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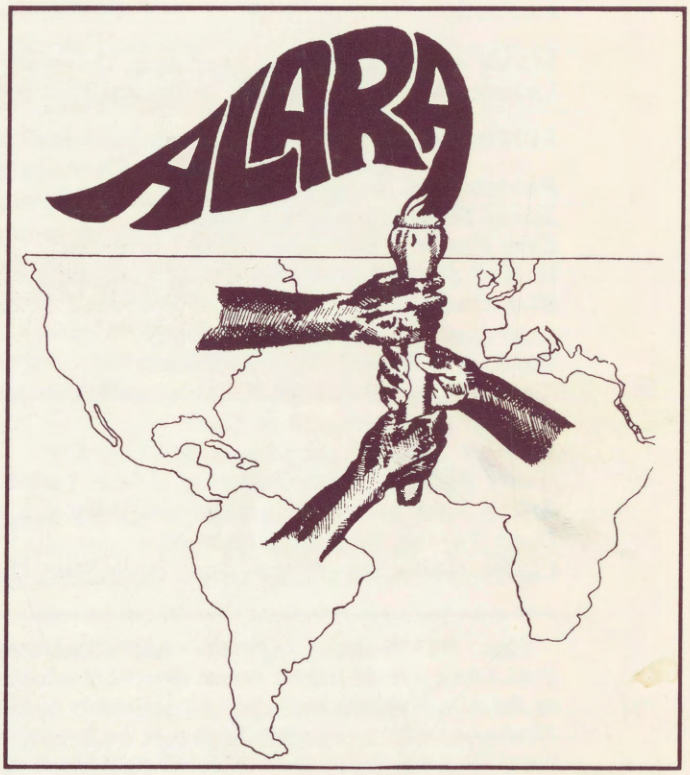

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CALL FOR PAPERS

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18-21 MARCH 1999
Münster, Germany

The Collegium for African American Research (CAAR) will hold its 3rd international conference, "Black Liberation in the Americas," at the University of Münster, Germany on 18-21 March 1999.

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Information about the conference will also be posted on CAARs home page at:

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Cuban Counterpoint, Coffee and Sugar: The Emergence of a National Culture in Fernando Ortiz's ***Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*** *and Cirilo Villaverde's* ***Cecilia Valdés***

by William Luis

Cirilo Villaverde's *Cecilia Valdés* is, without a doubt, the most important novel written in nineteenth-century Cuba, and one of the most important in Latin American and European literatures. As a realistic novel, Villaverde captures with precision the different social, economic, and racial strata of Cuban society, and their contributions to the formation of Cuba's national culture. Expressed in characters, they include the Spanish immigrant, the *criollo*, the free black and mulatto, and the slave. He also records with minute detail the geography of Havana, a technique later popularized by Benito Pérez Galdós's *Fortunata y Jacinta* (1886-1887) and James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922).

Cecilia Valdés is also an antislavery novel. As I have shown elsewhere, Villaverde wrote a short story and first volume with the same title in 1839, which he completed in exile in New York, in 1882.[1] There are significant differences between the first and last versions; the first two describe Cecilia's origins and record the once popular Ferias del Ángel; the definitive one elaborates on these, but also underscores the workings of the sugar and coffee plantations, and their respective slavery systems.

The novel's plot can be understood in terms of René Girard's triangular structure of desire, represented by the relationship between Cecilia Valdés, Leonardo Gamboa, and Isabel Ilincheta.[2] But Cecilia and Leonardo are also half-brother and sister, and their incestuous relationship is a symbol of Cuban culture, and the coming together of the different races. This is made evident by the "children" of the slave María de Regla, the wetnurse of the mulatto Cecilia, the white Adela, and her own Dolores.[3]

In this essay I will study the importance of coffee and sugar in the nineteenth century and their contribution to the formation of Cuba's national culture. Relating crops to culture is an idea already undertaken by Fernando Ortiz in his groundbreaking *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, in which he studies two Cuban plants, tobacco and sugar. Instead, I will turn my attention to coffee and sugar, the only crops discussed in Villaverde's novel. If we consider the historical moment of the narration in Villaverde's novel, the Dionisio Vives government (1823-1832), Leonardo and Isabel, and their respective families, represent two competing economies, sugar and coffee, with their own unique systems of slavery. Leonardo has an insatiable desire to be with Cecilia, but he makes a rational decision to marry Isabel, someone of his own race and social standing. Leonardo and Isabel are incompatible and their differences can be attributed to their sex, upbringing, and parents' economic interests. While my interest is to counterpoint coffee and sugar, I will also do the same with the works of Ortiz and Villaverde.

The idea of counterpoint in the title of

my study refers to Ortiz's monumental work, *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* (1940). In his book, Ortiz researches the history of sugar and tobacco and provides valuable information on the origin, development, and use of tobacco. Relying on Juan Ruiz's dialogue "Pelea que ovo don Carnal con Doña Quaresma" in his *Libro de buen amor*, between Carnival and Lent, Ortiz uncovers a similar relationship between tobacco and sugar, at the time of publication the two most important export crops in Cuba's economy. According to Ortiz, tobacco and sugar are opposites. One is native, the other foreign; one natural, the other artificial; one black, the other white; one takes the male article, the other female; one depends on free workers, the other on slaves; one demands skilled labor, the other unskilled; one desires shade, the other sun; one is delicate, the other robust; one appeals to the five senses, the other only to taste.[4]

As an anthropologist, Ortiz was ahead of his time, and Fernando Coronil and Antonio Benítez Rojo credit him with writing a postmodern work.[5] But Ortiz was not alone, and his study follows those of other anthropologists doing similar work. I am referring to Heinrich E. Jacob's *Sage und Siegeszug des Kaffees, die Biographie eines Welwirtschaftlichen Stoffes* (1934), and W. H. Ukers's *All about Coffee* (1935), two works published before Ortiz concluded his study, which he consulted and cited in his own. Ortiz follows more closely Ukers's example, who explores the history and myths of coffee, weighs the literature, comments on contradictions, pointing the reader to the most plausible observations, and quotes liberally from his sources. Ortiz does include some information about sugar, but his book is mainly about the history of tobacco. Therefore, from Ukers's perspective, Ortiz's work could also have been entitled "All about Tobacco."

To understand Cuban culture through tobacco and sugar, Ortiz's postmodern work reduces the island's economy to a binary opposition, a strategy that linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and structuralists like Roland Barthes had identified as a cornerstone of Western language and thought. Though I am in unison with Ortiz, but also Benítez Rojo's study of sugar and the plantation, exemplified in *The Repeating Island*, I propose to argue that during the first half of the nineteenth century, Cuba's agriculture was not a mono or duo, but a trio, a ménage-à-trois, between tobacco, sugar, and coffee.

Ortiz is correct in proposing a counterpoint between sugar and tobacco, but there was another one taking place between sugar and coffee, which he omits. In the early part of the nineteenth century, the time in which Villaverde narrates his novel, coffee and sugar competed for the same fields, and coffee even outperformed sugar. Fernando Portuondo tells us that in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, sugar mills grew from 400, in 1800, to over 1,000, in 1827. The figures for coffee are even more astonishing. Coffee exports were assessed at approximately 50,000 *arrobas*. In 1825 it surpassed the one million mark, while another million was consumed by a native population, which had developed a taste for the crop. By 1827, there were over 2,000 coffee plantations in Cuba. During the same period, tobacco did not grow. It was a controlled industry until 1817, when a royal decree authorized its sale for export, providing jobs for many whites and free blacks.[6] By the end of the Vives

government, all three crops were faring well.

Like tobacco and sugar, coffee and sugar are also opposites. Many observations made by Ortiz, when writing his *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, can be applied to coffee and sugar. One is male and the other female; one is dark, the other white; one requires high elevations, the other does not; one grows in the shade, the other in the sun; one is bitter, the other sweet. Some years later, and after writing his monumental work, Ortiz would notice a moral difference between coffee and the other two crops:

> Su agricultura y explotación eran más botánicamente "morales" que las del tabaco y del azúcar; en el tabaco todo es preferencia para las hojas y se desprecian los tallos, en el azúcar sólo se cuidan los tallos y se arrojan las hojas. En uno y otro no se esperan las flores; las plantas mueren en la tortura, heridas y despedazadas. A los cafetos se les respeta la plenitud de sus amores y de sus floraciones, y sólo es su fruto lo que se cosecha, mientras la plantación sigue en pie año tras año para florecer y retructificar.[7]

Though opposites, coffee and sugar also complement each other. Unlike tobacco, coffee and sugar are foreign crops brought from the Old World to the New and transplanted in Cuba; both depend on slave and unskilled labor, and when added to coffee, sugar enhances the flavor. The consumption of coffee made sugar popular in Europe.

Coffee, native of Abyssinia and also Arabia, spread westward through Constantinople, Venice, the Danube cities, and reached England around 1615. The Arabs were the supreme suppliers of coffee and are credited with its popularity. Coffee, tea, and cocoa became alternatives to the widely consumed alcoholic beverages; and of the three, coffee was the most popular drink. European countries soon became interested in the coffee trade, like the Netherlands through the Dutch East India Company. But toward the eighteenth century the French became the most important coffee-brokers, obtaining their shipments from the West Indies. France was later followed by England. Though the British preferred to drink tea over coffee, London was the banker of the world.

Like tobacco, coffee has always been considered controversial, and its origin mysterious. The most popular legend attributes the discovery of the drink to an Arabian herdsman of Egypt, or Abyssinia, who complained to an abbot that the goats under his care became frolicsome after eating berries found near the feeding grounds. The abbot decided to try them and he too experienced a sense of exhilaration. He boiled the berries and gave it to his monks who had no difficulty staying awake during religious services. Other versions of this story suggest that it was the herdsman who tried the berries, and these helped to cheer him.[8]

Coffee began to spread, and Mohammedan churchmen drank it as a substitute for wine. Some even say that the Angel Gabriel revealed it to Mohammed, others looked to the Koran for support of their use. Coffee drinking became so popular that it threatened the very fiber of religious orders. The first coffee persecution dated to the early sixteenth century and led to disagreements between Mecca and Cairo, resulting in disturbances, religious superstitions, political hatred, and the closing of the ever

popular coffee houses. The opposition to coffee was later repeated in Constantinople, where coffee houses grew at the expense of the mosques, and later by Charles II in England.

Like tobacco, whose usage was associated with Amerindians and African slaves, coffee was also viewed as a drink of Satan. Opponents argued that it was not mentioned in the Koran, others believed that it was classified with wine, and therefore prohibited. Shortly after it reached Rome, religious leaders appealed to Pope Clement VIII (1535-1605) to forbid it among Christians, only to have him baptize it and make coffee a Christian drink. In each situation coffee emerged victorious.[9]

As coffee spread, it gained a loyal following. It was first consumed as part of a private religious activity, but soon became secularized and spread to coffee houses, and represented a source of revenue. Some featured singers and dancers, story tellers, and political discussions. In Persia the wife of Shah Abbas appointed an ecclesiastical teacher to entertain with history, law, and poetry. Italy gave the western world its first coffee houses, which included Caffe della Ponte dell' Angelo, Caffe della Spaderia, and Menegazzo, frequented by intellectuals. The coffee houses were a place of refuge for all, including women.[10]

Coffee houses of London and Paris are legendary and have been recorded in their countries' literatures. In London, coffee represented a non-intoxicating alternative to the popular ale, and coffee houses replaced many of the much visited taverns, provoking numerous disturbances. In Paris, the Café Procope was frequented by intellectuals such as Rousseau, Beaumarchais, Diderot, and Voltaire, who was known to drink eighty cups to stimulate his thoughts. During the French Revolution its customers included Marot, Robespierre, Danton, Hébert, Desmoulin, and Napoleon Bonaparte. After the Revolution, it lost prestige, but regained it with Paul Verlain, in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Coffee is a radical drink associated with revolution; it makes people think, and is therefore dangerous to tyrants and enemies of liberty.[11] This was the case in Europe, but also in the British colony, where coffee had been served in Boston since 1689. The New York Merchant's Coffee House, founded in 1737, was attended by leading intellectuals who conspired against the colonial government.[12]

Throughout the centuries, coffee has served many functions and has had many masters. In the seventeenth century it was used as a medicament, to aid circulation, and as an anti-Bacchus remedy; that is, to wean Europeans from drunkenness. Puritans seized it to fight against alcohol. In the eighteenth, it was known as an intellectual stimulant, and sipped in the famous coffee houses throughout European capitals. In the nineteenth century, and with the success of the industrial revolution, working-class people began to drink coffee. It was promoted as a popular nutrient to combat high taxes. Though not a nutrient, many drank coffee to alleviate hunger.[13]

Coffee found its way to the New World. A demand for coffee grew in Europe in the eighteenth century, and growers began looking for fertile land in the Caribbean. Because of the ideal tropical climate, it was introduced by France to Martinique in 1727. The British sowed it in Jamaica one year later. José Gelabert brought the variety "Hope of Asabiaca" to

Cuba in 1748.[14]

The British invasion and control of Havana in 1762 opened Cuba to the outside world. When the British were expelled one year later, the government of Cuba continued to seek export markets. Tobacco was native; and just as the Spaniards eliminated the native population of the island, sugar, but also coffee, would compete with tobacco for Cuban land.

The Cuban coffee boom of the nineteenth century was due mainly to the success of the Haitian revolution of 1791. Cuban coffee, but also sugar, got a boost as French growers, who fled Santo Domingo, continued to cultivate the crop in their adopted land. Moreover, in 1792, a royal decree stimulated coffee production by exempting the crop for ten years from the *alcabala* and *diezmo* taxes. The royal decree of 1815 eliminated previous restrictions thus encouraged the spread of coffee to the hills and elsewhere, and protected property owners.[15] By the time Napoleon had been returned to Elba Island and, after his defeat in the battle of Waterloo, to Santa Elena; and Fernando VII was restored to the throne; Cuba was opened to export and encountered a world demand it could not meet, profiting from increased coffee prices.[16]

Coffee production in Cuba expanded and, during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, exceeded that of sugar cane. But coffee could not sustain its reign over the other crops. If we consider Villaverde's novel, by the time Dionisio was released from prison for the murder of Tondá in 1846, coffee was on its way down. Coffee farms were bought and planted with the more profitable sugar cane.

The process of cultivating coffee and sugar and the crops' adaptation to mechanization were factors responsible for their success and failure. The introduction of the steam engine in 1820 favored sugar over coffee, and played an important part in the shift. Though it marked the beginning of Cuba's industrial revolution, the total mechanization of sugar was not completed until 1878. Coffee is cyclical. It bears fruit only after the fourth year, and according to Jacob, follows a cycle of over-production and under-production. While waiting for returns, planters continue to plant. By the seventh year there is an over-production, and new plantations are neglected. And seven years later, plantations are again extended.

Hugh Thomas believes that coffee declined in Cuba for the following reasons:

1. It produced less profit than sugar, and the coffee plantations were not able to pay for expenses, including slaves.
2. The U.S. placed a high tariff on imports, a reaction to the Spanish tariff on U.S. products.
3. Nature reduced or destroyed the crop as Cuba experienced a series of hurricanes, the more serious ones in 1844 and 1846.
4. After 1840, Brazil developed into the most important producer of coffee in the world.

Thomas also explains that the decline of coffee in the eastern part of the island created a discontent among coffee growers against sugar planters, therefore representing a danger to the social order. Sugar and coffee were opposites, and coffee growers preferred white workers or free blacks. Some of them even adopted an anti-Spanish and anti-sugar position during the wars for independence.[17] According to Pérez de la Riva, coffee growers were the

first to use free or paid black workers,[18] thus indirectly, I would add, opposing slavery and the slave trade. Just as the European coffee houses became places of liberal ideas and discontent, Ortiz notes that in Havana the Café La Taberna, Café de los Franceses, Café de Copas, Café La Dominica, Café del Louvre, and others were centers against Spanish despotism. And the earliest conspiracies erupted in the coffee plantations of de Arraz and de Frías.[19]

Although tobacco is native and coffee foreign, in Cuba both crops challenged sugar, and its control over the economy and culture. If sugar argues for a central authority and large extensions of land, tobacco and coffee are decentralized, and grow in smaller parcels. Sugar promotes total control and latifundism, but coffee supports tolerance, and tobacco independence and liberty. In their use, coffee and tobacco stood for protest, defiance, the fight against oppression, and favored change and revolution. From their inception, coffee houses served as meeting places to read works, and talk politics. And in the latter half of the nineteenth century, cigar factories incorporated the custom of reading known to coffee workers. These skilled workers were educated and liberal in their actions. It is no wonder that Cubans accompany tobacco with a cup of coffee. One year before Ukers published his book, Cuba had one of the highest consumptions of coffee per capita in the world.[20]

There is no doubt about the enormous contribution Ortiz has made to understanding Cuba's economy and culture, but the idea of counterpoint between two crops in literature was not new, and had already been examined in Villaverde's *Cecilia Valdés*. By the time Ortiz wrote his work, tobacco continued to play an important role, not only in the development of Cuba's economy, but also in the tobacco workers' support for national independence both on the island and continent, where many intellectuals and cigar makers lived, and later in the promotion of socialism. The contribution of tobacco workers to independence and labor movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in the Caribbean and New York, has been documented by Bernardo Vega in his *Memoirs of Bernando Vega*.[21]

If tobacco ultimately surpassed coffee in economic importance, and this was the trend when Villaverde completed his novel in New York, then why did Villaverde not oppose it to sugar, as Ortiz would later do. Villaverde could have made Isabel Ilincheta and her family owners of tobacco fields and Leonardo's marriage to her would have meant the dominance of sugar over tobacco, as Ortiz would confirm. Or, for that matter, if coffee was an important crop in the Cuba of the first half of the nineteenth century, why did Ortiz downplay its contribution, especially since coffee and tobacco stood for liberty and challenged the sugar industry? As I mentioned above, when Ortiz wrote his work, there were a few significant studies on coffee, but the history of tobacco, and Cuba's contribution to its popularity, had not been recorded. *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* represented for Ortiz a unique opportunity to write the history of tobacco and juxtapose it to the powerful sugar industry. But in so doing, Ortiz missed the opportunity to explain an important nineteenth-century debate that helped to forge the Cuban nation, one which Villaverde captures eloquently in *Cecilia Valdés*. The debate was pursued four years later not by Ortiz, but by Pérez

de la Riva in *El café: historia de su cultivo y explotación en Cuba*, though prologued by Ortiz. Like Ortiz's pioneering work, Pérez de la Riva seized the opportunity to record Cuba's contribution to the popularity of coffee. He considered it the most Cuban of all crops. While sugar and tobacco became victims of foreign capitalism, coffee was forgotten and remained in Cuban hands.

Ortiz recognized the importance of blacks for Cuban society and culture, and had written significant works on the same subject, including *Los negros esclavos*. A study of coffee would have allowed him to further underscore the significance of slavery for Cuba's economy. However, tobacco provided a different avenue of research. It argues for independence and freedom, and represents a political and nationalist discourse that would gain momentum in the twentieth century, when Ortiz wrote his work. This position was first manifested against the Spanish colonial government during the Ten Years' War (1868-1878) and the Spanish American War. In the twentieth century, it was pronounced in opposition to the U.S. control of Cuba's economy and government, represented by the much hated Platt Amendment placed in Cuba's constitution in 1903. The Amendment made provisions for U.S. intervention in Cuba's internal affairs. Though abrogated in 1934, the U.S. presence continued to be felt in all aspects of Cuban life well after Ortiz had published his work. For Ortiz, tobacco was an opportunity to narrate the nation's need for real political and economic independence. For Ortiz, this crop became a symbol of sovereignty, and the island's contribution to the world's economy.

If we consider the history of the three crops alongside slavery and the antislavery literature, the tension between sugar and tobacco defines the outcome of a process that culminated in the Spanish American War, and the formation of the Cuban Republic in 1902. But it is the study of coffee and sugar that uncovers the process itself, of an emerging nation struggling with the issues of slavery. We know that tobacco is native and coffee and sugar are foreign, and that tobacco relied on free white labor, while coffee and sugar required slaves. Coffee, as we know, also pressed for free black workers. Juxtaposing sugar and coffee allowed Villaverde to reconstruct a historical period in which the two crops rivaled for dominance, but also two discourses representing different slavery systems and ideological positions. The immediate question for planters in the first half of the nineteenth century was not whether Cuba should promote slavery or emancipation, but which kind of slavery was best for the island and its economy. This was a period in which European demand for and consumption of Cuban crops increased, but also one which ushered the successes of the French Revolution, and its effects in the New World, as manifested by the rebellion in Santo Domingo. Certainly a support for coffee, which argued for a mild form of slavery, implied a certain freedom and a system of free labor, a direction history would later record.

Coffee and sugar were indeed opposites and their agricultural systems represented two different ideological positions. Compared with each other, coffee plantations were considered Paradises of sorts and sugar plantations Infernos. Sugar plantation owners were absent landlords; they were run mainly by overseers, who treated slaves brutally and inhumanely. Unlike sugar, coffee owners lived on the

plantation, interacted with slaves on a daily basis, and managed them with more compassion. They supported free workers and their technology provided a bridge between the large and small property owners.

During the time in which Villaverde situates the narration, Pinar del Río contained the most favorable lands for growing sugar, tobacco, and coffee, the latter particularly in the district of Alquízar, which he attributes to the Ilincheta family. Villaverde was familiar with the topography of this region. He had known it in his youth, having lived with his family in the region of Vuelta Abajo, where his father worked as a doctor in a sugar mill. The novel's description also recalls Villaverde's travel book about the same region, *Excursión a Vuelta Abajo* (1838 and 1842), and it may have served as inspiration and guidance when writing this section of the novel. The novel follows the travel book, as the character Villaverde visits first the coffee plantation and second the sugar plantations, the latter included La Tinaja, which appears in *Cecilia Valdés*.[22]

Villaverde's description of Ilincheta's coffee plantation La Luz is reminiscent of the beautiful French designs, native to Guadalupe and Martinique, built by the French fleeing from Santo Domingo.[23] The characterization points to a particular architectural style of the period, but also to a lifestyle of luxury, recreation and relaxation, intellectual activity, and appreciation for French culture. The French promulgated their customs, traditions, and liberal ideas, which spread to cities such as Santiago de Cuba and Havana, but in particular to coffee plantations throughout the island. These plantations became important centers for the creation and promotion of arts and science. French culture was expressed in theater, music, art, but also science and medicine. Antomarchi, Napoleon's doctor, went to live in Cuba. Slaves were exposed to and profited from French culture.[24]

The French concept of culture, which included an acceptance of the liberal ideas of the French Revolution, and its manifestation in Spain, as promoted by the Constitutionalists, were championed by Domingo del Monte and members of his literary circle, like Villaverde. As the most important critic and literary promoter of his times, Del Monte encouraged his followers to read French literature and write about events in Cuba, in a realistic style, which included descriptions of blacks and slaves as integral parts of Cuban culture. Authors such as Anselmo Suárez y Romero, Félix Tanco y Bosmeniel, Villaverde, but also the slave Juan Francisco Manzano denounced in their writings slavery in the sugar mill.[25]

As a coffee grower, Isabel lived on her plantation, and was instructed in the liberal ideas of the times, reflected in the manner in which she treated her slaves. Villaverde describes her as a benevolent slave owner who treated her slaves with compassion, and they in turn loved her. She respects and cares for them, allows them to question her decisions, and even argue with her. Isabel deals directly with her overseer, who is a slave, and, though he does not know how to read and write, relies on him for an accounting of the crop. She even trusts his judgement.

Isabel finds the manner in which slaves are treated in the sugar plantation clearly foreign, incomprehensible, and even despicable. Like the narrator, she considered the sugar mill to be Hell, and whites as the devils and executioners. In

the sugar plantation, there is no law and order; rather chaos and terror reign. The narration takes issue with studies that condemn blacks because of their race or skin color, which can be traced to Pliny the Elder's *Historia Naturalis*, about the monstrous races, and in the nineteenth century to Gobineaus's *Essai sur l'inegalité des races humaines*. Within the context of Villaverde's work, and other antislavery narratives, not the slave, but the white master is savage and inhumane. According to the narration, the slave has no other alternative but to escape.

The Ilincheta daughter is a product of her environment. As the only child, she helped her widowed father in every aspect of the plantation. She is an independent woman, and should be considered a precursor to the feminist movement. From this perspective, it is possible to suggest that gender may explain the difference in the way Isabel and Leonardo manage their slaves. Even on the sugar plantation, Doña Rosa forgives her slaves, and is more compassionate than either Leonardo or Cándido. However, doña Rosa's benevolence can also be attributed to her competition with Cándido for power, and her desire for revenge. She suspected and later confirmed Cándido's illicit love affair with Rosario Alarcón, Cecilia's mother. Doña Rosa constantly reminded him of the affair, and supported Leonardo's permissive behavior, which Cándido wanted to curtail.

My argument is further strengthened by Adela's attempts to capitalize on her mother's generosity to forgive her captured slaves. In the same spirit, Adela asks Doña Rosa to also pardon María de Regla, who for the mother is a constant reminder of Cándido's betrayal. Doña Rosa can forgive her defiant runaway slaves, but she cannot do the same for a harmless old woman who once was her daughter's wetnurse. As I have argued elsewhere, María de Regla is Cecilia, Adela, and Dolores's mother and is a symbol of the Cuban nation, and of the races her three daughters represent. I have also proposed that María de Regla's name brings together the Virgin Mary and the Virgin of Regla, which in Afro-Cuban religion is Yemayá, the goddess of the sea, therefore embodying Christian and African religions. But there is also a resemblance to Oshún, Cuba's national patron, the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre, who is depicted over water, protecting the three Juans. The three men represent Cuba's diverse racial composition, like María de Regla's three daughters.

As a woman, a member of her generation, and a coffee grower, Isabel takes a stance against slavery, not on economic but human grounds. Departing from her social and racial upbringing, she identifies not with the white master, but the black slave. When speaking to the priest in the sugar mill, she tells him: "Si me viera en el caso forzoso de escoger entre ama y esclava, preferiría la esclavitud, por la sencilla razón de que creo más llevadera la vida de la víctima que la del victimario."[26] From Isabel or Villaverde's perspective, coffee growers represented an ideological position tobacco growers and workers would later foster.

Villaverde makes life on the sugar plantation an issue for his characters and readers. The most dramatic account of slavery in La Tinaja revolves around Pedro, whose life changed drastically from a privileged overseer to a fugitive slave. For not sleeping in the barracoon, Pedro is stripped of his duties, whipped, placed in shackles for two days, and sent to work as

a common slave. He escapes, but is caught by the infamous slavehunter Francisco Esteves, whom Villaverde had known.[27] Esteves's dogs savagely attack Pedro. Though Pedro is sent to the infirmary, he receives no treatment. Liborio's actions are significant and go beyond those prescribed by the slavery laws or the customs of his own masters, ignoring Doña Rosa's protection. Depicted as a psychopath obsessed with his superiority over defenseless slaves, Liborio further torments Pedro. Being fired did not stop Liborio from torturing Pedro and telling him that he would not escape additional punishment. In desperation, Pedro swallows his tongue and asphyxiates. Villaverde insists on providing a detailed description of this agonizing death, as he explains it twice, first from a medical standpoint, and second from that of María de Regla, a common slave. For each, it is a most horrific death. But for Pedro, and many other slaves, suicide was the only escape.

The unfolding of the novel traces the dominance of sugar over coffee, but also the symbolic liberation of blacks, which had already taken place in the United States, where Villaverde concluded his novel. In Cuba, emancipation of fugitive slaves was a part of the rebel platform during the Ten Years' War, but slaves were not officially freed until 1886, twenty-one years after they were emancipated in the United States. Villaverde identified with the rebel platform but also profited from a climate that unfolded before his eyes on the mainland, as the Union forces defeated the Confederacy, united the country, and ended slavery in the United States.[28] Toward the end of the novel, Doña Rosa used her influence and power to force Isabel and Leonardo to get married. Isabel and her coffee plantation appear to succumb to the control of sugar and the Gamboa family. In essence, it is the triumph of La Tinaja over La Luz; that is, darkness over light.

The ending of the novel speaks more forcefully in support of the freedom of blacks and mulattos. Cecilia's friend and admirer, Pimienta, kills Leonardo before he can marry Isabel. Although Cecilia was accused of being an accomplice in Leonardo's death, the novel concludes on a positive note. In the end both mother and daughter are reunited, even if momentarily. Most important, Pimienta escapes and is never captured. Isabel joins a religious order for one year and her sister, Rosa, and the benevolent Diego Meneses, marry and manage the coffee plantation. In proposing this ending, Villaverde decouples Leonardo's control over Isabel, or that of sugar over coffee. While Isabel may have been strong enough to exert her independence in her marriage, ultimately sugar would have triumphed over coffee. Killing Leonardo allows light and hope to continue to exist, thus not letting darkness and the sugar industry extinguish it. The coffee plantation and Isabel's ideals would contribute to the abolition of the slave traffic and slavery.

Villaverde places the responsibility of fighting and defeating the sugar interest, not on slaves, but on a collaborative effort of free people. Pimienta acted alone. Yet his decision to kill Leonardo and not Isabel, as Cecilia pleaded, was motivated by a personal and also ideological position expressed in the narration. Slaves played an active role in the rebellion in Santo Domingo. Though there were uprisings in Cuba, slaves did not participate directly in a dialogue on the kind of slavery needed in Cuba. Rather it was an ongoing debate

between the liberal and conservative sectors of Cuban society.

Characters like Isabel, Rosa, and Meneses, but also individuals like Villaverde and other authors of antislavery literature, opposed the slave trade and the institution of slavery. Villaverde was imprisoned in 1848 for supporting Narciso López's annexationist movement. But in New York, Villaverde embraced the independence ideas promoted by José Antonio Saco. And though his characters do not propose a radical and violent resolution to the national issue, their position threatened the sugarocracy. Coffee planters joined tobacco growers and workers in the fight against slavery. With their struggle, they also contributed to cultural values that would become a part of the emerging national culture. Pimienta's escape can be considered poetic justice, but the responsibility for change rests on the characters and indignant white readers.

Notes

[1]See my *Literary Bondage: Slavery in Cuban Narrative* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 108-19.

[2]For a study of the triangle of desire among the characters in antislavery literature, see my discussion of René Girard's *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* in *Literary Bondage*, 47-48, 246.

[3]See my discussion of *Cecilia Valdés* in *Literary Bondage*.

[4]See: *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, trans. Harriet de Onís (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1995).

[5]See Fernando Coronil's introduction to *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar* and Benítez Rojo's *The Repeating Island*, trans. James Marannis (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1992).

[6]Fernando Portuondo del Prado, *Historia de Cuba: 1492-1898* (Havana: Editorial Pueblo y Educación, 1965), 311-312.

[7]See Ortiz's "Prólogo" to Francisco Pérez de la Riva, *El café: Historia de su cultivo y explotación en Cuba* (Havana, Biblioteca de Historia Filosofía y Sociología, volumen XVI, 1944), xi.

[8]*All About Coffee* (rpt. 1922; New York: The Tea and Coffee Trade Journal Company, 1935), 9-12. Also see Heinrich Eduard Jacob, *Coffee: The Epic of a Commodity*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (New York: Viking Press, 1935), 3-10.

