical and sentimental features that tied her and him across the landscape to others, often sold from hand to hand, of the same and different blood in a common fabric of memory and inspiration" (75). Consequently, African Americans have developed models of family relations that are not based on genetically visible or socially upheld consanguinity.

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By the turn of the century, Cuba and the U.S. were living out the contradictions of their nationalist aspirations. They were consolidating their national identity on the basis of certain myths regarding their

national destinies, and yet they were also blind to the ways in which those myths may have contributed to their own racial conflicts. Despite apparent national consolidation in the wake of the Civil and the Spanish American Wars, colonialist ideologies from the period of slavery were disguised in new conceptions of the national family, and the political and cultural dynamics between these two nations of Plantation America provided the rhetoric that would blind them from these vestiges of colonialism. Some, in their eagerness to move beyond racial conflict, were tempted to elide racial difference altogether in order to arrive at a more facile solution to the painful problems of democracy in a former slave society. This is because africanization, or what amounted to radical racial difference, posed a threat to each nation's model of the national family and therefore frequently became invisible to the nation's eye. In the case of the United States, because a white genealogy was the exclusive model, blacks were explicitly excluded from the public space, and even in the case of Cuba which, like many Latin American nations, chose a racially hybrid model, only those forms of blackness which could establish hybrid relations with white Creole culture found room in the national family.

Morúa Delgado and Chesnutt were pioneers in that they called attention to role of white social power in the construction of race. These writers freed categories of racial identity from the prison house of visual perception and were thus able to suggest what a future nation of blacks and whites might become after the decline of such power. They were not without their own contradictions however. As Faulkner was later to argue, the trap of Plantation America is that to ignore the history of slavery and how it has shaped race and identity is to live a lie, but to forsake the responsibility of trying to move beyond that past is to risk repeating it.

Notes

[1]In the United States, there were, of course, many novels in the genre of romance which explicitly defended the age of slavery by means of overt sentimentalism. Plantation fiction saw its heyday in the 1870s and the 80s when the once critical depictions of slavery were transformed into a Camelot legend, a strategy that originated in the South in an attempt to heal its wounds after the War and to protect its damaged image. The writers discussed in this study not only respond, then, to these overtly nostalgic depictions of slavery but to the perhaps more subtle longings found in much realist fiction as well.

[2]For a study of these predecessors, see my article "Reading in the Dark: A Comparative Study of Creole National Imaginings" in *Towards a New American Imaginary*, Ed. Sylvia Spitta, Durham: Duke University Press, forthcoming, 1997.

[3]Vera Kutzinski has argued along similar lines: "Sofía is excluded from the Unzúazu family because of her alleged race, a fiction that is installed literally in *loco parentis*, a place Nudoso [Acebaldo] can usurp because it is unoccupied.... Sofía's uncertain (and illegitimate) origins make it possible for Nudoso to assume paternal(istic) prerogatives" (*Sugar's Secrets* 113).

[4]According to Reynaldo Gonzalez, many representations of Cuba in foreign "pictographs" that flourished among the natives despite their origin in foreign tourism "pleased the eye of the consumer who wished to enjoys the goods of the tropics without being contaminated with 'blackness'" (12 translation mine). Such is the effect of Villaverde's narrative eye, according to

Gonzalez. See also Vera Kutzinski's analysis of tobacco labels and how their representations of plantation life implied the internalization of the foreigner's view of Cuban customs. As Williams has also argued, rather than writing to "satisfy the curiosity of a foreign readership about the human status of slaves" as does Villaverde, Morúa's narrative "de-familiariz[es] the reader's existing stock of knowledge" (302-303).

[5]All translations of Morúa Delgado are mine.

[6]Cable wrote in the 1870s that "when someone comes looking for Southrons, we can send them on to New Mexico, and say 'That is the New South. And make haste, friend, or they will push you on into South America, where we have reshipped the separate sort of books printed for the Southern market.'" (48). He also declared: "Nationalization *by* fusion of bloods is the maxim of barbarous times and peoples. Nationalization *without* racial confusion is ours to profess and to procure.... to make national unity without hybridity—the world has never seen it done as we have got to do it" (130). Cable's "South," then, is an ideology of difference that seeks to distinguish civilization from barbarism and is shown here to be pliable enough to allow Cable to cast responsibility for the barbarism of interracial mixing onto the lands beyond the American border.

[7]For an in-depth analysis of the relationship between these riots and Ches-nutt's novel, see Sundquist's *To Wake the Nations*, pp. 406-445.

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*Stepping-Stones Between the Americas: The Narratives of Paule Marshall and Gayl Jones**

by Stelamaris Coser

By overstepping closures of nationality, race, and gender, the contemporary U.S. writers Gayl Jones and Paule Marshall have rewritten the boundaries between North and South America on the basis of shared cultural, social, and economic history, as well as common cultural roots in Africa. In novels that deal with the complex and contradictory realities of mixed racial heritage in the Caribbean, the United States, and Brazil, they have helped blur the dividing line between the "advanced" North America and the contrasting neo-colonial Structure of the Caribbean (Anglo or otherwise) and Latin America.[1] The importance of their novels on an inter-American level is at least twofold: at the same time that they give visibility and recognize bonds with the southern hemisphere, pulling together memories and experiences, they also inscribe their gender and race in the literature of the United States and of the continent. They reinterpret gender and ethnicity in the process of remembering and writing Africa in the whole continent of America. They help rewrite and redefine what is "American" literature today. The difference traditionally emphasized in U.S. literary criticism between the literatures of North and South America derives from a canon that circumscribes "American Literature" within white, and preferably male, borders. It discredits not only the literature of the rest of the continent but also the writings of men and women of color within the United States. In 1989, Toni Morrison decried the ethnic segregation persisting in the field of literature and criticism. She said,

> There is something called American Literature that, according to conventional wisdom, is certainly not Chicano literature, or Afro-American literature, or Asian-American, or Native-American, or... It is somehow separate from them and they from it.[2]

Without belonging to any literary clique nor subscribing to a common style, Morrison, like Paule Marshall, Gayl Jones, and other contemporary writers, has told stories that recreate the nation and the culture. More than that, they rewrite the continent: they, too, are "American." We, too, in Brazil, amd elsewhere in this continent, are Americans. As the myth of the United States as a blond white nation comes to an end, the perception of a radical difference between North and South America and their literatures loses ground. Paule Marshall and Gayl Jones, among many other contemporary writers of color, have displaced such binary oppositions. Their works stand out for the negotiation of black identity in the cultural and historical reference of the United States; the concern with dilemmas inherited by women from the (still) oppressive patriarchal order; and the contextualization in a larger American space that *highlights* the history and the culture of the Caribbean, Central and South America.

Using Brazil as a foil to the history of race and gender relations in her country, Gayl Jones retrieves the African presence in the whole process of creation of America as a continent. In her first novel

Corregidora (1975), the narrative poem *Song for Anninho* (1981), and in the poem "Xarque" (1985), among other works, she seeks connections and explanations in the centuries of black experience in the Americas. Characters spring directly out of Brazilian history, which for Jones is part of the "collective past"of the African Diaspora that she attempts to bring into her own stories. The result is a multivocal narrative where races and cultures intersect in a context of violence, complexity, ambiguity, and greatness.

Jones's interest in Brazil has a broad Afro-American framework: she would actually like to write about "the whole American continent" and "of blacks anywhere/everywhere." She declared in a 1982 interview that the experience of "Brazilian history and landscape" even if "purely literary and imaginative," gave her a new perspective on U.S. history.[3] Besides her interest in the colonial past, she has repeatedly expressed a feeling of kinship with contemporary Latin American writers like Gabriel García Márquez and Carlos Fuentes. They have directly influenced her "notions of fiction" with their blend of history and myth in language, shifts in time and space, a combination of "different kinds of language...and of reality," the construction of a relationship between past and present with landscape," and the oral power of their narratives. She especially relates to their moral and social responsibility in describing the nightmares of history. Jones shares their wish to write a new and comprehensive American narrative, trying to imagine new ways to express a whole "American heritage" which is also "Amerindian and African."[4] Her personal response goes beyond mere technique; it involves cultural ties and the sense of trust and solidarity that she also feels with some black, Native American, and African writers.

Gayl Jones's research on Brazilian slave history informs a kind of work that is original and unique. In *Corregidora*, the protagonist Ursa embodies a significant and unusual combination of a Kentucky present—like the author's—and an ancestry rooted in the Brazilian slave system. Ursa is the great granddaughter and granddaughter of women slaves abused by their Brazilian master, Corregidora. His name is carried on as a sign of oppression by the four generations of women transplanted from the Brazilian plantations to the urban south of the United States. However unwillingly, Ursa Corregidora displays her complex history and geography on her colors and features.

> "What are you?" [the black man] asked.
> "I'm an American."
> "I know you a American," he said. "But what nationality. You Spanish?"
> "Naw."
> "You look like Spanish." (71)

Almeyda, the protagonist and narrator in *Song for* Anninho, is a seventeenth-century woman who survives to tell the story of the maroons of Palmares in 1697. In "Xarque" the time is 1741 and the narrator is Almeyda's granddaughter Euclida, writing of other Africans working in a xarque factory (drying beef), suffering and rebelling in the Brazilian northeast. Through Ursa, Almeyda, and Euclida, Jones rewrites historical records and brings a black woman's imagination, her dreams and nightmares, into a larger "African-American" narrative.

Rather than presenting dry accounts of

"what really happened," these stories are personal explorations that connect history and autobiography. They show the point-of-view and the cultural specificities of a black woman writer born in 1949 in Lexington, Kentucky, raised and educated up until the tenth grade in segregated schools, and later influenced by education and professionalization in universities in the East. With an identification and a solidarity based on gender and race, Gayl Jones gives voice to black women abused in the Brazilian past, who join black males and females of today to narrate the struggles for freedom in the history of the continent.

In *Corregidora*, Palmares appears as an important reference, the destination of male runaway slaves; in *Song for Anninho* it is the whole poem. Almeyda and Anninho had been husband and wife in the Republic of Palmares. They had planned to write down their own view of the experience of Palmares, knowing how the Portuguese corrupted facts to suit their purposes. "You see how they transform heroes into villains, and noble actions into crimes, and elevated codes into venality?," Anninho once asked (60). In fact, there is no account left by the inhabitants of the eleven villages or quilombos which constituted that brave Republic. Ironically, whatever we know of that maroon settlement today is based on documents left by those who wanted to destroy it. "The Negro Republic will always be seen from a distance," says Brazilian historian Decio Freitas, "and only slightly will we ever glimpse at its inside."[5]

Trying to tread closer than the historian can, Gayl Jones' imagination enters Palmares and records the joys and cries of the people. Almeyda barely survived the fury of soldiers who cut her breasts off and believed her dead. Having lost her lover, her village, her people, and much of herself, she has the urgency to tell the memories of what happened. In her escape, Almeyda receives the nurturing care of the Indian woman Zibatra, healer of her wounds and listener to her story, a hybrid figure who speaks in tongues and knows the miracles of the Bible as well as the magic of natural herbs, the visible and the invisible. Like Zibatra, Gayl Jones plays with magic and with different languages in *Song for Anninho*.

Almeyda also reconstructs history as she recalls her early slave years in a sugar plantation and in a shoemaker's shop, where the master spanked her with "the heel of a shoe until it bled," while his wife looked on and smiled in relief (28-30). She remembers her being kidnapped and taken to Palmares, where the king was elected and honored by his people. She registers the prosperity and the trade done with neighboring villages or farmers, and evokes the brave men who made Palmares the terror of the colonial power, with their snatching of women and men and the raids of nearby towns and plantations.

The reflective, meditative quality of her poem allows Jones to explore issues of cultural authenticity and origin. She is interested in the continuous process of cultures meeting, clashing, and sometimes combining in redefinitions and adaptations. Almeyda recounts the similarity of Brazil and Africa in the greenness of the landscape, but she describes Palmares as a community of Africans that welcomed diversity. Even if its population was originally composed of runaway slaves, it was open to all races and creeds and to all "the persecuted and disinherited from the colonial system," to quote historian Decio

Freitas.[6] Indians, mestizos, free blacks, and whites came freely or were brought to the settlement. Zumbi, like Anninho in the poem, was a free Negro who came to Palmares by choice, and his "first or major wife" Maria was probably white. Although the main characters in Jones are Muslims, Palmares had people from different areas of Africa and was predominantly influenced by the Bantu language and culture of Angolan slaves.[7] Syncretic forms of verbal communication and religious rituals were created to accommodate different languages, races, colors, and creeds.[8]

A "syncretic" figure himself, Zumbi was raised by a Catholic priest in a district near Palmares, baptized as Francisco, taught to read and speak Portuguese and Latin, and trained as an altar boy. At fifteen he ran away to Palmares and adopted the name probably inspired by the Congo deity Nzambi, but would often go back to visit the priest.[9] In her poem, Almeyda is the Catholic granddaughter of an intelligent, brave, and majestic African slave woman who has "the blood of the whole continent running in [her] veins" (12). Almeyda carries the memory of "a greener past" in Africa but she belongs to America now.

> "This was my place. My part of
> the world
> The landscape and tenderness,
> the wars too and despair,
> the possibilities of some whole
> living." (17)

When processes of domination rob the dominated peoples of their language, their narratives also disappear. Using a black woman as narrator, as the site of struggle and repository of memory Gayl Jones empowers the muted voices of history. She decries mutilation and rape of women and the oppression and violence against all blacks. On the other hand, she also insists on the hope of loving "in spite of the time" (64). In Almeyda's dreams King Zumbi reassures her that "flesh and blood and spirit continues in the world. " (59). She says:

> They put him in a public place
> so that we would forget he was
> immortal.
> They thought we would believe
> as they believe,
> that with the stroke of a knife a
> man
> would lose his immortality. (56)

In the poem "Xarque," Almeyda's daughter Bonifacia repeats the story to her own daughter Euclida, who asks her, "tell me about Palmares."

> A fugitive slave settlement where I was
> born. In mountains and difficult forests.
> There are always settlements like that
> one
> forming and dissolving. Always. (25-26)

By recreating the spirits of remarkable women in fierce times, Gayl Jones brings into the literature of the United States a history of black resistance whose importance in the Americas is considered "second only to the Haitian revolt."[10] She also deals with forced or free Atlantic crossings and migrations that started in colonial times. The Brazilian slaves in *Corregidora* end up in Kentucky. In "Xarque," Euclida tells about a free black woman who left for Paris to try better luck. Like the Corregidora women as well as many Brazilians today, Euclida would rather go to the United States in search of

her American Dream:

> If it was me I'd go up North. They say that that's the place for real adventure and real **fortune.** Up to North America, that's where I'll go. (41)

Migrations, slavery, rebellions, the Atlantic and the Americas also inform the fiction of Paule Marshall. Born in 1929 in Brooklyn, New York, to immigrant parents from the Caribbean island of Barbados, Paule Marshall reveals the influence of that origin and that migration on the language and focus of her writing. From her first work of fiction, *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, published in 1959, to her last novel *Daughters*, 1991, the Engligh-speaking Caribbean is the center, a crossroads of the world. Paule Marshall relates the past and present history of hybridization and abuse in the Caribbean to similar processes throughout the Americas, including her own nation, the United States. Her work is truly American in a large sense and provides invaluable comments on our continent, as it explores the intersections of power within and between nation-states.

The four novellas in *Soul Clap Hands and Sing* (1961) are individually dedicated to specific parts of Marshall's version of the "extended Caribbean," a term I borrow from Immanuel Wallerstein.[11] Titled "Barbados," "Brooklyn," "British Guiana," and "Brazil," they present colors, cultures, classes, and generations of a hybrid America, a dynamic terrain marked by continuous migration and interethnic contact. In Marshall's novel *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* (1969) the setting is a small Caribbean island modeled after Barbados and renamed Bourne Island. According to the dictionary, "bourn or bourne" is a terminal point, boundary between properties.[12] Like Barbados, it is smaller and even more vulnerable than the other islands, reaching out into the Atlantic. Marshall writes:

> "It might have been put there by the giants to mark the eastern boundary of the entire continent, to serve as its bourn. And ever mindful of the responsibility placed upon it in the beginning, it remained—alone amid an immensity of sea and sky, becalmed now that its turbulent history was past, facing east, the open sea, and across the sea, hidden beyond the horizon, the colossus of Africa" (13).

Paule Marshall maps geography and rewrites history, remembers memories and stories, and records songs and rituals of the broad coastal area where the Caribbean is a nodal point, a major crossroads, signs hyphenating hemispheres and cultures. The islands are described as "stepping-stones that might have been placed there long ago by some giant race to span the distance between the Americas, North and South" (13). The Atlantic separates the Caribbean from the locations of power in the United States and Europe, but also from Africa, motherland to 80% of the people actually living in Barbados today. On her map, Marshall explores the lines of oppression and dependency between the islands and the white metropolis, and draws lines of connection and longing between the Caribbean and Africa. But these lines sometimes blur and mix in the complex and contradictory relations with East and West. The line drawn between the Caribbean and Brazil reveals a solidarity based on common African roots. By the

end of Marshall's novel *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* the female protagonist Merle Kinbona leaves for Africa in search of her daughter. The way she organizes her trip from Bourne Island to Uganda, Africa, reinforces the bonds between largely black communities in the Third World—here Barbados and northeastern Brazil. She makes a conscious choice against pervasive Eurocentric domination. I quote from the novel:

> She was not taking the usual route to Africa, first flying north to London via New York and then down. Instead, she was going south to Trinidad, then on to Recife in Brazil, and from Recife, that city where the great arm of the hemisphere reaches out toward the massive shoulder of Africa as though yearning to be joined to it as it surely had been in the beginning, she would fly across to Dakar and, from there, begin the long cross-continent journey to Kampala. (471)

Africa suggests identity, roots, and the possibility of a future. Merle Kinbona goes there both to renew bonds with the culture of her ancestors and to reunite with her daughter. Throughout the novel, Merle is the postcolonial subject divided between allegiances and interests. Her colors, her history, and her conflicts make her symbolic of the Caribbean; in Marshall's words, "she embodies an entire history." Daughter of a white English father and his black servant, murdered soon after her birth, "she is the child of the hemisphere."[13] In her sexuality, her politics, her class, even in her appearance, she drifted back and forth with the Atlantic currents, ambiguous and indeterminate, her life ravished by violence as much as her homeland had been. At the age of forty, her Bantu face was lined with worry and conflict:

> "It had been despoiled, that face, in much the same way as the worn hills to be seen piled around her had been despoiled—stripped of their trees centuries ago, their substance taken ... it looked utterly bereft at times" (5).

She was critical of the colonial order but was deeply immersed in it, and, as so many people around her, lacked the energy to change.

The presence of U.S. anthropologists Saul Amron and Alan Fuso and Merle's role as their main informant allow the reader to observe and analyze the confluence of cultural, economic, and political interests dominating the place. The grotesque white houses lined with Greek columns, the social parties celebrating the joint corruption of whites and light-skinned mulattoes, the dark black Parliament members submerged in the general apathy, the schools forbidden to teach about slave rebellions or popular culture... an intense and widespread Eurocentrism that Merle had to "un-think." (I am here borrowing the term from Ella Shohat and Robert Stam's book *Unthinking Eurocentrism*).[14] Above all, the anthropological research exposes the barrenness of the land and the hopelessness and destitution of the people who still serve British lords. Ironically, a powerful U S. corporation named UNICOR—one heart—is behind the project, neo-colonialism disguised as good wlll.

Paule Marshall explores the interconnectedness of historical periods, geographical regions, and subject positions. An early subscriber to a combined

postcolonial, multicultural, and feminist approach,[15] she tries to "address overlapping multiplicities of identity and affiliation," exploring regions and cultural/social groups "in relation" but never identical.[16] In *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*, Latin America, the Caribbean, and the United States are hybrid sites of multiple gender, class, ethnic, and racial identities, influenced by dispersed Western and non-Western cultures. In the association of the Jewish and African diasporas through the approximation of Saul Amron and Merle Kinbona, Marshall connects their history of dispersal in the manner proposed by Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic*.[17]

Marshall connects the heritage of colonial structures in Bourne Island to the situation of other Third World places, or, to quote Stam and Shohat, to "a longer history of multiply located oppressions."[18] The tradition of wealthy landlords and depleted lands exhausted by sugar cane resonates in lands despoiled by other crops or by mining. The barren hills of the island remind the anthropologist Saul Amron of other impoverished lands of the American continent where he had lived and worked. Bournehills, the poorest urban area of the island, conflated with "the wind-scoured Peruvian Andes. The highlands of Guatemala. Chile. Bolivia, where he had once worked briefly among the tin miners... Southern Mexico. And the spent cotton lands of the Southern United States... It was every place that had been wantonly used, its substance stripped away, and then abandoned" (100).

There is hope only in change, a change that will come about with the memory and repetition of black rebellions. Every year the Bournehills Carnival Parade reenacts the heroism of slaves against oppressive circumstances, but passive remembrance is not enough. In the novel, hope materializes for Merle Kinbona when she is able to yell back at Harriet Shippen's offer of money. Shaken by her own screams and a desperate laughter, Merle seemed to react against centuries of white exploitation, as if she were expelling a dead weight that had been eating away her strength and her will. Her final sentence to Harriet was a declaration of independence, "I don't like people ordering me about like I'm still the old colonial. I've had too much of that" (442). For the black and poor, future also means resisting and fighting against the cultural, economic, and political pressures that had drained their power for so long.

When Paule Marshall delivered the Keynote Address at the National Black Writers Conference in 1996, she emphasized the "odyssey" motif guiding her novels: a transformation, a rite of passage. *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*, and more directly *Praisesong for the Widow*, focus on a woman's journey "that is primarily but not only of the self, but also about and for the larger community. "[19] Marshall's multicultural nation is marked by asymetrical positions and intersections of power. Her mother and other Barbadian women in Brooklyn taught her as a little girl to think in terms of continents and of a larger world.[20] Her stories speak of all America, North and South, filled with music, ritual, suffering, resistance, and the endless memory of Africa.

Deeply merged in the history of the Americas, the multiplicity of voices, languages, and geographies in the works of Paule Marshall and Gayl Jones point to the striking ethnic polyphony of our "New World." Their stories are told to the

sounds, songs, and rhythms of the Americas. The music echoing in the different works bears signs of each nation and also reflects the multicultural reality of the New World: Ursa singing the blues in *Corregidora*; the jazz, blues, and protest songs in *Daughters*; the carnival parade and the samba in Marshall's *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* and "Brazil;" the drum beat and religious rituals in *Praisesong for the Widow*. The music is both memory and creation, both Europe and Africa, crossroads signs of the "New Worlds." The memory of African drums, dances, old slave songs and ring shouts filter through the sounds of the continent.

Their writings often repeat common strategies in "narrating the nation" but also blur divisions and turn them into ambiguities and contradictions, in a constant rearticulation of identity and culture. Their exploration of the dilemmas and paradoxes of black culture in the United States is complicated by their own ambivalent position in relation to the dominant culture of the country: often apart and antagonistic, they nevertheless negotiate a place in it and effectively work for its transformation.

I have briefly attempted to interrogate the complex tension in the narratives of Gayl Jones and Paule Marshall. They draw on roots and traditions but at the same time suggest the need for renovation and change. They are deeply grounded in U.S. history and culture and at the same time open to histories and geographies beyond the national borders. They address the empowerment of black people and culture but also reveal the hybridity of their history and of the culture of the American continent. Connecting our lives and stories, they perform the same role as the Caribbean islands, "stepping-stones between the Americas, North and South."

*Parts of this article are expanded in my book *Bridging the Americas* (Temple, 1994).

Endnotes

[1] The basic works for this discussion will be Gayl Jones, *Corregidora* (Boston: Beacon, 1975), *Song for Anninho* (Detroit: Lotus, 1981), and *Xarque and Other Poems* (Detroit: Lotus, 1985). Paule Marshall, *Soul Clap Hands and* Sing (1961. Washington DC: Howard UP, 1988), *Praisesong for the Widow* (New York: Plume, 1983), *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969) and *Daughters* (New York: Atheneum, 1991).

[2]Toni Morrison. "Unspeakable Things Unspoken: The Afro-American Presence in American Literature." *Michigan Quarterly Review* 28.1 (Winter 1989): 1. The risk of perpetuating enclaves in literary history is well explained by Tillie Olsen: "It is an unhappy fact that association with a category: Native-American, Asian-American, *any* hyphenated American working class, black women, ethnic, minority, 'sub-culture' —U.S.A American all—has, with occasional exception, relegated a writer to less than full writer's status, resulted as well in ignorance of or lack of full recognition to a writer's work and achievement." Tillie Olsen, foreword, *Black Women Writers at Work*. ed. Claudia Tate (New York: Continuum, 1986) X.

[3]Interview with Charles H. Rowell, *Callaloo* 5 (Oct. 1982): 40-41.

[4]Interview with Michael Harper, *Chant of Saints: A Gathering of Afro-American Literature, Art, and Scholarship*. Ed. Harper and Robert B. Stepto (Chicago: U of Illinois, 1979) 365-67. (8) Gayl Jones has also referred to her mother and to her teachers Michael Harper and William Meredith as "the

most important influences on her writing. Interview with Claudia C. Tate, *Black American Literature Forum* 13 (Winter 1979): 144. In *Liberating Black* Voices (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin, 1992) 1, Gayl Jones praised the oral quality in "African, African American, Native American, and other Third World literatures."

[5]Decio Freitas. *Palmares a Guerra dos Escravos*. 4th ed. (1971; Rio de Janeiro: Edições Graal, 1982) 13. My translation.

[6]Preitas 72. Most of the 30,000 population in the villages of Palmares was black, but there were also "mameluc [mestizo Indian-white], mulatto, and white" people there.

[7]Ivan Alves Filho. *Memorial dos Palmares* (Rio de Janeiro: Xenon, 1988) 169. The only Muslim reportedly living in Palmares was a Sudanese Moor who supposedly suggested the plans for the palisade and the system of defense of Palmares. Sudanese Muslims led the repeated slave rebellions in the city of Salvador between 1805 and 1835, "the only urban insurrections in Brazil and the New World." Decio Freitas, *Insurreições Escravas* (Porto Alegre, BR: Movimento, 1976) 72.

[8]Freitas (1982) 48.

[9]Freitas (1982) 125-26.

[10] Freitas (1982) 13. The anniversary of Zumbi's death on November 20 has been adopted as the National Day of Negro Conscience in Brazil. In 1985 the location of the central village of Macaco in the Republic of Palmares—Serra da Barriga, now in the state of Alagoas—was established as a historic area to be preserved.

[11]Immanuel Wallerctein. *The Modern World System*, v. 2: (New York: Academic, 1980), 103.

[12]*The American Heritage Dictionary* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982) 201.

[13]Paule Marshall, interview with Daryl Cumber Dance, *Southern Review*. 28.1 (Winter 1992): 19.

[14]Shohat and Stam. *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

[15]These three critical terms are overloaded with contradictory meanings. For "post-colonial" literatures, Bill Ashcroft et al., *The Empire Strikes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. (London: Routledge, 1989) provides a good description: "[literatures that emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre" (2).

[16]Shohat and Stam use those terms to describe their own work, p.6.

[17]Paul Gilroy. *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1993).

[18]Shohat and Stam, 5.

[19]Paule Marshall. "Keynote Address" National Black Writers Conference. Internet. 28 March 1996.

[20]Interview with Sabine Brock, "Talk as a Form of Action" in *History and Tradition in Afro-American Culture*, ed. Gunther H. Lenz (Frank£urt, New York: Campus-Verlag, 1984) 197.

"Signifyin' Ole Woman": American Theater and African Tradition

by Alice Mills

According to Henry Louis Gates Jr., the tales of the Signifying Monkey usually begin with an introduction along the following lines:

> There hadn't been no disturbin' in the jungle for quite a bit for up jumped the monkey in a tree one day and laughed "I guess I'll start some shit." (*Signifying* 55)

In fact, these same lines also provide a remarkably accurate description of the principal role assigned to the Old Woman in African American theater; that is, to upset the established order of things through the propagation of thoroughly impudent and shameless lies and exaggerations. Her flair and sense of humor provide an attractive veneer to behavior which is remarkably egocentric and often places her outside the bounds of accepted social and family behavior.

When Brooks becomes bored in Theodore Ward's *Big White Fog*, she stokes the quarrels which divide her family. In *Mam Phyllis* by Elisabeth Brown Guillory, Viola spends her spare time spreading the most outlandish and provocative gossip. Confined to their chairs as invalids, Lena in Robert Alexander's *The Hourglass* and Mama E. in Dianne Houston's *The Fishermen* fake an even greater senility in order to manipulate their entourage. And, with regard to exaggeration, who can outdo Aunt Ester in August Wilson's *Two Trains Running* with her claim that she is three hundred forty-nine years old.

Exaggeration, hyperbole and wanton lying are often the hallmarks of the Old Woman's dramatic personality. Specialists in African American studies like Robert Hemenway and Françoise Lionnet[1] see a sign of ancestral ritual in this propensity for fabulosity; facts transfigured by the imagination generate the creative energy which is indispensable to the expression of the constantly changing and diverse realities of the black community. Zora Neale Hurston sometimes employed the tactics of exaggeration in her own research into the African American fables known as "lying sessions" (Lionnet in Gates *Reading*, 385). Gates points out that "'lies' is a traditional Afro-American term for figurative discourse, tales or stories" (*Signifying* 56), and Houston A. Baker, Jr. reminds us that knowing how to improvise the adequate falsehood is the very basis of any viable African American strategy. Recalling that "a compulsion to embroider the truth, to exaggerate or to tell lies" (74) is a form of mythomania, an essential characteristic of the voodoo tradition, he sees in this propensity a uniquely African American cultural trait. In this respect then, the character of the Old Woman is perhaps one of the major artistic achievements of African American theater.

The glibness and pugnacity of the Old Woman's speech differentiate her from those around her, very much like the Signifying Monkey and Br'er Rabbit who owe their own successes to the superiority of their verbal skills. Her fighting spirit is generally given its freest and most creative rein within a home shared by several generations of the same family, and she ceaselessly provokes confrontations amongst

its different members. Since she rarely encounters a worthy adversary amongst her own children, she encourages them to measure themselves against each other at the very least and goads them on with the most outlandish lies. Her daughter and son-in-law provide her with the entertainment that the lion and the elephant traditionally provide the monkey in the fables of the Signifying Monkey.

In Louis Peterson's *Take a Giant Step*, the Old Woman does not content herself with making fun of her daughters' terms of endearment for her husband; she actually incites her to fight with him. *In Big White Fog*, Brooks' jokes about her son-in-law's dark skin never fail to enrage him and Mama E. in *The Fishermen* pointedly reminds her daughter that there are more important things in life than a husband.

When quarrelling with her son-in-law begins to bore her and she tires of watching her own children fight, the Old Woman continues the struggle by provoking conflicts between them and their children. No matter what principles for raising their children the parents have agreed on, she finds reasons to defy them. If they favor a calm existence, she encourages her grandchildren to pursue an adventurous one.

In *Big White Fog*, Becky storms and rages in her efforts to make a prize fighter of her grandson, urging him to run away to Europe if necessary. In *Take a Giant Step*, Spence's grandmother nags him to leave the neighborhood his parents have chosen. She insists that he openly defy their demands of submission and good manners, and barricades herself in her room with him. In J. E. Franklin's *Black Girl*, the old woman helps her granddaughter leave home in spite of the mother's opposition and Mama E. in *The Fishermen* supports her grandson, Jeremy, when he decides he wants to change his name to Kimosabe.

On the other hand, if the parents themselves fail to conform to the highest standards of conduct, as with the mother of Linda who drinks herself into a stupor every evening (*The Warning: A Theme for Linda*, by Ron Milner), the Old Woman righteously criticizes the wayward parents and loudly praises the virtues of an orderly existence.

It would be a mistake, nonetheless, to conclude that the Old Woman wants to create an irrevocable split between her children and her grandchildren. Her impudent boasting is, in the end, more supportive than it is destructive. In reality, by provoking crises before they would develop without her meddling, she prepares her adult children and her adolescent grandchildren for the conflicts which they will have to face eventually. Such crises might prove insurmountable if confronted without the benefit of her experience. Her approbation of her grandchildren permits them to break momentarily with their parents without running the risk of a definitive rupture.

Thus, paradoxically, the Old Woman assures transition, continuity and even stability. The "monkey" side of her personality—the lying and the mischievousness, the sowing of disharmony and confusion—is balanced by wisdom and by a gift for reconciliation which are perhaps more the assets of the African God, Esu-Elegbara, than those of the Signifying Monkey, in the sense that the Signifying Monkey is better known for his pranks than for his wisdom. She assumes the role of the God Esu, the master of the crossroads and the mediator of opposites, by imposing herself between her children

and her grandchildren at the point of transition where her grandchildren pass from childhood to adulthood.

Gates's work, which has demonstrated the importance of the role played by the Divine Trickster, and the more recent analysis of the Trickster by Jacqueline de Weever help us to understand the duality of the Old Woman's personality. Not only is the African Trickster a spinner of tales, a liar and a comedian, he also acts as the privileged interlocutor between the gods and men, empowering him to be the master of those places where the profane and the sacred meet. His lies destabilize mortals and draw them outside their normal bounds into areas where their spiritual understanding can deepen. His wild tales become the tools necessary for the acquisition of wisdom. Pelton says that, as the mediator of opposites, "the Trickster God Esu destroys normal communication to bring men outside ordinary discourse, to speak a new word and to disclose a deeper grammar to them and then restore them to a conversation that speaks more accurately of Yoruba Life" (Pelton 163).

The Old Woman's propensity to create conflict and disturbance, coupled with her ability to force the resolution of these same conflicts, parallels the traditional role of Esu, the master of both disputes and reconciliations. She resembles the Divine Trickster in other ways as well. In accordance with the principle of the mediation of opposites, the Trickster is both infinitely old and infinitely young. For the Yoruba, he is the "old spirit god"; for the Oriki, he is "the father and the child, the first and the last to be born" (Gates *Signifying* 37). This characteristic helps explain the close relationship between the Old Woman and her grandchildren, and their complicity is a constant of African American theater.

Far removed from the affection and endearments usually associated with the Grandmother in Western cultures, the Old Woman expresses herself with words and gestures close to "the dozens" in their ritualistic tenor, the sharpness of their comebacks, their accompanying humour and in their final purpose which is to impose herself through a superior mastery of language. The cardinal rule of this game is "to get in the last word". The verbal jousting between Mrs. Love and her grandson, in *Contributions* by Ted Shine, are a convincing example of her skill:

> Mrs. Love: I thought most of you young cats had nerve today.
> Eugene: And I wish you'd stop embarrassing me using all that slang.
> Mrs. Love: I'm just trying to talk your talk, baby.
> Eugene: There is something wrong with a woman eighty years old trying to act like a teenager.
> Mrs. Love: What was it you was telling me the other day? 'bout that gap? How young folks and old folks can't talk together?
> Eugene: The generation gap.
> Mrs. Love: Well I done bridged it baby! You dig?
> Eugene: You are ludicrous ....
> Mrs. Love: Damn right.
> Eugene: That's another thing. All this swearing you've been doing lately.
> Mrs. Love: Picked it up from you and your friends sitting right there in my livingroom, under the portrait of Jesus Christ. (54)

Mrs. Love has assumed the role of "Elegbara, he who speaks all languages" (Gates *Signifying* 7). Once she has demonstrated the superiority of her wit,

she is free to teach her progeny without the fear that she will be accused of senility. No matter which ideological underpinning is contained in her lesson, it is invariably based on a steadfast refusal to lose hope, to give up the struggle. She typically describes the daily tribulations of her existence as well as the exceptional trials which she has had to face and which have formed her personality. Throughout the history of African American theater we encounter this same dialogue which, starts with a recital of the individual sufferings of the Old Woman and concludes with the similarities between her own aspirations and those of her grandchildren.

This process of repeating the same message with successive adaptations and modifications (a process similar to the creation of fables) is one of the Trickster's distinguishing techniques. He is obstinately opposed to any form of ending or enclosure, much preferring endless variations on an open theme. This stylistic device permeates African American literature (De Weever, Lionnet) and music (Baker) and is most frequently employed in the theater by the Old Woman. She reminds her grandchildren that their struggle, no matter what its underlying philosophy or the forms that it takes, can never rival, nor fail to take into account, the traditions from which it arises, but must build upon and broaden these traditions. From the early twentieth century, the theatrical incarnation of the Old Woman thus professes one of the defining ideas of modern African American feminism—she is intent upon creating bonds across all generations.

> Beaten and mistreated for the
> work that I gave
> Children sold away from me,
> husband too
> No safety, no love, no respect
> was I due (...)
> I couldn't read then. I couldn't
> write...
> But I kept trudging on through
> the lonely years (...)
> I had only hope then but now
> through you
> Dark child of today my dream
> must come true . . .

(Hughes 273)

Alongside the slave in *Don't You Want to Be Free?* by Langston Hughes, who addresses her descendants in the above manner,[2] we find the belligerent Old Women of Marita Bonner's *The Purple Flower*, of Gayl Jones' *Chile Woman*, the aged cotton pickers in *And Then the Harvest* by Regina O'Neil and the retired servants in *The Warning*, all demanding that their efforts be recognized by the young and integrated into the common cause. A characteristic example is Mrs. Love, who asks Eugene:

> Don' you think I wanted to sip me a coke-cola in a store when I went out shopping? Don't you think I wanted to have a decent job that would have given me some respect and enough money to feed my family and clothe them decently? (Yet my job) put your daddy through college so he could raise you with comfort like he raised you. (Shine 59)

It is interesting to that Mrs. Love's resemblance to the Trickster is not limited to her habit of repeating the same discourse over and over again: in accompanying the poisoning of her white masters' food with hymns and sweet smiles[3], she imitates the Brazilian Esu who spent his time "killing, poisoning and driving mad" the oppressor (Bastide 350).

The Old Woman frequently transmits her wisdom to the young via a process of interrogation leading to self-revelation. She is also, however, capable of revealing her secrets directly, teaching her daughters the arts of feminity and of love, for example. Her own initiation to the mysteries of the male sex has frequently been positive and even a source of joy. Old Woman in *Chile Woman* remembers, "I loved him so much. I loved to watch him walk. Black as satin. The handsomest man I ever knew in my life." (Jones 51). Bertha in August Wilson's *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* offers the following grandmotherly advice (and that of the Monkey, in fact) to her young tenant, Mattie, "The only thing that man needs is somebody to make him laugh." (87)

The grandmother speaks her mind to her grandsons too. In *The First Breeze of Summer* by Leslie Lee, Gremmar advises Lou to stop denying his sexual needs:

> Gremmar: Lord, Louis—Louis, child, get off your high horse, son ... don't be some old... old goody-goody. Some old—
> Lou (angrily): Gremmar, I am not! (hurt) I'm not !
> Gremmar: Yes, you are—that's what you are—some old goody goody! Talk like some old maid, some—some little old sissy! Some little old prude—that's what you are! (Lou is shocked by her words) Lord, Louis, you're a man, son, you're a man! He gave you something to use—to use! Don't you know it ? (He looks at her in disbelief and with embarrassment). (112)

African American theater frequently designates the Old Woman as the representative of that form of feminity which gives important roles to seduction and to the act of sex itself. And, indeed, she is not just talking, she consistently acts in accordance with her stated beliefs.

Alba, in Ted Shine's *The Woman Who Was Tampered with in Youth*, celebrates her seventieth birthday by blatantly forcing herself upon an elderly gentleman who, although initially reluctant, finally manages to enter into the spirit of the occasion: In this comic scene, Ted Shine allows his character, an Old Woman, to achieve something which African American theater often denies to the younger woman: the ability to create a happy couple.[4] This ambiguity of attitude towards women is characteristic of African American theater which, as much as it casts a kindly regard on and even delights in the sexuality of the Old Woman, can be as strikingly intolerant of the same impulses in younger women. And, indeed, the theater's tolerance of the appetites of the Old Woman is extensive. While Alba shows a certain respect for social conventions in choosing a victim of her own age, Aunt Edna, in Leslie Lee's *The First Breeze of Summer*, confesses that she prefers young partners. To her nephews who tell her "one of these young cats might be too much for you," she anwsers quite simply, "well, too much is better than too little." (52)

This seductive and fickle side of the Old Woman may disturb those for whom age is not, and especially not in the case of women, an asset to seduction. The association of advanced age with sexuality is unusual in any event, yet the Old Woman's seductiveness is virtually taken for granted in African American theater. The reasons for this characterization are clarified by a further examination of the many similarities between the Old Woman and the Trickster.

The Trickster is the source of all fecundity, both physical and spiritual, because he is situated at the point of intersection of the male and female principles. For similar reasons, he incarnates seduction and, more particularly, that form of seduction which in its exuberance and joyfulness admits no notions of suffering or remorse. The Fon's "Book of Destiny" relates Legba's sexual pranks as just that, a series of tricks or practical jokes which are, at the very worst, only slightly immoral. Legend has it that Legba's seduction of a mother and daughter angered his parents. Legba obstinately refuses to admit his guilt even in the face of overwhelming evidence so Mawu, his father, condemns him to a state of perpetual sexual arousal. Not only is Legba not cowed by his punishment, he is, in fact, delighted with it. He immediately throws himself on his sister, Gbadu, and tells his parents that it is their own fault and that, from now on, no woman within his reach will escape untouched (Herskovits 205).

It at first seems surprising that Legba, a male, could transmit his desire for sexual conquest to a female character, but only as long as we fail to remember that the Trickster is both male and female. Many statuary representations of Legba combine the genital organs of both sexes on the same body. The role assigned to the Old Woman in African American theater is not, therefore, in contradiction with the logic of African tradition. In fact, she can even allow herself to be the object of her grandsons' first tentative flirtations and affirmations of virility. In Gayl Jones' *Chile Woman*, Pigfootman gives expression to a widely recognized sentiment:

> See that ole woman over there. She kept her shape, ain't she? A black woman will keep her shape, won't she? Now you take a white woman, she get thirty and start running down. But even a ole black woman still got a shape. (19)

This theme continually appears in plays throughout the twentieth century via a symbolism centered on the African American Old Woman. Blood, its most eloquent element and the symbol *par excellence* of feminity, is an essential component of the character's dramatic substance. The final lines in Chile Woman are spoken by Old Woman who says, "My heart pumps blood to keep you from breaking." (Jones 56). This blood, of course, evokes the menstrual flow, but also, in a more general sense, the flow of water and the action of waves as demonstrated by Bachelard and by the anthropologist, Gilbert Durand, and is one more link between the Old Woman and the Divine Trickster. For the Fon, Legba is a "principle of fluidity, of uncertainty, of the indeterminacy even of one's prescribed fate" (Gates *Signifying* 28). For the Yoruba, Esu embodies that fluidity (Ogundipe 135).

The logic of a seemingly irrational scene in *Two Trains Running* is fully revealed in the light of this tradition. In order for Aunt Ester to change the course of their lives, several characters throw offerings of money into the river. She assures them that in making a gift to the river, they are in fact making one to her and to the gods. Once again she acts in accordance with the Fon belief that the Trickster is able to read in the book of fate. If fate can be foretold by the Trickster, it can also be changed by him/her (Gates *Signifying* 28). Like Esu who draws all men's steps towards him,

Aunt Ester attracts all the characters to her door where she dazzles them with her exceptional skill with words. "Ain't nobody ever talk to me like that" (Wilson 98), remarks Sterling, whom she advises to slip an envelope, twice folded over, into his shoe directly under his heel. This advice, too, appears less mysterious to those familiar with the legend of Esu, who, because he has one leg longer than the other, is able to keep one foot on earth and the other in heaven.

Aunt Ester's ultimate function has to do with creation. Her intervention aims above all else at the reunification of masculine and feminine elements. There is no question that the various characters consult her for ostensibly very different reasons—Holloway is obsessed with the idea of killing his grandfather; Memphis is intent on winning a lawsuit; West wants to communicate with his deceased wife; Sterling is waiting to meet the woman of his life. In orienting destiny in accordance with their desires (the grandfather dies a natural death, Memphis wins his hopeless case, and a young girl falls in love with Sterling), Aunt Ester relieves them of the torment which has prevented their personal fulfillment. Each of them then finds a woman, with the exception of West, who has refused to throw his money into the river and who, therefore, remains alone. This reunification of man and woman as willed by Aunt Ester opens into a theme of fecundity and birth. Bearing the gift of life,[5] the Old Woman shares once more in the power of the gods.

The richness and complexity of the character of the Old Woman in African American theater are, of course, directly linked to specific cultural traditions, but they are also familiar aspects of the major structures of human imagination. One particularity of the Old Woman is her affiliation with gods and animals of small size. Their triumph, in spite of their inferior size, is an expression of the "power of the minuscule" as analyzed by the anthropologist Gilbert Durand (544). Most civilizations have expressed a belief in the superior powers possessed by certain beings who are apparently feeble because of their small size, their old age or even both. Ananse, the Ashanti spider, Esu, the Yoruba's "tiny little man."[6] the American Br'er Rabbit, the Signifying Monkey and Goupil the Fox of medieval France are all physically smaller than their enemies. They are joined by the little monkey Souen Wou Kong in China and by Bès in Egypt. Europe's elves, gnomes and sprites, all very small and typically several hundred years old, are other manifestations of the power of the minuscule and the ancient. It is no wonder then that so many African American playwrights are under the Old Woman's spell and help perpetuate an ancient tradition in which wisdom and truth are inseparable from laughter and fabulosity.

Notes

[1]See the relevant commentary by Robert Hemenway in *Dust Tracks* and the article by Françoise Lionnet, "Autoethnography", in *Reading Black, Reading Feminist*, ed.by Henry L.Gates Jr.