[9]Ibid., 13-17.

[10]Ibid., 23-24.

[11]Ibid., 27-38.

[12]See: Pérez de la Riva, x-xi.

[13]Jacob, 202-8.

[14]Pérez de la Riva, 7. Also cited in Hugh Thomas's *Cuba: The Pursuit of Freedom* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 128.

[15]Pérez de la Riva, 12-4 and Thomas, 129.

[16]Pérez de la Riva, 48-49.

[17]Thomas, 132-33.

[18]Pérez de la Riva, 64.

[19]See note 12. Also see 67-68.

[20]In Ukers's per capita coffee consumption table, he lists Sweden first, with 16.02 pounds, Cuba second, with 15.99 pounds, and the United States fifth with 11.96 pounds. He does not provide any official figures for Brazil, but he estimates it to be 20.32 pounds. See Ukers, 519-20.

[21]*Memoirs of Bernardo Vega*, ed. César Andreu Iglesias, trans. Juan Flores (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1984).

[22]*Cecilia Valdés*, ed. Raimundo Lazo (Mexico City: Porrúa, 1972), 187.

[23]Enrique Soza, *La economía en la novela cubana del siglo xix* (Havana: Editorial Letras Cubanas, 1978), 94.

[24]Pérez de la Riva, 109-116. He writes: "Los esclavos también asimilaron algo de la influencia extranjera de sus amos y en las danzas negras se introdujeron cadencias y cortesías de minuet, como ocurrió en la llamada 'Tumba Francesa.'" (112).

[25]See *Literary Bondage*, chapter 1.

[26]*Cecilia Valdés*, 218.

[27]Villaverde's father monitored Esteves's activities and the son wrote the introduction to Esteves's *Diario de un rancheador*, ed. Roberto Friol, *Revista de la Biblioteca Nacional José Martí*, 64, no. 1 (1973): 47-148.

[28]I discuss the influence of the United States on Caribbean literature in "El desplazamiento de los orígenes en la narrative de Reinaldo Arenas, Luis Rafael Sánchez y Julia Álvarez," *Anales de Literatura Hispanoamericana*, no. 25 (1996): 263-88.

Hemingway, el Cazador de la Muerte:
Kenya en la novela de un afrocolombiano

by Manuel Zapata Olivella

El escritor y compilador Ntongela Masilela, siempre interesado en el origen común de la diáspora africana, nos ha invitado a colaborar en su antología "Africa, Latin América and the Caribbean: The Idea of Africa."

Queremos responder a esta solicitud fraternal, revelando las motivaciones psicoafectivas y culturales que inspiraron nuestra novela *Hemingway, el Cazador de la Muerte* (original en español, Arango Editores, Bogotá, 1993).

El porqué de su título, temática, personajes (Hemingway, Kenyatta), tradición kikuyo, Mau-Mau, elefantes, y particularmente, la narración en primera persona en la voz del Premio Nobel, un "musungo" (blanco).

Consecuentes con el argumento de la obra, comencemos por afirmar la raíz ontogénica: Africa, madre del hombre. Para sus descendientes directos no es evocación paleontológica, sino eco de los latidos del primer embrión. Se calcula que ésta pudo haber palpitado hace dos, tres, cuatro millones de años en Kenya. Una fecha indeterminada por los etno-historiadores pero no para quienes ajustamos nuestros sentimientos y conducta a los códigos genésicos. La sobrevivencia de lo africano en la familia humana trasciende el simple concepto de etnia inmodificada, para expresar la perdurabilidad de su acervo universal.

La mayor conjura de los ideólogos de la teoría "difusionista" sobre el origen del hombre es negar que Africa sea la cuna primigenia. Igualmente rechazan contra toda evidencia histórica que el Homosapiens africano se diseminó al Sudeste por el océano Indico tanto como al Nordeste a lo largo del continente Euroasiático.

También los cronistas del execrable comercio de hombres libres, poco informan de los lazos étnicos y culturales que unían a todos los prisioneros africanos desterrados a la América, cualesquiera fuesen los puertos donde eran embarcados. Para minimizar el flujo proveniente del Este africano se estigmatizó el litoral atlántico con el nombre de "Costa de los Esclavos."

Pero la historia comprueba que Africa, genética, histórica y culturalmente es indivisible.

Nuestra visita a Kenya (1986) nos permitió comprobarlo. Recorríamos los escenarios donde se desarrollarían las acciones de la novela, cuando el guía nos hizo caer en cuenta que pisábamos la Línea Ecuatorial en el poblado de Nanyuki, inscrito en todas las cartas geográficas y celestes. Entonces rememoramos que Kenya y Colombia, naciones hermanas, compartían rasgos tropicales y culturales semejantes: hombres de variadas etnias; volcanes nevados; litorales oceánicos, frondosas selvas, caudalosos ríos, lagos, sabanas, todos los pisos y climas térmicos...la única gran diferencia: la original, incomparable y poderosa fauna africana!

Extendido los brazos bajo la luz cenital y abiertas las piernas, pudimos abarcar ambos hemisferios, enraizada a nuestros pies la todo-poderosa e inseparable sombra de todos los Ancestros africanos.

He aquí el "plot ancestral" que concede derechos patrimoniales a un narrador afrocolombiano para incursionar en la temática humana y cultural de la antípoda Kenya.

Hemingway y Kenyatta, Protagonistas Principales

Los personajes centrales de la obra están concebidos en la caracterización del cazador Ernest Hemingway y el antropólogo Jomo Kenyatta. La trama que los une es una leyenda kikuyo:

"Todo aquél que dispare contra un animal sagrado, recibirá sobre su propio cuerpo las mismas heridas que le haya ocasionado con sus armas."

En verdad la bobina de la historia es mucho más compleja. El simple título del libro puede inducir al lector a relacionarlo con el suicidio del novelista: Hemingway, cazador irreductible, víctima de sus propias balas disparadas a la cabeza de las fieras en sus múltiples safaris en Africa.

No obstante la fábula es otra: los colonialistas al destruir con sus armas y voracidad la armonía existente los pueblos africanos y la naturaleza, se destruyen a sí mismos.

Contrario a cualquier presunción simplista, Hemingway no protagoniza en este drama al "malo", el cazador desalmado, sino a un safarista arrepentido, cuyos ideales encarnan el pensamiento de su paisano Walt Whittman, poeta del amor, la vida, la naturaleza y la fraternidad universal. La transmutación literaria del cazador en ecologista propicia el entendimiento con Jomo Kenyatta, quien oculta su verdadera identidad de líder de los Mau-Mau para colaborar en la expedición científica del escritor, transformado a su vez en jefe expedicionario. Su misión es investigar por qué los elefantes suben a las cumbres nevadas del Monte Kenya.

Cartas Sobre la Mesa

Al revelar las artimañas o trampas que se han entretejido en la creación de una obra literaria se corre el riesgo de perder al lector. Podría crearse mayores desestímulos y confusiones, particularmente cuando se pretende justificar juicios que no están en juego en el contenido de la narración, lo que occure en la mayor parte de las siguientes reflexiones.

Gran responsibilidad nos incumbe como autor afroamericano al abordar un tema tan ligado al patrimonio ancestral de muchos de sus lectores. Hemos depuesto sensiblerías para exponer las razones por las cuales hemos escrito sobre una región que se ha pretendido mantener oculta desde la antigüedad para encubrir las tropelías perpetradas por los colonizadores conta sus pueblos.

Conscientes de tales hechos, debimos reflexionar minuciosamente sobre su estructura, personajes, voces narrativas y temática. Son, pues, estos elementos históricos y fabulados los que exigen una confesión de parte.

Hemingway, Narrador

Justo es que comencemos por aclarar el relato en primera persona en la voz de Ernest Hemingway.

¿Por qué el autor afroamericano se oculta tras la personalidad consagrada del Premio Nobel de Literatura?

Leída la novela podrá colegirse que no existe ningún encubrimiento. El estilo del autor es fácilmente reconocible. Tango Hemingway como Kenyatta apenas son portadores en forma impersonal del diálogo entre dos fuerzas históricas enfrentadas: el colonialismo y las luchas emancipadoras del pueblo africano. Resalta el debate filosófico utilizando dos figuras universalmente conocidas, fabular es la única intención de la farsa.

Consideramos valido este recurso literario para sustraernos del archiconocido truco de enmascarar con nombre propio ideas ajenas. Esperamos que en el reino de

la muerte, Kenyatta y Hemingway se sienten alguna vez a dialogar sobre el tema.

Titiriteros, Carácteres y Lector

Debido a los mutuos influjos que intercambian autor-personaje y autor-lector, es explicable confundir la vida fáctica de los caracteres con la ficción literaria, y no pocas veces con el titiritero que maneja los cordeles.

Jomo Kenyatta más allá de su ideología y militancia política, ha escrito como antropólogo, el mejor testimonio sobre la cultura kikuyo a la cual pertenecía. Su auténtico pensamiento aparece en los diálogos que se suponen redactados por Hemingway.

La técnica de las superposiciones de caracteres se enriquece con la fábula, género típico de la tradición africana, cuando un elefante filósofo pregunta al jefe de la expedición naturalista (Hemingway), por qué Dios Blanco patrocina el exterminio con armas de fuego de su comunidad religiosa y pacífica.

La Magia y el Mito

La urdimbre de los personajes y las circunstancias en la medida en que suceden episodios inesperados, pasa de lo aparentemente real y científico a la nebulosa de la magia, la alucinación y el delirio. Hemingway y sus compañeros de expedición—un biólogo español y una fotógrafa italiana—al principio incrédulos de la existencia del "Mamut Sagrado" en la cima del Monte Kenya, una vez atrapados en la caldera africana, desnudan sus instintos primarios—sexo, celos, miedo, delirios—hasta destruirse a sí mismos. En este contexto es donde aparece la idea suicida que lleva al biólogo, hijo de un torero, a lidiar con su capote un rinoceronte, y a Hemingway disparar contra el "Mamut Sagrado", a sabiendas de que las balas le rebotarían sobre su cuerpo.

El Espacio Temporal

La historia gira en torno a los días que preceden la captura de Jomo Kenyatta, acusado por el Gobierno Británico de ser el jefe de los Mau-Mau:

•1953—Aún cuando esta fecha no se menciona en la obra, es clave para amarrar importantes acontecimientos históricos que como hilos invisibles estructuran su trama. Con su detención, el lector conoce la verdadera identidad de Kenyatta, hasta entonces encubierta con el nombre de Kamau Johnstone, uno de los muchos que utilizó a lo largo de su vida.

•1952—La entonces princesa Isabel de Inglaterra, alojada en el "Treetops Hotel" del Parque Nacional de Aberdares, recibe la noticia de la muerte de su padre, el Rey Jorge VII. En sus inmediaciones tiene lugar un enfrentamiento nocturno entre los personajes principales y un búfalo enfurecido.

•1954—El "Treetops Hotel" es incenciado y destruido por los rebeldes Mau-mau, otro suceso que tampoco se menciona en la narración. Sin embargo este año es trascendente para la correlación temporal y estructura de la obra: Hemingway recibe el Premio Nobel de Literatura.

•1961—El célebre escritor colapsa a sus millones de lectores suicidándose de un disparo, hecho con el cual concluye la novela.

En las líneas finales el "narrador" Hemingway revela una carta marcada al lector, en la cual sugiere que el relato ha sido escrito después de la muerte:

"En ese instante, perdido el control de mis movimientos, siento que mi propio cuerpo, sueltas las amarras, flota sin las ataduras de la vida."

La Semilla Más Antigua

La inteligencia humana, esa antiquísima luciérnaga que no ilumina, emprendió en Kenya su vuelo hasta nosotros, hace dos, tres o cuatro millones de años.

Una noche, bajo el cielo estrellado que tanto asustó al homosapiens,—Hemingway, el biólogo, la fotógrafa y un kikuyo—, al calor de los tragos de whisky, advierten sorprendidos que su piel, corroida por el gusano del tiempo, les desnuda hasta dejarlos en sus tétricos esqueletos. Entonces ven desfilar los fósiles de sus antepasados—Ramapiteco keniata, Homo erectus, Homo robustus, Hom habilis, Neandertals, Homosapiens—nacidos y evolucionados a la vuelta de la esquina, cerca de Koopi Fora, al este del lago Turkana y en las orillas del lago Elmenteita, todos en Africa. Después del largo desfile que duró veinte o más millones de años, los personajes novelados comprenden que son los últimos eslabones de aquella cadena ininterrumpida, Homo contemporaneus. En ese instante, recuperados músculos y tegumentos, son enceguecidos por la lejana radiación de un hongo atómico que funde la noche en un infierno de llamas.

Sueño, utopía o realidad, allí donde había nacido la semilla del hombre—Kenya—los tambores de guerra de los Mau-Mau anunciaban a los "musungos" que estaban dispuestos a no permitir que incineraran la vida y el planeta.

Los Wa-Ndoboro

Por dos veces se enfrentan el hombre primoeval—los Wa-Ndoboro—y el robot flamígero— Hemingway—en las selvas de Kenya. Desde luego, desnudos los unos y armados de fusiles los otros, el diálogo fue posible solo con las miradas de los siglos:

Los primeros manipuladores del fuego miraban con recelo las armas de los "civilizados" que escupían el rayo de la muerte. Cuando Hemingway ansioso de ganarse su simpatía les ofrece varias botellas de licor, tabacos y un puñado de monedas de cobre, el jefe tribal, malicioso, le pide un fusil que le es rehusado.

Pero más tarde, después que el hombre blanco ha herido al "Mamut Sagrado" y trata de halagarlo con nuevos presentes, el anciano brujo le muestra el camino con su bastón mágico para que se retire, y apretando sus ojos, lo desaparece de su presencia.

La Filosofía Bantú

En *Hemingway, el Cazador de la Muerte*, un espíritu próvido y vigilante transpira la atmósfera y pensamiento de los personajes: la sombra de los Ancestros bantú.

Profundicemos la naturaleza y trascendencia de este elemento.

Los códigos genéticos marcaron las respuestas biológicas y espirituales que los primeros hombres dieron a los misterios de la vida y la muerte. Desde entonces identifican la familia humana cualesquiera que hayan sido sus mezclas y culturas.

Así mismo la defensa de la vida y la sobrevivencia más allá de la muerte, les llevó a concebir Dioses, Orichas y Ancestros, fecundadores y protectores de la familia. En todas las religiones encontramos esta ideal del génesis como una herencia común de los pueblos. Sin embargo, en el africano y su diáspora es mucho más connatural en la medida en que somos descendientes directos de los primeros hombres, antes no existieron otros.

La etnia africana en el evolucionar de los tiempos ha generado en su continente de origen las cepas humanas de los pueblos

"negrito" y "negros", las más antiguas del planeta, aunque no se haya podido establecer con certidumbre los anillos que los unen a sus antepasados primigenios.

A este conjunto de ideas y sentimientos ancestrales pueden dársele cualquier nombre, pero nosotros reconocemos en ellos la filosofía del "muntú" que recitan los juglares bantú, yoruba, ewe-fon, etc., etnias raizales de las mil y una tribus de la familia humana del planeta: "Los vivos y difuntos por voluntad de los dioses y orichas están hermanados con los astros, animales, árboles y herramientas.

Nómadas y Trashumantes

Los lazos ancestrales que ligan los africanos a este ancestro bantú—sangre y espíritu—se entroncan con la etnia "negrito", desprendida del homosapiens durante el Paleolítico Superior. Nómadas y navegantes recorrieron Euroasia, Australia, Melanesia y Polinesia, originando variedades de pueblos y culturas. Siglos después, ya habitaban en América (¿hace 60-70 mil años?), donde por primera vez se estrecharon las manos los ciudadanos euroasiáticos y afroasiáticos, conformando la nueva nacionalidad multiétnica universal. Aunque la noticia no se difundió por escritos, telégrafo, radio, televideo o satélite, ni consta en ninguna carta geográfica, lo cierto es que en esos tiempos arqueológicos la simiente africana había circunvalado el planeta.

Revivamos estas huellas para desatar el primer nudo de la bobina bantú que nos permita desandar la trama de la novela. Sigamos el camino del sol que diariamente recorre las aguas oceánicas del Pacífico desde las costas colombianas a las de Kenya en el Indico.

Al leer el ensayo antropológico de Jomo Kenyatta, (*Facing Mount Kenya*) descubrimos que el pensamiento religioso kikuyo, a pesar de las distancias geográficas e históricas, preserva la misma filosofía de la tradición oral de nuestros aborígenes.

Igual asombro tuvo Vasco Nuñez de Balboa al encontrar comunidades de "piel oscura" en el litoral del océano que acababa de descubrir (P. Martie). Rasgos que explican el parentesco de las esculturas megalíticas de los mohai de Rapa Nui (Chile), hermanas de las cabezas Olmecas (México), ídolos de Tiahuanaco (Bolivia y Perú) y San Agustín (Colombia). Otro tanto acontece con las milenarias y minúsculas cerámicas de Valdivia (Ecuador) y Tumaco (Colombia). ¡Todos con los rostros de faraones egipcios y reyes de Napata! De estos últimos se conserva la cabeza gigante del rey Natekemani (Meros 1100 A.C?) impresionantemente similar a las Olmecas.

En los litorales, selvas y altiplanos de América, bajo la Luna y frente al Sol naciente, padres fecundos, los pueblos afroamerindios repiten las mismas oraciones y danzas rituales que los bantú en Africa acompañan con sus tambores y bailes.

"¿Por Quién Doblan las Campanas?"

El título de la obra de Ernest Hemingway no evoca ningún tópico de nuestra narración, pero sí puede simbolizar el reloj del colonialismo al iniciarse el Siglo XVI, marcando con fúnebre simultaneidad las horas de la depradación y la esclavitud perpetradas en Africa y América.

El rezongo fúnebre de las campanas denunciaba los millones de cadáveres insepultos, alimento de hienas en las sabanas africanas y detritus de tiburones en las profundidades del Atlántico.

También se oía en los socavones de las minas de oro tapizadas con la osamenta de los taínos, convertidos en raíces, piedras y sangre de los nuevos hombres de América.

Evoquemos Africa a mediados del Siglo XVI, cuando las naciones europeas se repartían a gruñidos el botín de prisioneros para transplantarlos a sus colonias americanas.

Los Reyes de España, excluidos del gran safari por decisión pontificia, ratificada por el Tratado de Tordecillas (1494), desterraban y vendían a sus propios súbditos africanos nacidos y cristianizados en la Península. Acto impío que reprochaban como oprobioso a los etíopes. Iguales y peores apostasías cometían sus Majetades británicas, francesas, lusitanas, holandesas, belgas y danesas, fueran católicas o calvinistas, cuando cazaban y vendían a los hombres que la misma bula papal había puesto bajo su protección.

¿Con qué moral condenaban a sus pares, los llamados "reyezuelos" a quienes corrompían con filigranas, bebidas embriagantes, mosquetes y pólvora a cambio de sus súbditos?

Detrás de esta cacería avanzaba el gran funeral:

Portugal afirmaba sus dominios en el Congo, Angola, Mozambique y Zanzíbar.

Holanda hundía sus colmillos en Cabo Verde, extendiendo sus garras sobre Sud Africa.

Inglaterra, atrapada Senegambia, rugía amenazante como potencia en el continente africano. Desde ciudad del Cabo hasta el alto Zambeze, los británicos aliados a los boers holandeses, profundizaban sus conquistas con cañones, fusiles y redobles de guerra sobre las hasta entonces misteriosas tierras de los zulúes, xhosas, sotho, stawana, tonga, zima, pedi.

Por el litoral Indico, los barcos de la Compañía de las Indias Orientales, con pabellón británico, armados de artillería pesada, expulsados árabes y portugueses de Zanzíbar, desde donde afianzaban sus conquistas sobre Kenya, Tanganika, Uganda y la oceánica Australia.

Francia les seguía el rastro, disputándoles y conquistando los territorios del Senegal, Dahomey y Castilla de Oro. Guerras por la posición de fuertes, factorías y la navegación en los ríos Gambia y Senegal por donde fluían las barcazas atiborradas de prisioneros.

Se consolidaba a cañonazos el reparto del globo circunvalado por los navegantes. Evidentemente, el tráfico de hombres superaba el comercio de especias. Sobre las espaldas de los africanos se abría paso la Modernidad, proporcionando a Europa el privilegio de enriquecerse en la nueva era de la "civilización".

El Rostro Oculto de la Ignominia

El tráfico de los zandj, "hombres negros como azabache" para ser esclavizados comenzó en el Este y no en el Occidente africano. Medio milenio antes de iniciarse la Era Cristiana, el infamante negocio ya se ocultaba por sus perpetradores, dejando a la memoria frágil de la tradición oral los fastos de sus felonías. Los relatos escritos por algunos cronistas y viajeros, más interesados en las hazañas de los conquistadores, menospreciaron a quienes, al decir de Homero, eran "bárbaros": egipcios, medos, persas, etíopes...

El "padre de la historia," en sus comentarios sobre Egipto, relata la penetración de las huestes romanas hasta los reinos de Kush, Meroe y Napata en el alto Nilo, cuya antigüedad se remontaba a 2000 años a.C. De allí regresaban las caravanas de cautivos zandj con pesadas cargas de oro, colmillos de elefantes y plantas aromáticas. Unos y otros llegaban a Roma para embellecer a las matronas y servir de esclavos a los patricios.

El primer documento sobre el litoral, "Periplo del Mar Eritreo" fue escrito por otro griego, el navegante Hippalus, quien lo recorrió desde el Cabo de Serapión (Mogadiscio) hasta la isla de sus pobladores, ciudades y puertos ya visitados por mercaderes indios, árabes y hebreos.

Sorprendidos por la gran estatura, fortaleza y habilidad de los zandj en la cacería de leones y elefantes, los marinos subestimaron sus delicadas orfebrerías en oro, marfil, carey y tejidos de algodón, para atraparlos como bestias y venderlos en los reinos de Omán, India y China, donde eran sometidos a trabajos forzados en labores de mampostería, cultivos de caña de azucar, té y algodón.

Los Primeros Insumisos

Tan antigua como la esclavitud era la decisión de los africanos por liberarse. Los levantamientos y fugas constantes dieron comienzo a la táctica de emboscarse y resistir, precursora de los palenques cimarrones en América.

En el año 868 tuvo lugar la rebelión victoriosa de los zandj en Basora (Mesopotamia), apoderándose del puerto de Obolla, entonces bajo el control del Califato de Bagdad. Los insubordinados resistieron quince años hasta cuando un poderoso ejército árabe logró exterminarlos sin dejar huella de su descendencia.

Aunque los viajeros no narran las luchas de resistencias de los pueblos índicos, sus relatos ayudan a rescatar su pasado brumoso:

La "Geografía de Ptolomeo", escrita tras la muerte del Faraón por varios autores en Bizancio, (año 120), registra datos que relacionan y esclarecen crónicas dispersas.

Los manuscritos de Al Macundí por India y China también recogen importantes observaciones sobre los pobladores orientales de Africa (año 915).

Al Idrisi (1100-1166), quedó altamente sorprendido por los vaporosos mantos y alhajas conque se adornaban las hermosas mujeres de piel oscura.

A estos escritos se suman los de Abdul Ibn Batuta quien visitó a Mombasa (1331), gran puerto de embarque de prisioneros zandj hacia el Medio Oriente e Indochina y los del árabe Abú al Masin (1411-1469).

Hasta desde la lejana China llegaron navegantes al oriente africano atraidos por la fama de sus fabulosas riquezas y vigorosos hombres. El primero de ellos fue Tuang Cheng Shih (año 863), seguido siglos después por el almirante Cheng Ho, quien a partir del año 1417, visitó la región por tres veces, la última en 1433.

Resistencia al Islam

Debemos confesar que para nuestro proyecto novelístico importó menos la historia de los colonizadores que la resistencia y perdurabilidad del pensamiento religioso de los oprimidos: la respuesta de los padres de la civilización a los "bárbaros".

La colonización árabe en el oriente africano durante un milenio, produjo imprescindiblemente un mestizaje con los pueblos del litoral: giriana, duruma, pokomo y con los del interior: kikuyo, masai, tukana, mandi, suk, etc. También éstos han sufrido influjos de hamita y nilótico sin que hayan perdido su lengua y cultura bantú. Los swahili y bajún de la costa han recreado un nuevo idioma árabe-bantú, el swahili.

El Islam es un punto de confluencia con múltiples ramificaciones en torno a sus símbolos inmodificados: el Corán, el Ramadan, las mezquitas, oraciones, vestidos, etc. No obstante prevalece la filosofía bantú, núcleo existencial que ha resistido las prédicas islámicas, católicas y

cristianas.

Cuando Cristóbal Colón (1492) pisó por vez primera a la América, en ese mismo año había fallecido Sonni Ali, soberano del esplendoroso Reino del Sonhai. Dejaba una gran herencia a la cultura africana: la Universidad de Timbuctú, el mayor centro cultural y científico de su tiempo. Allí enseñaban los más famosos educadores del mundo árabe:

"...médicos, juristas, predicadores y otros sabios que son generosamente pagados por el Rey. Han traído manuscritos y escrito libros sobre Barbaria (Egipto, Etiopía, Persia, etc.), los cuales eran valorados en mayor precio que cualquier otra mercancía," escribió el poeta Leo Africanus, protegido de León IX.

Hechos que contrastan con la "calumnia negra" sobre la incultura de los cautivos africanos para justificar su esclavitud. Igual mentira para desconocer y saquear las civilizaciones afroamerindias.

Sin que hayamos caracterizado esta resistencia como elemento central de nuestra novela, Kenya trasciende en los vientos telúricos que respiran los personajes aborígenes y extraños, animales, selvas y cimas nevadas.

Epílogo sin Final

La trata inhumana en el Oriente de la deslumbrante Africa, mantenida a oscuras por los árabes, nunca se interrumpió durante ocho siglos (700-1500), encadenándose al monopolio portugués (1500-1700). Lejos de humanizarla, los nuevos amos cristianos conservaron las prácticas antiguas, esforzándose en extremarlas.

Con la trata masiva de prisioneros africanos, a partir del Siglo XVI, los lusitanos continuarían la misma política de expoliación, esclavitud y silencio de los árabes, desraizando pueblos y arrasando culturas desde Madagascar, Tanganika, Kenya, Somlia hasta Etiopía. Bandas de cazadores armados y a sueldo de portugueses, británicos y franceses desde el interior de Africa conducían sus prisioneros a las factorías de embarque en Sofala, Malindi, Kilwa, Mombasa (Indico), de donde muchos fueron transportados a la América, vía Manila, vieja ruta de traficantes árabes hacia los mercados del extremo Oriente: India, Malasia, Molucas y Filipinas.

Todavía a principio del Siglo XVIII, cuando la revolución industrial inglesa socavaba la esclavitud con nuevas formas de producción, aligerando en parte el esfuerzo humano, la Compañía Francesa de las Indias Orientales, tras arrebatar a los portugueses las islas Mauricio y Seychelles, expoliaba al máximo la mano de obra esclava.

Aunque el tráfico haya sido reducido, no puede negarse la presencia étnica de los pueblos bantú del Oriente y Sur de Africa en América. Ese influjo no debe ponderarse por la cuantía, sino por su espíritu libertario, hoy presentes en la rebeldía de sus pueblos.

El Gran Safari Comenzó en Oriente

El comienzo de la trata masiva de los pueblos africanos (S. XVI) es un punto referencial muy importante en la motivación para escribir nuestra novela sobre Kenya. Lo que a primera vista pudiera considerarse como inconexo y antípoda, encuentra poderosas razones étnicas e históricas que los justifican:

Africa del Este siempre estuvo ligada a la América.

En gran medida la aparente ruptura se debe al sigilo riguroso que pusieron los portugueses en ocultar sus verdaderos intereses esclavistas en el Indico. Aquí

nacen las falsedades sobre el poco influjo cultural del Oriente de Africa en la diáspora americana.

Por el contrario, en la lectura de *Hemingway, el Cazador de la Muerte* (Kenya), el lector afroamericano respirará en cada párrafo una atmósfera y una realidad humana que le son propias.

La cuña portuguesa que distorsionaría la historia común de nuestros pueblos comenzó con el primer desembarco lusitano en el Congo, lo que daría una prominente presencia en la costa occidental, cuando gran parte de sus cautivos bantú con destino a la América, fueron embarcados en los puertos orientales de Mozambique.

Rememoremos las andanzas de los portugueses por el Indico, ansiosos de expandir sus negocios esclavistas:

—1484, Diego Cao explora la costa del Manikongo, donde muy pronto aparecerían las primeras factorías de prisioneros.

—1488, Bartolomé Dias alcanza el extremo sur del continente africano cuando lo recorre y bautiza con el nombre de Cabo de las Tormentas.

—1493, Pedro de Carvilha navega el Mar Rojo desde Arabia a Etiopía.

—1497, Vasco da Gama traspasa el Cabo de las Tormentas, ya rebautizado Cabo de la Buena Esperanza por el Rey Manuel, el Afortunado. Augurio de sus nuevas conquistas en el Oriente.

Gama desembarca en Mozambique y erige varias cruces cristianas, las que fueron destruidas por los aborígenes al considerarlas ídolos contrarios a los suyos. Principios de una guerra que duraría siglos entre las religiones bantú, islámica y católica.

Vasco siguió hasta Mombasa, floreciente ciudad, donde encontró navíos árabes, lo suficientemente numerosos para disuadirlo de atacarla.

—1502, Vasco da Gama retorna al Indico al comando de una expedición de 19 navíos de guerra para consolidar la hegemonía portuguesa en la región.

Ese mismo año (1502) arriba otra flota lusitana al mando de Pedro Alvarez del Cabral, quien acababa de tomar posesión del Brasil a nombre del Rey de Portugal (1501).

—1505, Francisco de Almeida, nombrado Virrey de las Indias por la Corona de Portugal, derrotó la flota de los emiratos árabes coligados. El vencedor impondría el nuevo cuño esclavista del Imperio Portugués en Africa y las Indias, el cual calcarían todas las naciones europeas: esclavizar y saquear los pueblos conquistados.

América Ignorada en el Génesis

En la agonía del Siglo XV, el reloj de la muerte había comenzado a marcar los segundos del genocidio de los aborígenes de América.

Mientras los lusitanos continuaban explorando y afianzándose en las Indias Orientales, con "virrey" abordo, los españoles se esforzaban en alcanzar el Imperio del Gran Khan por el Occidente.

—1492, Cristóbal Colól desembarcó en el islote Guahananí (Bahamas), tomando a nombre de los Reyes Católicos de España la posesión de su territorio y demás adyacentes, convirtiéndose de hecho en el primer Virrey de América.

En su libro de viaje, Colón afirma que "los aborígenes (taínos) tienen la color de los canarios", es decir, similar a los moradores de las islas Canarias, descendientes de africanos desde tiempos inmemoriales (¿Tartesios, Siglo V. a.C?).

En verdad los taínos, estaban emparentados con los melanésicos Olmeca de México, "mater gentium" de los pueblos de Mesoamérica. (Coe).

Hemingway, el Cazador de la Muerte con los tambores y danzas guerreras de los Mau-Mau desde los invisibles horizontes de la noche y las selvas.