[2]In my doctoral thesis, I equated the eternal mother in *Don't You Want To Be Free?* with the grandmother (i.e., the Old Woman). Calvin C. Hernton uses a somewhat similar approach to the subject in *The Sexual Mountain and Black Women Writers.*

[3]The Old Woman's relations with members of the dominant social group are often a direct application of the logic of the Signifying Monkey or of his alter ego, Br'er

Rabbit, since the latter, in spite of his apparent benevolence, sends both the fox and the wolf to a violent death. The Old Woman will also often appropriate for her own uses the practices of the American Christian. In Abram Hill's *Walk Hard* for instance, Becky replaces the bible with a cookbook and incites her family to beat their white neighbours instead of their own breasts.

[4]For a period of time during the 1960s, Black Revolutionary Theater summarily dismissed all black women as traitors. Girlfriends, wives or mothers, they were all historically guilty of obedience to whites in their roles as servants and nannies. In *And We Own the Night*, for instance, Jimmy Garrett completely demolished the image of the mother. The grandmother, however, was generally spared this lack of respect by simply not being represented nor often even mentioned in these plays. William Couch, Jr.'s *Family Meeting* is an exception, although no character in the play dares proffer the slightest criticism of the grandmother until after her death. In general the black women who had been tried and convicted by Revolutionary Theater were later elevated to a position of honor as Old Women. In most African American plays written in the 1980s, they are finally able to take their revenge on the men who tormented them when they were young. Ted Shine thus allows Alba to settle her score with the man who raped her when she was an adolescent. Amiri Baraka who, during the 1960's, preached rather brutal treatment of women, presents us in *Song* with an elderly teacher confessing to how stupid and pretentious he had been with regard to his companion. Lena Fletcher in Robert Alexander's *The Hourglass* exacts a more bitter revenge; condemned to her wheel chair, this Old Woman delights in turning over and over the hourglass which contains the ashes of her deceased husband.

[5]To my knowledge, the only Old Women associated with death in Afro-American theater are found in Georgia Douglass Johnson's *A Sunday Morning in the South*, Paul Carter Harrison's *Tabernacle*, Harry Dolan's *Losers Weepers*, William Couch, Jr.'s *Family Meeting*, and, to a certain extent, Pearl Cleage's *Hospice*.

[6]The Yoruba poem says, "Esu little man / Short, diminutive little man / Tiny little man" (Gates *Signifying* 65).

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The Diaspora and the Loss of Self in Caryl Phillips's Fiction: Signposts on the Page

by Claude Julien

My weird title is a distorted quotation from Caryl Phillips's *Crossing the River* (237) that is graphically translated in the photographic montage of the 1994 Picador edition: against the background of a stormy skyscape rent by a ray of dim light, three merged heads stick out of churning water gazing forlornly into different directions like an old-fashioned signpost. *Crossing the River*, Phillips' latest novel[1] features men and women adrift and whose hearts have been gnawed hollow by racism. The ultimate loss of self is illustrated by Joyce's behavior when this young British rebel the war has made a widow veers back into a socially acceptable rut when she gives Greer, her racially mixed baby, up to the British welfare system in order to reconstruct her own life as a conventional homemaker.

Crossing the River (1993) can be looked upon as the full realization of a fictional construction of our modern world begun with *Higher Ground* (1989) and continuing through *Cambridge* (1991). Based upon a discursive and structural analysis of Phillips's three African diaspora novels, we shall hypothesize a synergy at work bringing together diasporan dispersion and textual fragmentation, a metaphor that structures these three fictions and finally comes into its own in *Crossing the River*'s magic realism that masters time. For lack of any genetic information on Phillips's work, my hypothesis is strictly based on sequential reading. The point is moot but this global reading elicits a thought process flowing and maturing from one novel into the next.

This investigation will follow two converging routes. Discursive contents will come first: for the displaced victims of the diaspora, the middle passage is a one-way crossing. There is no returning because chains have taken root in this unwished-for elsewhere. A more arresting aspect is that Phillips's representation of the world invites a denial of the simplifications of traditional protest fiction by featuring white characters for whom the African diaspora is baneful in so far as it means distraction, the loss of their bearings as human beings. Then narration will briefly come under consideration. The metaphor of water where feet can leave no track also bears upon a fiction that is fluid, a textual strategy that consists in capturing the reader into its current rather than in stating ideas.

Higher Ground consists of three parts: "Heartland," "The Cargo Rap" and "Higher Ground." "Heartland" is narrated by a nameless character employed as an interpreter in a slave factory. From an unavailing uneasiness about this seamy business he goes along with to save his own skin, the story he tells proceeds to his unassuming revolt against degradation. Resistance comes to him selfishly when Price, a white officer, takes him along to a neighboring village to obtain a concubine for himself. The nameless "girl" resists Price's violent coercion and he ultimately sends the interpreter to lead her back to her village in frustration. The now sullied girl is rejected by her own and the interpreter comes to fetch her back for himself and smuggles her into the compound. The girl's presence is discovered by a soldier who, a lost soul in

between bouts of drunkenness, is rather friendly to the interpreter. The white man avails himself of the opportunity until the interpreter, allowing his dignity to speak, asks him to desist. Lewis then exposes the couple and punishment swiftly follows when the interpreter and the girl are branded and chained in the foul smell of the slave gaols of which not much is said to suggest the worst.

This brief synopsis leaves much untold. In particular, *Higher Ground* can be regarded as a seminal book: where the racial relationships induced by the diaspora are concerned, *Higher Ground* introduces through the social and philosophical musings of the factory's governor an idea each of the following two novels will take up and probe deeper into. Indeed, speaking with the wisdom of approaching death, the governor expresses his reticence toward his new post. He imparts his uneasy feelings but justifies the slave trade in the same breath: local potentates seek profit and this African lack of self-respect extenuates white guilt, while mankind's future lies ahead warped out of shape:

> I fear the wheel of history has spun us all into a difficult situation, and no amount of acclimatization by you or by me is going to heal the wound that this economic situation has inflicted upon our human souls. (51)

What the governor calls the pillaging of Africa finds its way into "The Cargo Rap," the second sequence organized around the letters a Black American prison inmate writes home to his parents, his siblings, his girl friend and his lawyer. Answers and visits from the outside are only reported and while these letters also deal with contemporary events outside (for instance Martin Luther King's assassination) they mostly chronicle incomprehension and detail the stages of Rudi's drift toward insanity. His first letter (written to his mother) overflows with the banal revolutionary topicality of the day, arguing that Blacks who accept the USA (which he later calls the Union of South Africa) as they are simply fail to hear their chains ringing. His last letter, also written to his (now) dead mother, is an acid parody of social Darwinism: in a short message a recently transplanted slave writes home to say he has made it to the other shore and will survive because he belongs among the fittest. The memory of slavery injects meaning into a segment whose very title, "The Cargo Rap" links the anger of the day with Africa via the slaver's hold. But this is an existential link, not an organic fictional one. This novel contains three separate strands that read like a triad of misfortune touching on three different places in selected times when the curse of racism hit the western world. There is no simplistic dramatization on the page; but the book feeds from the consciousness of racism like a manmade flood threatening mankind.

This is at least one of the suggestions arising from the overall title that alludes to the wished-for "higher ground" of the spiritual: a higher ground safe from evil and danger but which is denied Irene, a Polish Jew who has survived the Warsaw ghettos only to find neither refuge nor compassion in Britain. Her past traumas still haunt her, and her nightmares only elicit racist insults from the other side of the partition. The novel thus globally brings together different barbarities. Suffering imparts existential unity to the three stories that remain diegetically and chronologically separate even if Nazi racism and ordinary British antisemitism

can be looked upon as offshoots of the racist feelings that arose from African slavery. The effects, direct and indirect, of the diaspora dominate a book that still follows fairly conventional protest fiction recipes but begins to demur at the ethnically correct with the creation of white characters that are far removed from the simplifications of protest fiction. The waters rise from hurting Africa to the United States and then Europe. They are no cleansing waters but dangerous ones that unseat compassion and tolerance. From a narrative point of view, fragmentation remains purely formal. In Phillips's next novel, *Cambridge*, the diaspora is built into the central unifying fictional link.

Cambridge is composed of three untitled parts of unequal length preceded by a prologue and followed by an epilogue. The Prologue brutally posits social disharmony from the start when the reader is given to understand that a young woman is allowed to travel to her father's plantation in the Caribbean prior to an arranged wedding to a wealthy oldish widower whose social standing will help her father maintain his own. The first part is her own account of her one-way trip to the island. The second part is the personal account a slave nicknamed Cambridge wrote in his cell prior to his hanging for the murder of the overseer. The last is a newspaper account, the Establishment's version of the facts leading to Cambridge's execution. In the Epilogue, Emily is delivered of a stillborn baby fathered by the now dead overseer while the plantation is to be sold and dismantled as Britain is in the process of abolishing slavery.

Though minimal, this synopsis shows *Cambridge* has more diegetic cohesion than *Higher Ground*. Where dispersion informs the earlier novel, *Cambridge* builds up a diegetic continuity which it presents from different perspectives. In *Cambridge*, lives intersect, strands complement the overall diegesis while in *Higher Ground* they simply amalgamate to suit the novel's ontogenic purposes. With *Cambridge*, fragmentation becomes a structuring instrument, one that brings together the container and the contents.

Emily's journal is the most voluminous part and certainly the most challenging as to the memory of slavery. Where *Higher Ground* posits the African diaspora as the starting point of an alienation whose ravages govern modern racialist attitudes, *Cambridge* enlarges upon the idea of a moral wound mankind has inflicted upon itself and highlights the way racism worms its way into the hearts and minds of white people who, in turn, become their own victims. While this is no novel idea, one must recall here it found forceful expression during the Civil Rights campaign in the words of James Baldwin:

> Something awful must have happened to a human being to be able to put a cattle prod against a woman's breast. What happens to the woman is ghastly. What happens to the one who does it is in some ways much, much worse. Their moral lives have been destroyed by the plague called color.[2]

While not overlooking the tortured slaves, *Cambridge* shifts emphasis to the torturers. The poison of slavery whose effects upon the enslavers the dying governor briefly lamented in "Heartland" gives its full fictional measure in *Cambridge* when the reader is forced to read Emily's journal antiphrastically. Indeed, the young woman sails out as an abolitionist intending to

gather first-hand material to lecture against the institution on returning in Britain, the better to show her father what others must endure to make his carefree spendthrift existence possible. Her journal's words are unequivocal and carry the harshness of things half said; yet Emily's racial good quickly wears thin as the day-to-day realities of slavery corrode her abstract, intellectual opposition to the institution.[3] Hardly has she set foot on the island when her olfactive sensations and the sight of the pickaninnies' bare bottoms suffice to confirm the social hierarchy her mind harbors. Though an opponent to slavery, the young woman is a mental prisoner of racialism. Onomastics help support the idea that *Emily* merely *emulates* dominant (white) biases and the *rightfulness* of the *doer* her last name (*Cartwright*) suggests is an ironic dead end. Emily is far too absorbed in herself not to go along with the island's dominant white doxa. What the reader is given to see is entirely filtered by Emily. The unconscious racist mind-set she lands with finds fertile ground on the island of which she sees what she is shown, and about which she reports what she is told. The sadistic brutality of her lover wielding the lash becomes a diaphanous back-lit sight worded in genteel language. The absence of harsh violent scenes induces narrative gaps that call attention to the young woman's smugness as the novel distills the blight of racism at work in the heart of a person who meant well to start with.

Cambridge's death cell autobiography adds a Black viewpoint to Emily's unfinished journal. It begins with his relation of the way, as a teenager, he was torn from his homeland because greed had corrupted African hearts. Olumide was thus taken to North Carolina and then on to Great Britain where he was renamed Black Tom, then Thomas. When fully Anglicized, he became David Henderson, an evangelist who eventually married a white woman. After Anna's death in childbirth, David left for Africa as a missionary, was robbed of his money on the way and enslaved in the Caribbean where he was derisively nicknamed Cambridge and became the mate of Christiania, a woman the overseer lusted for.

Emily develops an interest for this giant she dubs "Hercules" without even so much as asking him his given name or relationship to Christiania who obeys him when he tells her to desist from her frightening obeah incantations. Cambridge ends his confessions[4] with his version of Brown's end whom he killed in self-defense while he was seeking an explanation as the overseer had unfairly punished him for stealing meat. The last part, a newspaper account of the events leading to Cambridge's execution, offers yet another point of view: that an act of quick and ready justice was concluded properly when the hanged man was left to rot as a warning to slaves contemplating insurrection.

Crossing the River, Phillips's last novel, and last under consideration here, takes its formal and discursive cue from *Cambridge*. It consists in a prologue set in Africa in 1750, where a father bemoans the sale of his children "jettisoned (...) at this point where the tributary stumbles and swims out in all directions to meet the sea" because he no longer could provide for them after his crops had failed (1). Four parts follow that concentrate on each of the father's three children as well as the British slave captain who purchased them. The Epilogue is again set in Africa: two and a half centuries later, the same father,

still bemoaning his loss, finds some comfort in the sound of the tomtom coming from the other shore and proving his children will survive.[5] The four core narratives move back and forth between Africa, the New World and Europe—forward and backward over the years. "The Pagan Coast" shows Nash, a manumitted slave, come to Liberia to bring light and religion to his father land. He writes home to his former master, his *Dear Father*[6] a number of sycophantic letters calling for help to carry out his intended duties. Unanswered letters result in one last message that boils down to one anguished question, "Why have you forsaken me?" (42). By then, Nash has married an African woman. His ultimate fate is unknown and matters little: death or disappearance are one and the same because Nash is ostracized both by the Africans and the American colonists. The diaspora rots all hearts and some Black colonists are even known to traffic in young slaves for the American market.

If returning to Africa is impossible, there is only a mirage for American Blacks moving west in post Civil War days. More waters to cross beyond which lies another illusion of more waters luring people on. In "West," Martha moves to California with a Black wagon train that drops her in Denver, an old woman to die a lonely winter death while she dreams of joining her only daughter whom a slave sale once tore away from her. Though she has never heard from Eliza Mae or of her whereabouts, she hopes for a reunion and a comfortable middle class life among her grand children.

Nash and Martha are children lost in the middle of the waters and the white characters in the following two parts follow the same fate. "Crossing the River," which gives its title to the novel, presents Hamilton, a slave ship captain on his maiden voyage from England, who purchases the African father's three children. Hamilton's logbook is very laconic. A true businessman, he harbors no hostility to the slaves upon whom he hopes to found his future material prosperity. But, in his letters to his bride at home, there emerges the vague consciousness of a disease that infected his father, also a slave ship captain, who mysteriously died in Africa because he "traded not wisely" (118). The option is open for the reader to conclude the same danger of being dehumanized by the diaspora lies in wait for the young man. He too is a lost orphan on the seas, which is metaphorically said when he writes "We have lost sight of Africa" in his logbook (124).

Joyce, whose diary makes up the whole of "Somewhere in England," is a woman from the Midlands, also a fatherless child, a rebel in her mother's house who gets an abortion after being jilted and finally marries a village grocer during World War II. Leonard is a brutal loutish beer fly who ends up in prison for profiteering on the black market. American troops are stationed in the village and Joyce marries G.I. Travis, the African father's remaining son, who is killed on a battlefield in Italy. Widowed Joyce then gives in to the social worker's insistence that her son, Greer, must become a ward of the County Council. Joyce rebuilds her life and marries again; one of the last scenes being Greer's visit while, as she writes in her diary, the children are at school. With Joyce, the former devil-may-care rebel now a common British homemaker, the diaspora stabs a loving mother in the heart. "Why have you forsaken me?" is a

question Greer never asks—but one which his mother answers when she pleads life was not easy for a racially mixed couple then.

The African father sells his children into slavery because of a poor crop, for the lures of material goods. Joyce severs herself from her infant son and tries to exculpate herself from blame with the fiction that Greer—("we were sensible, my son and I" [230])—chose to leave her for the County orphanage. No sale is involved; only the expectation of a return to racial normalcy and respectability. When allowing social pressure to reorder her life for her, Joyce confirms the racialism lurking throughout the pages of her diary where Travis' Blackness is first hidden behind easy-to-miss allusions to his hair or to the G.I.'s lively band and ability to dance, or to the commanding officer's warning the couple would not be allowed to settle in the United States after the war.

Such a situation can be read as a statement that man has lost his moral bearings and has allowed racism to throw him into a middle passage. The loss of one's bearings is an idea that recurs more and more strongly from novel to novel, although it is nowhere directly stated

Does the memory of the diaspora and its lingering poison contribute a mold to the form of Phillips' novels? A match between idea and structure is of course a moot point, but worth looking into.[7] My contention is that the diaspora, the loss of place and of moral self, becomes a metaphor (both spatial and temporal) that informs Phillips's three diasporan novels and bears the stamp of an evolving thought process from one novel to the next.

Phillips's fiction, and this is particularly true of *Cambridge* and then *Crossing the River* is thoroughly a-didactic, fluid. Rather than state things, it sucks the reader into a current. Reading then means allowing the current to carry you away while swimming against it to produce meaning. The difficulty (and worth) of it all is that what the diegesis carries along swiftly the narration holds back because it says nothing.

Cambridge is structured by spatial, temporal and societal displacement. Emily's voyage leaves her uprooted, a prisoner of what slavery has made her as a white person—metaphorically, a prisoner of the dilapidated colonial pavilion that became her love nest with the overseer. Similarly, displacement and substitution make up the life story of Olumide-Black Tom-Thomas-David-Cambridge, Hercules. They rule lives when Brown takes Christiania (Cambridge's wife) for his mistress only to replace her with Emily. Emily comes to the Caribbean thinking she will find (and perhaps help create) a new and better world. In fact she remains what she was to begin with, that is to say a self-centered white woman only able to speak through time-worn clichés. Educated Cambridge enjoys the white man's power. the word, and entertains the illusion it might change his status. In this respect, he is no different from Phillips's other educated Black characters, one to each novel, all three of them male. Neither one, be it the interpreter in "Homeland" part of whose work is to read to the ailing governor or manumitted Nash who pens respectful letters in beautiful and lucid English equal to Cambridge's, is immune from racist injustice. They can make books talk, but this magic fails to work with white people.

The river (an ideal trope for displacement and severance) is everywhere in

Phillips's latest novel and makes its fluid presence felt right from the elusiveness of the Prologue with those two voices that do not as yet enjoy the status of characters speaking words to come later in due diegetic course, only to leave them unexplained, as if the narrative present was waiting for the diegetic future to catch up. These speakers are an African (the father) and an Englishman (Captain Hamilton) that will develop into full individuals much further on. As the story begins, they linguistically blur into each other and can only be told apart thanks to italics and plain type.

Loss of self is clearly at work in the Prologue to *Crossing the River* that begins *in media res* and creates confusion as words glide along as if they overlooked the reader's need to construct meaning. But this prologue opens the culminating stage of the process I am hypothesizing and I would like to bring out the path it takes from one novel to the next. *Higher Ground* is an ahistorical fiction characterized by diegetic dispersal. *Cambridge* is historicized and presents a multi-faceted diegetic continuity. From this vantage point, *Crossing the River* offers a synthesis of the earlier fictions. It is deliberately ahistorical and resolutely adopts diegetic discontinuity—not dispersal—for its form. The people in *Higher Ground* are linked by the kinship of despair, the characters of *Crossing the River* are transecular kin and mates. Such magic seesawing over the generations bends their undeniable individuality[8] toward the universal value of the masks of tragedy. Cambridge already was such a timeless tragic character.

From novel to novel, Phillips's diasporan fictions have been constructing a synergy between diasporan dispersion and story telling. Such synergy has been achieved through mastery over time. *Crossing the River* patterns itself after *Higher Ground* while establishing a magic filiation that stretches the fictional world until it fits its philosophic mold: the idea that the diaspora broke open the dams of a poison whose effects have spread unchecked through the generations to men and women of all hues and origins. Indeed, just like her African father in law who sold Travis into slavery in 1750, Joyce, the young twentieth century British wife is seized by an unnatural dizziness—only much, much worse because it involves unconscious racist feelings that kill the bonds of motherhood.

Thus does *Crossing the River* make its fragmented continuo compelling, making it ring like a ricercare built on this very simple ostinato: "Why have you forsaken me?" This haunting question has a religious ring to it, should one take the liberty to raise it to the global level of a lost mankind.

Phillips's fiction in the three texts we have considered here proceeds from a juxtaposed to a structuring fragmentation that is especially visible in Joyce's diary that concludes *Crossing the River* and manipulates time through no less than sixty-five segments whose jostled chronology confuses the reader as much as it helps materialize the fractures of Joyce's mind adrift amid murky waters. Indeed, *Crossing the River*'s strength surges from the weakness of its characters and a fragmentation that turn it into a metaphor for the diaspora.

Notes

[1]At the time, *The Nature of Blood* (1996, Faber and Faber) was still unpublished.

[2]*The New York Times Sunday Magazine*, March 7, 1965 "The American Dream is at the Expense of the American Negro." One could add that this idea both informs and haunts the short story "Going to Meet the Man" Baldwin published in 1965.

[3]Emily's abolitionism feeds on her feminist stirrings. This journal is an almost perfect pastiche which reads like a lesson of civilization and history of ideas.

[4]This passage reads as an antithesis to the confessions of Nat Turner because they are written by a man who was no rebel and had fully opted for the white man's world and word.

[5]One finds here an idea imported from Rudi's last letter in "The Cargo Rap."

[6]The unspoken inequities of slavery do haunt the novel: Edward Williams might indeed be Nash's natural father, which may explain why Edward's wife relentlessly confiscated his letters.

[7]Conceptual bases for this study are many. In particular, one should mention the following: Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses*; Paul Veyne, *Comment on écrit l'histoire*; Paul Ricoeur, *Temps et Récit*; Laurent Danon-Boileau, *Du texte littéraire à l'acte de fiction lectures linguistiques et réflexions psychanalytiques.*

[8]Authenticity is constant. It is hard to find a word or a concept that fails to ring true to this or that character's social make up and day. Fastidious creation is generally true of all major characters, be it Cambridge's 19th century *church* English, Emily's romantic (and feminist) clichés or Rudi's modern American English.

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(Em)Bodying the Flesh: Mythmaking and The Female Body in Gayl Jones' Song for Anninho *and* Corregidora

by Patricia Muñoz Cabrera

Introduction

It goes without saying that contemporary African-American literature has been greatly enriched by the fictional world that African-American women writers have created. As weavers of stories they have engaged themselves in the exploration of the black woman's body. This process of (re)writing, which has at its core the dynamics of historical excavation in order to examine stereotypes that have shaped the image of black womanhood in the American mind, has led to both a (re)appropriation of the female body and the mapping of a new "critical geography" that historicises its suffering.[1]

From the site of patriarchal (racist and sexist) oppression to which it was for so long confined, the black woman's body speaks with several ton(gu)es to denounce the psycho/ physical fragmentation that it has endured throughout centuries of cultural bondage and struggle for survival. By doing so, African American women writers have transformed the female black body into a site for historical and socio/political exploration from where they are debunking old patriarchal myths that have imprisoned black womanhood in a web of stereotypes for centuries.[2]

An interesting feature of this process of body-reappropriation is the fact that the black woman's body is often portrayed as a "body in pain."[3] The fictional world that African American women writers weave for their female characters is marked by the pain inflicted on their flesh as well as on their psyches. In such a human landscape, the black woman's body becomes flesh that suffers, flesh that is torn and ripped, seared and branded as the white master's property. Yet, these postmodern (s)heroes struggle to make the shift from objectification to subjectivity. In their journey towards liberation from oppressive (and repressive) social, political and economic structures and their debilitating effects, the pain inflicted on their bodies reflects itself in a fragmented self where indelible scars are contained.[4]

In my essay I would like to examine how, through the Brazilian colonial world that Gayl Jones builds as foreground to her mythical poem called *Song for Anninho* (1981) and the African presence retrieved in her novel *Corregidora* (1975), the writer (re)visits the black female body and historicises the suffering that it experienced during slavery in 17th century Brazil and its aftermath in 1949 Kentucky, the United States.