El Exodo del Nunca Retorno

En este momento Africa y América comienzan a ser parte de una sola historia. Confluencia que nos permite iniciar nuestra novela sin mayores preámbulos al lector afroamericano.

Conquistada la mayor parte del Nuevo Mundo y diezmados sus pueblos, los Reyes de España repartían a sus favoritos flamencos y germánicos licencias de corzo para que negociaran con los portugueses, sus antiguos súbditos, la mercancía humana que abundaba en sus posiciones de Africa.

Estos últimos disponían de los barcos ataúdes con bodegas nauseabundas para acarrear millones de africanos cautivos a la América, de donde nunca jamás regresarían a la tierra de sus ancestros. Desde entonces comenzaron a irrigar con sus vidas los yacimientos de oro y plata donde expiraban exhaustos los sobrevivientes amerindios.

Galeones reales y piratas de todas blas banderas recorrían el Atlántico, atiborrados de niños, mujeres y hombres, semillas inextinguibles de la nueva progenie americana.

En Africa los puertos y mercados solían cambiar de amos al fuego de los cañones pero los imperios ya demarcaban en el Nuevo Continente la cartografía de sus parcelas:

Portugal, propietario absoluto de sus despensas en el Congo, Angola y Mozambique, abastecía de cautivos a las numerosas colonias españolas, la propia del Brasil y aún le sobraban remanentes para cualquier postor necesitado.

Gran Bretaña, cada vez más ambiciosa, había convertido sus islas de Barbados, Jamaica, Providencia, Bahamas y las Vírgenes en campos de aprovisionamiento y mercadeo internacional, además de suplir las demandas de sus colonias en Virginia, Carolina, Alabama y Mississippi.

Los piratas reconocidos como "caballeros" por el Imperio Británico, asaltaban navíos y puertos en todos los mares, preludio del monopolio esclavista que mantendría por varios siglos.

Francia con sus bucaneros asentados en Haití, disputaban a España espacios en martinica, Guadalupe, el Caribe y Guyana, a la par que sus legiones desembarcaban en Nueva Orleans y el Canadá.

No tardarían en llegar a estas islas los encadenados escultores, poetas y músicos de Benín, mágicos sacerdotes del Vodú.

Holanda había convertido las pequeñas islas de Curazao y Aruba en grandes factorías de prisioneros africanos para el consumo caribeño, sus territorios en la Guyana (Surinam) y conquistas en el Brasil.

Alemania, aprovechada de que sus cortesanos poseían el usufructo exclusivo de licencias para introducir prisioneros africanos a las colonias españolas, inició sus propias conquistas en la Capitanía General de Venezuela.

Cinco siglos después de la sangría que había padecido Africa por más de dos milenios, aparecen historiadores que minimizan a sólo 12 o 25 millones los 50 o más desterrados a la América.

La Guerra Contra la Cacería Humana

Las gestas heroicas de los pueblos africanos por su libertad contra los imperios europeos durante milenios, deben figurar en la Historia Universal como las más importantes por la dignidad humana. Sin embargo, no se registra en los anales de ninguna nación del mundo. Todo lo

contrario, se sepulta y recuerda tan sólo como un episodio más de la esclavitud, sin que cuente el heroismo de quienes se sacrificaron para impedirla y abolirla.

Para los cronistas de la historia africana sólo cuentan los "descubrimientos" y "encubrimientos" de los pueblos colonizados. Más los sometidos también tienen sus Homeros, los juglares que han cantado y preservado en sus cantos la memoria de las epopeyas de sus héroes, mártires e ideales libertarios.

Pruebas de estas luchas son las fortalezas amuralladas construidas por portugueses, holandeses, franceses, alemanes e ingleses en las costas del Atlántico, Mediterráneo y del Indico, donde eran confinados los prisioneros de todo Africa antes de la partida.

Los nombres de esas "casas de los Muertos" encubren las historias milenarias de culturas vivas y florecientes en el momento en que se enfrentaron a las ordas imperiales de los llamados "cruzados" de la Cristianidad. Asedios, incendios, exterminios, robos, capturas y exilio.

¿Por qué fortalezas amuralladas y no puertos de embarque?

Con esta aparente omisión u olvido se pretende ignorar a millones de rebeldes que murieron en la lucha contra los cazadores de hombres en defensa de ciudades, riberas, litorales y selvas, allí donde hubiera un prisionero que liberar.

Como en todas las infamias, no faltaron los Judas. Muchos jefes y reyes se dejaron sobornar por los invasores, comerciantes y esclavistas, patrocinando los crímenes contra sus hermanos. Otras veces fueron rivalidades ancestrales revividas por los traficantes a cambio de armas, tropas y dineros para destronar a los soberanos enemigos y esclavizar a sus súbditos.

Pero también hubo gobernantes insumisos a los halagos que nunca permitieron en su territorio fortalezas para la concentración y embarque de prisioneros. Movimientos liberadores como el capitaneado por Dingaan, cuya arremetida contra los cazadores portugueses en Sofala fue tan arrolladora que a su paso sus tropas aullantes no dejaron extraños con vida.

Y los temidos códigos espartanos de Zaka, el jefe zulú que hicieron temblar a los sanguinarios invasores de Sud Africa:

¡"Primero muerto que prisionero"!

¡"Primero suicida que esclavo"!

La Parábola del Bumerang

Era necesario recorrer dos millones de años de inteligencia y lucha por la vida, desde el primer Homosapiens africano hasta hoy, para exteriorizar la idea genésica que inspiró nuestra novela. El tema universal está abierto a todos los hijos de la diáspora en cualquier rincón del mundo, y desde luego en cada milímetro de Africa. Sin embargo, nos reclamaba Kenya, donde nacieron los padres primigenios.

¿Qué actitud han asumido los descendientes africanos, amerindios y mestizos, particularmente los novelistas y poetas, herederos de los griots y sacerdotes-jaguares, narradores de las epopeyas de nuestros antepasados?

Una vez más nos encontramos con el silencio de la literatura escrita sobre la verdadera épica de los africanos en su desesperada defensa de sus pueblos y culturas.

En *Hemingway, el Cazador de la Muerte*, no intentamos asumir un compromiso global sobre esta responsabilidad ineludible, pero sí comprometernos con una temática que no debemos soslayar con el pretexto de considerarla como algo "exótico" o vedado para un escritor afroamericano.

Apenas trazamos un instante de la memoria universal, los años intermedios

entre las décadas 50 y 60 de este siglo, caracterizados por la toma de conciencia nacionalista y las luchas armadas contra el colonialismo en Africa, concomitantes a los fenómenos de toma de conciencia étnica y social en América por parte de los escritores de la diáspora.

Este paralelismo o itinerario común por la libertad, como lo acabamos de resumir, ha sido constante en nuestro pasado. Revela así mismo que para los escritores de la diáspora no existen meridianos de tiempo y espacio que separen a nuestros pueblos como antípodas y nos demarquen fronteras literarias.

No debe sorprender que ese ideario haya inspirado la rebelión de los zandj en la antiquísima Basora, las guerras de los cimarrones en América, la Revolución Antiesclavista de los generales haitianos (L'Ouverture, Dessalines, Christophe) y la también victoriosa Rebelión Anti-colonialista de los Mau-mau (Kenyatta, M'Boya, Kimathi).

¡El mismo grito "¡Uhuru"! ("¡Libertad! ¡Independencia!")

Hemos querido recoger lo más trascendente de ese origen, encadenándolo a las luchas contra al colonialismo depredador de la vida (Monte Kenya), los hombres (kikuyos), los animales (elefantes), los árboles protectores (mogumos) y la tradición ("Mamut Sagrado"), un cocktail explosivo que como el bumerang africano—única arma capaz de retornar a las manos de su dueño—simboliza el suicidio de Hemingway al descargar sobre sí mismo las balas disparadas contra los hijos de la selva.

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A Ideologia em A Canção de Solomon, de Toni Morrison[1]

by Clélia Reis Geha

Antes de iniciar a análise da obra, seria interessante conceituar a palavra ideologia. "É um dos meios usados pelos dominantes para exercer a dominação, fazendo com que esta não seja percebida como tal pelos dominados".[2] A peculiaridade da ideologia que a transforma numa força quase impossível de remover, decorre dos seguintes aspectos:

1) "a suposição de que as idéias existem em si e por si mesmas desde o início é a separação entre trabalho material e intelectual, portanto, enquanto esses dois aspectos estiverem separados, a ideologia não perderá sua existência nem sua função;
2) o que torna objetivamente possível a ideologia é o fenômeno da alienação, isto é, o fato de que, no plano da experiência vivida e imediata, as condições reais de existência social dos seres humanos não lhes apareçam como produzidas por eles, mas, ao contrário, por tais condições atribuindo a origem da vida social a forças ignoradas, alheias às suas, superiores e independentes, de sorte que as idéias cotidianas representam a realidade de modo invertido e são mantidas nessa inversão, vindo a constituir os pilares para a sua construção.
3) o que torna a ideologia possível é a luta de classes, a dominação de uma classe sobre as outras que cristaliza em "verdades" a visão distorcida do real. O papel da ideologia é fazer com que no lugar dos dominantes apareçam idéias "verdadeiras" e que as pessoas creiam que elas são autônomas e, como tal, representam realidades (87)."

Muitos movimentos feministas lutam contra o poder burguês porque ele "é fundamentalmente um poder masculino que discrimina social, econômica, política e culturalmente as mulheres (111). É considerado um poder patriarcal, ou seja, fundado na autoridade do pai e legitima a submissão das mulheres aos homens tanto pela afirmação da inferioridade feminina (fraqueza física e intelectual) quanto pela divisão de papéis sociais a partir de atividades sexuais (feminilidade como sinônimo de maternidade e domesticidade) (111).

Nesse sentido, o conceito de família não é entendido como uma relação social que assume formas, funções e sentidos diferentes tanto em decorrência das condições históricas quanto da situação de cada classe social. Ao contrário, é representada como imutável, no tempo e no espaço, para todas as classes e como "uma realidade biológica, sagrada, eterna, moral e pedagógica (88)."

No sistema capitalista, o conceito de liberdade é amplo e discutível apesar de se dizer que os seres humanos são livres por natureza e manifestam essa liberdade pela capacidade de escolher. Mas resta saber quem dá as condições para a escolha. A definição da liberdade como igual direito à escolha é a idéia burguesa e não a realidade histórico-social.

Com base nesses pressupostos teóricos, bem como na crítica literária feminista, vamos analisar, neste trabalho, a situação da mulher e a segregação racial, salientando que abordar essas duas questões significa falar em ideologia. A análise terá como pano de fundo a obra "A Canção de Solomon", da escritora afro-americana

Toni Morrison.

Antes, porém, algumas reflexões sobre a situação da mulher na literatura. A crítica literária feminista surgiu recentemente nos Estados Unidos, no início dos anos sessenta, como resultado do renascimento do feminismo. Destaca-se pela luta contra a discriminação da mulher na literatura o que está intimamente ligado a aspectos sociais, econômicos, políticos e culturais.[3]

Esse fato não poderia deixar de exercer influência na sociedade como um todo, assim, surgiram novos nomes na crítica literária feminista tanto nos Estados Unidos quanto na Grã-Bretanha, França e outros países. No Brasil, temos até um Grupo de Estudos da Mulher na Literatura que integra a ANPOLL.

Toni Morrison, prêmio Nobel de Literatura de 1993, é uma das principais escritoras contemporâneas afro-americanas que tem denunciado na sua obra (um livro de ensaios, seis romances publicados e atualmente escrevendo o sétimo) o problema do racismo, a questão do cânone tendo em vista a rejeição das obras escritas por mulheres, sobretudo afro-americanas e o tratamento dispensado à mulher negra.

Assim, julgamos que "A Canção de Solomon" constitui rico material para desenvolver uma análise da ideologia uma vez que reconstrói, miticamente, a história de quatro gerações de uma família negra da Virgínia—os Deads—, cujo nome significa, em inglês, "mortos".

Com um enredo fragmentado, a ação transcorre entre 1931 e 1963 tendo como personagem principal Milkman que, afastado do cotidiano onde foi criado, por uma revelação do pai, viaja à terra dos avós—Shalimar—à procura do ouro que teria sido deixado por um garimpeiro assassinado. Ironicamente, o contato com o passado o faz mergulhar nas próprias raízes, descobrindo, na história dos seus ancestrais, o verdadeiro tesouro que buscava. O texto se apresenta com lacunas que devem ser preenchidas pelas leitoras ou leitores para criar a significância, o que, aliás, foi enfatizado por Morrison numa de suas entrevistas: "Minha escrita espera e exige uma leitura participativa... Não se trata apenas de contar a história, mas de envolver o leitor.[4]

Na denúncia de uma ideologia burguesa, Morrison, por um lado, pinta as personagens femininas ora com fortes marcas de submissão, como Ruth, Corinthians e Magdalene, ora procurando fugir a essa dependência. À medida que a história prossegue, elas crescem e conseguem desvencilhar-se da subserviência. Por outro, apresenta personagens fortes como Pilate e Circe. Descreve, com argúcia, o preconceito racial dos brancos contra os negros e destes contra os brancos bem como os conflitos de uma sociedade opressora. Vamos ilustrar esses aspectos com alguns exemplos:

Os correios não aceitam o nome da rua Doctor Street, assim chamada pelos negros em homenagem ao pai de Ruth, Dr. Foster, único médico negro do lugar. As autoridades mandam afixar avisos nas lojas informando que o nome da referida rua é Mains Avenue e não Doctor Street. Em protesto, os negros passam a chamá-la, ironicamente, de "Not Doctor Street." Do mesmo modo, o Mercy Hospital fica conhecido como "Not Mercy Hospital," pois só muitos anos mais tarde, foi permitida a entrada de uma paciente negra (a própria Ruth) que ali deu à luz.

A descrição da narradora sobre um "doutorzinho" (o pai de Ruth) cuja preocupação era casá-la com um homem de

posses também ilustra esse aspecto, o que é conotado pelo emprego do diminutivo.

Vejamos, agora, onde se revela o preconceito sócio-econômico entre os próprios negros e até entre irmãos (Macon Dead para com Pilate):

> Tremia ao pensar no que diriam os homens brancos do banco, os que o ajudavam a comprar e hipotecar casas, ao descobrir que aquela contraventora esfarrapada era sua irmã, que o negro de posses tão cioso de seus negócios, morador da mansão da Not Doctor Street, tinha uma mãe solteira como irmã, que, por sua vez, tinha uma filha em igual condição. (31)

Macon Dead se revela egoísta, ambicioso e misógino. Primeiro, é detentor de poder por ter bens materiais, ao contrário da maioria dos negros, a exemplo de Guitar, Potter e os integrantes da Sete Dias (uma sociedade secreta). Seu objetivo principal é acumular riqueza como um meio de cada vez ter mais. Seu sentido de posse se estende também a sua família, que é reificada, como nos é contado por Lena, sua filha:

> Quando éramos crianças, antes de você nascer, papai nos levou à fábrica de gelo. Fomos no Hudson que ele tinha na época. Enquanto papai falava com aqueles pretos suarentos, não parava de olhar para nós duas no automóvel. O automóvel e nós. Entende? Ele nos levou à fábrica de gelo para nos exibir, para que os outros nos vissem e ficassem com inveja de nós, inveja dele... Toda vida nos tratou assim: saía como se estivéssemos num desfile militar de gala, nos exibindo como as virgens da Babilônia, e depois nos humilhava como putas (232).

Havendo sofrido com a experiência do racismo, Macon Dead sente uma insaciável necessidade de segurança, o que representaria a ideologia de uma classe negra que internalizou a ideologia da classe branca e isso resulta numa perda de identidade. É tanto que Macon se considerava digno de cortejar Ruth Foster, "... pois aos 25 anos já era um homem de posses (11).

O poder da ideologia é tão forte que, apesar de vitimizada, ironicamente a mulher a assimila. Veja-se a reação de Ruth com relação às filhas:

> ... Ruth por fim se conformou com o terrível fato de que as filhas não iriam se casar com doutores. Foi um choque para todos, um choque que conseguiriam suportar recusando-se a aceitar uma verdade mais crua: que provavelmente elas nunca se casariam. (205)

Fica, assim, patente, o machismo da sociedade patriarcal quando havia um plano para a mulher casar e ter filhos com um homem de dinheiro, não deixando a ela o direito de fazer sua própria escolha. Desse modo, o pai, "dono" da filha, entrega-a ao marido que passa a ser seu "proprietário".

A situação da mulher se perpetua, então, naquele ciclo vicioso secular: de obediente ao pai passa a servir ao marido fazendo-lhe todas as suas vontades, inclusive sexuais. Macon Dead não se cansa de desprezar Ruth, tendo a seu cargo todos os trabalhos da casa enquanto o marido vivia para aumentar seu patrimônio imobiliário:

> Quando fechou a porta atrás de suas convidadas, deixando o sorriso tranqüilo morrer nos lábios, já era hora de preparar a comida que o *marido classificava de intragável*. (Grifos

> adicionados). Não que Ruth tentasse fazer refeições nauseantes; simplesmente lhe era impossível evitar o fracasso. Notou que o pão-de-ló estava excessivamente mutilado para apresentá-lo diante de Macon e resolveu fazer outra sobremesa. Porém o tempo gasto em moer a vitela e a alcatra para o bolo de carne fez com que se esquecesse da carne de porco, decidindo então substituí-la por tiras de bacon frito que seriam colocadas sobe o bolo; àquela altura, viu-se obrigada a desistir de preparar a sobremesa. (21)

A misoginia de Macon é revelada através do seu ódio tanto por sua mulher e filhas quanto por sua irmã Pilate. O excerto, a seguir patenteia esse aspecto:

> Implacável, resmungão, dado a irromper sem aviso, Macon mantinha todos os membros da família paralisados de medo. O ódio pela esposa brilhava e cintilava em cada palavra a ela dirigida. O desapontamento que sentia em relação às filhas peneirava-se sobre as garotas como cinzas, tirando o brilho de sua cútis amanteigada e afogando a nota alegre que deveria haver naquelas vozes juvenis. Sob o calor gelado do olhar do pai, as duas tropeçavam nos degraus e deixavam cair o saleiro nas gemas de seus ovos estrelados. A única emoção que as sacudia do torpor habitual era o modo como o pai lhes destroçava a dignidade, o espírito e a auto-estima... Da mesma forma, o desprezo que o marido lhe devotava causava em Ruth uma espécie de estupor, que se transformava, com o correr das horas do dia, na mais completa animação. (21)

A atitude de Macon simbolizaria a situação jurídica da mulher no século XIX, que ficava suspensa durante o casamento ou incorporada à do marido, tanto na Grã-Bretanha quanto nos Estados Unidos. Quer dizer que a mulher era "incorporada" ao pai ou ao marido.[5] Acrescentaríamos que na ausência do pai ou do marido, o irmão é investido de poderes patriarcais. Esse aspecto pode ser observado no diálogo entre Milkman e Lena, de início totalmente submissa mas, no fim do livro, enfrenta seu irmão, o que revela sua atitude de independência:

> Você sempre riu de nós, a vida toda. De mim, da mamãe, de Corinthians. Só nos usa, nos dá ordens, nos julga sobre como fazemos sua comida, como mantemos sua casa...Quem é você para aprovar ou desaprovar qualquer coisa ou pessoa?...Nossa juventude foi passada em função de você. Quando dormia, tínhamos de ficar quietas; quando sentia fome, precisávamos cozinhar para você; quando queria brincar, nós o divertíamos ...Vou lhe dijer o que lhe faz pensar que tem esse direito. É esse pedaço de tripa pendurado no meió de suas pernas. (231)

É pertinente lembrar com Simone de Beauvoir que "as mulheres continuam sonhando através dos sonhos dos homens."[6] Tentaremos aplicar essa premissa na obra, lembrando que Ruth obedece ao pai e casa com Macon Dead, a quem teme. Além disso, seu relacionamento com o pai é estranho, de acordo com Macon Dead:

> Houvera uma época em que acreditara que a visão da boca de Ruth nos dedos do homem morto seria a única imagem que ficaria gravada em sua mente. Enganara-se. Pouco a pouco os detalhes começaram a perder a nitidez, e era preciso imaginá-los, adivinhá-los ou até mesmo fabricá-los. A imagem o abandonara mas não o ódio. (27)

Após Macon contar esse fato a Milkman, ele segue Ruth, às escondidas e descobre que suas saídas são para visitar o túmulo do Dr. Foster. Com referência ao filho, Ruth o amamenta em segredo, apesar de ele já ser bem crescido, sentindo nisso um grande prazer. Pilate é uma personagem forte pois subverte a ordem social dominante. É tanto que orienta Milkman indicando-lhe o caminho para descobrir sua identidade. Mesmo assim, resulta ser objeto através do qual se veiculam os valores culturais. Ela "vê" através do espírito do pai que lhe dá ordens:

> ...Fui à caverna porque papai mandou. Ele estava sempre aparecendo para mim, me dando ordens. Primeiro só me mandava cantar. Ficava murmurando "Sing. Sing". Então, logo depois do nascimento de Reba, surgiu de novo e me disse: "Não se pode simplesmente fugir e abandonar um corpo." Então entendi porque papai estivera lá quando tudo aconteceu. Quis dizer que quando se tira uma vida, passa-se a ser dono dela. (224)

E, noutro momento:

> Sing. Sing. —Então apoiou-se no peitoril da janela e continuou: —Não se pode simplesmente voar para longe e largar um corpo. (162)

É interessante a ironia dramática conotada pela palavra "sing", pois, em inglês, significa cantar. Ao mesmo tempo, serve de referência ao título do romance, ao canto de Salomon que se repetirá na narrativa e ao nome da mãe de Pilate, "Sing," que só nos é revelado no fim do livro, no diálogo entre Milkman e Circe. "Sing"/sing, constitui, pois, um bom exemplo da linguagem altamente metafórica de Toni Morrison, revelando, ainda, um outro aspecto do "framework" ideológico, um discurso que atua como instrumento de persuasão da dominação masculina na sociedade patriarcal.

Outro aspecto ideológico digno de nota é a religião, que se manifesta na ironia da escolha da maioria dos nomes das personagens tirados da Bíblia Portanto, vamos recordar os significados dos nomes relacionando-os com a obra de Morrison.

Salomão é filho de Davi, chega a ser rei de Israel. Pedia a Deus que lhe desse sabedoria para governar. No romance, conhecemos Solomon através de sua canção que exerce fascínio sobre as outras personagens. Ruth, na Bíblia, é virtuosa, mas, a exemplo de Ruth, de *Canção*, passou grandes provações. Pilate, no romance, é uma mulher forte e o Pilatos bíblico um poderoso rei. No entanto, Pilate fascina Milkman mas é rejeitada por mulheres e homens por não ter umbigo. É bom lembrar que o umbigo está ligado à reprodução e significa origem ou centro de alguma coisa, portanto, falta a Pilate um ponto de referência.

> ...Pilate nunca ouvira a palavra 'umbigo' e não sabia do que a mulher falava...Até então não vira a barriga de outra mulher. E, pelo horror estampado no rosto da curandeira, deu-se conta de que havia algo de muito errado em não ter um umbigo.
> —Para que serve? —quis saber.
> A mulher engoliu em seco.
> —É para...é coisa de gente que nasceu natural. (27)

Quanto ao nome Hagar, no romance, a personagem, antes de morrer de amor por Milkman, tenta matá-lo ao constatar que ele não mais a ama. Hagar seria o emblema da mulher reificada. Na Bíblia,

Hagar casa com Abraão e lhe dá um filho, Ismael pois Sara, sua primeira mulher, era estéril. Corinthians, irmã de Milkman, no início da narrativa, nos é apresentada como tímida, mas, aos 36 anos, descobre o amor e cresce de personalidade. Corintos, bíblica, é uma cidade. Magdalene (Lena), no fim da história, subverte a ordem social e se transforma revelando forte personalidade. Quanto a Madalena, bíblica, é uma prostituta em quem atiram pedras e, defendida por Jesus, converte-se ao catolicismo.

Circe, a parteira mítica de "Canção", ajuda as mulheres a darem à luz. Na mitologia grega é uma feiticeira, uma fada que descobre a luz, predizendo as dificuldades e perigos que aguardavam Ulisses em sua viagem a Ítaca.

A questão do poder, intimamente relacionada ao acúmulo de bens materiais, à opressão da mulher, bem como ao preconceito racial se presentifica na obra. Para ilustrar esse aspecto, há inúmeros exemplos, dos quais citaremos:

1) A opressão da mulher:

Quando Milkman segue Ruth e a encontra de volta da visita que fizera ao túmulo do seu pai, ela diz o seguinte:

> —...porque o fato é que sou uma mulher pequena. Não em tamanho; sou pequena porque me fizeram pequena, me comprimiram. Eu morava numa casa grande, me tornava menor ainda. Não tinha amigas, só colegas, que queriam tocar meus vestidos e minhas meias de seda branca. Porém, eu não sentia falta de amigos, achava que nunca sentiria, porque eu tinha meu pai. Eu podia ser pequena, ele era grande. Não sou uma mulher estranha. Apenas pequena...Mas sei, tão bem como sei meu nome, que Macon só lhe relatou a versão dele. Tenho certeza de que jamais falou que matou meu pai e quis matar você também. Porque vocês dois desviavam a atenção que desejava só para si. Sei que ele nunca lhe disse que jogou fora o remédio do meu pai...Com isso, não consegui salvá-lo... E eu não teria conseguido salvar você se não fosse por Pilate.[7]

A versão de Ruth, nas mencionadas palavras, é totalmente oposta à de Macon. Além de oprimi-la, Macon forjou toda uma situação falsa para Milkman afastar-se de Ruth (137-138).

Ao descobrir a gravidez de Ruth, Macon fez de tudo para que ela abortasse, não hesitando em usar os meios mais cruéis, como se pode ver nessa passagem:

> ... tentara obrigá-la a abortar. Então o bebê se transformara na náusea motivada pelo vidro de óleo de rícino que Macon a forçara a tomar, ao qual se seguira a panela escaldada em água fervente, onde tivera de sentar, a lavagem intestinal com sabão, a agulha de tricô - da qual só inserira a ponta, de cócoras no banheiro, chorando de medo do homem que andava de um lado para o outro no corredor. Finalmente, quando o marido lhe batera—Ruth estava tirando o prato de sua frente quando ele olhou para sua barriga e a socou—, ela saíra correndo para Southside à procura de Pilate. (145)

2) O preconceito racial e a tortura:

A recorrência do desprezo e da tortura contra os negros chama a atenção no romance. Por isso, escolhemos alguns exemplos para ilustrar esses aspectos:

Pilate recorda o assassinato do pai:

> —Vi papai levar os tiros e ser atirado

> mais de um metro no ar. Vi-o estrebuchando no chão. Mas não apenas não assisti a sua morte como o vi muito tempo depois de ter sido baleado. (154)

E, também:

> ... Ainda hoje há lugares onde um negro não pode testemunhar contra um branco, onde o juiz e o júri têm o direito legal de não aceitar o depoimento de um negro. Isto significa que um preto só é vítima de um crime quando um branco atesta um fato. (175)

E, ainda, contando a Milkman a origem do nome Dead, Macon informa que seu pai, por não saber ler, usava uma marca como assinatura e, assim, lhe tomaram a propriedade. O pai de Pilate, Jake (avô de Milkman) é assassinado. A avó, Sing, se mata.

A ideologia do sistema capitalista corrompe as pessoas com referência à ambição por dinheiro. No romance, a personagem Milkman parte em busca do tesouro e combina dividi-lo com seu pai e com Guitar, seu maior amigo, que desconfia de Milkman. Por isso vai segui-lo na viagem a Shalimar. Ao encontrá-lo em companhia de Pilate, numa mata, dispara a arma, mas erra o alvo e atinge mortalmente Pilate. Na realidade, o sonhado tesouro não passa de uma ilusão e de uma grande ironia pois é em Shalimar que Milkman descobre sua identidade, ao entrar em contato com seus antepassados, seu verdadeiro tesouro.

A cena da morte de Pilate é impregnada de "pathos", pois suas últimas palavras servem de exemplo para demonstrar que não são apenas bens materiais que propiciam a felicidade das pessoas, mas a amizade e o amor ao próximo que estão muito além da ideologia capitalista e burguesa.

Vamos recordar como Pilate se despede da vida:

> Gostaria de ter conhecido mais gente. Eu teria amado todas as pessoas. Se tivesse conhecido mais gente, teria amado mais (358).

Como procuramos demonstrar neste trabalho, *A Canção de Solomon* apresenta uma série de instâncias narrativas onde avulta a ideologia do sistema pratriarcal, ou seja, um poder masculino que discrimina as mulheres nos aspectos sociais, econômicos, políticos e culturais.

Essa ideologia é tão forte que, no romance ora analisado, temos um exemplo de como as personagens negras internalizam inconscientemente essa ideologia agindo, como se fossem brancas, exatamente dentro dos padrões sócio-culturais impostos pela sociedade capitalista.

Macon Dead encarna muito bem o tipo originário de uma classe social pobre. Seu principal objetivo é acumular bens materiais para exercer o poder, sem preocupar-se com seus semelhantes. Além disso, é caracterizado com fortes marcas de misoginia no seu relacionamento com Ruth e suas filhas, que tremem de medo na sua presença. Sua atitude repercute na do seu filho, Milkman. Ambos procuram execer controle total sobre as mulheres, oprimindo-as e reduzindo-as a meros objetos.

Ruth é submissa, apagada, pois, tradicionalmente, à mulher cabe aceitar, não questionar ou discutir. No entanto, ela se sente infeliz e procura compensar a falta de amor do marido numa atitude estranha, ora em relação ao seu filho,

amamentando-o mesmo quando já grande, ora no relacionamento com seu pai. Já o comportamento de Lena e Corinthias, no início da narrativa, totalmente submissas, é marcado por uma progressão, uma vez que conseguem, aos poucos, livrar-se do domínio de Macon e Milkman.

Pilate e Circe são personagens marcadamente fortes, que exercem funções fora de casa. A primeira, com uma postura anárquico-subversiva, rebela-se contra os hábitos da sociedade. Ambas ajudam Milkman a encontrar o caminho para descobrir sua identidade. É bem representativo o fato de que Pilate e Circe não vivam de acordo com os padrões sociais. Nesse sentido, *Canção* tematiza a ambigüidade de sentimentos com que as personagens femininas passam a conviver, ao infringirem o lugar confinado—o da casa—que lhes era destinado, de acordo com a ideologia da sociedade patriarcal. Os relacionamentos dos "Deads" funcionam como um microcosmo de estruturas maiores de nossa realidade política e histórica.

E, por fim, fica a reflexão de que uma narrativa como a que acabamos de analisar, põe em cena personagens em situações de conflito que se originam de posturas divergentes, cuja base de sustentação está nos sistemas de valores ideológicos.

Referências

[1]Morrison, Toni. *A Canção de Solomon.* Tradução de Evelyn Kay Massaro. São Paulo. Ed. Best Seller, 1985. Referiremo-nos à essa obra, a partir de agora, como *Canção*, e todas as alusões à mesma constação do texto.

2 Chauí, Marilena. *O que é ideologia.* 15ª. ed. São Paulo. Brasiliense, p. 87. Todas as referências posteriores a esta obra constaía do texto.

[3]Sadlier, Darlene. "Teoria e Crítica Literária Feminista nos Estados Unidos." In: *ORGANON 16.* Revista do Instituto de Letras da UFRS. A Mulher na Literatura, p. 14.

[4]Tate, Claudia. *Black Women Writers at Work.* New York: Continuum, 1983, p. 125.

[5]Geha, Clélia Reis. "A Mulher Escritora no Período Romântico na Grã-Bretanha." In: *Momentos de Crítica Literária.* Atas dos Congressos Literários de Campina Grande/1992, p. 147.

[6]Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex.* Tradução de H. M. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1972, p. 174.

[7]Sobre a questão, é pertinente mencionar a primeira estrofe do poema nº 613, de Dickinson, cuja idéia de prisão, estabelece uma relação intertextual com o discurso de Ruth, nas duas primeiras linhas do trecho citado: "They shut me in Prose—/ As when a little Girl/ They put me in the Closet— / Because they liked me "still"— (Trancaram-me em Prosa/ Quando Criança/ Puseram-me no Quartinho—/ Porque queriam-me "Quieta—")

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Forging Linkages and International Relations With Africa: Afro-Americans, Afro-Brazilians, and Afro-Cubans Since the 1960's

by Zelbert L. Moore

The continent of Africa has made the front pages of the international press in the 1990's, albeit in a negative way. This is a far cry from the 1960's, when of these same nations were gaining publicity based on their newly won independence: Nigeria, Kenya, Belgium Congo, and Guinea (Conakry), etc. The only comparable event in the continent in the 1990's was the release from Robben Island Prison Feb. 11, 1990, of Nelson Mandela, and his subsequent election to the South African presidency in April, 1994. The independence of the former Portuguese territories (Angola, Mozambique, Guinea (Bissau), Cape Verde Islands, São Tome e Príncipe) in 1974-75 did not create much of a stir in the United States; neither did the independence of Namibia (the former SouthWest Africa) in 1989. These areas are central to this story, and we will return to them later in the essay.[1]

During the 1990's many of us have been subjected to front-page headlines and feature stories recounting the problems confronting contemporary Africa. For example, we have seen such headlines as, "Crisis Torn Africa Becomes a Continent of Refugees," (*New York Times*, May 23, 1994); "Southern Africa—Troubled Transitions," *African Report* (May-June, 1993); "The Agony of Africa—A Vast Continent in Free Fall," *Time Magazine* (cover story, Sept. 7, 1992); "The Killer in the Tent: The Surreal Horror of the Rwanda Refugees," *New York Times Sunday Magazine* (June 4, 1994); "Africa Tries Democracy, Finding Hope and Peril," *New York Times*, June 21, 1994 (three-part series), "Conflict in Africa: What Role for a Civil Society?," *West Africa* (June 17-23, 1996); "Liberia's Recurring Nightmare," *West Africa* (11-17, November, 1996), and "Famine Amid Plenty," *West Africa* (25 November-1 December, 1996).[2]

Readers will note that, despite the diversity of the publications (popular and academic), the themes appear to be consistent with regards to the status of Africa during this time. With this in mind we will now turn our attention to specific Black communities (The United States, Brazil, and Cuba), and how they and their governments have dealt with countries in Africa. All of these nations share a common heritage with Africa vis-à-vis the legacy of the Atlantic Slave Trade. Millions of slaves, especially from Nigeria, Ghana, and Congo region were shipped to North America, Cuba, and Brazil between the 16th and 19th centuries. This, of course, resulted in viable Black communities, which we find in contemporary Brazil, Cuba, and the United States. How these same communities have related to Africa, or have impacted the relations of their respective governments towards the continent are the subject of this essay. Some issues raised here no doubt will persist in the year 2000 and beyond.

Afro-Americans and Africa

After four decades of African independ-

ence the continent is no longer regarded as the "White Man's Burden." After all this time we in the United States are constantly reminded of the Continent's problems—whether it be those of Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Angola, Nigeria, and most recently Zaire (The Democratic Republic of the Congo). With the early 1990's euphoria of the release of Nelson Mandela in South Africa, we now are confronted with what seem to be intractable problems in much of Africa south of the Sahara. Indeed, one writer recently commented that we should "build a fence around Africa, and check back later, say, in 100 years, or create a new type of 'international trusteeship' to work out its problems."[3]

This type of thinking is a far cry from the type that went on in the 1960's, when Africa held a very different and more upbeat image in the United States and especially among Black Americans. In 1969, Lindsay Barrett, a Caribbean journalist, wrote an article for the then *Negro Digest*. The piece was entitled, "Should Black Americans Be Involved in African Affairs?" Barrett stated they they should, because of the forced enslavement of millions of their ancestors in the past. Of course, Barrett's question could have been put to Blacks in Cuba and Brazil, and he would have arrived at the same conclusion. The problems would come down to means, methods, and of course political power.[4]

The late scholar, Henry F. Jackson, has done pioneering work on the issue of Africa and Black Americans. In his book, *From the Congo to Soweto: U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Africa Since 1960*, Jackson noted that Black Americans' involvement with the continent dates back to 1817, when they became active in the circles of the American Colonization Society. They further had active roles in the establishment of the Republic of Liberia in 1847. Further still was the early work on behalf of Africa and Africans by Dr. W.E.B. DuBois and Henry McNeal Turner, the prominent bishop in the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME). Other Black Church and Missionary groups in the late 1880's and 1890's participated in developing African and Black American relations In modern times we have witnessed numerous other people, who have worked to forge new and better relations between the United States and Africa, including Malcolm X, the Rev. Jesse Jackson, former Ambassador to the UN and Atlanta mayor Andrew Young, the late Texas Congressman Mickey Leland, Whitney Young, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and ex-SNCC leader and Georgia Congressman, John Lewis. The Rev. Jackson, and U.S. Representatives Maxine Waters (California) and Donald Payne (New Jersey) joined President Bill Clinton on his historic 12-day visit to African in April, 1998.[5]

Despite the large Black American population in the United States (40 million or the third largest outside of Nigeria in West Africa and Brazil), Henry Jackson has noted that it was always a question of translating that into sufficient political power in the national arena. Persuading the various administrations (Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson, Gerald Ford, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan) to act on behalf of African interests has not always been successful. In the late 1950's Michigan Congressman Charles C. Diggs made his first official trip to Africa, but he did so in the company of Vice-President Richard M.

Nixon, a Republican. While not much was gained by Diggs on the GOP-initiated trip to Africa, it, for Diggs, was to be a new beginning for him and Africa. In 1959 he joined the U.S. House subcommittee on Foreign Relations, and by 1971 had risen to Chairman of the House Subcommittee on African Affairs. In that capacity Diggs enlarged his vision to include the Caribbean, and also brought the subject of Africa into the newly formed Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) in 1971. He also introduced a future pro-African and Caribbean activist to the Washington, D.C. scene—Randall Robinson. Robinson, who later formed his own group, TransAfrica, had worked as an administrator in Digg's office up to the formation of his own pro-African and Caribbean lobby group. During his 26 years in Congress, fellow Congressman William L. Clay noted that Diggs had been a tireless worker on behalf of Africa, and also one of the early critics of South Africa's system of apartheid. He was not able to further his goals in that direction, for in 1980 he was forced out of office for evading payment of federal income taxes.[6] The task of continuing the work of in the 1990's falls on the shoulders of Donald Payne and Alcee Hastings, Congressmen from New Jersey and Florida respectively. Thirteen House members served on the 1996 Subcommittee on Africa, which was chaired by Cuban-American and Republican Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida. Payne, like Hastings, is a Democrat and both are members of the CBC. Payne also is a former chairman of the subcommittee, and has maintained a much lower profile on African issues than the late Congressman Diggs. Blacks were further marginalized in the committee, which had eight Republicans and only four Democrats. One member is a registered Independent.[7] During Payne's watch perhaps the most significant event in Africa involving U.S. policy-makers was the deployment of U.S. soldiers to war-torn Somalia in 1993. The spotlight fell on Department of Defense policy-makers William Perry and Army General, Colin Powell. Those men, more than anyone else, were the key players in the short-lived military action known as "Operation Restore Hope." And despite a significant Black constituency, Payne and the CBC were not able to generate a great deal of interest in Black America on behalf of Somalia, or for civil and miliary unrest in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and the former Zaire. As has been the case with violence and revolution in Bosnia and some of the former Soviet Republics, Americans, Black and White, appear to have decided to sit on the sidelines of foreign affairs in the 1990's. For the former it appears that the indifference to African affairs have come about at the same time there is a preoccupation with things "African" (dress, hairstyles, even weddings).The Cold War era is behind us, but its legacy (land mines, refugees, civil/ethnic strife, and military governments) still occupies much of Africa. It would appear that more, not less, is needed from the likes of a Charles Diggs, Donald Payne, or an Andrew Young at this critical juncture in Black-African relations.[8]

Before moving on to Cuba's involvement in African affairs, it is worth noting the contributions of Andrew Young, who served as the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations in the Carter Administration (1976-1981). You may recall that Ambassador Young, as had Congressman Charles Diggs, redirected the mission of his office in his short tenure at the United Nations. He also made Africa the focal

point of his work, and in doing so brought Africa to the attention of President Jimmy Carter. He was outspoken on Africa, and at times ran afoul of the administration's powerful Secretary of State (Cyrus Vance), and National Security Advisor (Dr. Zbigniew Brzezinski). Those two men, in turn, were trying to overcome the legacy of Dr. Henry Kissinger on U.S. Foreign Policy, whether in Africa or any other part of the world. Kissinger, it should be remembered, served as National Security Advisor and Secretary of State under Richard Nixon (1969-74), and had sought to protect White minority rule in southern Africa. He also was author of the infamous *National Security Memorandum No. 39 (NSSM 39)*, which stated that Whites were in the region to stay, and that the United States should find a constructive way to accommodate them.[9] That attitude would survive all the way to the administration of President Ronald Reagan (1981-88). Reagan also would persist in living with apartheid in South Africa and South African aggression in Angola, Mozambique, and Namibia during his tenure in the White House.[10] For his part, Ambassador Young, before resigning in 1977, had worked to preserve the independence of Angola when it was under siege by South Africa and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Young also had brought harsh criticism on President Carter for stating publicly that, "the Cubans serving in Angola had been a stabilizing factor in the region," and not a threat to U.S. interests in any way. Young worked hard to expose the evils of apartheid in both Namibia and South Africa, and also support in Washington for newly (1978) independent Zimbabwe. And as had been the case of Diggs and Robinson, he helped launch the career for his assistant, Donald F. McHenry. McHenry, a career Black State Department officer, replaced Young at the United Nations in 1977. He joined other Blacks, who had obtained key State Department positions during the Carter administration —Dr. Goler T. Butcher, Terence Todman, and W. Beverly Carter. In the end, however, it was not so much numbers or lack of effort. The ability to affect power relations in foreign policy was still the primary one.[11] During his stint at the United Nations Andrew Young raised the level of debate and awareness of African-Cuban-U.S.relations, and in a sense upset the bi-polar vision (Soviet Union-U.S.) of Dr. Henry Kissinger. In that vision the Cubans were simply "small-time" or "Soviet proxies" in the southern African theater of Angola. The Cubans, for their part, had other ideas about their participation in this arena.[12]

Cuba and Africa—Che to Cuito Cuanavale

In the 1960's the Congo (Kinshasa) had won its independence from Belgium, and became the "hot spot" in Africa during the Cold War. In 1961, a young American president named John F. Kennedy had just assumed his position in the White House. He soon found out that Dwight David Eisenhower, the prior occupant and his policy advisors had worried about trouble brewing in the newly independent African nation. Eisenhower, during the presidential transition, had passed his views on this on to Kennedy, along with those regarding revolutionary Cuba. Patrice Lumumba became the Congolese Prime Minister, but he had quickly run afoul of Washington African policy-makers by suggesting that the Russians might be

asked to assist his young nation. Lumumba never realized his intentions, for he was assassinated in January, 1961, by a former friend and colleague, Col. Joseph D. Mobutu. Mobutu carried out his deadly deed with the assistance of the CIA. He would go on to rule Zaire until his own ouster in May, 1997, by pro-Lumumba forces. During his 32-year-reign President Mobuto Sese Seko managed to hold on to power and enrich himself and many of his close associates with the help of Washington political and financial leaders.[13] Few could have imagined that Mobutu's demise would come about because of the early work of Cuban revolutionary, Dr. Ernesto (Che) Guevara. The Argentine-born guerrilla leader had been the catalyst behind revolutionary Cuba's drive to win friends in Africa and Asia. After the triumph of the Cuban revolutionary struggle in 1959, Che Guevara, with the approval and support of Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz, made clandestine trips to then-emerging Third World nations in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. For example, in 1963 Che went to a number of Afro-Asian conferences in Algeria and also to New York and the United Nations. Indeed, in 1964, he represented the Cuban government when he addressed the 19th General Assembly conference on the role of "People liberating themselves from U.S. Imperialism." He also made note of the U.S. in the newly independent Congo, and stated that Cuba was going to add its voice to the struggle against imperialism. Guevara noted that, "Africa represents one of the most important, if not the most important fields of battle against all fields of imperialism, colonialism, and neo-colonialism. There are big possibilities for success in Africa, but there are also many dangers." The big positives noted were the youth of the African nations.[14] Guevara later traveled to Guinea, Ghana, Dahomey, Tanzania, Mali, Congo (Brazzaville), and back to Algeria, where he had first gone in 1963. Most of these times he traveled in well conceived disguises. He made these trips in order to explain the Cuban Revolution, and also to strengthen Cuban-African ties. He also noted that, "the battle of the Congo must for the African nations have the meaning of a historic stage that either determines their advance or their regression."[15] He further noted that, "victory in the Congo will show the Africans that national liberation opens the way for the construction of socialism; a defeat will open the way for neo-colonialism. Socialism or neocolonialism, that is what is at stake for all of Africa in the enounter now taking place in the Congo."[16]

Che Guevara, with the approval and assistance of Cuban leader, Fidel Castro, was more than a man given to idle talk. In 1963 Cuba sent troops to help the Algerians in their struggle with Morocco. The troops never engaged in combat, but in the training of Algerian soldiers in the use of tanks and new arms. In 1965 Che and some 200 Cuban soldiers came to Congo (Brazzaville) in order to train them in military tactics. They also fought against Congo rebellion leader, Moise Tshombe in newly independent Congo (Kinshasa), but pulled out when he was ousted by Col. Mobutu in November, 1965. One of their contacts and students at the time (1964) was a young Lumumba follower, Laurent Kabila. Kabila toiled in the bush, and in other African nations, then in the outer regions of Zaire itself for 32 long years. Of course, his patience paid off in May, 1997, when he (along with

Rwandan, Ugandan, and Angolan assistance) was able to chase Mobutu from Zaire and later rename the nation the Democratic Republic of the Congo. And he had gotten his early training from none other than Dr. Ernesto (Che) Guevara in 1964.[17]

Guevara's group, which included a number of Afro-Cuban officers, also was involved in the training of guerrillas in the Cape Verde and Guinea (Bissau) groups, or PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde/ Partido Africano da Independência da Guiné e Cabo Verde). They also gave assistance and training to young militants in the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola/ Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) and Front for the National Liberation of Mozambique/Frente de Libertação de Mozambique (FRELIMO) in the late 1960's. Guevara met and was familiar with most of the important African liberation movement leaders at this time: Dr. Agostinho Neto (Angola) and Amilcar Cabral (Cape Verde and Guinea (Bissau). Those leaders also traveled frequently to Cuba during this period as well, conferring with Fidel Castro and other Cuban military leaders. The Assistance and training by the Cubans for those southern Africans in the former Portuguese colonies of Africa would pay great dividends in the 1970's and 1980's.[18]

The earlier work in southern Africa, and in particular, Angola, started to pay quick dividends there in 1975. On November 11, 1975, the last Portuguese military forces had been withdrawn from Angola, and independence declared by the MPLA and Dr. Agostinho Neto. The newly independent nation was already being threatened in the north by Holden Roberto and his National Front for the Liberation of Angola/Frente Ncional de Libertação de Anglola (FNLA). Roberto's forces, backed by both Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko and the CIA, had started military attacks in northern Angola in May, 1975. And in October, practically on the evening of the country's declaration of independence from Portugal, an estimated 5- to 10,000 South African troops had also invaded the territory. As if this were not enough, the CIA and South Africa had given support to another anti-Angola government group, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola/União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA). These forces had started aggressive action against the MPLA government in Luanda, the capital, from the South. Dr. Carla Anne Robbins noted that during this period, the Cubans were in Angola in small numbers, probably around 200 advisors. That had been their contingent from the late 1960's to the 1970's. The massive internal and external threats had changed all that by 1975, however. An estimated 15,000 or more Cuban combat soldiers had been sent to Angola by March of the following year. Both the Angolans and the Cubans had recognized that they were involved in a much larger battlefield contest than previously imagined. And they were correct on that score, for Dr. Henry Kissinger had seen southern Africa as a potential Soviet theater, and not by people recently liberated from 500 years of Portuguese colonialism. Kissinger, on the other hand, had to contend with perhaps more rational people in Washington, for in December, 1975, Iowa U.S. Senator Dick Clark authored an amendment which shut down U.S. covert aid to anti-MPLA groups such as UNITA and FNLA.[19]

The Cuban African policy had survived

under the Carter administration, which despite the conflicts on opinion within (Vance and Brzezinski), had been carried out with a minimum of U.S. interference. The earlier work of Ambassador Andrew Young also had been pivotal to the creation of this diplomatic climate. The Reagan administration did not regard Africa as a region worthy of serious consideration. The Africa policy, such as it was, fell to the responsibility of Undersecretary of State, Dr. Chester Crocker. In trying to get the Cubans to leave the southern African theater (and to a lesser extent, South Africa's military forces), Dr. Crocker was quite active in trying to bring hostilities to an end in the 1980's. Unlike the previous administration, Crocker was given freer operating space in Africa by his boss, Secretary of State, Dr. George Shultz. The Cubans and Angolans were at times suspicious of Crocker, since he at times expressed sympathy for Dr. Jonas Savimbi and his UNITA.This was during the mid-1980's, when UNITA and South Africa were crippling the Angolan economy with successful military operations in the south and in Namibia. The Cubans and Angolans were aware of the Reagan administration's support for Savimbi and UNITA as well. Indeed, the Reagan group had successfully worked to get the U.S. Congress to throw out the 1975 Clark amendment in July, 1985, and thus allow then to funnel financial support to UNITA.[20]

The Reagan administration had sought to roll back Cuba's foreign policy initiatives early in his administration, and in October, 1983, had sought to hit them closer to home in Grenada. In a move that shocked many nations, and especially Latin America and the Caribbean, President Reagan had sent U.S. forces to invade this island nation of 150,000, and "rescue" American medical students studying there from the Cubans. The Cubans, who numbered about 700 soldiers, technicians, and construction workers, had been portrayed as "threats" to the security of the students. Angola was a different matter, however, and the Reagan administration would never have gained congressional approval for sending U.S. troops there.[21] Fidel Castro was aware of the shifting international climate after Grenada, and in 1984 cultivated relations with both Presidential candidate Jesse Jackson, and California Congressman, Melvin Dymally. In 1986 Fidel Castro, reacting to external (and perhaps internal) criticisms about the predominately White upper levels of the Cuban Communist Party, recruited more Blacks. More Blacks in the higher levels of government also would assure more support for his policies in Africa in the late 1980's. Moreover, Blacks were heavily represented in the Cuban Armed Forces (FAR), and also among the hundreds of Cuban doctors, teachers, and other nonmilitary personnel stationed in Angola and other southern African nations such as Tanzania and Mozambique.[22]

Fidel Castro also had worked to cultivate strong Cuban-African relations in the 1970's, and thus assure support for his policies in southern Africa in the 1980's. Indeed, in the 1970's prominent African leaders were regular visitors to Havana, and African children joined other Third-World children in studying in Cuba's Island of Youth (formerly Island of Pines).[23] The Revolutionary Armed Forces eventually would defeat the touted South African military on the battlefield, and force them to the conference table to

hammer out a political solution to the Angolan war. The key battle for Cuba had been won in January, 1988, in the southern Angolan region of Cuito Cuanavale. South Africa's high military command had chosen that area to make a stand and defeat combined Cuban-Angolan military forces in late 1987. The battle victory would belong to Cuba and Angola, however, and they were able to force South Africa (together with UNITA and the United States) to the peace table. The former combatants agreed on timetables for South African and Cuban withdrawal from Angola in accordance with UN Resolution 435/78 in August, 1988. The Cubans also were able to force South Africa to include the independence of Namibia (formerly Southwest Africa) in the 1988 treaties. And they further got South Africa to recognize the South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) as the sole legitimate government of that nation in 1989.[24] Cuba, together with the Armed Forces of Angola (FAPLA) had survived for 13 years the combined attacks and invasions of South Africa and the U.S.-supported rebels of Jonas Savimbia and UNITA. Cuban foreign minister, Jorge Risquet, put the victory at Cuito Cuanavale in 1988 in the larger context of African political history. He noted that the victory there had in fact liberated over 100 million Africans in 11 states (including Angola, Namibia, Tanzania, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Zambia, Swaziland, Botswana, and South Africa) from the powerful and racist forces of apartheid. Thus, Cuito Cuanavale had really been the death knell for racism in the southern region of Africa. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Cuba had been the catalyst for that historic change.[25]

The Cubans, according to former CIA agent, John Stockwell, also had blocked U.S. attempts to create a "Fourth Force" in Angola, and thus impose tremendous obstacles to the MPLA government in Luanda. Stockwell also noted that the agency did not allow Black American agents to participate in the Angolan program. They were worried about the possible fallout from Black agents, when they learned of the agency's close association with South Africa.[26]

When Fidel Castro addressed the Cuban people on the 30th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution on December 5, 1988, he noted that, "in Cuito Cuananvale, really, we broke the teeth of the South Africans, and all of this with a minimum of casualties! All because of our own soldiers, Angolans,and Cubans..."[27]. Nelson Mandela also had recognized the importance of the Cuban victory at Cuito Cuanavale, and noted in 1991 that it also had contributed to his freedom from South African jails. In a July 26, 1991, speech in Havana Mandela stated that even as he sat in his prison cell in Robben Island he heard about the work of Cubans in Angola. He noted that he also was aware of the contributions by Cubans in health and education throughout Africa during that period.[28] This small island nation had indeed contributed mightily to the liberation of Angola and southern Africa, despite the enormous human sacrifices. Dr. Olga Nazario, citing statistics of Cuban defector, Gen. Rafael del Pino, noted that Cuba lost up to 10,000 men during the 13-year war in Angola. Other sources have stated that the casualty figures are much lower. Whatever the correct figure, the Cubans had achieved their objective of standing up for Angola and Namibia, and turning back forever the menace of South African apartheid.[29]

Brazil and Africa

Because of its size, common language (Portuguese), and huge Black population, Brazil certainly was in an enviable position to make its presence felt in Africa in general, and Angola in particular. During the 1960's, President Jânio da Silva Quadros sought closer ties with Cuba. Indeed, Quadros had made a visit to Cuba while running for President in Brazil in 1960, and that visit had caught the attention of then President John F. Kennedy. Further still, Quadros, as President, had welcomed to Brazil in July, 1961, the new Cuban (Che was acually Argentinian) revolutionary hero, Dr. Ernesto "Che" Guevara, and awarded him the nation's highest honor, the Cruzeiro do Sul Order (Order of the Southern Cross). The Cold War was heating up and that act had not gone well either in Washington, or with the Brazilian military establishment. To both camps Quadros was appearing more "pro-Communist" with every passing day. Quadros, according to Dr. Wayne Selcher, also attempted to break new ground in foreign relations by moving towards the Afro-Asian camp in the 1960's. Selcher noted that between 1961 and 1965 Brazil was trying to move away from the United States and towards a more autonomous (even "neutral") position. And Quadros, once in office, pointed Brazil in the direction of Africa. He even appointed the nation's first Black Ambassador to an African nation. Dr. Raimundo de Souza Dantas was sent to Ghana, and this was at a time when the mutual knowledge of Brazil and many African nations was very poor. This is all the more remarkable, when we consider the strong African influence and culture in Brazil—in music (Samba, percussion), religion (Candomble, Macumba, etc.), and Folklore. In a 1963 poll taken with University students in Recife, Pernambuco, it was discovered that 61% of the students thought that Laos and Angola were independent nations. Africans were not much better when it came to knowing about Brazil. Quadros, to his credit, sought to change the situation somewhat in 1961. He further placed Brazil opposite Portuguese colonialism in Africa at the time, when Lisbon controlled Angolan, Mozambiquen, Cape Verdian, and Guinean territories. The initial bold moves by Quadros towards Africa were certainly visionary in scope. And in spelling out his ideas in the English-language journal, *Foreign Affairs* in 1961, not only praised new U.S. President John F. Kennedy, but also put forth his African views. "As to Africa," he said, "we may say that today it represents a new dimension in Brazilian policy. We are linked to that continent by our ethnic and cultural roots and share in its desire to forge for itself an independent position in the world of today. The nations of Latin America that became politically independent in the course of the 19th century found the process of economic development delayed by historical circumstances, and Africa, which has only recently become politically free, joins us at this moment in the common struggle for freedom and well-being." Going further, Quadros noted that, "I believe that it is precisely in Africa that Brazil can render the best service to the concepts of Western life and political methods. Our country should become the link, the bridge, between Africa and the West, since we are so intimately bound to both peoples. Insofar as we can give the nations of the Black continent an example

of complete absence of racial prejudice, together with suc-cessful proof of progress without under-mining the principles of freedom, we shall be decisively contributing to the effective integration of an entire continent in a system to which we are attached by our philosophy and historic tradition." Quadros also made reference to Portugal, and noted that in past years Brazil had made the mistake of supporting European colonialism at the United Nations. African nations thus had a right to be suspicious of a nation which still supported such policies. That would soon change, he said. Quadros did not stay in office to carry out his changes, and after only seven months in office resigned in August, 1961.[30]

João (Jango) Goulart followed Quadros in office in 1961, and continued on what the military considered a "radical-left" path. He, however, would be ousted in a military coup d'etat in 1964. The coup leaders, who were led by Gen. Humberto Castelo Branco, not only severed relations with Cuba, but also scaled back the African foreign policy initiatives of Quadros and Goulart in 1964. The Cuba break would last until 1986, when relations were restored by then President José Sarney.[31]

The military junta which overthrew Goulart had long supported Portuguese colonialism, and in the early 1960's had been look towards African independence. They also were, like the United States, hostile to the likes of left-leaning African leaders such as Patrice Lumumba in the newly independent Congo (Leopoldville).[32] There also were some Brazilian military leaders who envisioned a Portuguese-speaking Union, one composed of Brazil, Portugal, Mozambique, and Angola. General Golbery Couto e Silva had such an idea, and wanted to call it the "Atlantico Sul Zona de Paz e Cooperação (Atlantic South-Zone of Peace and Cooperation)," according to Dr. J.R. Franco da Conseca. That plan bore a close resemblance, however, to one proposed in the 1970's by the then Portuguese Military Chief of Staff, General Antonio de Spínola. His own plans called for a group named, "Os Estados Unidos da Africa" (United States of Africa).[33] Brazil also was the first nation in 1975 to recognize the independence of Angola under the MPLA. They later, however, backed off, because of what they perceived as Angola's tremendous ethnic problems in the new nation. Before that they, in recognizing Angola, had envisioned Angola as a "membro da comunidade dos países de língua Portuguesa—países de língua común" (member of the community of Portuguese-speaking languages —nations of a common language). Such a group could eventually create an economic bloc to rival that of the European Community, according to Dr. Fernando Augusto Albuquerque.[34]

In the early goings of the Angolan war, Brazilian military officers were allowed to be observers on the side of the U.S.-backed Holden Roberto and his Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA).[35] Again, Brazil appeared to be walking a tightrope in this area, and avoiding conflict with U.S. aims in the region. They also were still heavily involved in trade and tourism with South Africa. Clearly it did not choose to use its considerable advantages of size, resources, and finances to challenge the Cubans in southern Africa and Angola. The junta running the country also was very much preoccupied with "holding down the fort" at home, and the maintenance of his

national security apparatus, according to Dr. María Helena Moreira Álves. And real "openness" in the system did not occur until the presidency of Gen. João Baptista Figueiredo (1979-1984). The Angolan theater was passing them by at this point. President Figuereido continued to open up the nation for human and civil liberties during his regime. This did not, however, change the relations with Cuba. President Sarney would change that in 1986, and Fidel Castro himself would further open up relations between the two nations with several trips to Brazil, including one there in March, 1990. During this trip Castro took time to explain to the press and leading officials in Brazil what their goals were in southern Africa in the 1980's.[36]

Black Brazilians obviously were not able to impact their nation's foreign policy during this critical period. They, like their White countrymen, had labored under severe military restrictions between 1964-1985. Dr. Abdías do Nascimento, who had returned home from his teaching position at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo, and earned a seat in Congress in 1982, managed to carry on some work in the diplomatic area. While serving in the Brazilian House of Representatives he was a tireless worker in defense of Black Africa and critic of South Africa, apartheid, and their policies in Namibia. In the 1970's Aldaberto Camargo of São Paulo also had been a Congressman, and worked to build bridges between Brazil and Africa.[37] Black Brazilians have operated under some very difficult sociopolitical situations in contemporary times. They live in a nation which has constructed a powerful myth of "racial democracy." This has been the case since they abolished slavery in 1888. Brazil had thus followed the path made by Cuba, which had extinguished its slavery-based system two years earlier, in 1886. In Brazilian politics, Black politicians must become part of the larger political process, because in the past, they have gained political office on the "coat-tails" of the more promiment (and usually White) politicians. This was the case of Congressional candidate Abdías do Nascimento in 1982, or Minister of Sport Pélé (Edison Arantes do Nascimento) in 1994. Abdías got to Congress by aligning himself with Rio de Janeiro gubernatorial candidate, Leonel Brizola and his Democratic Labor Party (PDT). Pélé earned his office by joining forces with President-elect, Dr. Fernando Henrique Cardoso. This is a major reason for the paucity of Blacks in high political office. Moreover, of the 500 or so members of Congress, less than twenty of them consider themselves "Black." And since the 1980's Abdías do Nascimento has carried the torch of race consciousness. Pélé, from time to time, has made statements about running for President, but that is another matter altogether.[38]

Brazilian politicians on the left side of the political side of the spectrum have made individual attempts to make contact with Africa. For example, in 1995, Luíz Inácio da Silva (Lula) and Benedita da Silva journeyed to South Africa to meet with President Nelson Mandela. Da Silva is a former Presidential candidate in 1990 and leader of the powerful Brazilian Labor Party (PT), and Benedita da Silva is the first Black woman federal senator in the nation. She is a former member of Congress from Rio de Janeiro, and also a member of the PT party.[39]

Angola also has been active in the 1990's in strengthening closer ties to Brazil. In 1996 Dr. Ana María de Oliveira,

the Angolan Minister of Culture, came to Brazil at the invitation of Brazilian Ambassador to Angola, Dr. Alexandre Addor Neto. During her stay she also met with prominent members of Brazil's cultural and political elite, including historian Dr. Joel Rufino dos Santos; actor Hilton Cobra; human rights activist Ordenael dos Santos; Dr. Ruth Pinheiro, and Senator Abdías do Nascimento.[40]

During her visit, Dr. Oliveira made it clear that the MPLA government in Luanda was determined to reconstruct the nation's past. She noted that, "Angola has great concern about locating her 'Diaspora.' We want to know where the descendants of Angola are in the world, and here in Brazil." The Angolan minister, with the help of UNESCO, also is working on a project called the "Slave Route" (A Rota do Escravo).The project, which was started in 1994, will attempt to retrace the trials and travails of enforced African slavery not only from Angola, but also from Benin (formerly Dahomey) to the Caribbean and other Latin American nations. And Ambassador Addor Neto has gotten his nation involved in the affairs of Africa and in the new post-apartheid South Africa. He also has been active in the drive to recognize the contributions to the nation's history and culture of Zumbi, the African rebel leader of Palmares (Alagoas-Pernambuco) in the 1690's.[41] The story of Brazil in Africa in general and Angola specifically has yet to be completed, but they no doubt will contribute to the rebuilding of both in the future. And as recently as May, 1997, Brazil was indeed in Angola. This time their soldiers were in Angola under the auspices of the United Nations. The 1,100 Brazilians are part of COBRAVEM (Contigente brasileiro em Angola). They also have been assigned to Cuito, where they keep the peace between the MPLA and remnants of the former UNITA forces of Jonas Savimbi. After almost 30 years of war in the nation of 10.5 million people, the Brazilians are attempting to bring stability to Angola. A number of soldiers have attempted to adopt some of the war orphans, but Angolan law prohibits such actions. But the Brazilians will be part of the Angola landscape for some time to come, it appears.[42]

Thus ends the short story of Black communities and their governments and their impact on foreign relations with contemporary southern Africa. While the vast majority of the relations have involved state-to-state activity, there also have been attempts by Black citizens to affect those actions whether Brazilian, Cuba, or American. Some years ago the Afro-American filmmaker, Robert Van Lierop, made two important films about the wars of liberation in the former Portuguese colony of Mozambique in the 1970's. One of them, "A Luta Continua," was a very significant one for the times, and in a way speaks to all three communities.[43] And in 1995, Fidel Castro himself brought a personal message of solidarity to Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church. Castro, who was on hand for the 50th anniversary of the United Nations in New York City, spoke to the Abyssinian congregants about Cuba's role in Angola, South Africa, and Namibia. And he reminded his predominately Black audience that despite the positive achievements of Cuba's contribution to liberation and recon-struction in Angola, it has received little notice in the United States. Nelson Mandela had cited the Cuban contributions to the southern African struggle on his earlier trip to the United States. And he

closed out his talk with the statement, "How Far We Slaves Have Come." Both he and Fidel Castro had made that statement in 1991, when Mandela was on a state visit to Havana.[44]

Endnotes

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[2]*New York Times*, *West Africa*, *Africa Report*, and *Time Magazine*.