As critic Stelamaris Coser has argued, in her novels Gayl Jones articulates "an intertextual space 'in between' the Americas" wherein she retrieves the forgotten voices of early Africans that sank into oblivion after they were forcibly brought to the so-called New World.[5] This intertextual space that Jones builds and which echoes Toni Morrison's concern for the mapping of a new "critical geography" (1992, 3) proves a most fertile fictional territory for the thematisation of the black female body that I will attempt to illustrate in this paper.

An interesting feature of Jones' fiction is the fact that the black woman's body

becomes a metaphorical door that allows us to enter the world of early Africans and gaze at the vicissitudes of black womanhood as lived and first-person narrated by two postmodern storytellers: Ursa Corregidora and Almeyda.

In fact, what Jones unveils in *Corregidora* and *Song for Anninho* is a human landscape of sexual abuse, fractured identity and oppressive matrilineage. In her portrayal of slavery and its aftermath, she (re)inhabits those forgotten corners of African history from where the memories of black woman still sing a *deep song* denouncing a history that condemned them to cultural invisibility.

What is striking about the two works discussed in this paper is that both female protagonists lose parts of their bodies that are directly associated (if not crucial) to the prolongation of matrilineage, a tradition whereupon patriarchal mythmaking on black womanhood has considerably based itself throughout the centuries. The paradox lies in the fact that Almeyda—as well as Ursa—are women who are expected to "make generations" as evidence of the atrocities committed by Portuguese slaverholders in Brazilian plantations. Ursa loses her womb after being beaten by her husband, and Almeyda's breasts are cut off by Portuguese soldiers.

Just as *Corregidora* illustrates the paradoxical experience of oppression and resistance underlying the "double history of motherhood" as a legacy of American slavocracy, *Song for Anninho* posits the paradoxical nature of black motherhood under Brazilian slavery and the agony of a woman whose womb has been dried up.

The sexual mutilation that both characters experience calls on us to reflect on black female sexuality and the 'twoness' inherent in black motherhood, highly loaded issues (Rubin Suleiman, p.7) and central to any interpretation of Jones' fiction.[6]

Song for Anninho[7]

Song for Anninho, an epic poem that the writer adapted from her novel, *Palmares*, takes as its main theme a major event in Brazilian history: the destruction of Palmares, the rebel slave settlement in Pernambuco, Brazil, during the seventeenth century. The end of the quilombo in Palmares is marked by the killing of the African King Zumbi—leader of the revolt—in 1695.[8] Almeyda and her beloved Anninho are runaway slaves who—in their long and painful journey towards freedom—are caught by Portuguese soldiers who take Anninho, cut off Almeyda's breasts and throw them in the river. Left for dead, she is healed by Zibatra, priestess of all times and guardian of ancestry, who "speaks in tongues" (13) that go "beyond language" (14).

Fragmented as she is in flesh and soul, Almeyda realises that the only way she can reunite with Anninho is through memory and imagination. Helped by the occult powers of Zibatra, she retrieves the profundity of her love from the corners of her imagination:

> "I will plant my womb in the earth,
> and it will grow,
> and this feeling we have made between us
> will grow as deep. (p.19)

In the poem, Almeyda's song pervades the mythical landscape with a painful, yet reconciling tenderness, that despite her broken flesh, transcends the horrors of a "time of cruelty" when it was "hard to

look at each other with tenderness" (p.32).

Unlike Ursa's love for Mutt that imprisons her, as I will discuss later, Almeyda's love for Anninho is a liberating force that allows her to enter "places where the invisible and the visible meet/ where the human and the divine come together" (p.13-4), and where she —helped by the power of imagination—can ultimately recreate the depth of the spiritual, sexual and emotional bonds that tie her to Anninho.

With the help of Zibatra, she undertakes the painful journey towards survival through "rememory, a central theme in the poem."[9] Throughout her journey to the realm of imagining, she realises that hers "is an age that does not allow names" (p. 61) and revolts against the 'anger' that took her beloved Anninho away from her:

> Who made the earth so that his blood
> and mine could not continue together?
> And we had to turn our backs on each other,
> and be silent.
> Who made the earth that way? (p. 23)

Despite the irreversibility of her loss, Almeyda's awareness of the fact that 'the blood of the whole continent [runs] in her veins' (p. 12) helps her in her pilgrimage towards self-reconstruction after her flesh is torn apart. Unlike Ursa, who has trouble disentangling her 'intimate sense of self' (Tate 1988, p. 92) from the haunting shadows of her female ancestors, Almeyda knows that she is the granddaughter of an African. (p. 38)

Yet, being certain of her identity cannot totally undo the tragic fate of having to dwell between past and present, reality and imagination after her breasts are cut off: "Am I a woman or the memory of a woman?" (p.35) she wonders. The indelible scars wrought on her flesh and self make her doubt her own reality: Is she her own self and flesh or the memory of another flesh that suffers? Her suffering is soothed by the revelation that through rememory she can survive the horrors of a time that failed to acknowledge her womanhood.

Almeyda knows that she is living in a time when "a woman/ is worth nothing/ if her body can't/produce for [the slaveholder], or bear the burden of [his] flesh" (p.55). Aware as she is of the mercantile aspect of motherhood that confronts black women with the dilemma of carrying in their wombs the offspring of resistance but also new slaves for the Portuguese slave-holder (Davis, 1983; Dubey, 1995),[10] she nevertheless succumbs to a deep-feeling barrenness after her breasts are cut off:

> I wanted my womb to grow deep for you, Anninho,
> even in a time like this one,
> in spite of the time.
> I wanted my womb
> to grow deeper than the earth.
> My womb was angry.
> Maybe time made my womb.
> Maybe the times.
> And then that bitterness sucked my womb dry. (p.65)

In a fictional landscape that takes on mythical dimensions, Almeyda, the epitome of dispossession, denounces the barrenness that slavery caused to her flesh and the 'bitterness' of the slaveholder that 'sucked her womb dry,' in a flagrant attack on her womanhood.

She nevertheless struggles to overcome her tragedy. Despite a time that does not acknowledge her personhood, she event-

ually manages to preserve her self from the eroding force of slavery. Fused with nature, for it is the place where she achieves liberation, she feels how 'the sweet rain' comes, turning her breasts into buckets that are as deep as the tenderness that swallows the cruelty of the white slaveholder. Almeyda's times are those written with the ink of anger. Yet, from the realm where imagination meets reality, she paves the road for Ursa's dilemma by singing:

Do you think a day will come
when men will forget what anger is, will have
no need for it? Do you think so in this world?
And then the day when the hardness would be over,
the ground would soften, and swallow the anger.
And the men who know how to make the ground bleed,
and how to even get blood from stones,
would forget that knowledge. (p. 44)

Corregidora[11]

Set two and a half centuries later, *Corregidora* is a first-person blues narrative[12] about three generations of black women in Kentucky from the early to mid-20th century. The novel is set in the United States in 1948 and ends in 1969, when the protagonist is 47 years old. The protagonist's psyche—as well as the narrative—are haunted by the voices of Ursa's foremothers, who led lives of misery and enslavement on a Brazilian plantation in the 19th century. Sexually abused and forced into prostitution by Corregidora, a Portuguese slaveowner who fathered Ursa's grandmother and then impregnated his own daughter, they nevertheless whisper from the darkest corners of oblivion that "...the important thing is making generations," that "they can burn the papers but they can't burn consciousness, ...And that's what makes the evidence. And that's what makes the verdict" (22).

From the very beginning of the novel Ursa's body becomes the target of physical violence. During the fourth month of her marriage, Mutt throws her down the stairs outside Happy's Café, where she is working as a blues singer. As a result of the fall, Ursa—who was one month pregnant—undergoes a hysterectomy. While in the hospital, she feels as if part of her "life's already marked out for her—the barren part...."(6). The painful realisation that her "barrenness" is irreversible and that she is unable to leave evidence (14) of the horrors that her female ancestors lived under slavery in Brazil intensifies her suffering.

Ursa's tragedy begins after she undergoes a hysterectomy. Incapable of ever bearing a child, she sees her womb as a 'well that never bleeds' (p. 14). Her ancestors' pledge to procreate and her inability to fulfill the summons bind her to intense psychic suffering and trigger her obsession with Corregidora, the Portuguese slave-holder who 'still howls inside [her]' (p. 46).

Ursa perceives her body as a "wasteland" where her breasts "quiver like old apples" (99). Consumed by her hatred of Mutt for what he has done to her, she divorces him and marries Tadpole, the owner of Happy's Café and the one who helps her during her convalescence. After a short marriage that ends in an abrupt separation when he deceives her, Ursa's journey from a captive to a liberated-subject position begins.[13] She leaves Happy's Café and signs on at The Spider, where she

becomes an accomplished blues singer.

The beginning of Ursa's journey towards selfhood is marked by the protagonist's feeling of despair that "something more than [her] womb had been taken out..." (6). What Ursa experiences at this point is a deep feeling of loss and dispossession. She realises that by losing her womb she has been robbed of her identity and also of her visibility as a member of a community which values women insofar as they fulfil the maternal role.

During the twenty years of her journey towards self-empowerment, Ursa manages to turn her suffering into a constructive force.[14] Nevertheless, as I argue in my essay, this achievement is, at least partly, undone at the end of the novel, when she reconciles with Mutt Thomas, her first husband.

Ursa's controversial fellatio on Mutt at the end of the novel has been largely discussed by critics.[15] I would argue that by performimg fellatio on Mutt, Ursa not only fulfills the prophecy of sexual bondage experienced by her female ancestors on the Brazilian plantation but also perpetuates her subjection to male desire:

> It had to be sexual, I was thinking, it had to be something sexual that Great Gram did to Corregidora. I knew it had to be sexual: "What is it a woman can do to a man that make him hate her so bad he want to kill her one minute and keep thinking about her and can't get her out of his mind the next"? In a split second I knew what it was, and I think he might have known too. A moment of pleasure and excruciating pain at the same time, a moment of broken skin but not sexlessness, a moment that stops before it breaks the skin: "I could kill you." (C., 184)

The intense flashback triggered by Ursa's fellatio makes sexuality converge with history. She finally explains Corregidora's hatred for her greatgrandmother on the basis of sexual pleasure intertwined with pain. The same dialectics of love imprisons her and Mutt in a relationship that keeps Ursa in a captive position until she utters the last words—"he held me tight" (185) which end the novel on an ominous romantic tone that contains the potential for future violence.

The problem with *Corregidora* is that Ursa's psyche remains embedded in ambiguity. Her obsession with Mutt and the legacy of hatred for Corregidora, the slaveholder, that she inherits from her foremothers are unresolved issues when the novel ends. Moreover, she is unable to disentangle her self from the experiences lived by her maternal ancestors:

> I held his ankles. It was like I didn't know how much was me and Mutt and how much it was Great Gram and Corregidora....was what Corregidora had done to her, to them, any worse than what Mutt had done to me, than what we had done to each other, than what Mamma had done to Daddy, or what he had done to her in return, making her walk down the street looking like a whore? (184)

These lines illustrate Ursa's self torn between a legacy of bitterness 'squeezed into her' by her female ancestors and her desire to love. She realises that throughout centuries of struggle for survival, suffering was to her maternal ancestors (as it has been to herself) concomitant with love. Despite her realisation, Ursa's movement from "division to wholeness"[17] remains as incomplete as her search for a new self.

In such a fragmented world, Ursa strug-

gles to come to terms with the legacy of bitterness that she has inherited. Like Almeyda, she also sings her deep pain to denounce a sexist and racist world that does not acknowledge the dignity of her womanhood. Seizing the fictional territory with a song that narrates the suffering of their flesh is for both Almeyda and Ursa, 'a way of knowing themselves.'[18]

Ursa feels that her blood is 'stained with another past' (45) and struggles to liberate her aching consciousness from the grip of Corregidora, the slaveholder that her female ancestors "squeezed into [her]" so that she would not forget" (102).

By passing (her)story on to her daughter, Ursa's mother also passes on cultural pain. In Chapter II, Ursa's memory of her mother intensifies her pain when she remembers that:

> she [her mother] was closed up like a fist...never saw her with a man because she wouldn't give them anything else. Nothing. And still she told me what to do, that I should make generations. (101)

Aware as she is that she has broken the matrilineal continuum, she nevertheless sees that procreation can also be a "slave-breeder's way of thinking" (22). This revelation is by no means a relief to Ursa, who sees her castrated body that will never bear children as evidence of the atrocities committed during slavery in Brazil.

The biological castration that Ursa experiences brings forth the controversial issue of motherhood under slavery, which is also illustrated in *Song for Anninho*. For her female ancestors, the summons to "make generations" certainly meant a form of resistance against slavery in that it would continue a genealogical line of women and men who would bear witness to an excruciating pain and pass it on to the coming generations. What such a summons became, however, was the reproduction of more slaves. The irony is all the greater because what is passed on to Ursa as an admonition for freedom, on the contrary, enslaves her inner self to the point of alienation.

In *Corregidora*, Jones probes the abysses of love and hate as well as the suffering of Ursa triggered by her incapability to fulfill the maternal role, thus interrupting the matrilinear continuum that she was expected to prolong.

Ursa is portrayed as a character who has trouble resolving conflicts and who lives in a world of solitude. Torn between conflicting feelings of love and hate for her husband Mutt, she dwells in ambiguity, treading the boundaries of joy and sorrow in anguish. Tormented by the legacy of cultural pain passed on to her, she nevertheless struggles to build a world of her own.

By returning to Mutt, her "original man," (98) Ursa remains, in the reader's mind, a fictional character who undoes her previous progress towards subjectivity. Reconciliation thus implies succumbing to the oppressive bond of pain and pleasure that she experienced with Mutt twenty years earlier. There is also closure of a circle of brutality illustrated by the fact that their reconciliation takes place at the Drake Hotel, the same place where the couple was living the night that Ursa was thrown down the stairs at Happy's Café.

Unlike Almeyda's message that 'tenderness is a deeper thing than cruelty,' Ursa's message to the reader is that in a world built on the politics of sexism and racism, love can be an experience where

'hate and desire are two humps of the same camel' (102).

At the centre of the novel is the paradoxical nature of love between man and woman in a racist and sexist world. Ursa's tragedy retrieves Almeyda's cry from the human landscape of 17th century Brazil: "That was the question Almeyda,/how we could sustain our love/at a time of cruelty./It's hard to keep tenderness/ when things around you are hard" (p.32).

Almeyda and Ursa

Almeyda and Ursa remind us of the centuries of history that disparaged the black woman's flesh. In this realm built by the author to enclose a body that suffers, dispossession is a central theme. With brilliance, Jones succeeds in portraying Ursa as the epitome of a fractured identity in the aftermath of slavery and its psychological effects of history and power.[19]

Two and a half centuries later in Kentucky, Ursa sings her deep song, thus joining Almeyda in a single note of love and dispossession:

> I wanted a song that would touch me, touch my life and theirs. A Portuguese song. A new song. A song branded with the new world. I thought of the girls who had to sleep with her master and mistress. Her daughter's father. The father of her daughter's daughter. How many generations? Days that were pages of hysteria... How many generations had to bow to his genital fantasies?... And you with the coffee-bean face, what were you? They knew you only by the signs of your sex... (p. 59)

Separated by centuries, yet reunited by a common experience of cultural invisibility, Almeyda and Ursa emerge into the Postmodern world with the notes of *deep song* that give a voice to the silence of those black women who, in their struggle to survive, saw their bodies become 'vacant and fallow autumn field[s] with harvest time never in sight' (Walker, p. 233).[20]

In fact, Ursa and Almeyda denounce the historical invisibility of black women who for centuries have been the "objects of male theorizing, male desires, male fears and male representations, and [who] had to discover and reappropriate themselves as subjects" (Suleiman, 1986, p. 7).

In the Postmodern fictional arena, Jones transforms Ursa's and Almeyda's song of dispossession into a call that—as critic Susan Rubin Suleiman has argued—"[goes out] to invent both a new poetics and a new politics, based on women's reclaiming what had always been theirs but had been usurped from them: control over their bodies and a voice with which to speak about it" (p.7).

In conclusion, in *Corregidora* and *Song for Anninho*, Gayl Jones retrieves into Postmodernity "a history that somebody forgot to tell" (Christian, 1982), wherein Ursa and Almeyda epitomise the suffering of those black women whose flesh was treated by the slave-master as "property without cost" (*Beloved*, 182). At the same time, Jones' literary contribution to the revision of the black woman's body calls our attention to the vicissitudes of black women who, at least in this instance—by not fulfilling the maternal role are confined to the realm of invisibility.

Pervasive and compelling, Jones' fiction calls on the reader to revise male-based mythologies that have shaped the image of black womanhood. Concomitantly, her fe-

male characters and their struggle to survive in a racist and sexist society denounce the sexual politics that devalued black womanhood during slavery and which are still at work today.[21]

Indeed, her literary work opens new roads to further scholarship that explores (mis)representations of the black female body in postmodern fiction. Through her portrayal of Brazilian slavery and its legacy of psychic torture as lived by a black woman in Kentucky, the writer "puts the flesh back in its body." (Alarcón, 1985). By giving Ursa and Almeyda a historical context that makes their suffering visible and their voices audible, she challenges a patriarchal mythological pantheon that has neglected the true nature of black womanhood and renders visible centuries of a history that was erased from the official annals.

By historicising the female body and the pain that has ripped its flesh throughout the history of the African Diaspora, Jones weaves a "geography of pain" in her two works that calls for a revision of canonical myth-making that has imprisoned in its web the realities of black womanhood.[22]

Besides, her mapping of the black woman's "geography of pain"[23] in *Corregidora* and *Song for Anninho* bears witness to the historical dislocation that early African Americans experienced in times in which—as critic Spillers has succintly argued—"high crimes against the flesh" were committed.[24]

Despite the fact that—as the writer herself has declared—Jones does not want to be political or make moral judgements of her characters (Evans, 1984), her portrayal of the female body does come forth as a revolt against a tradition that has valued women in as so far as they have fulfilled the maternal role.[25]

Finally, the portrait of the black female body that Jones builds in these two literary works becomes the container that holds the notions of race and class through which she calls for (re)definitions of the cultural, spatial, and historical bridges that critics cross when thematising the black woman's body and (its)story.

Endnotes

[1]Toni Morrison, 1992, 3.

[2]In her essay "Slave and Mistress," Hazel Carby argues that, despite the plethora of studies on black womanhood, it is surprising to see how "the formation of stereotypes of black female sexuality has been reproduced unquestioningly in contemporary historiography even where other aspects of the institution of slavery have been under radical revision" (19). See Carby 1987, 20-39.

[3]For an interesting analysis of pain and imagining, as two extremes where the "whole terrain of the human psyche can be mapped," see Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain*, "Pain and Imagining," pp.161-80.

[4]I am indebted for this metaphor to Elaine Scarry's book *The Body in Pain*, op. cit.

[5]Stelamaris Coser, 1995, Chapter Four.

[6]See Madhu Dubey (1995, 245-679) for a discussion on black matrilineage and the "double history of motherhood" (Sadoff, 1985, 10) as a metaphor for the twofold experience of power and opression for black women slaves.

[7]Note that Almeyda was the surname of the founder of Brazil, namely Don Francisco de Almeyda, Spanish general who arrived in Brazil in the 16th century. This fact can be interpreted as either Almeyda holds the power of the Conquistador or the woman is imprisoned in a name that is not hers.

[8]The end of Palmares, as recorded in Décio Freitas, *Palmares, a guerra dos escravos*, came on November 1695 with the brutal

killing of King Zumbi, recorded in the official account of the Portuguese government. The report stated: "The examination of the corpse revealed 15 bullet perforations and countless numbers of stabs by cold steel weapon; after death, the Negro general had been castrated and his penis had been tucked into his mouth; they pulled out one of his eyes and chopped off his right hand." See Décio Freitas, 1971, translated by Stelamaris Coser, op. cit., 154.

[9]This word appears in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1988), in which the author reenacts the horrors of slavery after Reconstruction in the United States. In the novel, Sethe, the female protagonist, undertakes a painful quest for selfhood through a process of "rememorying" her African past.

[10]So tragic a dilemma is at the centre of Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*, where Sethe —the female protagonist—kills her baby Beloved in order to spare her the horrors of slavery.

[11]The Portuguese word *Corregidore* means "judicial magistrate." Critics such as Melvin Dixon (Evans 1984, 236-57) have argued that entitling Ursa with a designation usually associated with maleness empowers her to "correct" the wrong that was done to her foremothers. I would argue that by portraying a character who is forced to bear the name of the man who destroyed her foremothers' lives and haunts her own, Jones portrays Ursa as an enslaved self.

[12]For an explanation of the blues, as one of the techniques derived from the African American oral tradition and their contribution to African American literature, see Jones (1991, 195-203). Also read Michael S. Harper (1979, 352-55) for a discussion of the blues songs as framework for human relationships dwelling in the ambiguity of love and trouble.

[13]In her essay "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," Hortense Spillers makes an interesting discussion of the notion of the "captive body" as applied to early African Americans and the ways in which their forceful journey to the New World "marked a theft of the body—a willful and violent...severing of the captive body from its motive will, its active desire." See Spillers 1987, 67.

[14]Adrian Moulyn, *The Meaning of Suffering*, cited in Jacqueline de Weever, *Mythmaking and Metaphor in Black Women's Fiction* (1992, 3). De Weever states that "constructive suffering serves as a bridge between two modes of life, joining the before-and-after experiences, after which the sufferer leads a new and different life. Destructive suffering leads to death."

[15]Cf. Dubey (op. cit., 257-58) who argues that through fellatio, Ursa exercises sexual power over Mutt. Byerman (1984, 58) discusses the strong criticism of Jones' novel for validating the stereotype that has labelled black women as emasculating agents.

[16]In her essay "Master and Slave: The Fantasy of Erotic Domination," Jessica Benjamin discusses the cultural association of sexual dominance with men and sexual submission with women. In her anlysis of Pauline Reage's *The Story of O*, she examines the loss of self that O experiences when she submits to her master's desire and the subsequent pain involved in the violent rupture of self organization. See Ann Snitow et al., 1983, 280-99.

[17]This is a paraphrase from Eugenia Collier in Evans 1984, 295-315.

[18]Gayl Jones, 1991, 195-6.

[19]See Byerman Keith, 1984, 128-35.