[3]*New York Times*, Section E-3, June 23, 1996.

[4]Lindsay Barrett, *Negro Digest*, Vol. XVIII (No.10, 1969), pp. 10-12.

[5]Henry F. Jackson, *From The Congo To Soweto: U.S. Foreign Policy Toward Africa Since 1960*. New York. William Morrow and Co., 1982, pp. 126-146. *The New York Times*, April 19 (E-1), 1998; *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, April 19, 1998, p. 1; *New African Magazine*, May 1998. Waters, Jackson, Payne, Charles Rangel, and other prominent Black Americans accompanied President Clinton on his historic journey to Ghana, South Africa, Senegal, Rwanda, and Uganda in April, 1998.

[6]*Ibid*. William L. Clay, *Just Permanent Interests: Black Americans in Congress, 1870-1991*. New York. Amistad Books, 1992, pp. 88-89; 368-369.

[7]*Official Congressional Directory*, 104th Congress, 1995-1996. Washington, D.C.: The United States Government Printing Office, 1996, pp. 404-405.

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[11]Carl Gardner, *Andrew Young*, pp. 121-133; Henry F. Jackson, *From the Congo to Soweto*, pp. 124-126; 154-157.

[12]Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1982, pp. 440, 1030; John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies: A CIA Story*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1984, pp. 53-54.

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[14]*Che Guevara. Che Guevara Speaks: Selected Speeches and Writings*. George Lavan (ed.). New York: Grove Press, 1967, pp. 98-99, 101-118; Carla Anne Robbins, *The Cuban Threat*, pp. 61-71; Jorge Risque, *Changing the Face of Africa: Angola and Namibia*. Melbourne, Australia. Ocean Press, 1989, pp. 1-14.

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[19]John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, pp. 227-239; Carla Anne Robbins, *The Cuban Threat*, pp. 218-219; Henry F. Jackson, *From the Congo to Soweto*, pp. 65-71. See also, Dr. John Marcum's definitive *The Angolan Revolution* (Vol. II). *Exile Politics and Guerrilla Warfare, 1962-1976*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1978, pp. 262-265; Fred Bridgland, *Jonas Savimbi: A Key to Africa*. New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1987, pp. 151-155.

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[21]H. Michael Erisman, *Cuba's International Relations*, pp.185-185; Fidel Castro: *Nothing Can Stop the Course of History* (Interview by Dr. Jeffrey M. Elliot and Mervyn M. Dymally). New York: Pathfinder Press, 1986, pp. 143-160; Wayne S. Smith, *The Closest of Enemies: A Personal and Diplomatic Account of U.S.-Cuban Relations Since 1957*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1987, pp. 271-274.

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[24]Jorge Risquet, *Changing the Face of Africa*, pp. 131-138; Jeffrey Herbst, "The Angolan-Namibian Accord: An Early Assessment," in Sérgio Díaz-Briquets (ed.), *Cuban Internationalism In Sub-Saharan Africa*, 1989, pp. 144-153.

[25]Jorge Risquet, *Changing the Face of Africa*, pp. 105-119 .

[26]John Stockwell, *In Search of Enemies*, pp. 75-76.

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[28]*Mandela Speaks*, pp. 118-128.

[29]Dr. Olga Nazario, "Cuba's Angola Operation," pp. 109-110.

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[41]*Ibid.*

[42]*Isto É* (21 de Maio de 1997, No. 1442), São Paulo, S.P., Brasil, pp. 114-116. ("Os Filhos da Guerra: Arrasada por 30 anos de conflitos e com a maior população de mutilados do mundo, Angola comeca a dura tarefa de cicatrizar as feridas e reconstruir o pais.")

[43]Allen Isaacman. *A Luta Continua: Creating a New Society in Mozambique*. Binghamton, New York: Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economics, Historical Systems, and Civilization, State University of New York (SUNY), p. 131. Robert Van Lierop Films. (1) "A Luta Continua," and (2) "O Povo Organizado."

[44]*Facts on File* (Vol. 55, No. 2823, 1995), pp. 794-795, "Castro Addresses U.N., Harlem Church." Castro had previously visited Harlem in 1960, and during his Oct. 22, 1995, speech at Abyssinian Baptist Church spoke to an estimated 1,300 people. He was dressed in military olive-green fatigues (he previously had been wearing a new businessman's suit given to him by citizens in Colombia to wear at UN gatherings); he was warmly received by the congregants. He also spoke about the "New Colonialism" present at the U.N., particularly the lack of representation of Asia, Africa, and Latin America on the Security Council. See also, Nelson Mandela and Fidel Castro, *How Far the Slaves Have Come*. New York: Pathfinder Press, 1991, pp. 17-18; 22-23.

Latin American Spanish: Creolization and the African Connection

by John M. Lipski

Introduction

The Caribbean region is rightfully considered to be the largest repository of Afro-diaspora culture and language in the Western Hemisphere. In the popular perception of most Americans, attention usually turns to the islands which were once part of the British and French empires, while the Hispanic Caribbean is much less clearly understood. Within the Spanish-speaking Caribbean nations, recognition of the African contribution is a difficult enterprise, complicated by racial polarization and Eurocentric cultural elitism that has sought to relegate all African influence to popular music and a handful of words related to uniquely Afro-American themes. On those occasions where Afro-Hispanic populations have received serious attention—usually by cultural anthropologists and historians—the groups have been studied in isolation, as transplanted African societies in miniature, having little or no impact on the remainder of the population. Turning specifically to language, opinions by writers from inside and outside of the Caribbean zone have clustered around two equally untenable poles. The first position, representing Afrophobic insecurity or simple ignorance, affirms that there are **no** African traces to be found in Caribbean Spanish, other than the undeniable presence of at best a dozen or so words of limited circulation. The other position—most often sustained by non-Caribbean observers lacking knowledge of the full range of Spanish dialect variation—ascribes **all** typically Caribbean Spanish traits to African influence, regardless of whether they also occur in other areas of the Spanish-speaking world.

Africans and their descendents have been present in the Caribbean from the earliest Spanish expeditions until the present time—nearly 500 years of Afro-Hispanic language and cultural contact and symbiosis that cannot be brushed aside by categorical statements such as the ones just mentioned. In the following remarks, I would like to focus on three essential facets of the search for African contributions to Caribbean Spanish. First, we must consider the historical and demographic configurations which existed in the Spanish Caribbean, and the means by which varying social contacts among Africans, Afro-Americans, and Europeans could have influenced the languages of each group. Second, I will briefly discuss the search for concrete evidence of earlier stages of Afro-Hispanic language and the attempt to extract usable conclusions from amidst the jumble of confusing, distorted, and deliberately misrepresented testimony. Finally, I will attempt to assess specific features of modern Caribbean Spanish in terms of potential African contributions.

Historical and demographic considerations

When one society dominates and enslaves another, the languages of the enslaved group are automatically placed at a disadvantage, and can only seep into the language of the dominant society to the extent that both demographic weight (a high ratio of slaves to master class) and

direct social contact make such transfer possible. Beginning with demographics, simple ratios are not enough to ensure language transfer. During the early colonial period, Native Americans outnumbered Spaniards by as much as 100,000 to 1, but as long as the Spanish lived in walled cities or fortified coastal enclaves, they may as well have been living on a space station. Mexico City for example was originally walled off from the millions of surrounding indigenous residents, and Spaniards had contact with only a tiny handful of bilingual Indian or *mestizo* intermediaries. The Spaniards did not learn the indigenous language, and most of the indigenous population learned no Spanish. The bilingual and bicultural individuals who served as bridges between the two societies allowed for a little cross-fertilization, but it was only when the walls came down and a large mestizo class came into its own—and moved in among the Spaniards—that serious linguistic influence of indigenous languages on Spanish could become possible. In most instances this meant simply transfer of individual words such such as *chocolate*, *tomate*, *zacate*, *tecolote*, *poncho*, *jaguar*, *cóndor*, but when a bilingual population—retaining structural features of the indigenous language while speaking Spanish—became numerically and socially predominant, even monolingual Spanish usage was affected. This occurred, for example, in Paraguay and much of the Andean region, where grammatical patterns derived from the indigenous languages are used by Spanish speakers with no Native American heritage. A key factor facilitating the transfer of structural patterns from the indigenous languages to Spanish was the fact that in a given area, a single native language predominated. Indigenous residents continued to communicate with one another in their own language, and their approximations to Spanish all shared a common basis, reflecting the patterns of that native language. For example, bilingual Andean speakers frequently produce possessive constructions such as *de Juan su mamá* instead of *la mamá de Juan*, a direct translation of the Quechua possessive. Use of such patterns by thousands of bilingual/bicultural speakers is reinforced by the common awareness of a similar pattern in the shared native language. Much the same occurs in bilingual Spanish-English groups throughout the United States; a Cuban-American from south Florida, a Puerto Rican or Dominican from New York City, a Mexican-American from California or Texas, and a speaker from one of the isolated Spanish-speaking communities of Louisiana or New Mexico—not to mention the thousands of English-speaking students who are learning Spanish as a second language—will all understand the distinctly non-Spanish construction *Clinton está corriendo para presidente*, based on the shared knowledge of English. In Africa, Portuguese is spoken for example in Angola, in contact with the Bantu languages KiMbundu and KiKongo (Lipski 1995b). Particularly KiKongo is characterized by double negation, and Angolan Portuguese frequently uses combinations such as *não sei não* 'I don't know.' KiMbundu also does not move question words to the beginning of the sentence, and Angolan Portuguese uses questions such as *Você faz isso porquê*? 'Why are you doing that?' These constructions are easily understood by all Angolans because they reflect patterns in the prevailing local languages.

They are also contagiously picked up by Europeans living in Angola, even those who already spoke Portuguese prior to arrival. In the Philippines, Spanish is still spoken in some areas; these speakers use the predominant VERB + SUBJECT + OBJECT order of all Philippine languages, thus *Tiene Juan una casa*. Also frequent among all Spanish-speaking Filipinos is the expression *él cuidao, tú cuidao*, etc., roughly meaning 'he, you will take care of a situation,' which is a direct translation of an expression found in most Philippine languages, combining the subject pronoun with the word for 'care' or 'attention.' All Filipinos, regardless of their particular native language, share these patterns and readily understand the Philippine-Spanish equivalents (Lipski 1992b).

For a variety of reasons, the relationship between African languages and Spanish in the Caribbean was substantially different than in the cases just mentioned. First, Africans in Latin America usually did not enjoy the possibility of a shared common language. More by circumstance than by deliberate design, slaving ships typically picked up loads of slaves from several West African ports before traversing the Atlantic, and a shipment of slaves could contain speakers of a dozen mutually unintelligible languages. Moreover, at least six major African language families were involved in the Afro-Hispanic mix (Atlantic, Mande, Kru, Kwa, Congo-Benue and Bantu), each of which has totally different structures, and which share almost no common denominators at all. Unlike the case of Angola, the United States, or the Philippines, a typical heterogenous group of Africans acquiring Spanish could not use loan-translations from their native languages that would be widely understood by Africans of different backgrounds.

In such countries as Angola, Equatorial Guinea (Lipski 1985), and the Philippines, most individuals who use Spanish or Portuguese do so primarily with foreign expatriates, and less commonly with fellow citizens from other language backgrounds. They are never deprived of the use of their native language within the family, in the marketplace, on the street, and usually in school and in the workplace. When turning to Spanish or Portuguese, these speakers naturally draw upon their native language for structural patterns and pronunciation. At the same time, Spanish or Portuguese are typically acquired first in school, in a standardized version that lacks a colloquial register. This partially counteracts the tendency to carry over traits of the native language to the school language, by providing a constant reinforcement of the prescribed combinations.

Until the 19th century, Africans in the Spanish Caribbean usually worked on small farms, in placer gold deposits (panning for gold in river beds), or as domestic servants and laborers in cities and towns. In the largest cities, Africans were sometimes allowed to form socio-religious societies based on membership in a specific African ethnic group, which may have facilitated retention of some African languages beyond the first generation, but in general when Africans found themselves together in Latin America, they had to resort to Spanish. This situation predominated throughout the entire Caribbean area, including Cuba, Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo, coastal Venezuela and Colombia, and Panama, until the very end of the 18th century. Following the early use of Africans in placer gold mining, pearl diving, and agriculture, the importation of

Africans dropped drastically in all of these areas, except for the Colombian port of Cartagena de Indias, through which nearly all slaves destined for the northwestern part of South America passed. Thus although in some regions the population of African origin was considerable, most Afro-Hispanics had been born in the colonies in close contact with native speakers of Spanish. Only in a few of the largest cities, such as Havana and Cartagena, did even a minimal amount of ghettoization take place, which may have fostered the retention of certain ethnically marked words or pronunciation, similar to inner city neighborhoods in the United States, or the townships of *apartheid*-era South Africa. In the remaining places, the ratio of African-born workers who learned Spanish as a second language (these were known as *bozales*) was always small in comparison to the native Spanish-speaking population—black and white.

Matters changed rapidly following the Haitian revolution, which began in 1791. The French half of the island of Hispaniola, known as Saint-Domingue, was by far the world's largest sugar producer at the end of the 18th century, and the ratio of black slaves to white masters was as high as 100:1 on some plantations. Following the revolution and the establishment of the free nation of Haiti by the 1820's, sugar production dropped almost to zero, and other Latin American countries which had previously been reluctant to compete against the French near-monopoly rushed to fill the gap. This required the immediate importation of hundreds of thousands of additional laborers, the majority of whom came directly from Africa, with a considerable number also drawn from other established Caribbean colonies. The two largest participants in the new sugar boom were Brazil and Cuba. In Cuba, to give an idea of the explosive growth of the African population, up until 1761, approximately 60,000 African slaves had been taken to Cuba. Between 1762 and 1780 some 20,000 more slaves were imported. From 1780 to 1820 the number jumps dramatically: more than 310,000 African *bozales* arrived during this period, bringing the total number of slaves taken between the first colonization and 1820—the **beginning** of the sugar boom—to around 390,000. By 1861, this number had jumped again, to an astonishing 849,000, which means that nearly 86% of all slaves taken to Cuba arrived during the first half of the 19th century. Extrapolating to allow for underreporting and clandestine traffic, some historians estimate a total as high as 1.3 million African *bozales* taken to Cuba during the entire slave trade.

Puerto Rico also participated in the explosive growth of sugar plantations, although on a proportionally smaller scale. Out of a total of 75,000 African slaves estimated to have arrived in Puerto Rico during the colonial period, almost 60,000 arrived in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Among other Spanish American colonies which saw rapid grown of the African-born population to meet new agricultural production demands were Venezuela (principally the production of cacao, which had started in the 17th century) and Peru (cotton and sugar cane).

Unlike in earlier times, the last wave of Africans arriving in the Spanish Caribbean was often divided into larger groups speaking a single language. This is because only a few large slave traders remained in business, and had established themselves in ethnically homogeneous

African ports. In Cuba, Yoruba speakers from southwestern Nigeria (known as *lucumíes*) represented the largest group, and provided the linguistic and cultural basis for the Afro-Cuban religion *santería*. Igbo- and Efik-speaking *carabalíes* (from southeastern Nigeria) also arrived in large numbers, and their language contributed to the secret Afro-Cuban society known as *Abakuá*. Groups of KiKongo speakers (known as *congos*, from modern Zaire and northern Angola) and Fongbe speakers (known as *ararás*, from modern Benin and Togo) were also found in Cuba, and to this day musical, cultural, religious, and linguistic traditions from these African ethnic groups remain in Cuba, Haiti, Trinidad, and other Caribbean areas. This created the conditions for wider use of African languages in the Caribbean colonies, and Africans who spoke less common languages learned major African languages such as Yoruba and KiKongo in the Caribbean, much as major regional languages are used as lingua francas throughout Africa.

Equally important in the search for African roots in Caribbean Spanish is the fact that the newly arrived African workers were highly concentrated in sprawling sugar plantations known as *ingenios*, housed in barracks or *barracones*, and deprived of the broad-based contact with native speakers of Spanish that earlier generations of Africans had encountered. A description of one such estate written in 1849 by the English traveller Richard Madden (1849: 156), graphically describes the living conditions:

> The appearance of the negroes on this estate was wretched in the extreme; they looked jaded to death, listless, stupified, haggard, and emaciated: how different from the looks of the pampered, petted, well-fed, idle, domestic slaves of the Dons of the Havana! The clothing of the Olanda negroes was old and ragged ... they lived here in huts, near the Ingenio, but very miserable places, unfit for the habitation of wild beasts that it might be thought desirable to keep in health or comfort ...

Newly-arrived *bozales* rarely communicated with white plantation owners or even working-class whites, but rather with a small group of free black or mulatto foremen, slavedrivers, and overseers, known as *mayorales*, *contramayorales*, and *capataces*. These free blacks spoke Spanish natively, although given their own relative isolation from wider segments of the Spanish-speaking population, they may have used an ethnically marked variety. These large slave plantations deprived most of the African-born workers from acquiring full native competence in Spanish, although even with the use of some African languages, the slaves inevitably had to use Spanish with the overseers, as well as with some of the other Africans. The combination of a need to speak Spanish and the absence of sufficient native speakers resulted in the formation of a PIDGIN or reduced form of Spanish. Imagine for example that everyone in this room had taken a year or two of college Spanish, but that most of us had no native language in common (allowing perhaps for groups of 2-3 with the same native language). Imagine also that we were all on a cruise ship, which shipwrecked near a deserted island (before the days of cellular phones). In this environment, we would have to use our rudimentary Spanish—better in some, worse in others—with one another,

without the possibility of consulting grammar books, and without any native speakers either correcting us or adding to our knowledge of vocabulary and structure. As the years went by, we would all become more proficient at communicating with one another, developing new circumlocutions and paraphrases for Spanish vocabulary items that nobody in the group knew. The language might stabilize somewhat, so that for example if nobody knew the word for 'fire,' a combination such as *luz caliente* might become widely used. It's also possible that a word from one of the native languages of the group might surface and be accepted by other group members. This is one way in which a pidgin is formed; in other circumstances, pidgins exist for longer periods of time in multilingual trading areas such as much of West Africa, the China Coast and the South Pacific during the 19th century. Sometimes native speakers of the full language also learn the pidgin deliberately, in order to communicate more effectively with speakers of other languages. Over time, words and expressions from the pidgin may even slip into the dominant language from which the pidgin was derived. Modern English retains Asian/Pacific pidgin English expressions like *long time no see*, *no can do*, and *have a look-see*.

In a multilingual pidgin-speaking environment such as a large plantation or our hypothetical group of shipwrecked Spanish students, nature will eventually take its course, love will leap across the communication gap, and couples who can communicate with each other only using a pidgin will produce offspring. What happens when children are born to pidgin-speaking parents who share no native language? Inevitably, each child will acquire at least one non-pidgin language, since parents will speak to their children at least part of the time using the language which is closest to their hearts, namely their native tongue. However, the children will also acquire the language that their parents speak to one another and to other community members. Rather than being a haphazard improvization invented by adult second-language learners, the child will acquire the pidgin as another **native** language. Children who speak a pidgin natively will not regard it any differently from other languages, and will be unaware of its origins as an improvizational strategy. They will further extend the vocabulary and structure of the pidgin, creating more elaborate patterns and giving the language greater inter-speaker consistency. The language thus becomes a **creole**, that is to say, a restructured version of the language that was originally pidginized. This is not the only way in which a creole is formed, but it is a common enough scenario. A creole has thus passed through a historical DISCONTINUITY; it is not simply the result of normal language change, but has rather suffered an abrupt change caused by the intermediate presence of a pidgin which was nobody's native language, and which contained structures and combinations not present in the original language. Decades or centuries after the fact, it is usually impossible to tell whether a given language has passed through the PIDGIN + CREOLE stage or whether it has simply followed a normal course of evolution unaffected by language contact phenomena. A comparison of earlier stages of a language with later periods, combined with a comparative knowledge of typical forms of language

change, may allow for an educated guess as to whether or not a creole stage intervened, but in the absence of historical and demographic information which explicitly documents the rupture caused by pidginization, the true answer may never be known.

For more than half a century in the Spanish Caribbean, social and demographic conditions existed which necessitated the use of a Spanish-based pidgin by African-born *bozales*. Their attempts at speaking Spanish are well-documented, as we shall see shortly. What is less clear is whether *bozal* pidgin Spanish ever became a native language in the Caribbean, and whether subsequent reentry into mainstream regional varieties of Spanish produced a permanent African imprint. In the most isolated slave barracks of large plantations, Spanish pidgin undoubtedly became the native languages of children born in these difficult conditions, and given the social isolation of black plantation laborers, a creolized Spanish may have existed for at least a generation in a few of the largest *ingenios*. However, following the abolition of slavery in the Spanish Caribbean around the middle of the 19th century, even African-born *bozales* were placed in contact with large numbers of native Spanish speakers. If a Spanish- based creole ever existed in the 19th century Caribbean, it was a fleeting occurrence in a few of the largest plantations, and quickly rejoined the mainstream of Spanish following the integration of the Afro-Hispanic population. There is less likelihood that Spanish became a creole language in the Caribbean prior to the 19th century, except in highly exceptional cases. From the earliest colonial times, slaves often escaped and formed isolated maroon villages, where Spanish-based pidgins and creoles undoubtedly flourished briefly before being extinguished or re-absorbed by the dominant population. A few of these 'special' forms of Afro-Hispanic language made their way into historical accounts, and in addition to fragmentary hints scattered throughout remote Afro-American communities in the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Panama, Colombia, and Venezuela, at least one full creole language has survived to the present day, in the Colombian village of San Basilio de Palenque, near Cartagena.

Possible vectors for Afro-Hispanic penetration of Caribbean Spanish

If we assume for the moment that at least some Africans and their descendents in the Spanish Caribbean spoke a Spanish-based pidgin or creole, or an ethnically distinct 'black Spanish,' how could such a language exert a permanent influence on the speech of non-African speakers? There are actually several possible mechanisms, each of which was operative at one time or another. First, in areas where the population of African origin was proportionally large, eventual intermarriage with individuals of European ancestry, together with the social levelling created by the abolition of slavery and the gradual disappearance of elite ruling classes, brought the speech of Afro-Hispanics more and more into the mainstream. At the same time, continued immigration from the poorest areas of Spain resulted in the formation of a white working class, whose members labored alongside slaves and free blacks much as occurred in the southern United States. As a result white Spanish speakers picked up

words, expressions, and sometimes even pronunciation patterns from their black co-workers. Throughout Latin America, emigration from the countryside to the cities has been constant, and in the Caribbean this brought predominantly black villagers and former plantation laborers into urban neighborhoods, where their language interacted with regional Spanish. Much as has occurred in other societies, these words and expressions work their way up from the most marginalized working classes into the middle class, to eventually enter the general language. Words like *chévere*, *marimba*, *ñame*, *cumbia*, *ñinga*, and *bitute* are used throughout the Caribbean, much as *jazz*, *juke* (as in *juke-joint*, *juke-box*), *banjo*, *mojo* (as in *I've got my mojo working*), *goober* (peanut), *tote* (carry), and *yam* (the vegetable) have entered mainstream American English.

In wealthier families, children were cared for by black servants. The white children learned the language of their black caretakers and their children, and as occurred in the southern United States, grew up in effect bi-dialectal. Finally, as the popular music of Afro-Hispanic groups caught on with middle-class youth, words and expressions originally reserved for speakers of African descent became part of popular culture. The Argentine *tango* was once the exclusive purview of black residents —who formed 30%-40% of the population of Buenos Aires and Montevideo at the time of colonial independence—the same as the Veracruz *jorocho*, the Cuban *son*, the Dominican *merengue*, the Colombian *cumbia*, the Peruvian *marinera*, the Puerto Rican *plena* and *bomba*, and the Venezuelan *salsa*. As this music became accessible to wider segments of the population, the remnants of Afro-Hispanic language found in the earliest musical forms also lost their ethnic designations.

Documentation of earlier Afro-Hispanic language

What sort of documentation exists of former Afro-Hispanic language and how can such information be used to reconstruct the African impact on Caribbean Spanish? Beginning at the end of the 15th century, Spanish and Portuguese writers produced literary imitations of the speech of African-born *bozales* who struggled to learn European languages. Even before black slaves arrived in large numbers in Latin America, southern Portugal and Spain contained thousands of Africans, and such prominent writers as Gil Vicente, Lope de Rueda, Góngora, Quevedo, Lope de Vega, Calderón de la Barca, and—in Spanish America—Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz included imitations of Africanized Spanish (Castellano 1961; Lipski 1986a, 1986b, 1986c, 1988, 1992a, 1995a, 1998; Chasca 1946; Dunzo 1974; Granda 1969; Jason 1965, 1967; Ríos de Torres 1991; Veres 1950; Weber de Kurlat 1962a, 1962b, 1970). Some of these authors had extensive contact with African *bozales* and probably wrote accurate imitations. For example, the early 16th century playwright Lope de Rueda played the part of black characters in the theatre troupe which he led, and prided himself on the authenticity of his 'Africanized' language. In effect, a comparison of his literary examples with existent Afro-Hispanic and Afro-Hispanic pidgins and creoles bears out these claims. However, most of the other writers were more interested in the comic value of racist stereotypes, which inevitably portrayed Africans as buffoons and simpletons. The 17th century satirist

Quevedo quipped that in order to speak *guineo*—as he called *bozal* Spanish—it sufficed to change all /r/'s into /l/: *Francisco* > *Flancisco*, *primo* > *plimo*, etc. Although some African language families do produce this type of interference, others distinguish /l/ and /r/ perfectly; Spanish writers uncritically adopted literary formulas of deformed pronunciation, misconjugated verbs, and humorous but unbelievable words such as *cagayera* for *caballero*. Such language even made its way into Catholic religious practice, where humorous madrigals known as *negrillos* were sung in churches and cathedrals in Spain and Spanish America through the end of the 18th century. Lacking in all authors prior to the 19th century is any sympathy for the plight of black slaves and free workers, as well as an interest in accurately portraying Afro-Hispanic language. More critically lacking is the voice of the Africans themselves. With the exception of a few black Spaniards who managed to become educated and well-respected, such as the 17th century scholar Juan Latino (who wrote in impeccably ornate Spanish), the Africans' own voice is completely absent from literature. In the theater, black characters were portrayed by white actors in blackface, and increasingly, Spanish authors relied on second-hand information in the representation of Afro-Hispanic pidgin, since the majority of blacks in Spain and Spanish America were native-born and spoke Spanish with no distinguishing characteristics. Thus in the balance, the entire corpus of pre-19th century Afro-Hispanic imitations must be approached with extreme caution. There are indeed kernels of truth sandwiched amidst the crude parodies and parrot-like author-to-author mimicking, but only the barest skeleton of reconstructable language emerges. The few trustworthy common denominators which can be extracted from these texts show a range of approximations to Spanish that differ little if at all from what is found among our own English-speaking students' performance in our Spanish classrooms. In particular, there is no evidence of a consistent restructuring of Spanish, either in terms of copying African language constructions or the development of innovations from within the Afro-Hispanic community.

Beginning around the turn of the 19th century in Latin America, there is a great outpouring of imitations of *bozal* language; by far the most extensive corpus comes from Cuba, the second largest group comes from Buenos Aires and Montevideo, with relatively small numbers of texts coming from Peru and Puerto Rico. Significantly, there are no known *bozal* imitations from the Dominican Republic, Venezuela, Panama, or Colombia from this time period, reflecting the proportionally small number of African-born *bozales* in these colonies. The existent Afro-Caribbean texts run the gamut from the crude parodies of past centuries to reasonably accurate travellers' observations, anthropological descriptions of local customs and language, and works written by abolitionist authors who had no reason to denigrate Afro-Hispanic language. At the end of the 18th century, the Spanish priest Duque de Estrada (Laviña 1989) living in Havana published a manual for other priests to teach the Catechism to African-born *bozales*. Although both condescending and designed to convince Africans that slavery was the will of God (portrayed as the 'great overseer'), the approximations to *bozal* language show nothing other than

simplified Spanish with lapses in agreement and many circumlocutions: 'yo soi un pobre esclavo, yo tiene dos gallinas no más, gente tiene suelto su cochino, cochino come mi gallina. Yo ya no tiene con que comprar tabaco ni nada ... ¿yo va andando en cueros?' In the 1840's—as the sugar plantation boom entered its most frenzied period—the Cuban lexicographer Esteban Pichardo (1849) wrote in the introduction to the second edition of his dictionary of Cubanisms an unflattering but reasonably accurate description of *bozal* Spanish, as well as the Spanish pidgin spoken by Chinese indentured laborers and Mayan Indians from the Yucatan who had been forced into servitude in Cuba:

> Otro lenguaje relajado y confuso se oye diariamente en toda la Isla, por donde quiera, entre los *Negros bozales*, o naturales de Africa, como sucedía con el Francés *Criollo* de Santo Domingo: este lenguaje es comun e idéntico en los Negros, sean de la Nación que fuesen, y que se conservan eternamente, a ménos que hayan venido mui niños: es un Castellano desfigurado, chapurrado, sin concordancia, número, declinación ni conjugación, sin R fuerte, S ni D final, frecuentemente trocadas la Ll por la Ñ, la E por la I, la G por la V &; en fin, una jerga más confusa mientras más reciente la inmigración; pero que se deja entender de cualquiera Español fuera de algunas palabras comunes a todos, que necesitan de traducción. Para formarse una ligera idea de esto, vertiremos "na respuesta de las ménos difíciles: "yo mi ñama Frasico Mandinga, neglito reburujaoro, crabo musuamo ño Mingué, de la Cribanerí, branco como carabon, suña como nan gato, poco poco mirá oté, cribi papele toro ri toro ri, Frasico dale dinele, non gurbia dinele, e laja cabesa, e bebe guariente, e coje la cuelo, guanta qui guanta"... los negros criollos hablan como los blancos del país de su nacimiento o vecindad: aunque en la Habana y Matanzas algunos de los que se titulan *Curros* usan la i por la r y la l, v.g. "poique ei niño puee considerai que es mejoi dinero que papel" ...'

Towards the end of the 19th century, the Cuban writer Antonio Bachiller y Morales (1883), responding to a written request by the German philologist and creole language researcher Hugo Schuchardt wrote an imitation of the *bozal* language which he still heard on a daily basis: 'Ah, si oté no lo cubrá,si oté tovía no fué, ¿pa que buca que bebé? ¿Con qué oté lo va pagá?' All of these imitations show no evidence of grammatical restructuring, but only the sort of errors found among all second-language learners of Spanish.

Beginning in the 19th century, a small but important group of Afro-Cubans also found a literary voice, and were able to describe their own situation. The most important surviving work is the autobiography of Juan Francisco Manzano, a slave who was born in Havana around the turn of the 19th century. Raised in an aristocratic family, Manzano was able to teach himself to read and write, and began to compose poetry at an early age. This does not mean, however, that his childhood and adolescence were happy and carefree. To the contrary, the young Manzano was made to work long hours at arduous housecleaning tasks in the Havana residence and later in on a sugar estate in Matanzas, and he often received cruel punishments for real or perceived transgressions.

In 1839 Manzano wrote his autobiography, a highly stylized denunciation

of slavery, a work which was translated into English and published in England by the abolitionist Richard Madden, whose description of Cuban slavery we have already noted. For obvious reasons the work was not published or even known in Cuba, until Calcagno included some excerpts in the anthology *Poetas de color* (1878). The full autobiography was not published until 1937 (Franco 1937). Manzano's auto-biography, as might be supposed, shows no traces of Afro-Hispanic language, since Manzano was a Cuban-born slave who was raised in close proximity to educated native speakers of Spanish. His writings, however, are replete with orthographic mistakes and odd turns of phrase, and while not part of the *bozal* corpus, do provide an insight into the situation of American-born slaves who attained a modicum of literacy. Given his life, Manzano's choice of language had little to do with the highly Africanized Spanish of the slave barracks. This consideration would make suspect any use of Afro-Cuban oral traditions, or any other strictly vernacular usage. Manzano, however, makes no such reference; rather his possible slips lie in the direction of pan-Cuban popular Spanish, tendencies which were found in the unguarded speech of even the most aristocratic members of society, while having a higher frequency among the lower sociolects. Although shedding little light on colonial Afro-Cuban speech, Manzano's autobiography is linguistically important for other reasons. In a very real sense, the Manzano text is similar to documents from earlier centuries, in Spain and Latin America, written by semi-literate military or civilian personnel, or copied by scribes with questionable levels of functional literacy. His writings exemplify the language of American-born blacks, and is important in assessing the sort of language that was used among Afro-Hispanics in the 19th century Caribbean.

Variants of *bozal* language appear in several 19th century Cuban novels, most of which were written as anti-slavery documents. By far the most famous is *Cecilia Valdés*, by Cirilo Villaverde (1979). Villaverde was in a position to closely observe different varieties of Afro-Cuban speech, and indeed he based his black characters on individuals whom he had known personally. He was also sympathetic to the situation of Cuban blacks, and did not seek to ridicule any of his characters through use of language. We may therefore tentatively take the *bozal* imitations in *Cecilia Valdés* to have at least some basis in observed reality:

> Labana etá perdía, niña. Toos son mataos y ladronisio. Ahora mismito han desplumao un cristián alante de mi sojo. Uno niño blanca, muy bonite. Lo abayunca entre un pardo con jierre po atrá y un moreno po alantre, arrimao al cañón delasquina de San Terese. De día crara, niño, lo quitan la reló y la dinere. Yo no queriba mirá. Pasa bastante gente. Yo conoce le moreno, é le sijo de mi marío. Me da mieo. Entoavía me tiembla la pecho.

Another well-known Cuban abolitionist novel containing purported Afro-Cuban *bozal* speech is *Francisco*, by Anselmo Suárez y Romero (1947), originally published in 1839, containing examples like: 'sí, siñó, contramayorá manda mí, sí, siñó, yo va caminá ... que va hacé, pobre clavo? Ese ta malo que ta la carreta.' Suárez y Romero shared with Juan Manzano a common mentor, Domingo del

Monte, who urged both the white Suárez and the mulatto Manzano to produce literary works which could aid the abolitionist cause in Europe and ultimately in Cuba itself. Martín Morúa Delgado, another 19th century Cuban abolitionist writer, employed *bozal* language in his novels *Sofía* (1972) and *La familia Unzúazu* (1975). A few 19th century Cuban novels contain only tiny fragments of *bozal* language: 'Médico. ¿Y pa qué? Neye lo que tiene só un bariga con su yijo lentro. Lo góripe que siá dao pué binilo un malo paito, pero entuabía se pué remedialo. ¿Sisita médico pa sujetá un criatula?' For example, Francisco Calcagno's (1977) well-known *Romualdo: uno de tantos* (first published in 1881, and written some time before): 'ése no son la jijo francé, ése viene langenio chiquitico ... no quiere la mayorá. no quiere cadena con maza ...' Another abolitionist novel with *bozal* fragments is José Antonio Ramos' *Caniquí* (1963): 'Camina po lo suelo, niña asustá, camina po lo suelo, cueva tapá camina po lo suelo, no sale má manque te juya tú báa morí coggao.' This novel is set in the slaving area of Trinidad, Cuba, in the 1830's, but it was written a century later, in a modern Cuba where slavery was but a distant echo of the past.

These abolitionist writers, whose imitations of *bozal* speech cannot be dismissed as racist parodies, were responsible for only a fraction of the Afro-Hispanic literary imitations from the 19th century Caribbean. Much more frequent were poems, newspaper columns, plays and novels, whose authenticity ranged from the most vulgar stereotypes to accurate—if not flattering—approximations to Afro-Hispanic pidgin. The sheer number of such texts, as well as the availability of information on the authors, makes evaluation of the linguistic details somewhat easier, especially when compared with the living memories described previously.

More important for the reconstruction of Afro-Caribbean Spanish is the fact that the last African-born *bozales* arrived in the Caribbean around the middle of the 19th century; some of the speakers survived until the middle of the 20th century, where their voices and recollections were transcribed by unbiased and talented contemporary or recently deceased writers such as the Cubans Alejo Carpentier and Lydia Cabrera. The largest body of Caribbean *bozal* language comes from the extensive writings of Lydia Cabrera (born in 1900, died in 1990), whose amateurish but generally accurate reproductions of the Afro-Hispanic speech which she heard during the first decades of her life correlate closely with empirical observations made by trained linguists (Cabrera 1970a, 1970b, 1970c, 1971, 1975, 1976, 1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1983, 1989).

Despite the critical importance of obtaining samples of the last living *bozales* or their immediate offspring, almost no field research has been done by contemporary Caribbean linguists. Elderly former slaves or the children of former slaves are among the most marginalized citizens of the Spanish Caribbean, and within these nations there has been little interest in tapping the vast historical and cultural knowledge which they represent. Unlike what happened in many former British and French Caribbean colonies, the Spanish Caribbean nations are not run by primarily Afro-American governments, and there have been no nationwide African roots revival movements which would stimulate interest in the language and customs of Afro-Hispanics. As an

example of the contrast in national attitudes, the Trinidadian historian and linguist Maureen Warner-Lewis (1991: xx) writes of newly independent Trinidad that 'In the second half of the twentieth century there were still people alive who remembered their ancestors from Africa and who could sing and speak in African tongues. This had important implications for our sense of historical depth, our sense of historical and cultural possession, as well as our ability to reconstruct the processes of cultural transmission in the New World.' Although the same situation obtained for the Spanish Caribbean, there was no comparable interest in tracing the African roots of countries which still continued to identify themselves as anything but African.

The exceptions to this trend have made little impact on Afro-Hispanic linguistic studies. In 1965, a Cuban linguist jotted down some observations gleaned a few years earlier from elderly former slaves (Alzola 1965). In 1963, a 104-year-old former slave—Esteban Montejo—was interviewed and taped by the Cuban writer Miguel Barnet (1966), whose interest lay more in relating 19th century slave revolts with the Cuban Revolution than in reconstructing Afro-Hispanic language and culture. Although this slave was Cuban-born and spoke vernacular Cuban Spanish, he recalled the speech of *bozales* and offered accurate imitations:

> Criollo camina allá adonde yo te diga, que yo te va a regalá a ti una cosa ... Usté, criollo, son bobo ... mire, usté ve eso, con eso usté consigue tó en cosa ... Mientras tú trabaja mayombe, tú son dueño e tierra ... Tú son bueno y callao, yo va a contá a ti una cosa ...

His own father had been born in Nigeria, and his godfather was presumably a *congo*. The *bozal* language of Montejo's recollections is unremarkable, in no way suggesting a stable creole language with non-Hispanic syntax. Montejo himself declared (p. 158):

> Les decían bozales por decirles algo, y por que hablaban de acuerdo con la lengua de su país. Hablaban distinto, eso era todo. Yo no los tenía en ese sentido, como bozales; al contrario, yo los respeteba ... esa palabra, bozales, era incorrecta. Ya no se oye, porque poco a poco los negros de nación se han ido muriendo ...

Last year, a former student of mine, Luis Ortiz (Ortiz López 1996), travelled to extremely isolated areas of eastern Cuba and interviewed elderly Afro-Cubans, many of whom were over 100 years old, and who vividly recalled the speech of now-deceased *bozales*. Most of the recollections fit with the pattern of Spanish as a second language, although in Havana itself, some Afro-Cubans recall having heard *bozal* language that might have been more internally coherent, and therefore possibly the first stages of a true creole. Thus the trail of living Afro-Caribbean speech is not entirely cold, given the existence until the late 1950's of the last living *bozales*, and the current existence of elderly Cubans who recall the Africanized Spanish which they heard in their youth.

There is still considerable fieldwork to be done throughout the Caribbean, which may shed light on earlier Afro-Hispanic language, despite the fact that the last of the slaves are long gone, and in most regions so is any ethnically marked variety of Spanish. Despite the relatively small

geographical size of the noticeably Afro-American areas of the Caribbean, there has been little serious fieldwork designed to uncover vestiges of earlier *bozal* language. Moreover, within many Afro-Caribbean communities, African linguistic carryovers are not shared with outsiders, but may form part of ceremonial language or in-group speech; thus, considerable ingenuity and plain luck may be required to ferret out remaining evidence of Africanized Spanish. I have already mentioned one intrepid fieldworker who traversed eastern Cuba, often crossing mountains by mule-back, to interview elderly residents whose voices and memories had never before been catalogued. A graduate student at the City University of New York has come upon some decidedly creolized language in some remote villages of the Dominican Republic, despite the fact that the most 'Africanized' Dominican villages had already been scoured by other linguists in search of post-*bozal* evidence. The isolated settlements of northwestern Colombia, known as the Chocó, have recently turned up possible evidence of earlier Africanized Spanish, some of which may have penetrated surrounding coastal dialects. There are Afro-Mexican villages whose language has yet to be recorded, and there are some hints that traces of the once massive presence of Africanized Spanish along Mexico's Caribbean coast may still be found. In Panama, I have done field-work with the so-called *Negros Congos* (Lipski 1989), Afro-Panamanians who natively speak the local variety of Spanish, but who also speak a special language during Carnival season which they claim is derived from former *bozal* Spanish. Although much of the *Congo* language is really just humorous improvization and word-play, there are also legitimate remnants of *bozal* Spanish which could not possibly have been invented in modern times by these isolated and nearly illiterate communities. I have also worked with the few remaining speakers of Spanish on the Caribbean island of Trinidad (Lipski 1990), some of whose speech can be traced back to the days of Spanish slavery, and contains *bozal* traits. In Puerto Rico, I have delved into Afro-American villages, where nearly all traces of *bozal* language have faded, but where songs and oral traditions contain small nuggets of information. There is much work still to be done in Afro-Bolivian communities, in the interior of the Afro-Ecuadoran province of Esmeraldas, in the Afro-Uruguayan *comparsas* or Carnival societies—which still sing songs in *bozal* language and may hold the key to further information on Afro-Rio Platense speech—in the Afro-Peruvian villages to the north and south of Lima on the Pacific coast (distinctly Africanized language and songs have been recorded in several such villages), in some remote Afro-Venezuelan villages in the eastern coastal region (despite considerable work already done on Afro-Venezuelan language). Africans were held only in small numbers in Paraguay and Chile, but at least in the former country a few descendents still remain, and given the paucity of knowledge of ethnic varieties of Paraguayan Spanish, some information may be recoverable. Naturally, there is still much research to be carried out in countries where Afro-Hispanic language has been the subject of serious study: the last word has yet to be heard of Africanized Spanish in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, and so forth.

There is a final possible hunting ground for surviving traces of earlier Afro-

Caribbean Spanish, which to date has received absolutely no attention. Indeed, the geographical location where such a search might begin seems incredible at first sight: West Africa, the very region from which the majority of Africans arriving in the 19th century Caribbean were taken. In the final decades of the 19th century, there arose "return to Africa" movements in Brazil and Cuba, as well as in some Caribbean colonies. Many African-born Brazilians and even some of their descendents returned to Nigeria and especially Benin, where their descendents still identify themselves as 'Brazilians' (Cunha 1985, Krasnowolski 1987, Turner 1975, Olinto 1964, Verger 1969). This reverse diaspora actually began towards the end of the 18th century, where Brazilian slaves who had been freed or purchased their freedom established themselves in Whydah, Dahomey, where they maintained Brazilian customs and lifestyle, and at times even participated in the final decades of the Atlantic slave trade.

Afro-Cubans also returned to Africa, but in smaller numbers, and beginning well past the first decades of the 19th century. It is possible that in Benin they blended in with the already established Afro-Brazilian population, an easy task, both culturally and linguistically. The most well-documented Afro-Cuban return migration was to Nigeria, the homeland of the Yoruba-speaking *Lucumíes*. Africans who had spent decades in Cuba began returning to Nigeria as early as the 1840's, and in the 1850's a document produced in Lagos quotes one returnee as describing the difference between slave-holding within Africa and slavery in the Caribbean (Pérez de la Riva 1974: 175): 'Los negros no Jesú: los blancos todo religión.' This brief statement suggests that *bozal* Spanish made its way back to West Africa. More than a century later, in fact just over a decade ago a Cuban scholar (Sarracino 1988) visited Lagos, Nigeria, where he met children and grandchildren of these repatriated *bozales*, some of whom were able to converse in (presumably *bozal*) Spanish (cf. also Pérez de la Riva 1974). Unfortunately, neither recordings nor detailed linguistic observations were made, and given the political instability and urban explosion of Lagos, Nigeria, the chances of recovering *bozal* language in this West African setting grow slimmer by the day. Rural areas of Nigeria and Benin, where family oral traditions still predominate over mass media culture, may still be viable sites for Afro-Hispanic field research. Finally, the Cuban linguist Sergio Valdés Bernal, who lived for a time in Angola, reports meeting a (possibly *bozal*) Spanish-speaking descendent of a Cuban slave in that African nation.

Possibly African imprints in Caribbean Spanish

I have suggested in the preceding remarks that throughout the Caribbean, Africans who acquired Spanish as a second language spoke it with much the same difficulties as experienced by other foreign language learners, with each speaker or ethnic group giving the Afro-Hispanic pidgin a slight flavor of one African language or another, but with the common denominators not being uniquely African. Moreover, in reviewing the demographic situation prevailing in most of the colonial Spanish Caribbean, I believe it quite unlikely that a fully creolized form of Spanish ever came into sustained contact with mainstream Spanish —although Spanish unquestionably trans-

muted into a creole here and there as special circumstances stranded heterogenous groups of Africans for a generation or more in plantations, mines, or maroon communities. We have seen that there continue to exist small pockets of distinctly Afro-Hispanic language, set against the backdrop of general vernacular Caribbean Spanish; however, precisely due to the marginality of the groups in question, this particular form of Africanized Spanish has had little opportunity to influence larger regional varieties. What, then, are the demonstrable African imprints in Caribbean Spanish? This question has both obvious and more reclusive answers. The use of African-derived words is beyond question, although even in the most Africanized holdovers in the Spanish Caribbean we do not find loan translations of African idiomatic expressions, such as are commonly found in Caribbean English- and French-based creoles (e.g. *eye water* for 'tears,' *foot* for 'entire leg,' etc.). Throughout the Caribbean, the colloquial use of *hombe* for *hombre* can be heard (even making its way into *merengue* and *vallenato* songs). This is a carryover of the African pronunciation, which often reduced two-consonant groups to a single consonant; for example, in colloquial Brazilian Portuguese, *negro* is pronounced *nego*, used nowadays as a term of endearment with no racial con-notations. More generally, Caribbean Spanish pronunciation is derived from the speech of southern Spain and the Canary Islands, which provided the main trade routes to Spanish America, as well as a high proportion of merchants, settlers, and sailors. Andalusian/Canary Spanish was already weakening or eliminating final consonants at the time of the first Afro-Hispanic contacts. Africans did not initiate these changes; they did, however, extend them far beyond the natural evolution of these processes in Latin American regions lacking a large African population. In contemporary Andalusia and the Canary Islands, the elimination of final consonants takes place at rates as high as the most Africanized forms of Latin American Spanish, presumably because these Spanish dialects already had a 'head start' in terms of this evolutionary process (Lipski 1995a). Within Latin America, however, there is a very high correlation between the extreme elimination of final consonants and sustained African presence, particularly in the last century and a half of colonization. This includes eastern Cuba, most of the interior of the Dominican Republic, the Caribbean coast of Panama, the Chocó and the Pacific coast of Colombia, and the Afro-Hispanic villages of coastal Ecuador and Peru, not to mention Afro-Mexican villages in the states of Oaxaca and Guerrero, where the heavy consonantal reduction stands in stark contrast to the surrounding Mexican dialects, in which final consonants are pronounced strongly.

In the realm of grammar, matters are considerably less clear, but the best estimate that can be made with currently available evidence is that such African traces as are to be found are twice-removed from the direct contact of Spanish and African languages. In addition to the interaction between *bozales* and Spaniards, Caribean Spanish came into contact with a variety of Afro-Atlantic creoles, particularly in the last century of the slave trade, when Cuban and Puerto Rican plantation frantically acquired slaves and free laborers from other Caribbean islands, where established creole languages were spoken

natively by those born on the islands. In one version, this proposal is at the center of a heated debate over creole language formation, while from another viewpoint, the contact of Spanish with Caribbean creoles has scarcely been touched (Lipski 1996, 1998). Based on a handful of suggestive Afro-Cuban texts, together with one Puerto Rican skit, several scholars have suggested that many if not most African slaves arriving in the Caribbean **already** spoke a Portuguese-based creole or at least a stable pidgin, acquired in the major Portuguese slaving depots of West Africa, particularly the island of São Tomé, on which an Afro-Portuguese creole language survives to the present day. São Tomé creole bears striking resemblances with the one surviving Afro-Hispanic creole in Latin America, spoken in the Colombian village of San Basilio de Palenque. Moreover, a description of Africans in Cartagena de Indias (Colombia) written by the priest Alonso de Sandoval (1956: 94) in 1627, stated that many of them spoke 'con la comunicación que con tan bárbaras naciones han tenido el tiempo que han residido en San Thomé, las entienden casi todas con un género de lenguaje muy corrupto y revesado de la portuguesa que llaman lengua de San Thomé ...' However, this refers **only** to slaves shipped through the holding station on São Tomé; of other Africans, Sandoval noted that they spoke only pidginized Spanish, '... al modo que ahora nosotros entendemos y hablamos con todo género de negros y naciones con nuestra lengua española corrupta, como comúnmente la hablan todos los negros.' The creole of San Basilio was formed early in the 17th century, when the Portuguese were still supplying the majority of slaves to Spanish America, mostly through São Tomé. However, beginning in 1640, control of the Atlantic slave trade passed first into Dutch hands, and then successively to British and French dealers, none of whom received slaves from West African areas where any form of Portuguese was widely spoken. In particular, the huge influx of Africans in the 19th century Caribbean came principally from Nigeria, the Slave Coast (Benin and Togo), and the Congo, and there is no indication that any of these Africans spoke creole or non-creole Portuguese (except for one sea captain's log which stated that he had taken a few slaves from the Portuguese-creole speaking Cape Verde Islands to Cuba).

What is documented for the Spanish Caribbean is the presence of other Caribbean creoles, brought first by escaped slaves from neighboring colonies, and then during the 19th century sugar boom by contract laborers. The most prominent Caribbean creole inserted into the Afro-Hispanic cauldron is Papiamento, spoken on the Dutch islands of Curaçao and Aruba. The former island was used by the Dutch for almost two centuries to supply slaves to the Spanish, and the Papiamento language contains approximately equal portions of Spanish and Portuguese. Papiamento speakers are documented in 19th century Cuba and Puerto Rico, where travellers noted their presence, and some songs and poems were even transcribed (Alvarez Nazario 1970: 4; Pasarell 1951: 124). In Venezuela, maroon communities were formed of Papiamento-speaking escaped slaves from nearby Aruba; songs and poems in this language were discovered as late as a few decades ago, and may still be remembered in some villages (Aretz de Ramón and Ramón y Rivera

1955: 72; Domínguez 1989: 12). The linguistic features of Papiamento, including many key words not found in other forms of Afro-Hispanic language, are found in several key Afro-Caribbean Spanish texts which others have used as evidence that Spanish creolized directly (Lipski 1993, 1996, 1998).

Another creole language once found in Cuba and Puerto Rico is Negerhollands, the Dutch-based creole formerly spoken on the Danish-then American Virgin Islands (the last speaker died a few years ago). In the 19th century Negerhollands was the major language of the western Virgin Islands, whence slaves escaped by swimming to nearby Puerto Rican offshore keys. Negerhollands workers from the Virgin Islands were also imported into Cuba, where they worked on sugar plantations with other Caribbean-born laborers.

French-based Haitian Creole has profoundly interacted with Dominican Spanish for more than 200 years, and the language of many Afro-Dominican villages bears traces of Haitian influence (Lipski 1994). A large Haitian community also developed in eastern Cuba, in Oriente and Guantánamo provinces, where they continued to speak a Haitian-influenced Spanish pidgin until only a few years ago (a few elderly Haitians, some over 100 years old, continue to speak in this fashion even today; Ortiz López 1996)). The presence of French creole speakers from the Lesser Antilles is documented for colonial Puerto Rico and 19th century Panama.

Afro-English language first entered the Spanish Caribbean in the form of West African Pidgin English, the Lingua Franca of coastal Nigeria. Pidgin English words made their way into Afro-Cuban Spanish, and are also attested in Puerto Rico. During the sugar plantation boom, English-creole speaking workers from Jamaica arrived in Cuba and Puerto Rico (and during the 20th century also in the Dominican Republic). Creole English speakers from English-speaking Virgin Islands worked in Puerto Rican agriculture, while creole English and French speakers from Trinidad made their way to the Venezuelan mainland, where remnants of their speech—highly reminiscent of earlier *bozal* Spanish—can still be found (Lipski 1996, 1998).

In a few cases, actual words from Caribbean creoles crop up in *bozal* imitations, but this is exceptional. In some Afro-Cuban texts, for example, we find *yijo* (Pap. *yiu*) 'son, daughter,' *agüé* 'today' (this form is still recalled by elderly Afro-Cubans), *ahuora* 'now,' and a couple of other items (Lipski 1993; Ortiz López 1996, 1998):

TRACES OF PAPIAMENTO *YIU* 'SON/DAUGHTER' IN AFRO-CUBAN TEXTS:

Mi *yijo*, gayina negro son mucho, y toíto pone güebo blanco (Martín Morúa Delgado, *La familia Unzúazu*)
no ta sufrí mi *yijo* (Armanda Ruíz García, *Más allá de la nada*)
Yija de mi pecho son (Ignacio Benítez del Cristo, "Los novios catedráticos")
Si mañana *yijo* füíri, ¿quién llora su madrina? (Lydia Cabrera, *Por qué*)
ay, *yijo*, yo no tiene carabela aquí. (Lydia Cabrera, *La sociedad secreta Abakuá*)
si, *yijo*, es mío el quimbombó (Lydia Cabrera, *El monte*)
mi *yijo* Eulogio, nacío y criao en el Guatao (Benjamín Sánchez Maldonado, "Los hijos de Thalía")
¿Tú no ve uno yegua paría que anda con la *yijo* suyo como quien la tiene orgullo

porque saca lotería? (José Silvio Rodríguez, "La esquina de la viajaca")
Neye lo que tiene só un bariga con su *yijo* lentro. (Martín Morúa Delgado, *Sofía*)
tu son mi *yijo*, arrea, vamo ... Yo no tiene mujé, no tiene *yijo* ... (Lydia Cabrera, *Reglas de congo*)

TRACES OF PAPIAMENTO *AWE* 'TODAY' IN AFRO-CUBAN TEXTS:

Poquitico fatá pa que señora murí *agüoí* (Ildefonso Estrada y Zenea, *El quitrín*)
Agüe memo, ñamito (María de Santa Cruz, *Historias campesinas*)
ahuoy lo va a jasé Pancha ... Ma *ahuoy*, letó mi corasón ... *ahuoy* bariga yo saca ... *Ahuoy* vamo ta mosotro como pecá dentro lagua ... (Creto Gangá, "Un ajiaco o la boda de Pancha Jutía y Canuto Raspadura")
agüé día tambó to mundo baila (Lydia Cabrera, *Reglas de congo*)

TRACES OF PAPIAMENTO *AWOR* 'NOW' IN AFRO-CUBAN TEXTS:

¿Y qué yo dicí *ahuora*, eh? ... *ahuora* sí mi pecho está girviendo como agua que pela engallina (Ignacio Benítez del Cristo, "Los novios catedráticos")
y *ahuora* que no lo ve ... donde *ahuora* yo só otra vé congo y trabajaore la muelle ... donde *ahuora* yo só José mimo ... *Ahuora* a trabajá (Francisco Fernández, "El negro cheche")
con toa esa bemba se larga *ahuora* mimo de aquí ... vamo a ve si *ahuora* oté me entiende ... *ahuora* sí verdá que no pue má ... hasta *ahuora* yo no tení guto pa conocé a noté (Manuel Mellado y Montaña, "La casa de Taita Andrés")
Prusumpueto que *ahuora* narie lo habra diotro cosa ma que de la Jópera (Creto Gangá, "Un ajiaco o la boda de Pancha Jutía y Canuto Raspadura")
... la Cula ta gualando *aguora* en la cafetá (José Florencia López [Jacan], *Nadie sabe para quién trabaja*)
Camina, pícaro, que *aguora* tú lo va pagá (Ildefonso Estrada y Zenea, *El quitrín*)
aguora yo jabla oté (*Guayabo, rumores del Mayabeque*).

In rural Afro-Dominican villages, Haitian Creole words crop up more than occasionally, among speakers with no current knowledge of Creole (Lipski 1994). Much more important than the very occasional contribution of words, the Caribbean creoles' impact on Spanish stems from another fact: the creoles share a large number of prominent grammatical patterns, which in turn differ from equivalent structures in other varieties of Spanish. The reasons for the similarities among Caribbean creoles are twofold. The mix of African language families which formed the input in creole formation were typically the same in each case, thus producing comparable results in the ensuing creoles, regardless of the European language which served as a platform. Universal strategies of simplification were also at work, as well perhaps as transfer from one creole to another on neighboring islands or colonies. Among the common deominators found in Caribbean creoles known to have interacted with Spanish, the following deserve special attention:

(1) **Invariant word order**, including questions in which the subject remains in preverbal position: *¿Qué tú dices*? These questions are found sporadically in the Canary Islands and Galicia, regions of Spain which supplied a large proportion of immigrants to the Caribbean during the 19th century, but the frequency is nowhere

near as high as in Caribbean dialects. As in the case of massive loss of consonants, non-inverted questions were probably aided by the presence of speakers of a variety of creole languages, all of which use the same question strategy. It is important to note that non-inverted questions are not a common denominator among most West African languages, thus ruling out a direct African-to-Spanish connection.

(2) Constructions with a **prepostion followed by a subject pronoun and an infinitive**: *antes de yo llegar aquí.* This combination occurs occasionally in Canary Island and Galician Spanish, probably derived from Galician/Portuguese in both cases. In the Caribbean, however, the construction was strongly reinforced by identical patterns in all the major creole languages which interacted with Spanish.

(3) **Obligatory use of subject pronouns.** In Spanish, subject pronouns are typically redundant, since the subject can be identified by the verb conjugation: *tenemos*, *hablaste*, *hablo*, etc. In Caribbean creoles, verbs are not conjugated (they have a single form), and subject pronouns become obligatory, much as in English. Caribbean Spanish in turn is noted for its comparatively high use of subject pronouns. Sometimes this is due to other causes, such as the widespread loss of word-final /s/, which makes certain verb forms sound identical. However, the proportion of overt subject pronoun usage in Caribbean dialects characterized by a heavy African presence is noticeably higher than in southern Spain and the Canary islands, where final consonants are lost at the same or higher rates. Once again, an Afro-creole `nudge' of an option already present is the most likely scenario.

(4) **Two-part question words**, particularly the equivalent of 'what thing,' for 'what,' 'what side/place' for 'where,' 'what person' for 'who.' Caribbean Spanish, particularly in Cuba, often uses *qué cosa* instead of just *qué* (the equivalent form became shortened to *kiko* in Papiamento, and to just *cosa* in Philippine Creole Spanish). Other two-part question words crop up from time to time.