[20]I agree with Coser's argument that "only in the last two decades has there been a concerted effort by academic spheres to hear marginal voices and face the true reality witnessed by women, blacks and Indians in Brazil. Former slaves narrate their memories, African descendants retell stories, and black people describe their own experiences with discrimination in the world of today.... Regardless of similarities and differences between slave systems, Jones' own historical research undoubtedly showed her that blacks are oppressed today as much as they

were yesterday all over the Americas; and that they have been kept voiceless for too long. Her stories are imaginative accounts of the personal dilemmas encountered by black women under slavery and afterward, an attempt to give them a voice." Op. cit., 124-25.

[21]Cf. hooks, 1992, 51-86.

[22]Angela Davis and Hazel Carby (1987), among other authors, have analysed slavery as the source of stereotypes for the black woman's body.

[23]I have borrowed the term from Françoise Lionnet (1995, 101-27).

[24]In her essay, Spillers discusses the problematic of the forceful voyage to the "New World" that Africans had to make and the implications it has had in the (mis)construction of African American identity. She contends that:

> Even though the European hegemonies stole bodies—some of them female —out of West African communities in concert with the African "middleman," we regard this human and social irreparability as high crimes against the flesh, as the person of African females and African males registered the wounding. If we think of the "flesh" as a primary narrative, then we mean its seared, divided, ripe-apartness, riveted to the ship's hold, fallen, or "escaped" overboard. (Spillers 1987, 67)

[25]In an interview with Mari Evans, Jones restated her interest in the psychology of her characters and her deliberate refusal to make neither political nor moral judgements of her characters. (See Evans, 1984.)

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Hybridity and Diasporization in the 'Black Atlantic': The Case of **Chombo**

by Lourdes Martínez-Echazábal

1. Introduction

In the last twenty years, the Afrocentric redefinitions of Afro-Hispanic literatures have generated very productive criticism and theoretical debates about questions of "authenticity" in writing "race" in Latin America. In addressing Afro-Latin American and Afro-Latino literatures and cultures, however, I do not concern myself with questions of authenticity and purity, but with one to which "Afro-Latin American" and "Afro-Latino" as conceptual or speculative systems lend themselves—namely the question of the hybrid or *lo mestizo*.

In addition to infusing some historical awareness into contemporary discussions of hybridity, I will show how this concept continues to be deeply implicated in emergent Black postcolonial discourses, particularly in those emanating from Afro-Latin America and its Diaspora. In the first half of the paper, I will briefly engage in a conceptual discussion of hybridity and trace its deployment in various bioculturalist paradigms from Latin America, the United States, and Europe. I will then move to articulate a discussion of Paul Gilroy's construct of the Black Atlantic, along with a critique of the various ways Latin Americans have conceptualized hybridity. To conclude, I will undertake a reading of the Afro-Panamanian novel *Chombo*, a novel written in Spanish in Los Angeles, California, by Carlos Wilson, also known as Cubena, and published in 1981 in Miami, Florida. Although relatively obscure, *Chombo* clearly points to one of the missing chapters in both the literature and in the historiography of the African diaspora in Latin America. Therefore, reading *Chombo* will not only serve as a vehicle for rethinking issues of racial, ethnic, and national identity formation, diasporas, cultural pluralism, and hybridity in the so-called Black Atlantic, but also for bringing to light the romantic nature of Gilroy's ethnoregionalistic construct.

2. On Hybridity

Conceptually speaking, hybridity is not only a sexual, racial, and sociocultural phenomenon, or a conjectural model for thinking about Latin American writings and artistic production in general, but, most importantly, it is an ideologeme, the basic unit of analysis of the multifaceted, polysemic, ideological discourse of racial, cultural and national identity in Latin America and the Caribbean.[1] Bridging issues of race and sexuality, the concept of hybridity was central to scientific and social discourses throughout the nineteenth century. Though having different political stakes, the notion of hybridity was at the core of: 1) the polygenist argument, 2) the amalgamation thesis, 3) the negative version of amalgamation, 4) the decomposition argument, and 5) the assertion that hybridity varied between "proximate" and "distant" species.[2] Similarly, from the late nineteenth century onward, as the discourse of hybridity was redeployed by turning the standing scientific idiom of *degeneration* into grand theories of *regeneration*, hybridity rested at the core of several Latin American bio-

culturalists paradigms, among them José Martí's "Our *Mestiza* America" ("Nuestra América mestiza," 1891), Vasconcelos' "Cosmic Race" ("La raza cósmica," 1925), Nicolás Guillén's "Cuban Color" ("Color cubano," 1931), Gilberto Freyre's "Racial democracy" ("Democracia racial," 1930s), Fernando Ortiz's "Transculturation" ("Transculturación," 1940), the Venezuelan Acción Democrática Party's notion of "Café au lait" ("Café con Leche," 1940s), and Alejo Carpentier's "Marvelous Real" ("lo real maravilloso," 1949), among others. Likewise, we find hybridity entrenched in more recent bio-culturalist paradigms articulated either in the United States or in Europe by intellectuals of the Latin American and Caribbean diasporas, such as the Gloria Anzaldúa's "Borderlands" and "Mestiza consciousness" (1987), Benítez Rojo's "The Repeating Island" ("La isla que se repite," 1989), or Paul Gilroy's "Black Atlantic" (1993). I suggest that these contemporary paradigms be read in part as leitmotifs of earlier Latin American theorizing on hybridity, that is, as redeployments of hybridity in the late twentieth century, for it is clear that the concept of hybridity "changes as it repeats, but also repeats as it changes" (Young 27).

Let us engage briefly Gilroy's paradigm, which is one of the most recent theoretical invocations of cultural hybridity in Black post-colonial discourse. Not only is the intercultural and transnational formation Gilroy calls the Black Atlantic a hybrid creation resulting from the intersection of Africa, Europe, the United States, and the Caribbean, but the very foundation of what the author claims to be a distinctive black response to modernity—the Du Boisean "double consciousness" of being both an outsider (Black) and an insider (American) *at the same time*—is, also, entrenched in the notion of hybridity. Furthermore, to the extent that Gilroy criticizes Black nationalism and contemporary Africentrism because of their appeal to a "pure" African root, and invites the reader instead to think of the Black Atlantic as having developed from the various *routes* through which (sub-Saharan) African people were initially *dispersed* by the system of slavery, he is, I contend, concurrently redeploying hybridity as diaspor*aization*,[3] as a form of disjunction that destabilizes hybridity both as synthesis—as embodied in the very process of naming the Diaspora formation he called the Black Atlantic—and as what I have referred to elsewhere as symbiosis[4]—epitomized in the "double consciousness" of being both *at the same time*. And it does so, that is, it destabilizes hybridity as synthesis and as symbiosis, by simultaneously coexisting with them as a compounded, composited, *poly*geneous mode. I shall make clear here that my deployment of hybridity as a polygeneous mode extends beyond the working definition of "the heterogeneous" proposed by Cornejo Polar, whereby the notion of the heterogeneous denotes a "*dual* socio-cultural status" that results from "the conflictive *junction of two* societies and two cultures" (12-13).[5] In contrast, I am positing the notion of the polygeneous as *disjunction and multiplicity* rather than as the result of the dialectical negotiations between *two* opposite entities or identities.[6] In any case, my notion of the *polygeneous*, to the extent that it attempts to move away from both binary thinking and from the essentialism implicit in the notion of two original or originating societies, cultures, or moments, from which a third emerges, is more in kind with Homi Bhabha's

notion of the "third space" (211), than with Dubois's "double consciousness" or Cornejo Polar's "heterogeneity."

In the context of Latin America, as in that of Gilroy's Black Atlantic, hybridity has also been deployed as synthesis and as symbiosis. In the former capacity, hybridity is said to have functioned to create a new, and allegedly stable, identity resulting from the fusion of the two which engendered it. As fusion, then, hybridity has been deeply implicated in sustaining the "assimilation model" of racial and cultural hegemony promoted by the state in the Hispanic Caribbean as well as in countries like Brazil and Venezuela.[7] Given its procreative general quality—as racial and/or cultural amalgamation—hybridity is "naturally" invested in the politics of heterosexuality, turning that which is generally seen as a transgressive act of racialized desire (let us say between blacks and whites) into a [p]act sanctioned by a semiofficial nationalistic rhetoric. In fact, it is axiomatic that virtually all of the hybridity-centered paradigms that surfaced in Latin America (particularly *branqueamento* in Brazil and the *Cosmic race* in Mexico) relied on *qualified* heterosexual interracial sex[8] for attaining, in the future, the "happy synthesis" that would produce, in Vasconcelos' words, the "fifth race," that is, a new historical race endowed with metaracial attributes.

As symbiosis, on the other hand, hybridity has yielded a plethora of highly complex homosocial (and at times homoerotic) relations.[9] Unlike its other incarnation (as synthesis), hybridity as symbiosis produces no stable new form but rather the straddling between *two* forms, discourses, systems, rendering what Du Bois and Cornejo Polar, respectively, have referred to as a form of "double consciousness," and "a dual sociocultural status," but which I would rather characterize as a balancing act, a form of *restless equilibrium*. As restless equilibrium, hybridity has sustained the most creative and original ways artists, cultural critics, social scientists, and politicians in Latin America and the Caribbean and their diasporas have negotiated the permeable contacts, and profuse promiscuity among the various people and cultures of the Americas, as well as dealt with the tensions of being both African, Native American, East Indian or Asian, *and* European.[10] The problem I see with both hybridity as synthesis and as symbiosis is that they are firmly rooted (not routed) in a binary (or at best in a dialectical) logic that, symbolically, is no longer able to address the phenomenology of a world order claiming itself to be based on a "trans" episteme.

Indeed, as early as the 1700s throughout various locations of the Black Atlantic, for instance in Brazil and Jamaica (to mention but two sites with a very different history of European colonialism),[11] some of the above-mentioned categories, particularly African and European, begin, progressively, to appear as mutually inclusive, first in the very definition of what it meant to be, culturally speaking at least, of the New World—criollo—(vis-à-vis the Old), and, in the next century, "an American" (as opposed to a European, an African or a Native American). In fact, it is not until the late nineteenth century, with the new dimension of Americanism proposed by José Rodó, that these categories become mutually exclusive in the discourse of *latinidad*, which affirmed a spiritual **Latin** American identity over the irrational, sensual, and erratic Calibán, and the degraded pragmatic values of **Anglo** American culture.

From the 1920s onward, however, in countries like Mexico, Cuba, Venezuela, and Brazil, a semiofficial nationalist rhetoric actively promoting notions of cultural hybridity-as-synthesis as part of a nationalistic project of modernization is able to integrate categories such as African and/or Indian and European into isomorphic relations. Thus, privileged categories such as "bronze [or mestizo] race" and "café con leche" become emblematic of a national type and of allegedly racially democratic nations.[12] In fact, in virtually all of African Latin America, with the exception of Haiti—which officially professes an ideology of *négritude* —the building of a national culture and a national cultural identity rests upon the notion of racial and cultural fusion and not purity (either Black or White, African or European).

3. Hybridity and Writing

Since the mid-nineteenth century, Latin American artists and intellectuals have actively sought to appropriate the culture of the other, whether through ethnicity, class, religion, and/or sexuality. In the case of "ethnicity," for instance, many writers [primarily nostalgic white, or white-identified, middle class, males (and some females)] fantasize about crossing into the other's culture, enacting, therefore, various nuanced versions of what I refer to (in the African Iberian context/contact) as the Black within syndrome, a troubled subject position well recognized, for example, in the novels by Jorge Amado and Alejo Carpentier, in virtually all of the negrista poetry of the 1920s and 1930s produced in Latin America (including Brazil), as well as in the critical work of cultural ethnographers such as Gilberto Freyre, Fernando Ortiz, or Lydia Cabrera, among many others. This kind of transmigration, of "crossing into" the culture of the other, a critic has recently suggested, "is the form taken by colonial desire, whose attraction and fantasies were no doubt complicit with colonialism" (Young 3).

Redeploying the concept of "colonial desire" within the Latin American historical context, however, poses the need to differentiate between external and internal modes of colonialisms, and between the different forms of alterity produced by them. It should be remembered that in Latin America, the white or white-identified *criollo/a*-writer, in addition to being first a colonial subject, and then a neocolonial one, also stood, at *the same time*, as an internal colonial agent in relation to the others—the slaves, the blacks or mulattos, the Indians, the lower class folks, the women, whomever [s]he desired to colonize, that is, to discover, to explore, to formulate, and above all to meld with, thus exercising what has been called the anthropophagic vocation of the Latin American writer (Chiampi 127). One could also argue (though, perhaps less provocatively) that, in addition to being read as a form of "colonial desire," such "crossing into" could be interpreted as an account of the exchange between the different races and cultures mapped out by the process of intellectual transculturation in the Americas. For as Paul Gilroy, echoing Nicolás Guillén, Fernando Ortiz, Gilberto Freyre, Edward Brathwaite, and Edouard Glissant, among others,[13] has noted, "the reflexive cultures and consciousness of the European settlers and those of the Africans they enslaved, the 'Indians' they slaughtered, and the Asians they indentured were not, [...], sealed off hermetically from each other [...]" (2),

rather there was (and continues to be) an "inescapable hybridity and intermixture of ideas" (xi) among them.

In fact, since Inca Garcilaso (1539-1616),[14] Latin American writers have never ceased to represent and/or to study the mechanism of the intricate processes of cultural contact, intrusion, and fusion. Furthermore, I suggest that to read their writings is to read the region's hybrid history. On the other hand, what most Latin American writers have failed to do, that is, until quite recently, is to explore the mechanism of hybridity as **disjunction**—rather than as synthesis or symbiosis—which would necessarily render hybridity as eccentric, radical polygeneity. In this regard, *Chombo* adds a major contribution not only to the studies of the African Diaspora, but also to contemporary debates about hybridity.

Before moving into a more detailed discussion of *Chombo*, however, I would like to engage once more Gilroy's text by focusing on the author's mapping of the Black Atlantic (though, for accuracy's sake, I should refer to it as the Black *North* Atlantic).[15] I would like to preface this brief critique of Gilroy's privileged transnational space with a quotation from Benítez Rojo's *The Repeating Island*, a move that could be mistakenly interpreted as a chauvinistic invocation on my part —given the fact that I position myself as an islander-woman from the Spanish Caribbean—when, in fact, what I am attempting to do is to strategically deploy this quote in order to counter Gilroy's Anglocentric gaze. The quotation reads: "b.C [before the Caribbean] the Atlantic didn't even have a name" (xx). To the best of my knowledge, only one critic has, in writing, underscored the Anglo- centricity of Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*, or to put it differently, "the North Atlantic/European location" (Clifford 320) of the writing subject. In this respect I contend that Gilroy should have named his book *The Black North Atlantic*, for in his book the territories located between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn (Central and Southern Mexico, the Caribbean, Central and most of South America), precisely the areas that, according to historians and cartographers of the African diaspora, received the largest percentage of Africans in the Americas, are utterly ignored.[16] In fact, Gilroy, like other British and US cultural critics, seems to only pay lip service to African Latin America, with the exception of Haiti and Jamaica in the Caribbean. I believe this oversight is due to a metonymic reading of the Americas, one that privileges some places (the United States and Jamaica), and treats them as if they constitute and, consequently, could stand for the whole of the Americas, and specifically for the totality of the African diaspora. A scholar of Black Atlantic cultures, including the African diaspora in the South Atlantic, would have properly addressed Latin America when constructing its paradigm. [S]he would, no doubt, contend with an area that because of its own historical specificities, resists the rather romantic, or utopian, sense of ethnic community which Gilroy ascribes to the Black Atlantic, based on a typology which I believe he delineates in his book. Gilroy characterizes this broad area as having: 1) a collective name: black (as in *The Black Atlantic*), 2) a myth of origin: slavery, 3) a territory: the Atlantic (north of the Tropic of Cancer, that is), 4) a shared history of deterritorialization and oppression by Europeans and 5) a distinctive shared culture, and 6) a sense of diasporic solidarity.

The most disturbing feature of Gilroy's ethnoregionalistic poetics in *The Black Atlantic* is the absence of nuances in a book that claims figures of disjunction, itineracy, and hybridity as its organizing principles. In fact, some of the first questions I asked myself when I read Gilroy's text were: What about the effects of the opposite systems of racial hegemony (i.e., the "assimilation model" of racial incorporation promulgated in Latin America vis-à-vis the binary, two-tier system still in place in the United States[17]) exercised in the Americas? Why are these systems not properly addressed? Why is it that Gilroy overlooks such a quintessential historical fact? While in my view it is not only possible but most desirable to create nexuses among the African Diaspora, it is also important to recognize, along with Sidney Mintz and Benítez Rojo, among others, that the experiences of the African Diaspora have been informed, thus nuanced, by different forms of social structures and social organizations. Had Gilroy taken into account the specifics of the systems of racial hegemony that developed in the Americas, I venture he would have had to forego some of his formulations in the book, particularly his allegation about a shared history, a distinctive shared culture, and the sense of diasporic solidarity, with which he endows and circumscribes the ethnic community he calls the Black Atlantic. Undoubtedly, the above categories appear extremely problematic when read, for instance, in the context of the narrative of the African diaspora constructed by Cubena's novel *Chombo*.[18] Thus, as I mentioned in the beginning of this paper, reading *Chombo* will not only serve as a vehicle for rethinking issues of racial, ethnic, and national identity formation, diasporas, cultural pluralism, and hybridity in the so called Black Atlantic, but also for bringing to light the romantic nature of Gilroy's ethnoregionalistic construct.

4. *Chombo*: A Disjunctive Text

A fictionalized autobiographical novel, *Chombo* depicts the experiences of a significant portion of the black population in Panama: those of West Indian descent, referred to, demeaningly, as "Chombos," who are part of a 19th and 20th century migration to Panama in contrast to "Colonial Blacks," who arrived as slaves.[19] Panama, like most countries of the Black South Atlantic, had its share of African slaves, who under the sanction of either the Spanish or the Portuguese Crown were introduced to their respective domains in the New World to work primarily in the colonial fields and mines, and to provide the labor base required to develop the infrastructure of the booming seaport cities throughout the Iberian empires. By 1850, however, as the winds of modernity began to blow over the narrow waistline of the Americas, projects such as the construction of the Trans-Isthmian Railroad in 1849 and later the Panama Canal (first attempted, unsuccessfully, by the French engineer Lesseps, and then by a US government enterprise from 1904 to 1914), called for an infusion of cheap labor. Responding to this call, and lured by the promise of temporary, better-paying jobs, poverty-stricken blacks from the economically depleted and socially troubled islands of the West Indies migrated to Panama by the thousands.[20] In registering such migration, *Chombo* poignantly underscores the very important fact that when speaking of the African diaspora in the Americas one must

necessarily refer to it in plural (diasporas) as a way to acknowledge not only the various *routes* through which people from different places in Africa were originally dispersed, but also subsequent diasporaizations throughout the Caribbean, Central, and South America. Clearly, if we can and do refer to the *Middle Passage* as the first moment of a massive transcontinental migration and diasporaization of African people to the "New World," then the palimpsestic layering of modernity over the ruins of the Plantation[21] constituted the second one.

But *Chombo* is also the story of Litó and his immediate "family," who arrived in Panama from Jamaica in the early 1900s to work on the construction of the Canal. It is the story of a boy (Litó), and of a people, who amidst bitter racial and ethnic prejudice and discrimination, from Colonial Blacks, mestizos and whites alike, remained West Indians in heritage while identifying as Panamanians by location.[22] It is the tale of an angry young Afro-Antillean-Panamanian man self-exiled to the United States, a place he considered the "lesser of two evils" when compared to Panama in terms of racial prejudice and discrimination.[23]

Last, but not least, in the best of Afro-Caribbean literature and cultural traditions, *Chombo* is the story of Litó's homecoming, of his quest to come to terms with his own hybrid,[24] hyphenated, and itinerant identity by searching for the facts underscoring the otherwise allegorical story of "the three gold bracelets" that allegedly belonged to his mother, a central motif in this narrative. While Litó's own personal quest never produces concrete answers for him,[25] nevertheless, the act of reading eventually discloses the genealogy of "the three gold bracelets" to the reader, as narrated by "the eldest of the African ancestors from the Kingdom of the Dead." According to this narrator (the novel has more than one narrator), the three African bracelets had been a precious gift to the Onítefo clan, founders of the town of Nokoró in Africa, from its allies in Cuzco, Chichén Itzá and Tenochtitlán (an explicit reference to the three great Pre-Colombian Empires). Years passed, and after the bloody massacre of Nokoró, when its survivors were put in chains and shipped to be enslaved in the allegedly "New World" they once knew (or knew of),[26] one of the Onítefo maidens managed to safeguard the three gold bracelets. Years later, the three gold bracelets reappeared in Xaymaca-Nokoró, a runaway slave settlement. Likewise, after three centuries, the three gold bracelets arrived in Panama, when the *Telemaco* (Telemachus),[27] filled to the brim with black Antilleans destined to work on the construction of the Canal, dropped its anchor in the Port of Cristobal, three days after leaving Kingston, Jamaica, where Nenén, one of the passengers, had found a little girl, with three gold bracelets, next to a dead woman. Earlier in the story readers learn that Francis Wilson, a descendant of the Onítefo's clan whose maroon African ancestors founded Xaymaca-Nokoró,[28] had gone to Panama—much like Telemachus in the Greek mythical tale—looking for her husband George Wilson, who, in turn, had gone to Panama to look for three of his wife's brothers and a cousin, Leonora Dehaney. But Francis Wilson's search was unsuccessful, and so she returned to Jamaica ill and empty-handed, though she never made it very far from the side of the ship that carried her to Panama and back. She died by the docks with a little girl in her arms (the little girl found by Nenén

just before boarding the ship bound for Panama).

Through this legendary and rather labyrinthine story we come to know the little there is to be known about Litó's "blood" relatives: his grandmother was the dead woman by the dock, his mother (Abena Mansa) was the little girl found wearing the gold bracelets next to the dead woman's body. As readers, we learn as well that "family," like community, has very little to do with "blood," for neither Nenén nor Papa James, Litó's beloved "grandparents" in the novel (16), are in fact his blood relatives. Towards the end of the book, Litó realizes that he had wasted precious time searching for "the true story" of the three gold bracelets "in Paris, London, Rome, New York, Rio de Janeiro ..." (92), instead of searching for it "at home," so to speak. Yet he arrives at this realization too late, when the still-warm body of Leonora Dehaney, his biological grandmother's cousin, the only living soul who, allegedly, could have revealed to him the "true [and presumably complete] story" of the three gold bracelets (and of his genealogy-as-roots), was on its way to the morgue.

In some allegorical way, the story of the three gold bracelets reveals the futility of searching for individual or collective identity through the metaphorics of blood and genealogy. As the novel clearly dramatizes, the process of diasporaization and hybridization (however variously defined) renders notions of "purity" and "authenticity" ethereal, for, in the last instance, identity is found to rest in the temporality of place.