The combinations just mentioned have survived in non-African Caribbean Spanish precisely because they represent extreme cases of options that were already available in other dialects of Spanish. Other cross-creole characteristics were found in non-native *bozal* language, but did not survive the transition into mainstream Caribbean Spanish, since they were too 'exotic' to be accepted by the general population. This includes unconjugated verbs, the use of preverbal markers such as *ya* and *ta* (in creole/pidgin English: *mi walk, mi de walk, mi don walk, mi bin walk, mi go walk*, etc.).

Another non-surviving creole trait is the use of the same pronouns for subject and object, with the original object pronouns ('me,' 'us,' etc.) chosen in each case. Some Afro-Cuban *bozal* texts exemplify the use of *mí* as subject instead of *yo*; the identical pronoun exists in Papiamento, creole English, and Negerhollands, while creole French has the cognate form *mwe* (Lipski 1993, 1994, 1996):

A mí no bebe aguariente, mi ama (Contesa de Merlin, *Viaje a La Habana*)
Ah, ñamito, perdona mí ... *Mí* no sabe, ñamito ... *mi* no sabe ná (María de Santa Cruz, *Historias campesinas*)
Ecucha Encarna, *mí* no guta eso ... ella dise, *mí* ba casa ma Cecilia ...(Emilio Bacardí Moreau, *Filigrana*)

This usage never took hold in the Spanish

Caribbean, probably because it was highly stigmatized from the outset (this substitution is very common in early child language, and also was found in the first Afro-Iberian language from Spain and Portugal in the 16th century.

Caribbean creoles—the same as many African languages—use the same pronoun for 'he' and 'she.' Afro-Antillean *bozal* Spanish used *elle/nelle* in this capacity (elderly Afro-Cubans recall and sometimes still use this word; Lipski 1993, Ortiz López 1996, 1998):

Elle estaba en un mortorio. El borbanaó manda prendeslo. Dentra Tondá, *elle* solito con su espá, coge dos (Cirilo Villaverde, *Cecilia Valdés*)

¿Y *nelle* lo muchachito va pendé su Paña de nuté? (Martín Morúa Delgado, *La familia Unzúazu*)

Eso mimo quiere yo, *nelle* lo mimo, vamo pa la engresia (Ignacio Benítez del Cristo, "Los novios catedráticos")

si yo lo tené uno niño como *nelle*, yo va murí de cuntentamienta (Creto Gangá, "Un ajiaco o la boda de Pancha Jutía y Canuto Raspadura")

yo mirá que *nelle* tiene sangre, ese simbregüenza mimo se piá detrá la quitrín y arrancá corré. (Ildefonso Estrada y Zenea, *El quitrín*)

Hora, dipué que *nelle* coge yebba la gloria, vamo saludá Ocha ... Muñeco con píritu de mueto muchacho, que *nelle* metía dientro (Lydia Cabrera, *El monte*)

Po que juntó con la mala compañía y *nelle* lo pervierte o lo sonsacá. (Benjamín Sánchez Maldonado, "Los hijos de Thalía")

Yo tiene la pecho premío pur *nelle*. Yo ta namorá, yo va vé si *nelle* quié só mugé mía pur langresia ... yo pué casá *cunelle* ... (Francisco Fernández, "Los negros catedráticos")

nelle que lo só intriuo ... *nelle* mimo que lo só ... poque *nelle* ta en la tea ... porque *nelle* lo gatá ... (Francisco Fernández, "El negro cheche")

noté quie jabla cun *nelle* ... y disi que va a tumbá mi bují, vereme *nelle* ... (Manuel Mellado y Montaña, "La casa de Taita Andrés")

nelle tiene un vapó ... *nelle* viene, yo le da ... *Neye* se ñama mujé ... *neye* va acabá con pacífico insurrecto ... (Lydia Cabrera, *Reglas de congo*)

toíto *neye* ta cargá ... cuando *neye* mira yo ... *neye* ta morí de risa ... (Manuel Cabrera Paz, "Exclamaciones de un negro")

cuando *nei* ta vení, ya yo no tiene que da vueta ... singá caballo pa *neye* ve jodienda la Tajonera ... (Lydia Cabrera, *Francisco y Francisca*)

varón quitá *neye* ... (Lydia Cabrera, *La sociedad secreta Abakuá*)

Neye lo que tiene só un bariga con su yijo lentro (Martín Morúa Delgado, *Sofía*)

yo te ba da un medalló pa que tu luse con *eye* (Anon., "Yo bota lan garafo")

luego *nelle* va viní a comé la buen caliente (José Florencia López [Jacan], *Nadie sabe para quién trabaja*)

Nelle son mala cabesa (Ramón Méndez Quiñones, alternate fragments from ¡Pobre "Sinda!"; Puerto Rico)

Yo no quisió di con *elle* (Eleuterio Derkes, "Tio Fele"; Puerto Rico)

Since this usage is completely at odds with Romance language patterns, no variety of Caribbean Spanish has chosen a single pronoun, although in isolated Afro-Hispanic communities throughout the region, what appear to be 'errors' of pronoun choice are sometimes found.

The creole languages under discussion do not inflect adjectives for masculine and

feminine gender; *bozal* Spanish did so inconsistently. This massive neutralization has not passed into Caribbean Spanish, but once again, isolated Afro-Hispanic groups even today produce discrepancies at a much higher than chance rate.

Conclusions

To summarize the results of the preceding survey, I have suggested that direct African influence on Caribbean Spanish may occasionally have occurred, especially in the context of plantation labor, but that indirect influence via already existent Afro-European creole languages was the more common scenario. This entails a re-evaluation of the relevance of Caribbean Spanish for the study of Afro-Hispanic language contacts. The heavy African cultural and ethnic presence in the Spanish Caribbean has often been taken uncritically as proof that any unusual feature of Caribbean Spanish is due to African influence. When to the mix is added a corpus of creole-like language formerly attributed to blacks in several Caribbean nations, the equation seems complete: Spanish once creolized in Latin America, at least among the population of African origin, and this creole gradually percolated up to encompass all local varieties of Spanish. This would make Caribbean Spanish much like English as spoken by Jamaicans, or French as spoken by Haitians, except that in the Spanish Caribbean the creole itself would have disappeared, leaving only fossil imprints in vernacular Spanish.

The facts, however, do not support this simple equation. Conditions favoring the formation of a stable creole never existed in the Spanish Caribbean. A much more reasonable basis route for creole-like characteristics of earlier Afro-Caribbean Spanish, as well as contemporary vernacular varieties, is the impact of established creole languages, which in one guise or another formed the linguistic backbone of the 19th century Caribbean. Regardless of the European language which provided their lexicon, these creoles already shared considerable similarity with one another, due both to universal aspects of creolization, and to commonly recurring patterns in key groups of West African and European languages. In the linguistic proving ground of 19th century Caribbean plantations, simply throwing Spanish together with any of the Caribbean creoles, or better yet with several, would yield strikingly similar results, which might be superficially indistinguishable from the effects of spontaneous creolization of Spanish.

These remarks are meant to be suggestive rather than definitive, and to stimulate discussion rather than to stifle it. Latin American dialectology is full of little-explored corners and unsuspected subcurrents, and few linguistic features can be safely attributed to a single cause. In Latin America, spontaneous generation was the exception, and language contact was the rule. The influence of creole languages on Spanish represents African linguistic and cultural contact twice-removed, and the study of creole-to-creole transfers promises to fill in more pieces of the still enigmatic puzzle of Latin American dialect differentiation. This new journey has only just begun, and I welcome the thoughts and efforts of fellow-travellers.

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Los africanos en México antes de Aguirre Beltrán (1821-1924)

by Alvaro Ochoa Serrano

Aunque soy de raza *Conga*,
yo no he nacido *africano*;
soy de nación *mejicano*,
y nacido en Almolonga.
El Negrito Poeta

Los africanos y su prole, a partir del tráfico de esclavos y su traída forzosa a América durante los primeros años de la época colonial, aún persisten en gran parte del México actual, de alguna manera u otra, presentes en la cultura del país. Se les percibe en rasgos físicos, en actitudes, en la música, en el toque mágico popular dado a la vida nacional y que va desapareciendo en la república al conjuro neoliberal de la modernidad. Como sea, en el fondo del intenso mestizaje mexicano se encuentra esa tercera raíz largo tiempo ignorada.

No fue sino hasta que Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán (1908-1996), antropólgo muy conocido por sus estudios sobre la población negra en México desde 1942, señalara la notoria ausencia de investigaciones sistemáticas. Anteriormente, los Africanos no pasaban de ser alusiones muy marginales, de intentos fallidos de aproximación o del total desconocimiento en la historia escrita de México desde la era independiente al citado año de 1942. Carencia que, sin duda, se debió a la atención muy marcada que se brindó a la pretendida integración indígena "al progreso nacional" por parte del gobierno y a los trabajos de los académicos orientados a este tema.[1]

Mediante un recorrido a través de una breve incursión archivística y de una mínima bibliografía de la época, aquí se tiende a localizar regionalmente, a anotar las referencias y a resaltar la vida de los africanos y los suyos en suelo mexicano entre 1821 y 1924; es decir, desde las primeras disposiciones dictadas por el gobierno independiente en relación a las diferencias étnicas de ese momento hasta las noticias etno-antropológicas de Nicolás León acerca de las castas de México.

Precisamente antes de la guerra de independencia, Fernando Navarro y Noriega, contador de arbitrios del gobierno novohispano, al amparo de la ilustración borbónica española, levantó un censo que dio a conocer luego en *Estado de la población del reino de Nueva España en 1810* mismo en el que contó y clasificó el haber demográfico en tres grupos (españoles americanos o criollos y españoles europeos en uno solo, sin la variedad de castas en otro) obedeciendo el orden establecido de antemano:

Españoles	1,097,928
Indios	3,676,281
Castas	1,338,706[2]

En tal orden y en teoría, los "indios" tendrían la protección de la corona, y los mestizos como descendientes de españoles también se suponía deberían gozar los mismos derechos que ellos, pero por la costumbre semejante se confundían en la clase de castas; y de éstas, las provenientes

de africanos "eran reputadas infames de derecho todavía más, por la preocupación general que contra ellas prevalecía." Paradójicamente, los hombres que a ellas pertenecían, la parte más útil de la población, según opinión de Lucas Alamán,

> endurecidos por el trabajo de las minas, ejercitados en el manejo del caballo, eran los que proveían de soldados al ejército, no sólo en los cuerpos que se componían exclusivamente de ellos, como los de pardos y morenos de las costas, sino también a los de línea y milicias disciplinadas del interior.[3]

Es más, los soldados "negros de Tierra Caliente" participaron activamente en la guerra en el bando realista—notorio el caso del mulato Armengol y sus partidarios en la Costa Chica—y se mantuvieron fieles al gobierno español hasta el final del regimen colonial en 1821.[4]

Tras la consumación de la independencia a manos de la elite criolla, el antiguo orden se mantuvo de hecho—excepto la abolición esclavista—en las mismas condiciones y proporciones, pero con distinto nombre. Así, el efímero imperio de Iturbide y la vetusta iglesia en julio de 1822 procurarían designar a los habitantes mexicanos "con el título universal de ciudadanos del Ymperio," excepto los indios, la población mayoritaria sin derecho de participación real, quienes supuestamente disfrutarían "privilegios apostólicos," bajo la expresión de Ciudadanos agraciados por la silla Apostólica, abreviada en "agraciados." Además, en octubre del mismo año, la jerarquía eclesiastica ordenaba a los curas—entonces los únicos encargados de registrar el nacimiento, pasión y muerte de los mexicanos—, de que no se observara la variedad de castas "mas de sólo en el cobro de derechos matrimoniales."

Con todo, en los libros parroquiales, ya en pleno régimen republicano, el clero continuaba asentando los distingos sociales en las partidas bautizmales, de matrimonios y entierros, con la reiterada recomendación superior de señalar a los "descendientes de los primeros pobladores en lugar de los agraciados con que hasta aquí [1825] se han verificado o la de indios como se llamaban antes," y se decidió por lo último. Todavía después de la peste colérica de 1833 que mató a millares de ocupantes en la república sobrevivían las denominaciones de indio, mulato y español —léase criollo—en los registros parroquiales hasta entrados los años cuarentas cuando se diferenciaba solamente a los "indios" de los demas "ciudadanos" del país.[5]

En fin, las nuevas leyes republicanas pretendían hacer desaparecer esas viejas distinciones, pero—escribía el guanajuatense Alaman—, "poco pueden las leyes del hombre contra las de la naturaleza y contra el influjo de costumbres y preocupaciones inveteradas." De ahí el tono y tinte diferentes que el trío forjador de la sociedad mexicana (criollo, mestizo-mulato e indio) imprimía a la partitura nacional, en un ritmo marcado por el sector acelerado de la primera voz que, a costa de tocar intereses de la iglesia, entonaba el proyecto liberal en pos de la modernización del país.

Un miembro del primer grupo y coterráneo de Alamán, José María Luis Mora, en su obra *México y sus Revoluciones* (París, 1836), bajo un ideal blanqueador, reconocía el rostro colectivo de la república como el resultado de una

mezcla "complicadísima" cuyos componentes "han sido los habitantes del antiguo imperio [indígena] mexicano, los conquistadores españoles que los vencieron y subyugaron, y los negros conducidos de África para los trabajos más fuertes de las minas y el cultivo de la tierra."

Sobre los afrodescendientes, apreciaba el teórico del liberalismo mexicano que la cantidad había sido siempre reducida en estos lares y en la misma dirección advertía con cierto alivio: "en el día ha desaparecido casi del todo, pues los cortos restos de ellos que han quedado en las costas del Pacífico y en las del Atlántico son enteramente insignificantes para poder inspirar temor ninguno a la tranquilidad de la República, ni tener por su clase influjo ninguno en la suerte de sus destinos" y auguraba que desaparecerían totalmente antes de medio siglo, perdiéndose "en la masa dominante de la población blanca por la fusión que empezó hace más de veinte años y se halla ya muy adelantada." Proceso parecido tendrían los indios, agregaba, sólo que "será más lentamente, y acaso no bastará un siglo para su total terminación." Creía que de intensificarse la colonización nacional "con una perseverancia invariable," si el gobierno prescindiese "de las mezquinas ideas político-religiosas que hasta ahora [en 1836] lo han embarazado y lo embarazarán siempre: entonces la fusión de las gentes de color y la total extinción de las castas se apresurarían y tendrían una más pronta y feliz terminación."[6]

Pese a las intenciones colonizadoras, "las gentes de color y castas" resistían a la obra emprendida por el grupo dirigente criollo. Persistían de hecho, era evidente. Se les menciona en noticias, derroteros y bosquejos estadísticos que proliferan en el cuantitativo siglo XIX. Por ejemplo, el erudito José María Murguía y Galardi, gobernador y antiguo diputado por su provincia al Congreso de Chilpancingo en 1813 y a las Cortes de España en 1820, escribe varias referencias en su "Estadística Antigua y Moderna de la Provincia, hoy Estado libre, soberano e independiente de Guajaca," entre 1826 y 27. La primera nota aparece en relación con la siembra y la industria de la caña de azúcar.

En el Partido de Nejapa o Quiechapa, en el valle, dice se fundaron trapiches y que para este trabajo se introdujeron Negros, "cuya semilla degenerada en la Casta de mulatos, es la única clase de gente que existe hoy en algún número, comparado con los españoles e indios pues de aquellos hay ciento sesenta y nueve almas, de los segundos que se reputan por tales, sólo existen veinte y ocho y de los últimos que acaso no son legítimos indios, siete únicos." Igualmente anota que en el Partido de Teutitlán del Camino, con motivo de los trapiches, "hay alguna mulatería en diversas partes, mas las Sierras altas de Papalo, Huehuetlán y Huautla son de indios puros sin mezcla ninguna procedente de Negros."[7]

Si bien era común asociar mano de obra de piel oscura con el establecimiento de "trapiches de caña," el caso del Partido de Jamiltepeque no correspondía a tal patrón. Ya que no existiendo en el partido esta clase de industria, Murguía y Galardi supuso que tal presencia se debió a las minas cercanas "porque todas las descubiertas en esta Provincia las trabajaron en la antiguedad con Esclavonía respecto a que los indios fueron siempre protegidos para que no se les obligase a este trabajo que les era odioso y muy molesto." La decadencia e inestabilidad de la actividad minera propició que muchos negros y mulatos dispersos se refugiaran

en este Partido, "y como en su costa marítima encontraron un temperamento análogo al de su origen, libres unos y prófugos otros, se radicaron en esta parte."[8] Oficialmente, en 1825, el gobiemo del estado de Oaxaca había redimido en definitiva a las familias de "la raza etiópica."[9]

Por otro lado, y otro aspecto, en tierras de Jarniltepec se habían fincado las haciendas ganaderas del Mayorazgo Mariscal de Castilla, y el dueño de estas había conducido para el cuidado del ganado "a negros y Negras que enlazados en Matrimonio propagaron su especie, pues los indios no son a propósito ahora, y mucho menos lo serían entonces para el ejercicio de vaquería;" de ahí que por angas o por mangas, "de aquella enlazada con Indios e Indias [resultó] la especie de Mulatos de que abunda este Partido." También, la vaquería convirtió a negros, mulatos o pardos en diestros jinetes y les dio cierta libertad de acción. E igualmente la agricultura, sería otra ocupación de subsistencia, en particular el cultivo del algodón.

En torno a dicho cultivo en las zonas bajas, y alrededor del comercio que éste generaba, el autor citado ofrece un acercamiento a las redes económicas y sociales que se entablaban así como a varias características culturales destacadas de esas relaciones:

> El cultivo del algodón en este Partido (a que los mulatos son dedicados con demasiado ahínco) y el afecto decidido que profesan a los caballos, de que usan todo el día hasta el grado de no andar por su pie ni aun el más pequeño espacio de tierra que les exijan sus diligencias, hace que los comerciantes que desean de aquel fruto cantidades considerables, conduzcan frenos, espuelas, sillas de montar, machetes, rosadores, y de cinta de todo género de tejidos de algodón del País, sombreros del mismo y paños de Querétaro y de la Europa pañuelos de seda y platillas Reales, pues de todo hay consumo de mucha cantidad.

Sin embargo, ese trafique se reducía únicamente al temporal de la cosecha de los algodones, cuando los comerciantes llevaban las mercancías y colocaban sus tiendas en bajareques muy "a la vista pública." Y conforme los "Negros y Pardos" hacían la cosecha iban canjeando el producto según necesitaran de "tales o cuales géneros o artículos"

> de cuyo cambio resulta al comerciante considerable utilidad pues estas gentes no compran o cambian por el valor intrínseco que le supongan al efecto sino el que le dan según su gusto o pasión, con tal que aquél a la vista les llene: de aquí es, que valorizado de este modo, den el duplo o algo más de lo que legítimamente deba valer: por lo mismo el comerciante práctico, cuanto más conoce la pasión del negro, le hace a su efecto más y más recomendaciones que lo suben de grado y así también aumenta el número de arrobas de algodón por las que ha de cambiar.

El circuito comerciante-marchante se extendía en cuanto al avío para la siembra y labores de cultivo; porque los habilitados pagaban religiosamente a sus acredores "si han recibido dinero anticipado" para el beneficio del algodón, y generalmente la cosecha de él

> la costea el habilitador hasta el número de arrobas que cubre la deuda; y después la sigue el negro hasta su conclusión; es muy bueno dar al tiempo de la

> habilitación la semilla porque entonces el habilitador es atendido con preferencias, de modo que en el caso de que uno haya dado reales para hacer la sementera y otro la simiente, el Negro guarda tan rigurosamente el derecho de reintegrar a este, que no dispondrá de una libra en favor del otro, hasta no haberle cubierto la semilla.

Además en el Partido "no se hilaba," es decir, no había telares ni tejedores; de tal manera que, sin otra salida, éstos tenían que vender la cosecha, aparte de quedar luego a expensas de los comerciantes y prestamistas para poder obtener cada año nueva semilla que

> se compra con embidia, y así el Negro que no alcanza a comprarla, y la tuvo por vía de habilitación, queda agradecido y satisface el beneficio con aquella privilegiada correspondencia, y si habla del sembrado no dice que es suyo sino (con sus propios términos) del amo Fulano, que dio la pepita.

Para cerrar las anotaciones de Murguía, baste señalar otra huella colonial en el campo, entre vecinos que en el primer tercio del siglo XIX comparten tareas delimitadas mas no productos agrícolas. Debido a razones de peso económico y por una vieja costumbre, los nativos no se dedican a la siembra y cultivo del algodón, sino sólo al de la grana, mientras que "los Negros y Mulatos no se aplican sino a aquél."[10]

A reserva de volver a Oaxaca, pero prosiguiendo en el mismo tema, con rumbo oeste y un decenio después, en 1836, se toma el "Derrotero Estadístico de los Pueblos que componen el Distrito de Acapulco"... donde el jefe regional o prefecto rinde cuentas a la superioridad. En el documento aludido se menciona la vida y pasión de San Jerónimo, pueblo y anexos con 2 mil 500 almas, cuatro quintas partes "de origen africano," perteneciente en la esfera eclesiástica a la mitra de Morelia. Sus habitantes, aparte de cultivar el algodón, se dedican a la cría de ganado vacuno y caballar "de que hay mucho;" y quienes, en circunstancias propicias para el relajo, tienden a ser "muy dominados del juego y en la embriaguez, causa porque se matan con frecuencia en tiempo de cosechas."

Un elemento accesorio más, la gente de la localidad de San Jerónimo y otras de su jurisdicción, con antecedentes en el ejercicio del cuaco, del potro, y de las armas, a cambio de simbólica paga, cierto prestigio y poco poder, "abastece al batallón activo de Zacatula." En ese cuadro

> las autoridades militares son de algún modo respetadas por ellos; la política que sólo consiste en una persona encargada de justicia, no les merece el menor aprecio, sino es cuando tienen alguna necesidad de su *favor*.[11]

A lo anterior, tal vez sea necesario recalcar la participación de combatientes mestizo pintos y pardos en el movimiento de Ayutla de 1854, dirigido por Juan Alvarez contra la dictadura de Santa Anna, que facilitó el ascenso del Lic. Benito Juárez y su grupo liberal a tomar el mando supremo de la república. En esos años, y de paso por varios lugares de México, el viajero Carl Sartorious delineaba esta particular estampa somática y genética:

> The African race, which is but slightly represented in Mexico, has such very marked characteristics, that it may be recognized in spite of every inter-

marriage, by the woolly hair, thick lips, and broad compressed nose. From the union of a negro with an Indian female, or of a Mulatto with a negress, arise those dark-brown Mestizos, known on the west coast by the appellation Zambos: in general, however, the different degrees of colour are not taken into consideration...

Proveniente de una nación esclavista y discriminatoria, a Sartorious le llamó algo la atención el trato oficial casi igualitario brindado a la población Afromexicana y ante vestigios palpables de ésta, con alguna explicación, comentaba la supervivencia:

In time the black race will disappear altogether, and would have been extinct already, if free negroes, mostly artificers, had not emigrated from Cuba, and other islands of the West Indies, and settled in the sea-ports. Though their number be small, it is still sufficient to keep up this part of the population.[12]

Más adelante, en 1859, separada la iglesia del estado, y cuando éste encabezado por Juárez presciende de "las mezquinas ideas político-religiosas" de la primera para avanzar en la Reforma, otro funcionario de gobierno elaboraba la "Noticia Estadística del Distrito de Acapulco de Tabares perteneciente al Estado de Guerrero" y en ella recogía la repetida imagen familiar de los habitantes "de la Africana" en cuanto a las ocupaciones agrícolas y ganaderas, la inclinación al juego y la bebida "especialmente en las cosechas en el tiempo de los algodones," y un rasgo del carácter:

susceptibles entre sí a la venganza a que sacrifican todos sus sentimientos de humanidad hasta el grado de trasmitir a sus hijos la satisfaccion de sus agravios.

Bajo una óptica liberal atenuada, el funcionario externaba sus deseos de que "con la protección y una mirada paternal de las autoridades superiores de la Nación, sobre el fomento de estos pueblos y de su civilización, podría sacarlos de la abyección moral en que se hallan." Observaba detalladamente que en el servicio de la milicia "son intrépidos, sufren la hambre, la desnudez, y la falta de prest"; también destacaba:

Tienen muy pocas necesidades, sus habitaciones son casas de paja, sus alimentos son frugales, su vestido ordinario consiste en cotón y camiseta corta, calzón blanco, sombrero de lana, zarape o manga: sus aspiraciones se reducen a la posesión de una arma blanca y un caballo; nadar, esgrimir y montar a caballo son cosas generales en estos individuos, y se puede decir sin temor de equivocarse que estos tres importantes ramos los poseen desde su juventud.[13]

En lo que a las mujeres tocaba, en un rol secundario, sobra decir que éstas llevaban sobre sus cabezas y manos "el peso de los quehaceres domésticos."

Los moradores de la Municipalidad de San Marcos, "la mayor parte de origen africano," no cantaban tan mal las rancheras cerca del mar y lejos del ideal progresista liberal, por el que se destaca el señalamiento del funcionario

son afectos a las carreras de caballos, juegos de gallos y al baile. La falta de una buena escuela que demanda el número de su población los tiene en la ignorancia en que se encuentran pues se

> dificulta la elección de personas que tengan los conocimientos necesarios para desempeñar los cargos municipales.[14]

Ante ese estado de cosas, y al parecer, les importaba poco la esfera y el ámbito de gobierno. Por lo pronto quedaba claro para la minoría rectora criolla que, de esa manera, los sureños de color oscuro, los afromestizos o mestizoafros, no tendrían influencia ni siquiera—parafraseando a Moraen la suerte de sus propios destinos.

A partir de la segunda mitad decimonónica, pasada la intervención francesa, tras la república restaurada y desde luego que en el porfiriato, la mención de la ascendencia africana pasó a un relegado tercer lugar si es que no al olvido en el gobierno por parte de funcionarios de primer y segundo rango, secretarios y sub. Como un caso aislado se comenzó a publicar en la ciudad de México el "Calendario del Negrito Poeta," que contenía los versos de este personaje, a partir de 1856 y durante varios años, pero como una simple curiosidad, nada más.[15] En cambio, tenazmente, la cuestión indígena seguía en pie y ésta la consideraban los liberales como un obstáculo para la empresa modernizadora del país.

Era en ese entonces un país eminentemente desigual y rural en el que la cúpula urbana respiraba una atmósfera de darwinismo social, de positivismo, orden y progreso; alturas hasta donde llegaban noticias de exploraciones científicas y de expansionismo colonial, cuando Europa —necesitada de materia prima y mercados cautivos—intensificaba victorianamente la colonización de África. Envueltos en ese ambiente, miembros de los circulos ilustrados de la capital mexicana indagarían acerca del lejano y "exótico" teatro de nuevos acontecimientos. En 1870, Manuel Payno, quien viviera la experiencia europea, entregaba una colaboración para el boletín de la única sociedad científica mexicana existente; texto sobre África que, ajeno a cualquier relación social mexicana, iniciaba con estas palabras:

> por su clima, por el color de su población, y por otras mil causas ha permanecido muchos años despoblada, inculta y bárbara, está unida sin embargo a la Europa y a la civilización del mundo por una tierra antigua, misteriosa y singular, El Egipto.

En igual sentido irían los sendos escritos de dos alumnos de la positivista y recién creada Escuela Nacional Preparatoria, Santiago Méndez (hijo), "El Egipto según Ptolomeo," y José Iglesias Calderón "Antiguedades del Egipto."[16] Además, para aclarar y con una visión eurocéntrica, Oloardo Hassey vertería información en dicho Boletín a los letrados mexicanos acerca de "Africa y la Raza Negra." Contaba a su entender, entre otras contrastantes peculiaridades, que en todas partes del mentado continente

> el negro es de genio alegre, ligero, sin previsión, inclinado a los goces sensuales, crédulo supersticioso, fiel en la amistad, sin astucia ni falsedad.[17]

Vicente Riva Palacio, con otra intención, publicaría en 1874 los artículos sobre la ejecución de treinta y tres negros y la rebelión de Yanga en *El Libro Rojo* y el tema resurgiría en *México a través de los Siglos*. Aun en la ya mencionada publicación de la Sociedad de Geografía y

Estadística fundada por el liberal Gómez Farías en 1833, se llegaría a reproducir en 1878 un artículo periodístico español, titulado "Los Zulus."[18] Para este tiempo neocolonial la España de posesiones en Cuba y Puerto Rico mantenía intereses—que ya no el comercio de esclavos—en el norte y occidente de Africa.

En tanto, para algunos extranjeros que recorrieron el occidente, centro o sur de México, o para los estudiosos del país o de regiones concretas, los descendientes de africanos y colaterales no habían pasado tan desapercibidos. El inglés W. Hall Bullock en 1865 encontró peones "half-castes" en una hacienda del oeste.[19] A su vez Ramón Sánchez, en el bosquejo estadístico e histórico del distrito michoacano de Jiquilpan, ampliaba más tarde lo que había notado Bullock:

> Hay también esparcidos por todo el distrito y particularmente en la hacienda de Guaracha hombres de raza negra, aunque ya muy mezclada con indígena y blanca, sabiéndose que a fines del siglo pasado [XVIII] fue traída una colonia del Congo; entre las mujeres hay bonitas cuarteronas.[20]

Como también el galeno Domingo Orvañanos diagnosticaba en su *Ensayo de Geografía Médica y Climatológica* de 1889 que de los cuatro componentes de la población mexicana (india, europea, negra y mestiza) la proporción de la negra y su descendencia, doscientos cincuenta mil de ésta comparada con once millones del resto, era "extraordinariamente rara en la República." Igualmente Alberto Correa en la décima edición de su *Geografía de México* en 1901 cuantificó la presencia negra sólo en cien mil. El geógrafo asentaba además

> La *raza negra*, que constituye una insignificante parte de la población de México, está formada por los descendientes de los antiguos esclavos y algunos *libertos* procedentes de Cuba y Los Estados Unidos del Norte, y tiende a desaparecer.[21]

Por otra parte, en la cuenca del río Balsas y en la costa michoacana, el prefecto porfiriano del Distrito de Salazar, un ingeniero embebido en las ideas deterministas de Gobineau y de Ratzel acerca de "la raza" y del medio, entre otros rubros, informaba al gobernador del estado:

> Los habitantes de la Costa de la sangre del Africano, tanto en su modo de andar como de hablar, son por regla general de buenas costumbres pero algo indolentes por los motivos del clima [cálido]. Sus diversiones se concretan exclusivamente al fandango, que consiste en tamborear el arpa y bailar encima de un cajón invertido ...el modo de bailar la Chilena entre la gente de Tierra Caliente y de la Costa es algo diferente, pues el costeño siempre tiene más gracia en este sentido debido tal vez a su sangre Africana.[22]

Ahora que regresando hacia Oaxaca y Guerrero, las entidades que aportaron participantes a los movimentos rebeldes de Alvarez en Ayutla y de Porfirio Díaz en Tuxtepec que cambiarían el rumbo político del país, cabría destacar la sobrevivencia de hombres y mujeres piel canela, "hombres iguales civilmente" en medio de "blancos," hispanoamericanos o mestizos e indígenas. Entre 1891 y 1892, Alfonso Luis Velasco (quien elaboró varias estadísticas de los estados) enumeraba en Oaxaca a "descendientes de europeos e indígenas, de

criollos e indígenas, de negros e indígenas, de europeos y criollos y de indígenas"... Sin que faltara la vieja canción: en la costa suroeste radican vástagos "de raza africana, que son muy buenos agricultores, pero muy belicosos y afectos a los vicios."