5. Conclusion

As I hope to have shown, there are grounds for a productive dialogue between *Chombo* and Gilroy's text, based among other things on their respective elaboration of the concepts of *roots* versus *routes*, and of diaspora(s). Nevertheless, as I also tried to make explicit, such a dialogue simultaneously interrogates the homogeneous and idealistic image of the African diaspora embodied in Gilroy's construct of the Black Atlantic. In a similar vein, Cubena's text questions (and in doing so goes against the grain of) the proscriptions and assumptions mobilized by the kind of celebratory Latin American discourse on hybridity or mestizaje. While the resident discourses of many Latin American intellectuals have theorized mestizaje as a form of contamination, as a threat to civilization, modernity and progress for others it has meant precisely the opposite: the way of crossing the infamous "color line" drawn by the system of slavery. In this milieu, possessing the phenotypical markers and/or displaying the cultural attributes associated with whiteness, that is, performing whiteness, represented a way of elevating oneself, the community and/or the nation above the infamous "linha negra," as the Brazilian abolitionist Joaquím Nabuco would call it (106). Furthermore, is is important to underscore that, a significant number of religious, political and intellectual leaders, as well as artists, writers, and other folks throughout African American and African European communities of the African diaspora, have reacted strongly against the notion of mestizaje-as-whitening described above because, as they claim, mestizaje-as-whitening both promotes and enacts racial and ethnic genocide. *Chombo* clearly endorses this position. In Litó's mind mestizaje-as-whitening is a form of "melaninafagia" (28), a slow and dreadful

form of self-annihilation. Still, I would venture to argue that despite its openly endorsed Afrocentric poetic, *Chombo* is a text that by its own hybrid or mestizo poetics, textualizes a leitmotif of that very vexed discursive tradition of mestizaje—at least in its cultural encarnation—which it so boldly places under attack and ultimately rejects.[29] Furthermore, considering Cubena's own history of involvement in US-based Afrocentric aesthetics and critical practices, as well as the text-explicit ideological position (one partially informed by the Black power movement in the United States), perhaps it would be more appropriate to read *Chombo* as a black (em)power(ing) text, owing more to liberation movements in Africa, in the French and English Caribbeans, and in the US, than to conventional Afro-Hispanic literature or postcolonial discourse. Or perhaps, I would like to propose, we could read *Chombo* as an Afro-Caribbean-Latino-American text in dialogue and conflict with each and all of the above.

Notes

[1]For a discussion of the idelogeme of *mestizaje*, see the works of Irlemar Chiampi (1980), and Martínez-Echazábal (1996), listed in the bibliography.

[2]The polygenist argument stated that 1) different species could not mix at all, or if they did the product would be infertile, or would become so, after a generation or two, 2) the amalgamation thesis claimed that all humans can interbreed prolifically, producing, at times, a new mixed race, with merged but distinct new physical and moral characteristics, 3) the negative version of amalgamation asserted that miscegenation produces a mongrel group that makes up a raceless chaos, merely the corruption of the originals, threatening to subvert the vigor and virtue of the pure races with which they come in contact, 4) the decomposition thesis admitted that some amalgamation was possible, but any mixed breed would either die quickly or revert to one or the other permanent parent type, and 5) the argument that hybridity varied between "proximate" and "distant" species, in other words, that the offspring of "proximate" species—or races—would be fertile, but the one resulting from "distant" ones would be either infertile or would tend to degenerate (Young 18). The latter became the dominant view from 1850s to 1930s in Latin America, as clearly illustrated in the work of Carlos Octavio Bunge and José Vasconcelos. For a more ample discussion of this typology, see George Stocking, Nancy Stepan, and, especially, Robert Young.

[3]In fact, as Gilroy himself has pointed out in an interview, "[t]here is no pure culture. Itinerancy is the rule" (Winkler 8).

[4]See Martínez-Echazábal's *Para una semiótica* ... , chapter IV.

[5]Emphasis mine.

[6]Notions of disjunction and multiplicity have always characterized the Caribbean Basin, and, I believe, best characterize the acute dynamics of translocations and relocations, of dissemination and reconstitution experienced by a significantly large sector of the world population today.

[7]For a discussion of the "assimilation model" see Mintz, 1974, and Hoetink, 1985, both of which are listed in the bibliography.

[8]I stress the word "qualified" because heterosexual interracial sex between a black man and a white woman has never been sanctioned by the patriarchal economy. The redeeming qualities of heterosexual interracial sex have always derived from sexual relations between white men and black or mulatto women.

[9]Those interested in the subject of homosociality and/or homoeroticism in Latin American novels should read the novel *Cumboto* (1950) by the Venezuelan Ramón Díaz Sánchez.

[10]The problem I see with both hybridity as synthesis and as symbiosis is that they are firmly rooted (not routed) in a binary (or at best in a dialectical) logic that, symbolically, is no longer able to address the phenomenology of a world order claiming itself to be based on a "trans" episteme.

[11]For a discussion of the formation of Creole society in Brazil and Jamaica, see Freyre and Brathwaite, respectively.

[12]I caution the reader not to equate "racial democracy" with racial equality. Quite the contrary. Racial democracy calls for racial amalgamation, through *branqueamento*, and cultural homogenization, while maintaining a racialized hierarchy in class difference.

[13]These are but a few of the most prominent names in the long list of Latin American and Caribbean theoreticians of hybridity.

[14]Author of the noted *Comentarios reales* (1609) and *Historia general del Perú* (1617), among other works, Inca Garcilaso was the son of a Spanish *conquistador* and an Inca princess. Upon his father's death, Garcilaso went to Spain to claim his inheritance but was unsuccessful. He then joined the army in Spain and later the Church. Because of his first-hand knowledge of Inca life, he became the chronicler of the Inca people.

[15]Clearly, in my qualification of North, I am not using the Equator as a geographical marker. Instead, what I have in mind is a kind of map based upon the Peter's projection. This projection, it is said, "represents an important step away from the prevailing Eurocentric geographical and cultural concepts of the world" (See *North-South*.... 2).

[16]Around 1810, for instance, out of a total population of approximately 8.5 millions Afro-Americans (free or enslaved) only a little over 2 million resided in the United States. Brazil alone had over 2.5 million. Another 2 million were found throughout the Antilles. The rest were scattered primarily over South America, namely Venezuela, Chile, Ecuador, Colombia, Argentina, and Uruguay, and Mexico in North America. For more information see *The Historical Atlas of Africa* listed in the bibliography.

[17]Though more and more it seems like the two-tier system in the United States is being destablized by a third category composed by Hispanics and other "people of color." Thus it is likely that in the very near future the system of racial incorporation in the US will approximate that of Latin America.

[18]I would extend a similar criticism to Gilroy's unqualified deployment of the notion of *the Americas* when, in fact, he is referring primarily to the United States and, to a lesser degree, Jamaica. Yet he proceeds to develop his framework as if these parts (the United States and Jamaica) constituted and, consequently, could stand for the whole of the Americas, and specifically for the totality of the African diaspora.

[19]The term "Colonial Blacks" is used in Panama to refer to the descendants of African slaves introduced in Panama by means of the slave trade. Unlike other blacks (such as the Afro-Antilleans of *Chombos*) who migrated to Panama primarily, though not exclusively, from the British West Indies, "Colonial Blacks" assimilated the language, religion and customs of the Spanish colonizer. In other words, they identify with an (Afro)Hispanic, rather than with an (Afro)British cultural tradition. As illustrated by the character of Karafula Barrescoba in *Chombo*, many "Colonial Blacks" considered themselves superior to those of West Indian origin precisely because of the attributes mentioned above. See the narrator's assessment of this character on page 65 which clearly supports my point.

[20]Although in this paper I limit my discussion to West Indian migration to Panama, the population movement of West Indians was not limited to that country. West Indians also migrated to Venezuela, the French, Dutch and British Guyanas, as well as to Central America, with the exception of El Salvador which does not have an Atlantic coastline.

[21]I am using, along with Benítez Rojo, the

upper case to indicate those societies that resulted from the use and abuse of the plantation economy.

[22]Faced with a verbal outburst of racial and ethnic bigotry from another character, Fulabuta Simeñíquez, who is presented as a chombophobic, poor woman who lives among "Chombos," an Afro-Antillean woman responds to her in the following manner: "I don't usually waste my time talking to people like you but this time I'll make an exception. *I am as Panamanian as the flag and the national anthem* [...]. We are very proud of our African heritage and so what's it to you if we want to speak English, Chinese or Japanese?" ["Por lo general no gasto pólvora en gallinazo, pero contigo voy a hacer una excepción. *Yo soy tan panameña como el pabellón tricolor, el Himno Nacional y la flor del Espíritu Santo*. Nosotras somos muy orgullosas de nuestra ascendencia africana. Y, ¿qué te importa a ti si deseamos hablar en inglés, chino o japonés?" (95]. Emphasis mine. All translations, unless noted otherwise, are mine.

[23]In light of the character's stated belief and of his move to the United States, a move that I suppose further destabilizes his already polygeneous identity, I can't resist posing the following question: how would Litó be seen and how would he see and situate himself within the frame of US ethnic labels? Furthermore, what complicates my question is that in the novel Litó does not appear to have relocated himself on the Eastern seaboard, where there are large communities of successful West Indian immigrants, but rather on the West Coast. Furthermore, by virtue of his routing—West Indies-Panama-United States—it is likely that Litó would not see himself nor be seen as a West Indian immigrant in the United States, but rather as each and all of the above in the proteic path of itineracy and identity.

[24]In *Chombo*, Litó is not only characterized as a cultural hybrid, but also as a racial one. His father, a character mentioned only in passing, was a mulatto of Antillean parents, who raped Litó's mother in an alley exactly at 5:00 p.m. (57).

[25]The text seems to indicate that one of the legacies of slavery is precisely the inability to ever get to know one's own roots/origins. For after being uprooted from their place of origin, "the Afro-exiles in Jamaica, Panama, Barbados, don't really know if they are Yoruba, Congo, or Ashanti; they don't know if their mother tongue is Yoruba, Kikongo or Twi; they don't know if their true gods are Yemanyá, Bena-Lulúa or Nana Nyankopon" ["los afro-exiliados en Jamaica, Panamá, Barbados, no saben con certeza si son de la familia yoruba, congo, o ashanti; no saben si su lengua materna es yoruba, kikongo o twi; no saben si sus verdaderos dioses son Yemanyá, Bena-Lulúa o Nana Nyankopon" (18)].

[26]It is not made clear in the story if members of the Onífeto clan had actually been in the "New World" or if they only knew of it through the relationship allegedly maintained with their pre-Columbian allies.

[27]In reading the name of the ship, we cannot ignore the reference to the Greek tale of Telemachus, the son of Ulysses and Penelope, who, led by Athena, goes in search of his father (or his roots) who, years before, when he was still a child, had left for Troy.

[28]It is worth noting the transculturalization of some of the names in this novel. What I mean by this is that some of them have incorporated linguistic element from both the Spanish and from some of the indigenous languages spoken in the Americas. Such is the case with the Spanishization of the name Frances (Francis) or the Nahualtization of Jamaica (as in Xaymaca). I owe this observation about the transculturation of the above names to my colleague Susan Gillman, and to others who have read this piece and who assumed the names where misspelled.

[29]There are many examples in the text that would speak to this fact. See among others the description of the process of adaptation

or transculturation of James Duglin, the young Afro-Antillean from Barbados (35). Or, likewise, the transformation of Nenén noted by Papa James upon returning home after having served time in a Panamanian jail: "The first thing he noticed was a woman who was now more of an isthmian than an islander" ["Lo primero que observó fue una Nenén más istmeña que isleña..." (68)], that is, a Nenén whose Spanish vocabulary was more extensive and varied, and who had adopted many of the folkways of her adopted land.

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Valorizando o negro na República Dominicana: o caso de Blas Jiménez

by Ana Beatriz Gonçalves

A influência do negro e de sua cultura na República Dominicana é um tema de certa complexidade. Como afirma Bruno Rosario Candelier,

> los rasgos culturales negros existentes en Santo Domingo no han sido valorizados del todo, ni en todo su alcance. Pese a que estan ahí, se niegan, se ocultan o se subestiman sus manifestaciones (30).

Franklin Franco vai um pouco mais além ao afirmar que "la aportación del negro a la formación del pueblo dominicano ha sido siempre relegada a último plano—cuando no completamente desterrada" (13). Pode-se dizer que essa rejeição à participação do negro na formação da nação dominicana possui um precedente histórico. A divisão da ilha em duas colônias pertencentes a dois países distintos, a ocupação haitiana de 1822 a 1844, as interferências norte-americanas e a ditadura de Rafael Leónidas Trujillo, de 1930 a 1961, ano em que foi assassinado, são alguns dos fatores que fazem da República Dominicana um país em busca de sua identidade própria.[1]

Desde o momento de sua formação como nação, afirma Franco que "este país ha sido dirigido por un conglomerado que ha vivido por negar su propia realidad" (87). Negam a presença do negro e sua participação na formação dominicana. Essa negação é bastante compreensível, uma vez que, ao contrário das outras nações hispanoamericanas, que conquistaram suas independências lutando contra Espanha, a República Dominicana consegue a sua lutando contra o Haiti, "nación predominantemente negra, en medio de un ambiente ideológico universal propicio al racismo" (Franco 90). Peter Winn observa que a independência

> was led by a weakened white elite who used the struggle to promote a national identity defined in opposition to Haiti: If Haiti was black, African, and Voodooist, then the Dominican Republic would be white, Spanish, and Catholic (288).

É precisamente essa elite pró-hispânica, anti-haitiana, que governa a nação, manipulando a grande maioria mulata.[2] Segundo Winn, "three out of four Dominican are of mixed European and African descents, making it the nation with the highest proportion of mulattos in the Americas" (285). Deste modo, "someone who is fairly light-skinned will say: I'm white. A mulatto with medium skin...will say: I'm Indian. And blacks themselves will say: I'm a dark Indian" (Winn 285).

Fortalece-se ainda mais essa idéia de "hispanidad" dominicana durante a ditadura do General Trujillo. Segundo Winn, sua concepção da identidade dominicana "was to deny the existence of African strains in both the population and its culture" (290). Assim sendo, nega-se por completo a presença negra na República Dominicana; o negro será sempre haitiano, ou seja, o outro.

Não somente nega-se a existência de um negro dominicano, como também culpa-se a imigração haitiana à República Dominicana como a causadora de todos os

males do país. Joaquín Balaguer, intelectual dominicano que chegou à presidência do país, em um estudo intitulado *La isla al revés, Haiti y el destino dominicano* insiste em culpar o fracasso dominicano à presença do negro haitiano. Afirma que

> nuestro origen racial y nuestra tradición de pueblo hispánico, no nos debe impedir reconocer que la nacionalidad se halla en peligro de desintegrarse si no se emplean remedios drásticos contra la amenaza que se deriva para ella de la vecindad del pueblo haitiano (45).

Segundo Balaguer, devido à presença haitiana, o país "va perdiendo poco a poco su fisionomía española" (45). Em outras palavras, insiste em afirmar a hispanidade dominicana ao mesmo tempo que menospreza a presença negra. Para Winn, "the casting of Haitians as the ethnic 'other'...has legitimated racism in the name of nationalism" (292).

Obviamente que essa rejeição legitimada em nome do sentimento de nacionalidade conduz à construção de estereótipos negativos. Assim sendo, o negro será imoral, preguiçoso, portador de doenças.

Desmitificando esses estereótipos está, entre outros, Blas Jiménez que, por meio de sua poesia, afirma a presença negra em seu país, ao mesmo tempo em que valoriza a influênica negra, não somente na República Dominicana mas, em todo o Caribe. Segundo o próprio poeta, "tenemos que sentirnos negros, por las tantas veces que fuimos blancos, por las tantas veces que fuimos indios, por las tantas veces que no fuimos nada" ("Negritud, mulataje y dominicanidad"). Para Jiménez, os dominicanos devem "grasp our negritude and say, 'yes, this is what I am'" (citado em Winn 292).

Segundo James Davis, o poeta "es una de las voces mas poderosas en cuanto a su mensaje de la situación socio-política del negro dominicano" (183). Marvin Lewis afima que sua poesia "is an affirmation of négritude and a questioning of the functions of social structures which asssure that the majority will remain poor and oppressed" (301). Por conseguinte, Jiménez não somente assume sua "negritude," como também, "denuncia la situación desventajosa del negro en la sociedad dominicana, tanto como un malhechor social como un problema racial" (Davis 183).

Seus três poemários, *Aquí—otro español*, publicado em 1980, *Caribe africano en despertar*, de 1984 e *Exigencias de un cimarrón*, de 1987, tornam-se, então, espaço de auto-conhecimento, de valorização de uma cultura rejeitada e, sobre tudo, de reivindicação. Neste trabalho pretendo observar os temas mais constantes na poesia de Jiménez, no que se refere à afirmação de uma identidade negra dominicana, sem levar em consideração a ordem em que foram publicadas.

Observa-se de imediato o surgimento de um eu enunciador que, ao mesmo tempo que se afirma negro, aponta a falta de identidade do negro dominicano. É o caso de "Yo," onde se verifica o surgimento de uma voz poética negra que, apesar de assumir sua "negritude," continua sendo o "outro," aquele que "no tiene tierra, patria, ni / universo..." (1).

O tema da falta de identidade aparece também em "Aquí," onde depreende-se uma crítica a todo um povo que segue vivendo uma mentira, ou seja, que nega a verdadeira realidade dominicana, de uma população na maioria mulata e miserável, para viver escondendo-se atrás de máscaras,

isto e, um povo "que presenta una frente orgullosa" (12) mas, que na verdade, são "máscaras ficticias de una civilización que aún no ha llegado" (13). Por este motivo, trata-se de um povo que vive "sentado pensando sentado esperando" (15).

Nega-se uma vez mais a figura do negro dominicano no poema "Haiti," onde "eres Haitiano por ser negro / eres negro / eso te hace haitiano" (65). Observa-se, também, a não valorização do negro: "Negro es lo malo/ Malo es lo haitiano / negro es feo / feo es haitiano" (65).

Em "Cobarde" verifica-se uma crítica àqueles negros que, acomodados nesta situação de super-valorização da cultura européia versus a não valorização da cultura negra, acovardam-se. É interessante observar a animalização do homem negro que, como um animal, ao aceitar passivamente valores impostos, sem nenhum tipo de reação ou questionamento, está deixando-se "domar" e, consequentemente, seguirá na sua "jaula," obedecendo a seu "amo" :

Aún tienes miedo
cobarde

Aún te encuentras acorralado
cobarde

Aún te encuentras en tu jaula
cobarde
. . . .

Vives en un mundo fijo,
con miedo
con miedo de ser (89)

O poema "Somos" retrata, uma vez mais, a falta de identidade não só do negro, mas do dominicano em geral:

Un pueblo de hombres a medias
medio negro
medio espanol
medio indio
medio africano
medio latinoamericano
medio pueblo
de hombres a medias (30)

Lewis, ao referir-se a este poema, afirma que:

> The process of miscegenation is viewed here in a negative light since not much positive value is placed upon blackness. The anaphora with "medio" enumerates effectively the situation of half a man ...who is accepting the definitions imposed by Eurocentric culture. This creates profound psychological difficulties for those who are farthest from the white norm (307).

Finalmente, como ilustração da falta de identidade, está o poema "Discriminación a la dominicana" onde, outra vez, nega-se a presença do negro naquele pas. Lewis observa que este poema "demontrates the schizophrenic nature of being black in the Dominican Republic" (310), ou seja, percebe-se a constante rejeição a ser negro:

tú no eres negro
tú eres un indio

. . . .

tú no eres negro
tú eres de aquí

. . . .

tú no eres negro
tú tienes educación

tú no eres negro
tú tienes dinero

. . . .
tú no eres negro
tú eres un negro blanco (45)

Contrastando com a negação da presença negra na República Dominicana, encontra-se uma série de poemas onde se crítica a miséria, resiste-se à assimilação aos valores ditados por uma elite branca para, deste modo, buscar-se a afirmação de uma identidade negra dominicana.

Em "Bwana—Señor—Amo" verifica-se a presença de uma voz poética negra que, cansada de ser o "outro," de ser obrigada à submissão, reivindica seu direito de afirmar-se. Oberva-se que assumir sua "negritude" significa também recuperar o idioma perdido no longo processo de aculturação sofrido por seus antepassados:

Bwana. Yo quiero ser negro
Bwana. Dejar de llorar
Bwana. Hablarte en mi lengua
. . . .

Bwana. En tu lengua vengo
Bwana. Hoy a reclamar
Bwana. Que me deje ser
Bwana. Negro y nada más (3)

A tentativa de conscientização aparece também em "Negro de mi tierra." Neste caso, verifica-se a presença de uma voz poética que dirige-se a todos os negros em uma tentativa de conscientizá-los de sua situação inferior. Observa-se que para tal, utiliza o verbo em terceira pessoa do plural, onde "eles" representa uma minoria branca, dominadora e "tu" a grande maioria negra, dominada:

Negro de mi tierra
tratan de ver por tí
están ciegos,
. . . .
tratan de oir por tí
están sordos,
tratan de hablar por tí
son mudos
tratan de pensar por tí
son bobos (25)

Termina o poema revertendo a situação de inferioridade e mostrando ao negro o orgulho que deve sentir, já que:

negro de mi patria
tú eres el futuro
eres mi hijo
eres mi nieto
hijo de mi nieto
mi tataranieto.
Eres negro eres
sí negro eso eres
NEGRO (26)

O poema "Tengo" reflete esse processo de auto conscientização, onde o eu-lírico assume sua identidade negra, recusando-se a ser qualificado de branco ou índio:

Tengo que sentirme negro
por las tantas veces que fui blanco
tengo que sentirme negro
por las tantas veces que fui indio
tengo que sentirme negro
porque soy negro (31)

Entretanto, assumir sua identidade negra não é uma tarefa fácil, uma vez que assumi-la será "la contradicción de mi historia" (31). Mesmo assim, sente "el llamado a re-escribirla/ re-escribir la historia de esta tierra (31).

Não obstante, observa-se que a meta final é a ausência de qualificações raciais, a qual só poderá ser alcançada após um estágio de auto-definição, de não-negação. Por este motivo, afirma que "Tengo que sentirme negro /... / hasta dejar atrás el ser

negro /.../ y ser /.../ por las tantas veces que dejé de ser" (32).

A necessidade de resistência à assimilação leva a uma valorização de aspectos negros, sejam eles instrumentos musicais, características físicas ou a própria cor da pele. Tal é o caso de "Canción negra para rifles y atabales" onde a resistência armada vem unida ao som de um instrumento musical de origem africana. Música e armas serão, deste modo, o caminho para a liberdade:

Tam, tam-tam, tam-tam
los hijos de los negritos
hicieron un compromiso
para despertar al mundo
traen los fusiles listos
. . . .

Tam, tam-tam, tam-tam
me tocan los atabales
dicen acércate más
que en este ritmo traemos
traemos libertad (52)

"Identificación" toma uma característica física negra, o cabelo, e a transforma em símbolo de resistência, revertendo, deste modo, seu valor. O cabelo do negro simbolizará, então, a força que tratá mudanças:

El pelo
como revolución de su personalidad
llenando las negritudes
un medio mundo de cañas

El pelo
por ser diferente
muestra la personalidad
deja salir la negritud
en caminos de cambios
mulatajes Caribe

El pelo (64)

"Pelo-pelo-pelo" retoma essa temática de exaltação das características físicas do negro, o cabelo e a cor da pele para se chegar à afirmação de uma identidade negra:

Mi pelo
crece en mi piel
piel negra.

. . . .

pelo bueno del negro
pelo negro
pelo que no me sofoca

. . . .

un pelo crespo
un pelo en afro
un pelo de negro
mi pelo (63-64)

No poema "Hombre" observa-se uma vez mais o orgulho de ser negro por meio da exaltação de algumas características, associadas ou não ao negro:

nadie puede hacerte bravo
negro bravo
nadie puede hacerte fuerte
negro fuerte
nadie puede hacerte sabio
negro sabio
nadie puede hacerte bueno
negro bueno
nadie puede hacerte bello
negro bello

. . . .

porque eres (41)

Outra temática constante na afirmação de uma identidade negra dominicana é a ambigüidade em relação ao que é ser um

negro dominicano, ou seja, por um lado o sentimento de orgulho de ser um negro na República Dominicana e, por outro, o sofrimento que leva dentro de si precisamente por tentar assumir essa identidade. Em "Contradicción de un patriota (canto a la patria)," como o próprio título indica, depreende-se uma voz poética cheia de contradições, já que ao mesmo tempo que ama sua pátria, sente-se rejeitado por ela. Trata-se de um verdadeiro retrato da situação do negro nesse país, que, apesar de presente, nega-se sua presença:

Pienso en ti
te necesito
razones. . . no tengo (74)

Por sentir-se tão apaixonado, parte desse país que o rejeita e que, no entanto, ajudou a formar, reivindica seu direito de ser reconhecido. Esse sentimento de reivindicação ao lado da afirmação da presença negra na República Dominicana será uma constante em todo o poema:

¿Qué quiero?
exijo reconocimiento
que me permitas ser parte de tu historia
porque fui el forjador
fui el labrador
fui el que colocó las piedras en los palacios
fui y soy tu vida. (75)

O poema termina com uma voz poética decepcionada, uma vez que, apesar de todos os seus esforços, segue sendo rejeitada:

Porque después de muchos años
aunque te conozco
aún no me conoces
aunque te canto
aún no me oyes (81)

A preocupação pela miséria do dominicano, especialmente do negro dominicano, é outro tema constante na poesia de Jiménez. No extenso poema "Aquí" verifica-se um questionamento da nação dominicana, onde ressaltam-se os contrastes da beleza do país e da miséria de sua população: "Aquí frondosos flamboyanes dan sombra / a niños malnutridos" (9). Trata-se, portanto, de "Un pueblo hambriento que come tradiciones/.../ pueblo sin ideas /.../ pueblo sin historia /.../ pueblo sin pueblo /.../ mi pueblo" (11); um lugar onde "el negro bembe /.../ se siente cansado al amanecer /.../ no le queda un chele /.../ nada de comer" (16).

Em "Canción No. 1" denuncia a miséria das crianças negras. É interessante observar o uso do rítmo como parte significativa do poema, ou seja, em uma verdadeira rumba, rítmo de origem negra, observa que tais crianças:

se van sin comer
se van a la tumba
se van los negritos
al ritmo de rumba (43)

Como válvula-de escape dessa situação de miséria e de rejeição está a imagem da África representando a figura maternal. É o caso de "África No. 1," onde o eu enunciador sente-se violentado, uma vez que foi "despojado de tu vientre / desposeido" (41). Observa-se, também, o desejo de proximidade, de um retorno simbólico, onde a África representa uma fonte de energia e, ao mesmo tempo, um exemplo a ser seguido:

Madre África
Desde Santiago te escribo
para sentirte cerca

para volver a tí.
. . . .
madre África
préstame tu fusil préstame tu orgullo
préstame tus cojones de hombre
madre África (41)

"Canto al abuelo desconocido" reflete precisamente essa exaltação da herança africana, representada na figura do avô que, ao contrário da imagem do escravo submisso, tem aqui a imagem do negro quilombola, significando, assim, a resistência a assimilação:

Eres negro de las lomas
eres negro cimarrón
dejaste ya las cadenas
la caña y la plantación
eres negro de las lomas
eres negro cimarrón. (56)

Finalmente, verifica-se o apego à religião africana e a rejeição a religião "branca" como modo de estabelecer uma identidade negra. No poema "Ese Dios" observa-se uma voz poética em estado de revolta ao observar que: "ese Dios es de los que tienen /.../ ese Dios se merece el oro de los pobres /.../ y los deseos de los ricos /.../ porque ese Dios es malvado" (93). É precisamente esse Deus, associado à Igreja Católica e a civilização européia, quem "tantas maldades me hizo/ tantas mentiras me habló" (93). Por este motivo questiona a validade desse Deus.

Por outro lado, a imagem dos deuses africanos aparece de maneira positiva, ou seja, revertem-se valores aceitos e impostos pelo conquistador e reconhecem-se outros até então rejeitados: "Dios mío / dioses de mi lejano reino /.../ dioses de mis antepassados" ((57).

Concluindo, pode-se afirmar que por meio de sua poesia, Blas Jiménez tenta estabelecer uma identidade negra dominicana, por muitos negada ou rejeitada. Para que se estabeleça tal identidade o poeta se vale de uma série de temas constantes através dos quais constrói uma cosmogonia negra, à medida que afirma a presença histórica do negro na República Dominicana e questiona a "hispanidad," ou seja, a falsa identidade baseada somente no elemento europeu. Tal é o papel não somente do poeta dominicano mas, de qualquer intelectual negro latino-americano, isto é, deverá lutar dentro de sociedades onde, "as formas de conduta e de etiqueta dos brancos bem-sucedidos" predominam (Ribeiro 226).

Notas

[1]Juan Bosch, intelectual dominicano, em *Composición social dominicana* faz uma análise completa da história do país até o início da década de 60, época en que morre o ditador Trujillo.

[2]Franklin Franco em *Santo Domingo: cultura, política, e ideología* faz uma excelente análise deas raízes históricas do anti-haitianismo.

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Los mosquitos de orixá Changó

by Cubena

Dedicado a Jaime José y Carlos José
hijos y amigos

En aquella época cuando el sol era un jovencito y su hermanita la luna una niñita, en Africa, cerca del volcán Kilimanjaro y a orillas de río Nilo, en una población hermosa y famosa, felizmente vivían Obicheré y sus abuelos.

Alegremente, al bohío grande, donde vivían Obicheré y sus abuelos, el bohío más distinguido de la población, llegaban puntualmente todos los atardeceres, durante la temporada de lluvias, los más enormes elefantes, las más altas jirafas, las más veloces cebras y los más fuertes leones, para visitar a los abuelitos más cariñosos y bondadosos de la más famosa población de Africa, y, por supuesto, llegaban también para conversar, cantar, bailar y jugar con el amiguito Obicheré.

Un bello día martes lluvioso al atardecer, de gorjeos melodiosos, fragancias encantadoras de flores lindas y olores sabrosos de frutas tropicales, en el día del cumpleaños de Obicheré, como regalo de sorpresa, la cariñosa y bondadosa abuelita de Obicheré preparó la comida favorita de su nieto. Luego, los tambores principales en la población, generalmente, sonados sólo para las ceremonias más importantes, mandaron sonoros ***bumbumprá-prabum-prabum-piquitipán-praprá-bumprá-bumbumprá***, a todos los bohíos de la población a orillas del río Nilo y los alrededores del volcán Kiliman-jaro, invitando a los vecinos, los elefantes, las jirafas, las cebras, los leones y, también, a todos los otros amiguitos de Obicheré, para celebrar en una gran fiesta de cumpleaños. Luego, ese día martes, tras de rendirles homenaje a todos los antepasados en el Reino de los Muertos y saludar a los orixás, todos los invitados comieron comida suculenta, bebieron jugos sabrosos de frutas tropicales, jugaron juegos divertidos, cantaron cantos melodiosos y bailaron bailes rítmicos, hasta tarde en la noche, en la gran fiesta de cumpleaños para Obicheré.

Al día siguiente, en la madrugada, las gallinas no cacarearon como de costumbre. La abuela de Obicheré, quien rara vez se enfermaba, amaneció con un dolor fastidioso en el pecho. Pero, como de costumbre, al despertarse temprano cuando escuchó el quiquiriquí de un gallo vecino, tras de bañarse en el río Nilo, ella barrió el bohío, y después de colocar la escoba en un rincón, empezó el fuego en un fogón de carbón para cocinar el desayuno. Luego se lavó las manos después de cosechar guandú, ñame, quimbombó, yuca y plátanos. Mientras preparaba los camarones de río y un pollo para el desayuno, la abuela enferma trató de hacerle caso omiso al dolor en el pecho, pero no pudo aguantar más el dolor fastidioso y empezó a quejarse.

Luego, al mediodía, cuando Obicheré despertó tarde, agotadísimo de tanto jugar, cantar y bailar en su fiesta de cumpleaños, se preocupó mucho por las quejas, los lamentos y el sufrimiento de su abuelita, porque la quería mucho.

Obicheré quería mucho a su abuelita porque, además de ser cariñosa, bondadosa y la que preparaba la comida más suculenta de la población, ella nunca regañaba a su nieto ni le gritaba, aunque de vez en

cuando fuera travieso, sino que lo acariciaba cariñosamente por la mañana, por la tarde y por la noche, cuando le servía el desayuno, el almuerzo y la cena, todos los días, como si Obicheré fuera un niñorrey; y, además, la abuelita nunca permitía que a su nietecito se le acercaran chiquillos malcriados y, muchos menos, le tocaran la cabeza las personas con manos sucias, sobre todo, con la mano izquierda, pero más importante aún, ella lo acunaba tiernamente en sus brazos, meciéndose en una hamaca a la hora de la siesta cuando, a diario, le narraba a su nieto los relatos de la araña amistosa, la iguana juguetona, la tortuga astuta y, sobre todo, los viajes y las hazañas de sus antepasados nobles y valientes en Darién, Chichén-Itzá, Tenochtitlán y Macchu Picchu; además, le narraba sobre los parientes olmecas y quichés, y las hazañas heroicas de los abuelos en Egipto, Etiopía, Nubia, Ghana, Mali, Songhay y Zimbabwe.

Luego, cuando la abuela de Obicheré sintió más dolor en su pecho, en ausencia de su marido quien ya hacía varias temporadas de lluvias se encontraba allá lejos en Egipto, donde había sido invitado por la fama de su destreza con el pincel, para pintar el más importante recinto sepulcral en una pirámide de un faraón joven, la abuela enferma decidió enviar a su nieto de siete años de edad a un pueblo cercano, donde el anciano Babalú Ayé en su jardín tenía una planta verderojiza con hojas amarillas y flores azules, porque los delicados pétalos de las flores azules se preparaban, a fuego lento, en agua de coco con canela, miel de abejas y hojas tiernas del árbol baobab como el mejor remedio, para el mal de ojos, fiebres, cólicos, jaquecas y otras enfermedades.

Obicheré, un muchacho inteligente, amable, ágil, dueño de un perfil con huellas de nobleza y de ascendencia vigorosa, tenía fama de ser muy orgulloso y juicioso; y, consecuentemente, como quería mucho a su abuelita, en seguida, aquel día del dolor fastidioso en el pecho de su abuelita fue corriendo, como el más veloz impala, rumbo al pueblo cercano, para pedirle al anciano Babalú Ayé que, por favor, le cambiara siete pétalos de las flores azules de su jardín por quimbombós, ñames, guineos y tres totumas de guandú que él mismo había cultivado en la huerta de sus abuelos. En el camino, el niño no se detuvo para recoger hermosas flores favoritas de su abuelita, tampoco se detuvo para admirar las mariposas bonitas que flotaban entre las flores de fragancias encantadoras, ni para escuchar la sinfonía de gorjeos de los pájaros en las palmeras, ni para saborear las frutas maduras que caían de los árboles y la miel de abejas en una colmena abandonada; pero, cuando Obicheré llegó por la mitad del camino, ese día caluroso, tenía mucha sed de tanto correr, y por lo tanto, descansó un ratito bajo la sombra de una ceiba, y poco después, empezó a correr otra vez. Luego, volvió a descansar otro rato bajo un árbol baobab. La sed que tenía Obicheré le causaba más cansancio. Obicheré se acercó con ansias a un cocotero en el camino, pero para no perder tiempo no quiso subir un cocotero tan alto donde los cocos lo invitaban para saciar su sed con agua fresca y dulce. No obstante, al rato, se alegró porque en una aldea cerca del cocotero cargado con cocos grandes se encontraba una vaca gorda que fascinó a Obicheré. La vaca era negra con siete manchas azules en forma de tortuguitas. En efecto, como Obicheré tenía mucha sed, y, a la vez, como tenía mucha prisa por cumplir con el mandado de su abuelita enferma, decidió no subir el cocotero que casi llegaba a las

nubes, pero en cambio, se le ocurrió ordeñar la vaca negra. Tremenda fue la sorpresa. La leche de la vaca era de color chocolate, y, lo mejor de todo, era el rico sabor de la leche. Golosamente, Obicheré saboreó mucha leche chocolate ese atardecer caluroso. El muchachito de la población famosa por sus maestros, artesanos y héroes, bebió tanta leche chocolate sabrosa que, felizmente, su barriguita se puso gorda como la de un viejo pipón. Y, después de un rato, Obicheré, al igual que un bebé contento en su hamaca a la hora de la siesta, que se mece suavemente por las brisas que hacen bailar a las palmeras y murmurar las olas del mar, se durmió bajo la sombra de un frondoso árbol baobab.

Curiosamente, durante la siesta bajo la sombra del frondoso árbol baobab, Obicheré soñó que, para su cumpleaños, el abuelo regresó de Egipto para celebrar en la gran fiesta y para narrarle sobre los paseos interesantes, en barcos, en el río Nilo y el mar Mediterráneo, las tertulias con los parientes fenicios, cartagineses e iberos, las visitas a la Esfinge y las escenas pintadas en la pirámide para el faraón joven. Pero, para Obicheré, lo más emocionante en el sueño cuando regresó su abuelo de Egipto fue el regalo que le trajo de Etiopía: un hermoso caballo negro llamado Relámpago. Y, cada atardecer, después de agradecer al abuelo con abrazos por el corcel negro, Obicheré le preguntaba, a cada rato, a su abuelita si ella necesitaba que le hiciera algún mandado al jardín del anciano Babalú Ayé, para cabalgar velozmente por la población, donde los otros niños gritaban con admiración: "¡Viva Obicheré", y aplaudían por todo el camino al más ágil y diestro jinete de la población famosa a orillas del río Nilo y los alrededores del volcán Kilimanjaro.

Más tarde, de repente, cuando Obicheré despertó de la siesta al escuchar el aleteo y graznido de una lechuza ya era de noche y, por la oscuridad, como un ciego perdido en el bosque en una noche huérfana de luna, no veía nada a su alrededor, porque el sol y la luna se habían marchado para celebrar en otra fiesta de cumpleaños con sus amiguitas las estrellas allá lejos, al otro lado del mundo. En la oscuridad, asustado por los aleteos, graznidos, aullidos, gritos ... Obicheré pensó mucho en su abuelita enferma y sola en el bohío a orillas del río Nilo y cerca del volcán Kilimanjaro, y, preocupado por lo de su abuelita, empezó a llorar, porque en la oscuridad no podía encontrar el jardín del anciano Babalú Ayé. Obicheré lloró, lloró y lloró. Lloró muchísimo. El muchachito lloró tanto que, por sus lágrimas, un río nuevo se formó cerca del frondoso árbol baobab, donde se había dormido tranquilamente después de tomar mucha leche chocolate sabrosa.

—¿Por qué llora ese niñito? —preguntó una elefante.

—Ese chiquillo está perdido —contestó una jirafa.

—¿Por qué llora tanto ese muchachito? —preguntó una cebra.

—Le tiene miedo a la oscuridad —contestó un león.

Obicheré siguió llorando y llorando, y las lágrimas que salían de sus ojos eran como cataratas; y, por supuesto, esto preocupó a algunos animales, insectos, plantas y árboles a tal extremo que le rogaron a Obicheré que, por favor, no llorara más, porque sus lágrimas formaron un río nuevo que ya estaba lleno con sus lágrimas. Paulatinamente, por las inagotables lágrimas del niño, el río se puso caudaloso como ocurre con los ríos

en las regiones tropicales después de los frecuentes e incesantes aguaceros torrenciales; y, nerviosamente, todos se preocuparon de que ocurriera una inundación diluvial. Además, muchos animales e insectos estaban muy asustados y enojados porque algunos de ellos todavía no habían aprendido a nadar. Pero, Obicheré hizo caso omiso de los ruegos, las súplicas, los disgustos y los enojos, y siguió llorando y llorando... Y, en el momento cuando el río caudaloso, por las copiosas lágrimas de Obicheré, comenzó a inundar todo alrededor del árbol baobab, de repente, enviado por orixá Obatalá, el marido de orixá Yemayá y el padre de todos los importantes orixás africanos, se apareció orixá Changó, el creador y dueño de los relámpagos.

Al muchachito perdido en la oscuridad le extrañó que en ese momento de tanta angustia no se apareciera orixá Elegguá, el que cuida los caminos y auxilia a los viajeros, u orixá Ochún, la dueña de los ríos, u orixás Oggún y Orula o, al menos, orixá Yemayá, la gran madre y reina de las siete mares. No obstante, preocupado por su abuelita enferma y sola allá en el bohío, Obicheré, aunque un poco desconcertado, se alegró de la llegada de orixá Changó.

—Amiguito, ¿por qué lloras tanto? —preguntó orixá Changó.

—Porque mi abuelita está enferma y sola —contestó Obicheŗé.

—Pues, amiguito, no te preocupes mi hermano Babalú Ayé en su jardín tiene muchas plantas y también muchas hierbas medicinales para todas las enfermedades.

—Pero, es que por...ahora no puedo encontrar el camino en la oscuridad y ...

Orixá Changó ya sabía todo lo que había ocurrido con la vaca negra de las siete manchas azules en forma de tortuguitas, en el camino rumbo al jardín del anciano Babalú Ayé, cuando le ofreció a Obicheré que lo ayudaría bajo una condición: prometer nunca jamás ordeñar, sin permiso, la vaca negra con leche chocolate de su hermano orixá Osaín. Efectivamente, muy contento, Obicheré hizo la promesa bajo juramento solemne y en honor a la memoria de los antepasados en el feliz Reino de los Muertos. Entonces, con voz de trueno, orixá Changó les ordenó a los mosquitos, quienes tenían fama de necios por sus zumbidos diurnos y nocturnos alrededor de las hamacas de los recién nacidos en Africa, que acompañaran relampagueantemente al niño Obicheré por todo el camino oscuro rumbo al jardín del anciano Babalú Ayé.

Luego, poco antes de la medianoche, Obicheré conversó con el anciano dueño del jardín con hierbas y plantas medicinales, y, muy agradecido, logró obtener los siete pétalos de las flores azules. Y, tras de agradecer repetidas veces el intercambio de pétalos por ñame, quimbombó, guandú..., más veloz que el más ágil impala, Obicheré regresó corriendo al más hermoso bohío a orillas del río Nilo, para curar a su abuelita.

Felizmente, en la población famosa a orillas del río Nilo y cerca del volcán Kilimanjaro, además de jugar con los elefantes, las jirafas, las cebras y los leones, día tras día, cada anochecer, después de besar y abrazar a su abuelita y a su abuelito, Obicheré ofrece a los vecinos e invitados postres deliciosos de guineo, maní, mamey y guanábana, luego sale a jugar alegremente con sus nuevos amiguitos: los mosquitos de orixá Changó, quienes, divertidamente, con cada latido de su corazoncito, lanzan relámpagos para iluminar todos los

caminos oscuros.

Este fue el origen de las luciérnagas.

Orixá Changó's Mosquitos

Translated by La Verne Marie Seales Soley

Dedicated to Jaime José and Carlos José

During that time when the sun was a young man and his younger sister the moon was a little girl, a boy named Obicheré and his grandparents lived happily in a beautiful and famous village, at the banks of the Nile River and close to the Kilimanajaro Volcano, in Africa.

Happily, during the rainy season, the most enormous elephants, the tallest giraffes, the fastest zebras and the strongest lions arrived on time every afternoon, to the hut where Obicheré and his grandparents lived, the most beautiful hut in the village, to visit the most affectionate and kind grandparents of the most famous village of Africa, and of course, to talk, sing, dance and play with their little friend Obicheré.

Towards sundown, on a beautiful rainy Tuesday of melodious twittering, beautiful flowers of enchanting fragrances and delicious tropical fruits, Obicheré's affectionate and kind grandma prepared her grandson's favorite food as a surprise gift on his birthday. Then, the main drums of the village, usually only beaten for important ceremonies, sent *bumbumprá-prabum-piquitipan-praprá bumprá* resounding to every hut of the village at the banks of the Nile River and the surrounding area of the Kilimanjaro Volcano, inviting the neighbors, the elephants, the giraffes, the zebras, the lions and also, all of Obicheré's other little friends, to celebrate in a big party. Then, on that Tuesday, after paying their respect to all the ancestors of the Kingdom of the Dead and greeting the other orixás, all the guests ate succulent food, drank delicious tropical fruit juices, played fun games, sang melodious songs and danced rhythmical dances until late at night, at the great birthday party for Obicheré.

At dawn, the following day, the chickens did not cluck as usual. Obicheré's grandmother, who was rarely ill, woke up with an annoying chest pain. As was her daily routine, she woke up early when she heard the cock-a-doodle-doo of a neighbor's rooster; after bathing in the Nile River, she swept the hut, and after putting the broom in a corner, she started the fire to cook the breakfast. She then washed her hands after harvesting pigeon peas, yams, *quimbombó*, yucca and plantains. As she prepared the river shrimp and a chicken for breakfast, the sick grandmother tried to ignore the chest pain, but she could no longer bear it and she started complaining.

Then, at noon, when Obicheré woke up late, exhausted from so much playing, singing and dancing at his birthday party, he worried a great deal about his grandma's complaints, pains and suffering, because he loved her so much.

Obicheré loved his grandma very much because not only was she loving, kind and the one who prepared the most succulent food in the village but also, she never scolded or yelled at him, although he was mischievous from time to time, but instead she lovingly caressed him in the morning, at noon and at night, every day, as if Obicheré were a boy king; and also, the grandma never allowed spoiled kids to get close and, much less, did not allow people with soiled hands to touch his head, especially with the left hand, but

most important of all, she tenderly cuddled him in her arms, rocking in a hammock at siesta time when every day, she told her grandson stories of the friendly spider, the playful iguana, the clever turtle and especially, the travels and the deeds of his noble ancestors in Darién, Chichén-Itzá, Tenochtitlán and Macchu Picchu; also, she told him stories about his Olmec and Quiché relatives, and the heroic deeds of the grandparents in Egypt, Ethiopia, Nubia, Ghana, Mali, Songhai and Zimbabwe.

Then, when Obicheré's grandmother experienced more chest pain, in the absence of her husband who had been far away in Egypt for many rainy seasons, where he had been invited to paint the most important resting place in a young pharaoh's pyramid because of his skillfulness with the paint brush, the sick grandmother decided to send her seven-year-old grandson to a nearby village, where old Babalú Ayé had a greenish-reddish plant with yellow leaves and blue flowers in hs garden, because the delicate petals of the blue flowers were prepared, on a low flame, in coconut water with cinnamon, bee's honey and tender leaves from the baobab tree as the best remedy for jinx, fevers, colics, headaches and other illnesses.

Obicheré, an intelligent, kind, agile youngster, with traces of nobility and vigorous lineage, had the reputation of being very proud and wise; and consequently, since he cared for his grandma so very much, immediately that day of the nagging pain in her chest, he ran, like the fastest impala, heading for the closest village, to ask Babalú Ayé to please exchange seven petals of the blue flowers from his garden for *quimbombós*, yams, bananas and three calabashes of pigeon peas that he had carefully grown in his grandparents' garden. On the way, the boy did not stop to pick some of his grandma's favorite beautiful flowers, neither did he stop to admire the beautiful butterflies that floated between the flowers of enchanting fragrance, nor to listen to the warbling symphony of the birds in the palm trees, nor to savor the ripe fruits that were falling from the trees and the honey of bees in an abandoned beehive; but, when Obicheré was halfway there, that warm day, he was thirsty after running so much that he rested a while in the shade of a ceiba tree, and shortly after, he started running once more. Then he went to rest again under the baobab tree. Obicheré's thirst made him feel extremely tired. Obicheré anxiously approached a coconut palm tree on the road, but not to waste time, he did not want to climb a tall coconut palm tree where the coconuts were inviting him to quench his thirst with fresh and sweet water. However, he soon became happy because in a village close to the coconut palm tree laden with big coconuts, there was a fat cow that fascinated Obicheré. The cow was black with seven blue spots in the shape of little turtles. As a matter of fact, since Obicheré was very thirsty and in a hurry to do his sick grandma's errand, he decided not to climb the tall coconut palm tree that almost reached the clouds, but instead, it occurred to him to milk the black cow. What a surprise. The cow's milk was brown, and best of all, was the delicious flavor of the milk. Greedily, that warm afternoon, Obicheré savored much chocolate milk. The little boy from the village famous for its teachers, craftsmen and heroes, happily drank so much chocolate milk that his little belly got fat like a *viejo pipón*. And after a while, Obicheré, like a contented

baby at siesta time, in his hammock that is gently rocked by the breeze that makes the palm trees dance and the waves of the ocean murmur, fell asleep in the shadow of a leafy baobab tree.

Curiously, during the siesta in the shadow of the leafy baobab tree, Obicheré dreamt that his grandfather returned from Egypt for his birthday to celebrate in the great party and to tell him about the interesting boat trips on the Nile River and the Mediterranean Sea, the meetings with the Phoenician, Carthaginian and Iberian relatives, the visits to the Sphinx and the scenes painted in the young pharaoh's pyramid. But for Obicheré, the most exciting thing in the dream when his grandfather returned from Egypt was the gift that he brought him from Ethiopia: a beautiful black horse called Relámpago. And every evening, after hugging his grandfather and thanking him for the black steed, every couple of minutes Obicheré would ask his grandma if she needed him to run any errands to old Babalú Ayé's garden, to swiftly ride his horse through the village, where the other children shouted with admiration: "Long live Obicheré," through the entire road they applauded the most agile and skillful horseman of the famous village at the banks of the Nile River and the surrounding areas of the Kilimanjaro Volcano.

Later, when Obicheré suddenly awoke from his siesta to the sound of the flapping and squawking of an owl, it was already nighttime and because of the darkness, like a blind man lost in the forest on a night without a moon, he could not see anything around him, for the sun and the moon had left to celebrate at another birthday party with their little friends the stars there, far away, at the other side of the world. In the darkness, frightened by the flopping, squawking, howling, screams ...Obicheré though about his grandma who was in the hut sick and alone at the banks of the Nile River and near to the Kilimanjaro Volcano, and, concerned about his grandmother, he began to cry, because he could not find old Babalú Ayé's garden in the dark. Obicheré cried, cried and cried. He cried a lot. The little boy cried so much that, because of his tears, a new river was formed near the leafy baobab tree, where he had peacefully fallen asleep after drinking so much chocolate milk.

—Why is that little boy crying? —asked an elephant.

—That child is lost —answered a giraffe.

—Why is that little boy crying so much? —asked a zebra.

—He's afraid of the dark —answered a lion.

Obicheré continued crying and crying, and the tears that came out of his eyes were like waterfalls; and of course, this worried some animals, insects, trees and plants to the point that they begged Obicheré to please stop crying, because his tears formed a new river that was already filled with his tears. Gradually, because of the boy's endless tears, the river rose as it happens with rivers in the tropical regions after the frequent and constant torrential downpours; and nervously, everybody worried that a diluvial rain might occur. Besides, several animals and insects were afraid and angry because some of them had not yet learned how to swim. But Obicheré ignored the pleas, the supplications, the disgust and the anger, and he continued to cry and cry... And at the moment the mighty river started to flood because of the many tears of Obicheré, everything around the baobab tree sud-

denly, sent by orixá Obatalá, orixá Yemayá's husband and the Father of all the important African orixás, orixá Changó appeared, the creator and master of lightning.

The little boy who was lost in the dark was surprised that at that moment of so much anguish, orixá Elegguá did not appear, the one who guards the roads and assists travels, or orixá Ochún, the mistress of rivers, or orixá Oggún and Orula, or at least, orixá Yemayá, the great mother and queen of the seven seas. Although Obicheré was concerned about his grandmother who was sick and all alone, he was pleased with orixá Changó's arrival.

—Little friend, why are you crying so much? —orixá Changó asked.

—Because my grandmother is very sick and she is all alone —Obicheré answered.

—Well, little friend, don't worry because my brother Babalú Ayé has many plants and medicinal herbs for all the illnesses in his garden.

—But is that because...now I can't find the way in the darkness and...

Orixá Changó already knew everything that had happened with the black cow with the seven blue spots, in the shape of little turtles, on the road to old Babalú Ayé's garden, when he offered Obicheré help under one condition: to promise to never ever milk his brother orixá Osaín's black cow that gives chocolate milk without asking permission. Sure enough, pleased, Obicheré made the promise under solemn oath and in honor of the ancestors of the happy Kingdom of the Dead. Then, with thundering voice, orixá Changó ordered the mosquitos, who had a reputation for being annoying because of their buzzing day and night around the newborn babies' hammocks in Africa, to flashingly accompany the boy Obicheré through the dark road to old Babalú Ayé's garden.

Later on, shortly before midnight, Obicheré conversed with the old man who owned the garden with the medicinal herbs and plants, and gratefully, he managed to get the seven petals from the blue flowers. And, after repeatedly thanking him for the exchange of petals for yams, *quimbombó*, pigeon peas...Obicheré returned running faster than the most agile impala to the most beautiful hut at the banks of the Nile River to heal his grandma.

Happily, day after day, at dusk, in the famous village at the banks of the Nile River and close to the Kilimanjaro Volcano, in addition to playing with the elephants, the giraffes, the zebras and the lions, after hugging and kissing his grandma and grandpa, Obicheré offers the neighbors and guests delicious banana, peanut, mamey and soursap desserts, then he goes out to happily play with his new friends: with every beat of their little hearts, orixá Changó's mosquitos amusingly flash lightning to illuminate all dark roads.

This was the origin of the firefly.

Notes to the translation

quimbombó: variety of bean

viejo pipón: a term used to refer to a potbellied person.

IV Afro-Brazilian Congress Recife, Brazil: A Critical Review

by Lourdes Martínez-Echazábal

In 1934, a year after the publication of *Casa Grande & Sensala*, the Brazilian sociologist Gilberto Freyre, with the collaboration of Jarbas Pernambuno, José Clarival do Prado Valadares, and with the support of several member of the Afro-Brazilian religious communities, organized the I Afro-Brazilian Congress in the Teatro Santa Izabel of the City of Recife. Three years later, in 1937, the second Congress took place in the City of Salvador, Bahia. Forty-eight years passed, however, before the Teatro Santa Izabel once again housed another Afro-Brazilian Congress. The III Congress, promoted by the Joaquin Nabuco Foundation, took place on September 20-24, 1982.

The IV Afro-Brazilian Congress is part of this historical continuum. Twelve years after the third one, the Joaquin Nabuco Foundation organized the IV Afro-Brazilian Congress on April 17-20, 1994. The Congress was co-sponsored by the Secretaria de Planejamiento da Presidencia da Republica, and the State of Pernambuco, along with several national and international institutions, among them the MacArthur Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the United States Information Services, the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation, the Institute for Ibero-American Cooperation, the Calouste Gulbekian Foundation, and the CNPq.

Overall, there were a total of approximately 290 presentations distributed among thirteen thematic sessions (with an average of ten presentations per session), and twenty-six round tables (averaging six participants per table). A religious observance was held prior to the beginning of each round table: religious leaders from all African Brazilian nations were invited to sing to their respective orixás, while paying homage to an important member of the respective nation. Additionally, there were four single conferences: the opening and closing conferences, *The Importance of Afro-Brazilian Congress*, and *The Political and Ideological Dynamic of Racism: The New International Context*, were presented by Julio Braga from the Centro de Estudos Afro-Asiaticos in Salvador, Bahia, and by Clovis Moura from the IBEA, São Paulo, respectively; the other two conferences were presented by international scholars: *African American Today*, by Barbara Carter, from Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia, and *De la representation masculine de la femme dans quelques sociétés africaines: mère nourricièrre ou mère dévorante*, by Michel Adam from the Université de Tours, France.

In addition to the round tables, panels, and conferences, there was a substantial cultural program, including book presentations, exhibits, dance performances, poetry reading, documentary screening, Afro fashions and hair shows, as well as an array of musical presentations, including the Afoxê Ylê de Egba, Recife's Popular Orchestra, the Rebeldía and Guetos Bands, the Congadeiros Nossa Senhora dos Rosários dos Pretos, and several Maracatú Parades. The final event of the Congress was a *Festa de Ogúm* at Pai Adão's house, also known as the *Abá Ogunté terreiro*.

Regarding this final event, it is worth noting that according to the Annals of the I Afro-Brazilian Congress, in 1934, Pai Adão, from the important *Casa de Culto*

de Estrada Velha de Agua Fria, refused to participate in the Congress because he considered himself superior to the other *babalorixás* that had been invited to participate. The reason given by Pai Adão was that he received his training in Africa, while the other *babalorixás* were trained in Brazil. In a recent interview, however, his grandson, Manoel Nascimento ("Papai"), claimed that Pai Adão was trained in Pernambuco, and the reason why he did not participate in the Congress was so that he would not have to share his knowledge of *Camdomblé* with the significant number of intellectuals attending the Congress. Pai Adão believed that only those intimately related to the "cult" were authorized to discuss it. Clearly, for the babalorixá "quem toma banho de areia não sabe o sabor do mar."[1]

Whatever the reasons might have been, what called my attention was not so much the choice on the part of the Congress' program committee to hold the closing event in that particular *terreiro*, but the willingness on the part of Papai to welcome the academic community into his house, thus embracing an event previously rejected by his grandfather. One reading of Papai's complying gesture would suggest a healthy exchange of ideas, hence a renegotiation of knowledge (and power) among academics, African Brazilian political activists, and religious leaders.[2] Another, would situate it as complying in a broader sense with the system of clientelism that has characterized Brazilian society. Let us not forget for a moment that the Congress was sponsored by major political constituencies from City, State, and Federal governments, as well as key international agencies, all of which, in one way or another, support the cultural activities of the Afro-Brazilian community both locally and nationally. Accordingly, in this era of intense political and cultural brokering, a feeling of mutual agreement and cooperation, ought to necessarily replace the old antagonisms. But for how long, one may be inclined to ask?

I should drift no more. The IV Afro-Brazilian Congress was, indeed, a very ambitious conference. If, back in 1934, the main objective of the first Congress was to gather *babalorixás* and other representatives from the various (then referred to as) African religious "sects" existing in Brazil, the main objective of the fourth Congress appears to have been the rethinking of the "Afro" question from multiple perspectives, that is, ethnic, religious, economic, social, cultural, and political. In fact, the event gathered members of the academic and religious communities, representatives from various cultural and political organizations, and leaders of the Black Movement, who, during three fully programmed days, engaged, for the most part, in very productive dialogues. I say for the most part because, in my view, some of the presentations failed to recontextualize and revitalize the issues at hand, reproducing the kind of non-critical, official statements Brazilians are familiar with.

An example of such ventriloquism was found in the various speeches given during the grand opening ceremony by the Minister of Culture and Sport, the Governor of the State of Pernambuco, the Mayor of Recife, and the President of the Foundation Joaquin Nabuco, speeches that reaffirmed the notion of "racial democracy" and celebrated the contributions of African "culture" to the formation of Brazilian society, while paying little or no attention to the contemporary situation

and status of African Brazilians. Along the same lines, most of the papers presented at the round table entitled *Casa-Grande & Sensala: sua Importância e a Revitalização dos Estudos Afro-Brasileiros*—one of the key events of the Congress—reproduced the kind of mystifying and laudatory statements regarding the life and work of Gilberto Freyre that need to be deconstructed at once if a resignification and "revitalization" of AfroBrazilian Studies is to take place beyond a simple rhetorical gesture.

Overall, the various round tables and panels covered issues ranging from gender, poverty, and reproductive health, violence and child abuse, the history of African religion in Brazil, sexism and racism, identity and citizenship, issues of reparations (reparações), religious syncretism, the representation of black people in popular literature and the media, to issues of gender, race and the market place in the 1990s. While the official program attests to a balance among the topics covered by the Congress, there still seemed to be a rather "natural" gap among the various audiences attending the event. My sense is that there was an audience of scholars much more interested in attending the religious-oriented round tables and sessions, another, made up of scholars and activists, clearly interested in current political and/or academic issues, and yet another made up of members of the community who did not attend the meetings but were interested in the cultural events taking place during the evening. In this sense, I believe that the Congress, despite its claims, did not manage to suture the gaps among all the constituencies interested in the Afro-Brazilian experience. In fact, the old Spanish aphorism "junto pero no revueltos" seems to have been the audience's guiding principle. Personally, for instance, I found myself primarily attending those events bearing the most academic/ political relevance, at the expense of the more "cultural" or religious ones.

In my opinion, the problem was not structural but rather political. Hence, it would be unfair to deposit all the blame on the organizers of the, otherwise very successful, event. The aforementioned crevasse exists, it is an ideological one, one that has traditionally stood between the religious community and the Black Movement in Brazil, and that, until quite recently, has deeply marked (and to some extent continues to mark) the relationship between academics and militants as a relationship of mutual distrust and apartheid. This separation, among other things, has erected a symbolic, as well as a political barrier to the consolidation of the Black Movement, while maintaining in place the traditional demarcations within Afro-Brazilian Studies, that is, between the study of African Brazilian culture (as epitomized, primarily, by the study of religion, music, and folklore, art, etc.), race relations, and the history of slavery. This dismemberment and mutual isolation has tended to neutralize any kind of concerted political agency, which, in my view, is the only viable means for the African Brazilian community to attain citizenship, hence identity, in Brazil, as elsewhere in the African Diaspora.

Fortunately, a few of the panels, particularly *Identity and Citizenship, I & II*, and *Gender, Race, and the Marketplace: Perspectives for the 90s, I & II*, did go beyond the traditional areas of inquiry by focusing on contemporary issues that impinge upon the African Brazilian

population, thus, managing to stimulate and facilitate a dialogue among an audience of scholars, representatives from various nongovernmental agencies, and activists from the Black Movement.

As a scholar interested in African Latin American societies and cultures, I consider myself fortunate to have been in Brazil at the time this historic event took place, and, even more, to have made it a priority to attend.

Notes

[1]A literal translation of this phrase will read: a person that swims in the sand can't never know the taste of the sea. This metaphor poses the question of authority. In other words, it questions who is authorized to discuss African Brazilian religious experience and who is not.

[2]The relationship between the various sectors of the intelligentsia, the Black Movement, and African Brazilian religious institutions, is not a recent phenomenon. In fact, such relations have existed, at least, since the latter part of the nineteenth century. In the past, however, the workings of those relations tended to occur on an individual rather than institutional basis; as such, then, they were perceived by all parties involved as part of a network of interpersonal relations, and not as part of a concerted effort to build coalitions, or to create mutually beneficial institutional alliances.

Quisqueya la bella: The Dominican Republic in Historical and Cultural Perspective

by Alan Cambeira

New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1997, 272 pp

reviewed by James J. Davis

As a collector of Dominican things (books, newspapers, magazines, videos, radio broadcasts, merengue music and recipes for my favorite dishes), I was particularly pleased when Alan Cambeira's *Quisqueya la bella: The Dominican Republic in Historical and Cultural Perspective* (*Quisqueya* hereafter) reached my hands. At the outset, I believe that *Quisqueya* is a collector's item which needs to be read and guarded carefully on the Latin Americanist's bookshelf. Enclosed in an appealing cover, the text contains a list of maps, acknowledgements, an introduction, and twenty-three chapters followed by three appendices, a bibliography and an index.

While the preceding twenty-two chapters offer very comprehensive and informative data on the historical evolution of the island-nation, this reviewer was particularly intrigued and consumed by the concluding chapter 23 and the appendices, entitled as follows: (A) *What Makes the Language of Quisqueya Different?*, (B) *National Treasures*, and (C) *The Dominican Flag*. Chapter 23 is entitled "Conclusions: Dreaming Jointly in Defining Dominican Culture." "Dreaming jointly" is attractive language, but the phrase, at the same time, conjures up an unattractive universal reality—the systematic exclusion of people of color in the dialogue on the formation of the "civilized" world. Cambeira, using the theme of a young Dominican nationalist group seeking to address issues on the essence of Dominican culture and its "community," writes that "To speak of collective dreaming is to address all the divergent segments within the Dominican community in considering the social and historical, authentic and total Dominican reality" (p. 218).

Based on my reading of *Quisqueya*, Cambeira, through what seems to be an autobiographical treatise at times, proposes that every geographical region should accept *all* of those who have made a mark on the march of humanity. That he is particularly concerned about the African cultural elements in the Dominican Republic is powerfully evidenced when he writes that: "Today's Dominican Republic most certainly does reflect the lusciousness of Afro-Hispanic culture, the impressive body of Afro-Hispanic literature and other creative arts, as well as the diverse contributions by Dominicans of African descent to the creation and development of the entire nation" (p. 213).

A creative aspect of Chapter 23 is the inclusion of several "authentic" voices of Dominicans who provide their views on what Dominican culture is to them. While the number of people interviewed for this section is limited, those included represent a good sampling of Dominicans—male and female—of varying socioeconomic backgrounds. Quite appropriately, Cambeira introduces this section with a very concise and forceful discussion of the

Dominican poet, Pedro Mir, who has for decades, through his verses, explored and interpreted Dominican culture. Cambeira shares the following about Pedro Mir: "Profoundly human and revolutionary in personal sentiment, Don Pedro is a genuine Caribbean voice in the distinct troubadour tradition of Nicolás Guillén, Jacques Roumain, René Marquéz, Audre Lourde, and Derek Walcott" (p. 215).

In *Quisqueya*, Alan Cambeira openly discusses the concept of race and skin color in the Dominican Republic under sections entitled "Mulatez: The Quality of Mulatto-ness," and "Configurations of Color." Furthermore, he deals amply and sensitively with the issue of the Dominican-Haitian relationship (Chapters 13-17). Much has been written about this issue, but Cambeira's account is the most comprehensive and interpretive, in prose, that I have read to date. The North American scholar/student of the Dominican Republic often poses questions on the issues of the Dominican-Haitian relations and the Dominican view on skin color. Cambeira answers those questions in a comely and straight-forward manner.

In Appendix A, the author begins with a very cohesive statement about the characteristics of Dominican Spanish. This is followed by a "Glossary of Frequently Used Dominicanisms." The entries are quite appropriate, interesting, and often comical. For example, the Dominican uses the term "La churcha" (from the English word "church") to refer, secularly, to a "boisterous crowd of people intent upon having fun and a good time" (p. 243). To further illustrate the imaginative and creative mind of the Dominican, Cambeira offers a list of standard Spanish terms that refer to the human body along with the accompanying Dominicanisms. To conclude Appendix A, the author includes a small section of "Popular Dominican Sayings." This is extremely important because "Dichos" (Sayings) can and do unveil a great deal about a culture's view of the world and interpretation of its immediate reality. Some of the popular sayings (and references to the human body) cited by the author, however, are not strictly Dominican in origin or usage. "No hay mal que por bien no venga" (Every cloud has a silver lining), for example, is used, without variation, throughout the Spanish-speaking world, and probably has some equivalent in most world languages.

In Appendix B, "National Treasures," Cambeira points out what he sees as the two national cultural icons: "El Sancocho Dominicáno" (a type of stew which has undergone variations in its recipe over the years) and "El merengue" which is, as he says, "undisputedly the country's most popular dance and dominates the musical life of the entire island" (p. 252). Cambeira includes Doña Paulina's [Lantigua] recipe as a prototype. The title of Appendix C—"The Dominican Flag"—does not reflect fully its components. In addition to a brief history of the flag, the author provides an abbreviated history of the Dominican National Anthem (1883), its *letra* (lyrics), and an English translation. This is an important inclusion because the National Anthem reveals an interesting and perhaps puzzling insight into Dominican cultural and racial history. The Anthem is essentially a cry for liberty of its citizens and for the abolition of slavery forever. Using Cambeira's English translation, I reproduce the final two lines of the anthem's two stanzas: /When in the warlike defiance of death/They broke their chains of slavery/ and /That if it were enslaved a thousand times/As many others

shall know how to be free/ (p. 256).

My only criticism of the "language" in the text, which might be invalid, is that, at times, the author makes some seemingly unconscious, yet disturbing, statements which, for me, represents Eurocentrism at its best. For example, Cambeira, when explaining the differences between the "*Ladinos*" (christianized Africans) and the "*Bozales*" (non-Christian Africans), states that "...the other group of Africans firmly maintained their fiercely proud African traditions and customs, married only other Africans, and remained for the most part *unacculturated*" (p. 90) (emphasis mine). It is a bit distressing that the author did not qualify or react textually to the word "unacculturated." There are other examples in the text. I am aware that it is virtually impossible, when writing in a European language, to avoid all of the terms which connote cultural superiority. I reiterate here that the author treats the African and Africanity with great dignity throughout the text. This, in fact, makes up for any blundering in language usage.

Cambeira's book is an intriguing international resource. Its title is appropriate and creative. *Quisqueya* offers, I reiterate, a comprehensive look at Dominican cultural history. He does this by focusing pressingly on the "forced" historical marriage of three cultures: the native Taino Indian, the Spanish, and the African. I invite my colleagues of Dominican and Latin American Studies to make use of this very valuable text. I further encourage directors of study abroad programs to make this publication—especially chapter 23 and Appendices A, B, and C —required reading for those making their first trip to the Dominican Republic. *Quisqueya* contains much more than I can reveal in this review!