En Guerrero, Velasco aumentaba la lista de "descendientes de europeos e indígenas, de europeos y criollos, de criollos e indígenas, de criollos y negros llamados mulatos, de indígenas, de indígenas y negros y de negros." Cita que en Tecpan indios y negros "se dedican al comercio, la fabricación de panocha e hilados y tejidos de algodón, y cambiaba un poco la referencia de "entre los negros que viven en la costa, hay muchos buenos agricultores, pero afectos a la embriaguez y a las pendencias" para agregar—tomando en cuenta los servicios prestados a la causa liberal—: "son valientes y muy amantes de la patria."

Ya más en detalle, especifica que ocho de los veintiséis distritos de Oaxaca contenían población de origen africano: Cuicatlán, Tuxtepec, Tehuantepec, Juchitán, Pochutla, Juquila, Jamiltepec y del Centro. Distinguíanse más Juquila y Jalmitepec; en cambio, no se le recordaba en Teotitlán y Yautepec (que abarcaba a Nejapa) donde sobre todo en éste predominaba "la casta de mulatos" en 1827. Respecto a Guerrero, cinco de los catorce distritos parecían conservar descendencia afro: la Unión, Abasolo, Allende (Ayutla), Tabares (Acapulco) y Galeana.[23]

En general, durante la postrera etapa del porfiriato que navegaba aun en cuestiones "de razas e inmigración" para poder continuar la empresa colonizadora, los criollos allegados del gobiemo veían solamente a indios, mestizos y recién llegados. El ingeniero Rafael García Granados, lector de Buckle, Finot y sobre todo de Ratzel, señalaba como factores determinates del desarrollo "el medio ambiente y la raza a que pertenecen sus habitantes." En cuanto a esta última, sin mediar ortodoxia, indicaba la particularidad de que "hay pocos países en el mundo en donde actualmente [1909] se esté produciendo una amalgama de razas tan distintas como en México." Otra variante en el proceso de amalgación colonización sería la opción para elegir los inmigrantes que mejorasen las condiciones del país.[24]

García Granados proponía al gobierno se alentara la inmigración europea (que no atendía mucho el llamado) y, en cambio, se evitara la continua entrada de asiáticos que arribaban sin invitación, porque estos, aparte de no integrarse a la vida mexicana, sino hasta la tercera o cuarta ronda, reducían la demanda de brazos y, en parte, propiciaban que aumentara la emigración de trabajadores mexicanos a Estados Unidos.[25] Para muestra, vaya un montón de cifras. Entre julio de 1910 y julio de 1911 ingresaron 4 mil 246 personas "de la raza amarilla," salieron 820, y de los que se quedaron a vivir tres mil 318 eran chinos y 114 japoneses. En el mismo periodo anual, mas en dirección opuesta, salían 39 mil 136 mexicanos al Norte, volvían sólo 26 mil 004 y permanecían bajo extraño cielo 13 mil 132.

En cuanto a los Africanos en suelo mexicano se refiere, únicamente se podía rastrear por el momento el paso de migrantes de "la raza negra," del tipo semierrante, libre y con oficio que ya mencionaba Sartorious. De acuerdo con las citadas estadísticas no muy específicas del primer decenio de siglo, habrían entrado 2 mil 292, de los cuales partieron mil 524 y al parecer 768 14 optaron por no mudarse; la diferencia podría calcularse como una

tercera parte de los primeros y como la mitad de los segundos.[26] Pero contaba para el caso, como el somero pormenor de Tuxtepec, Oaxaca; allí se aseguraba que de Cuba habían llegado "algunos mulatos que se establecieron en Amapa, y de Veracruz y Córdova otros" para la chamba en el ferrocarril transoceánico, Puerto de Salinas Cruz y anexas.[27]

Respecto a asuntos de sociedad y desarrollo en México, igual actitud a la de García Granados asumía el abogado Andrés Molina Enríquez en vísperas de la trastocadora revolufía de 1911. Molina Enriquez había dedicado experiencia y tiempo para la reflexión en torno a los Grandes Problemas Nacionales, drama en el que figuraban de manera estelar Extranjeros (debido a la necesaria inmigración), Criollos, Mestizos e Indígenas. Ninguna mención clara a los africanos. Molina Enríquez simple y sencillamente postulaba que los mestizos, "la raza mixta," serían una transición; ya que después de poco tiempo, todos "llegarían a ser blancos."[28]

Distinta visión tendrían otros estudiosos luego del estallido rebelde iniciado por Madero, vuelto bola de facciones en 1914. "Negros, españoles e indios" aparecen en la *Geografía Histórica de Oaxaca*, fechada en 1913; en ella, Esteva, el autor pone énfasis en el predominio de "la raza americana," la nativa, y dedica algunas nociones a la "raza etiópica" en los bajos y cortijos del estado, en donde existen las variantes de "la cambuja, la del salto atrás y la china."[29] Pero, sin duda que el movimiento armado influyó más en el ánimo del Lic. Alfonso del Toro (1873-1952); en 1920, el también historiador retomó el tópico de los africanos en su escrito "Influencia de la raza negra en la formación del pueblo mexicano" para plantear, con base en que sobresalía la población africana al inicio de la época colonial, que si bien

> los caracteres físicos del negro han desaparecido en las altas mesas y en la parte de México colocada fuera de la zona tórrida, posible es que se conserven algunos de los caracteres morales de la raza negra en sus descendientes, y un estudio etnográfico detenido podría explicar así muchas de las propensiones del pueblo mexicano [...] quizá de allí, de la sangre negra provenga la indocilidad del pueblo mexicano a sujetarse a sus gobernantes y su tendencia a revolucionar.[30]

No tan retirado del anterior que ponía en duda la afirmación de Mora sobre la extinción de los rastros africanos, el médico y antropólogo Nicolás León (1859-1929), atento lector de Alamán y quien cita a del Toro, ubicaba el tema en 1924 con *Las Castas del México Colonial o Nueva España: Noticias Etno-Antropológicas*. Antes de este trabajo había publicado *El Negrito Poeta Mexicano y sus populares versos, una contribución para el folklor nacional* (1912), y "Catarina de San Juan y la China Poblana. Estudio Etnográfico-Crítico" en 1920.

Aunque sabido, quizás sea pertinente aclarar que, en medio del nacionalismo imperante, a partir del censo de 1921 desaparecieron oficialmente las distinciones dérmicas que no las tentaciones de algunos a hacerlas. Así, a ojo de buen cubero, León estimó que de los catorce millones de mexicanos censados "el número de blancos" constituía la quinta parte, un 20%, "el de los indios" dos quintos, el 40 por ciento, y el restante 40% "de gente de color." Comparativa-

mente con los ocho millones y pico de habitantes que había una centuria antes, en 1821, la diferencia étnica en cantidad variaba. En ese entonces, la población denominada india formaba el 60 por ciento, tres quintas partes; mientras que las castas el 23 de cada cien, más de una quinta parte. Los criollos, en tanto iban a menos. Dicho en otras palabras, significaba que un siglo después los criollos se mantenían casi conservadoramente igual, disminuía en proporción la población indígena y aumentaba la llamada gente mezclada, mestiza o de color.[31]

Mas tornemos a la obra de León sobre las castas, trabajo en que durante la época del secretario de educación José Vasconcelos se proponía ilustrar y divulgar todo lo que fuera "pertinente en este ramo de la ciencia, a las cosas de México." Su estudio, desprendido básicamente de uno biombos ilustrados de la era colonial, ofrece algunas gráficas y una larga retahíla de "esas denominaciones odiosas y ridículas" como Ahí te estás, Albarasado, Albino, Barzino, Cambujo, Calpamulato, Castizo, Coyote, Cuarterón, Chamiso, Chino Cholo, Grifo, Jarocho, Lobo, Morisco, Mulato, No te entiendo, Sambaigo, Saltatrás, Tente en el aire, Tornatrás, Zambo. Es de notar que algunas de estas denominaciones "odiosas y ridículas," y otras relacionadas (cafre, casanga, genízaro, pardo, etc.) deambulan aún hoy entre el campesinado y la plebe.

Al final de su libro, el mencionado León trata otra fase del mestizaje mexicano que se formaba "con la abundante inmigración de chinos y japonenes, mediante casamientos legítimos e ilegítimos, pero formando familia"... Sin olvidar su fondo clasificatorio positivista de antaño ni las lecturas de Alamán, León se formula la interrogante "¿cómo llamar y considerar étnicamente a las castas de ello resultantes?"[32] Pregunta que nuevamente traía a cuento el viejo problema de piel que no el de costumbres o de lengua, y a la que ofrecía otro José Vasconcelos, El Negrito Poeta, este reeditado rezongo:

> Calla la boca, embustero,
> y no te jactes de blanco,
> saliste del mismo banco,
> y tienes el mismo cuero.

Ya por último, concluimos el recorrido del ciclo temporal 1821-1924, a lo largo del cual acompañamos a clérigos, políticos, funcionarios, viajeros y hombres de ciencia en cuyos archivos, libros, proyectos, informes, testimonios, notas y estudios encontramos imágenes, las huellas—perono la palabra directa—, de los que involuntariamente traídos allende alguna vez de Africa se quedaron aquende para no volver.

Tras largos años de distancia, precedidos por trabajos sueltos, los estudios sistemáticos y especializados de Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán y las pesquisas de sus recientes seguidoras y seguidores confirman la existencia de los descendientes de Africanos en varias partes del territorio, no sólo en las costas; presencia que se halla, diluida que no blanqueada, íntimamente enraizada a la tierra de México, en Nuestra América.

Notas

[1]G. Aguirre Beltrán. 1976. "Los símbolos étnicos de la identidad nacional" en *Aguirre Beltrán. obra polémica*. Edición y prólogo de Angel Palerm. México: CISINAH, SEP INAH.

[2]M.P. 1859. "Población de la República" en *La Aveja*, México, 9 nov 1858, Núm. 18. Citado en Boletín de la Sociedad de Geografía

y Estadística de la República Mexicana (BSGERM), t. VII, México: Imp. de A. Boix.

[3]L. Alamán. 1849. *Historia de Méjico.* Parte Primera. México: Imp. de J. M. Lara, I: 25-26.

[4]L. Alamán. 1852. *Historia de Méjico.* Parte Segunda. México: Imp. de J. M. Lara, V: 310-312. José Antonio Gay. 1881. *Historia de Oaxaca.* México: Imprenta del Comercio, de Dublan y Cía. II: 414-415.

[5]Archivo Parroquial de Ixtlán, Michoacán. 1815-1836. Libro de Providencias Diocesanas, ff. 17, 23. 50.

[6]J. M. L. Mora. 1965. *México y sus revoluciones.* (París, 1836). Edición y Prólogo de Agustín Yánez. México: Edit. Porrúa, pp. 72-74.

[7]J. M. Murguía y Galardi. 1859. "Estadística Antigua..." en BSGERM, VII: 199.

[8]*Ibid.*, p. 224.

[9]C. Esteva. 1913. *Nociones Elementales de Geografía Histórica del Estado de Oaxaca.* Oaxaca: Tip. San-German Hno's., pp. 97-98.

[10]Murguía y Galardi. *Op. cit.*, pp. 227-228.

[11]"Derrotero Estadístico de los Pueblos que componen el Distrito de Acapulco, hecho con ocasión de la visita que hizo el Prefecto en fines de 1836" en BSGERM, VII: 430.

[12]C. Saltorious. 1858. *Mexico. Landscapes and Popular Sketches.* Darmstadt, London, New York: Edited by Dr. Gaspey, pp. 50-51.

[13]"Noticia Estadística del Distrito de Acapulco de Tabares Perteneciente al Estado de Guerrero" en BSGERM, VII: 410.

[14]*Ibid.*, p. 424.

[15]Coleccionados por N. León. 1912. *El Negrito Poeta Mexicano.* México: Imp. del Museo Nacional.

[16]BSGERM. 1870. 2a. Época. México: Imp. del Gobierno, en Palacio, II: 1.

[17]BSGERM. 1871. III: p. 41.

[18]M. T. R. 1878. "Los Zulus." Tomado del Boletín de la Sociedad Geografíca de Madrid en BSGERM.1878. 3a. Epoca, IV. Vicente Riva Palacio et al. 1874. *El Libro Rojo 1520-1867.* México. Reeditado por Angel Pola en 1905.

[19]W. Hall Bullock. 1866. *Across Mexico in 1864-5.* London and Cambridge: MacMillan and Co., pp. 231 -232. Hans Gadow. 1908. *Through Southern Mexico.* London: Whiterby, pp. 426-429, menciona el caso de Cocoyule, Guerrero.

[20]R. Sánchez. 1896. *Bosquejo Estadístico e Histórico del Distrito de Jiquilpan de Juárez.* Morelia: Imp. de la E. I. M. Porfirio Díaz, p. 166. Es la zona de la familia Cárdenas.

[21]Orvañanos. 1889. *Ensayo de Geografía Médica y Climatológica.* México: Oficina Tip. de la Secretaría de Fomento, p. 14. Correa. 1901. *Geografía de México.* México: Imprenta de Eduardo Dublán. pp 71, 73.

[22]C. Allen. 1908. *Informe General del Distrito de Salazar.* Morelia: Talleres de la E. I. M. "Porfirio Díaz," 1908.

[23]L. A. Velasco. 1891. *Geografía Estadística del Estado de Oaxaca.* México: Oficina Tip. de la Secretaría de Fomento, pp. 121, 132, 138, 141, 151, 176, 181, 184, 196, 204, 206, 214, 216, 227. 236, 349, 360, 365, 368. L. A. Velasco. 1892. *Geografía Estadística del Estado de Guerrero.* México: Oficina Tip. de la Secretaría de Fomento, pp. 88, 159, 166-167, 179, 187-188 208, 210.

[24]R. García Granados. 1909. "La Cuestión de Razas e Inmigración en México" en BSGERM, 5a. Epoca. T.III. México: Imp. de Arturo García Cubas y Sucesores Hermanos. Los "indígenas" permanecían en la categoría de distintos y desiguales. Archivo Municipal de Zamora, Mich. Fondo Prefectura. Gobernación, 1905-1910, varios expedientes.

[25]R. García Granados, *op. cit.* A. L. Velasco. 1891. *Geografía y Estadística del Estado de Oaxaca.* p. 184. Gran número de chinos cantoneses se encontraba desde finales del siglo XIX trabajando en el Ferrocarril Interoceánico de Tehuantepec.

[26]J. Romero. 1912. "La Inmigración y Emigración en México durante el último año

económico [julio 1910-julio 1911]" en BSGERM, V. En el primer semestre de 1910, habían entrado mil 452 y salieron 688.

[27]C. Esteva, *op. cit.*, p. 422.

[28]A. Molina Enríquez. 1909. *Los Grandes Problemas Nacionales*. México: Imp. de A. Carranza e Hijos, p. 345.

[29]Esteva, *op cit.*

[30]A. del Toro. 1920-1921. "Influencia de la raza negra en la formación del pueblo mexicano." Ethnos. México, 1: 8 a 12.

[31]N. León. 1994. Las Castas del México Colonial o Nueva España. México: Talleres Gráficos del Museo Nacional de Arqueología, Historia y Etnografía, p. 15. M. P., *op. cit.* Simón Tadeo Ortiz de Ayala. 1822. *Resumen de la Estadística del Imperio Mexicano, dedicado a la memoria ilustre del Sr. D. Agustín I, emperador de México.* México: Imp. de doña Herculana del Villar y Socios.

[32]N. Leon, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

Blas Jiménez: Lo nativo como poética de la negritud

por Odalís G. Pérez

Vivir la esencia de lo racial a través de las formas de la descolonización política y espiritual ha sido la perspectiva de los poetas continentales que han abrazado la *criolleidad* y la negritud o la "negredad" como manifestación del ente situado más allá del signo de la opresión intelectual, política, social y racial. El significante racial es un espacio de liberación y síntesis que se autentifica en la significación de la historia social y poética, pero además, en la errancia de la letra señalada, tildada, expulsada, prohibida y colonizada en el imaginario cultural de los pueblos del Caribe.

La *criolleidad* abraza el signo—raíz de las razas manumitidas y despojadas de su verdadera identidad y como ya han mostrado poetas representativos, la criolleidad, esta se define en su expresión y contenidos, pero a la vez en su espacio y temporalidad. Senghor, Aimé Césaire, Nicolás Guillén, Emilio Ballagas, Luís Palés Matos, Manuel del Cabral y otros clásicos de la criolleidad incorporan todo el imaginario racial negro como proceso de constitución de la errancia poética y el movimiento de la tachadura que aspira a borrar la marca discriminatoria, poética e históricamente determinada por los controles sociales.

En René Depestre, Jacques Roumain y J. Stephen Alexis se puede leer la piel abierta al sol y a la significancia, pero esta poética rebasa los límites del color y produce su inscripción en el signo de la liberación y el diálogo intercontinental. Lo poético aquí se expresa en el fondo de universos que aspira a un despertar de lo criollo a través de la negredad, esto es a través de una categoría que se cualifica en tanto que visión del mundo y expresión lingüística y literaria.

Todo lo anterior se conjuga en la poesía de Blas Jiménez quien es un cultor de dicha poética. Pero la militancia de Blas Jiménez no solo se funda en una ontología del negro sino en una dialéctica de la historia en las manifestaciones culturalmente negras. La visión de su poesía no es determinista, sino que más bien la misma incorpora lo universal a través de lo local. No debe entender el sujeto lector lo local como pura contingencia, sino, como lugar de la contradictoriedad o lugar de encantamiento a través del lenguaje y la cultura. Por eso la poesía de Blas Jiménez es un fragmento de sociedad, realidad y ser en el mundo:

> Su cara era un relato,
> su cuerpo un cuento.
> Recordamos el pasado africano
> un presente y futuro criollo.
> Un despertar negro-mulato.
> La noche histórica en aquellos ángeles
> arrebatadores de poderes.
> Junto al Caribe encubridor
> junto al mar libertador.[1]

El diálogo poético es también relato, pues aquí, el poeta dialoga con los elementos y con la historia misma de la voz y el cuerpo:

> La tierra libre
> las historias largas
> los ángeles muchos
> la vaca, aquella patria de senos flacos...
> Datos, más datos.

La travesía poética se observa en el retumbe, en el ritmo y la luz de los

elementos tutelares. Cubrir el tiempo es cubrir también el espacio de la danza y el movimiento. El camino es el mismo:

Un día
los barcos.
Llegaron del norte
vomitando fuego.
Dioses gordos, flacos, negros, blancos, grandes y pequeños...
Guerra contra los dioses, la locura de la guerra en contra de los dioses.

(pp. 30-31, Trece)

Lo social y lo contradictorio que implica su poesía materializa las formas y estructuras que constituyen el mundo de la obra y el mundo de la vida mediante la poesía:

Cuando los cuerpos jóvenes, todos en pedazos, sin haber seleccionado su partida
entre cañaverales quedaron
en las calles
los barrios
las cárceles
las cuevas
los vientres
la mente de un pueblo viejo

(Catorce, p. 32)

El epos y la arquitectura significante continua los grados extendidos de la cultura, así como los enunciados que expresan el mundo como forma y sustancia dialógica:

El miembro, aquel señor sin miembro.
La bestia
el mismo animal
que se piensa turista y nació aquí, allá, en cualquier parte.

(Catorce, pp. 32-33)

La oralidad poética mantiene sus ritmos particularizados en la ideología misma del poema, de tal suerte que los elementos de base nominal y verbal arquean la frase poética:

"Por allá por Hatillo Palma, va la negra".
Entre lomas de piedras afiladas.
Rugen tambores de guerra.
Tam, Tam, Tam, Tam.
Tam, Tam. Tam,Tam
Despiertan los valientes
el campo corre desangrado.

Los ritmos onomatopéyicos, eufonías, paronomasias, epítetos y atildamientos conducen al sentido que es la finalidad del poema. La negra entre lomas hace que los tambores suenen y dicho sonido despierta a los valientes, negros también, que expresan la vividura poético-vital. Lo negro se define en el fraseo de la poeticidad y en aquel espacio fundador encontramos la identidad abierta a los avatares:

"Recogen ejemplos de negros mandingas, aquellos alzados, aquellos fundadores de Villa Mella."
El sudor en la frente
el sudor en el pecho
el sudor en las nalgas...
Así Con los sonidos del tambor en guerra, de varias madres
van
naciendo criollos... (p. 39)

La poética de lo criollo engendra en Blas Jiménez los resortes de un universo temático individualizado en la "negredad" y la negritud en tanto que vías expresivas e ideacionales motivadas por la acción liberadora del espíritu. Las manos que se afirman en el espesor de lo criollo forman parte de una cultura de los símbolos

representativos de la bioculturalidad criolla en el Caribe, siendo así que la definición temática estructura el universo en su monovocalidad específica:

Salvajes
nunca debimos educarlos
(p. 40)

Quema la caña el criollo.
Arden los amos por el bolsillo,
se preocupan los amos...
El grito cimarrón.
En las peladas lomas del Curazao que cambia
de manos
en las pequeñas cuevas de las islas.
En las noches oscuras de los amos...
Un machete de fuego
en la caña que arde.
Un grito en la mente del amo... Arde con la caña

(Caña quemada, p. 46)

Los símbolos y signos del cimarronaje, la caña, el machete y la llama se entrelazan en la superficie poética e ideológica para producir el estremecimiento y la continuidad. Las raíces se afirman en la temporalidad y el espacio a través de las miradas políticas y poéticas que empujan la significancia reconocida en el ritmo-lenguaje de la expresión poética.

Tanto el machete de fuego como la caña que arde y el grito en la mente del amo se extienden en las noches del criollo mulato, negro para mostrar el cuerpo en ofrecimiento y ceremonia. El poema se convierte en partitura, rito y clamor para, mediante el fraseo interno y externo, asegurar el efecto que funciona como ideologema de todo el poemario. Cuerpo y tambor criollo retumban en las vertientes del mulataje y la mulatería, la negrería que se convierte en milagro y música de los sentidos:

El tambor retumba y tumba,
llega la civilización...
De cuerpo presente,
puja la negra-mulata,
puja y gime como la gata.
El tambor retumba y tumba.

En la mente del negro-mulato...
Retumba y tumba.
Retumba y tumba.

Llegó la civilización.
El criollo sonríe y llora,
el criollo baila
El criollo renace
con el retumba y tumba
en el tambor.
Quien ríe último... (p. 49)

Para Blas Jiménez la poesía es afirmación de los valores constitutivos del ser cultural. Lo criollo se intuye, explica y define en su condición poética, lingüística y antropológica. La unidad del universo poético advierte los elementos de transformación que se operan en la lectura de los signos culturales, pues la poesía es la voz colectiva cifrada en expresión y mensaje.

Oh noches
De varias edades.
aceleradamente llegando al final
cuerpos negros al vaiven
del ritmo y el tiempo, en el jazz del momento

La tipa aquella, su atrevimiento.
"que la rumba es blanca"
La tipa gritando.
"no me dejen sola.
Que lo nuestro es bello, que la
rumba es blanca y el sabor es negro"

(pp. 53-54, Imágenes que nos brindaron)

Con *El Nativo*, Blas Jiménez se confirma y reafirma en la poética de lo criollo, en un nuevo ámbito del mulataje, la mulatería y la negrería caribeñas, siendo así que los puntos verticales y el tramado formal y temático del texto enuncia los componentes y ritmenas que estructuran el espacio de la imaginación cultural caribeña.

Nota

[1]Blas Jiménez, El nativo: Versos en cuentos para espantar zombies (Santo Domingo: Ed. Búho, Colecciones cimarrones, 1996), p. 30.

Women of Belize: Gender and Change in Central America

by Irma McClaurin

New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1996, 218 pp.

Reviewed by Geta LeSeur

Although Irma McClaurin's book *Women of Belize: Gender and Change in Central America* (1996) is structured and organized in ten chapters with headings such as "So Where the Hell is Belize?" (Chapter 2) and "From the Marketplace to Lemongrass" (Chapter 3), it is the last one, called "Dis Heah Time No Stand Like Befo' Time" (Chapter 10) which has the genesis and summary of her very informative study and research on the women who live in this very interesting Caribbean country. In this chapter she says:

> Life stories without social and industrial context are meaningless, while structured models of society devoid of the individual perspective provide only partial insights into the workings of a particular society. Gender is not just a set of institutional practices and processes but an all-encompassing social phenomenon that implicates institutions, people, beliefs, behaviours, symbols and meaning—in a word culture.... My goal has been to point out not only the similarities in the way women's experiences are shaped by gender ideologies but also the differences that make Belize unique....I am convinced that I have begun to understand only a small segment of the cultural and social complex that constitutes Belizean society. (190-91)

McClaurin's attachment to her subject shows from the beginning of this informative book on Belize, its women, and interestingly, its men. The time spent there—1990, 1991, 1994—allowed her to realize that one cannot isolate the study of women/gender without understanding how men are also "culturally situated" within this framework.

The book is categorized as ethnography and focuses on the towns within the small district of Toledo. McClaurin's anthropological background shows as she examines several facets of that history, ethnicity, population, folkways, family structures, language, and customs. As if these were not enough for a researcher, she contextualizes it by studying and investigating how Belizean women negotiate their very conservative, structured, and customary lives to reshape, reform, and discover strategies to "modernize" their lives. Their vision is pursued through the formation of women's organizations such as "The Belize Organization for Women and Development" established in 1992 to assist in getting better work conditions and salaries for domestic workers.

Two things, (a) the study of women, culture, and community and (b) women organizing for change at times seem at odds with each other so that the reader is unsure as to her major focus for this book. Actually, it seems at times that there are two separate studies presented. She spends considerable time, for example, talking about "Women Against Violence," an extremely important issue, but does not connect it directly to any of the three women—Zola, Evelyn, Rose—whom she

interviewed at length and with great skill. This is one of the major and bothersome elements for me. Perhaps reorganizing her text would have afforded more consistency.

The early chapters, "Prologue," "Women of Belize," and "Where the Hell is Belize?" are didactic in that they instruct us and provide many useful facts about Belize. For example, McClaurin tells us that "Belmopan, the capital, is called The Valley of Peace. But all is not peaceful in Belize" (1); that the country has grown by 40,000 since the 1980 census; that Belize used to be called British Honduras and, that independence from England came late in the 1970s, compared to the other West Indian islands; that there are many Spanish-speaking immigrants and refugees from political trouble spots like Guatemala and Ecuador because of proximity; that the Caribbean influence is strong, despite the multi-ethnic multi-lingual, and multi-racial complexity there. Importantly, she makes very clear that the term "Creole" indicates a mixed Black/African ancestry, and the label "Garifuna" indicates those who descended from "a fusion of escaped slaves and Carib Indians."

She then stresses how these two groups, Creole and Garifuna, protect those heritages and that we will often hear the following: "We da Creole, deh da Garifuna; we no da one." (We are Creole, and they are Garifuna, we are not the same) (2). Then there are the Mestizos who are of mixed Spanish and Indian blood, but who have little to do with the Spanish culture. Other groups in Belize are the East Indians, Chinese, Mayan, and a small but growing population of whites—mostly American, Canadian, and British—all coexisting rather amicably.

It appears, then, that Belize is a most unique Caribbean country in the Western hemisphere, and would make for a study in exemplary democracy and multi-racial tolerance. As McClaurin states, "difference seems to make little difference." (2) This invites us to prepare for a visit or to emigrate to this "bela-isla" or beautiful island.

McClaurin focuses the gender portion of her research on three women from a different culture, class, and racial group. They are a 39 year old Creole, Evelyn, who has eight children and is an independent entrepreneur, a store keeper, and seamstress. Evelyn reminds me of those other Caribbean women from all those other Caribbean islands who keep going with absolute determination, despite a culture characterized by "machismo" and "wandering men." The others are Rose, a Garifuna mother of two. Her mothering of only two children in a culture where women have several, (an average of six) is a bit unusual. She became husbandless when she refused to accept his extramarital affairs. Her strong religious beliefs and affection for her children helps her to survive her particular circumstances. Zola, an East Indian, interestingly does not present the typical image one has of "coolie" women. She does the stereotypical thing one hears about West Indians, which is "you must own land." She does this and gets her power from land ownership which also gives her community status.

The chapters entitled "Rose's Story" (Garifuna), "Zola's Story" (East Indian), and "Evelyn's Story" (Creole) are interviews conducted with these three women. All are interrupted with descriptions of places, times, commentary and explication of the things said by the interviewees. Some readers may find this bothersome as it interrupts the flow of the narratives.

Personally, I would have preferred to hear their entire story with commentary appearing either before or after the narratives. What McClaurin does is to reorganize the narrator's responses into categories and issues. For example, Rose's responses are organized under six categories: "...Gendered Dependency"; "Change, Its Catalysts and Obstacles"; "Unmaking the Mythology of Motherhood"; "Institutionalizing Change"; "Life Course and Empowerment and Reflections." The strengths of this book, however, are embedded in the narratives by all three women. McClaurin is very much at home in this format, and her ability to get the most out of an afternoon's taping are due, I'm sure, to her intimacy with her subjects, subject, and Belize. She mentions from time to time how she was viewed by all as a sister or cousin, because of her color, hair, and African linkages rather than her African Americanness.

The author also examines two wornen's groups to see how they serve to change women's lives. The primarily Mestizo "Orange Walk Community Group" (OWCG) has thirty women members. The group began originally to "socialize" in women's homes, but has gone through various changes to currently developing women's leadership skills and community awareness. As Maria Rodriguez, its leader, says: "My group was never (intended) to teach women arts and crafts. Our goal was to become community-minded... our goal is to educate women to become leaders in the community; give them basic training; nothing to frighten anyone." (182)

"The Roaring Creek Women's Group," (RSWG) has a strong Creole membership and Lily Waters, its Jamaican-Belizean founder, says its beginning was based on a need to do something within each village community. This group has not been as successful, as the Orange Walk one because of geographic divisions and differences in goals and strategies. This is not unlike the many women's groups and agendas that emerged during the American Women's Rights Movement of the 1970s, which quite often fell apart along racial and ethnic lines over differing priorities and issues. One excellent point addressed by McClaurin which bears repeating here is that:

> When (women of color's) behaviour does not conform to the standards prescribed by the white Western-centric feminist movement, (it) is sometimes interpreted as non-feminist and regarded as reactionary. The result has been that the actions taken by women who lacked an explicitly political rhetoric of a clear feminist ideology have been viewed as "less than" the behaviour of "real" feminists who are generally represented in the literature as white, Western, middle class and from developed countries. Although much of this has been critiqued and altered, these are lingering tendencies to try to "find" feminism in whatever activities women are engaged. (171)

This observation is profound and should be understood by those of us who continue to do women's work for ourselves, our sisters, our families, and our race. All white feminists should also think deeply on this statement. We should not permit belittling and critiquing of our methods of promoting equality and access.

Chapter 9, "The Quest for Female Autonomy: Women's Groups in Belize" is one of the better written chapters and begins with a Frederick Douglass quote as its epigraph: "Power concedes nothing

without a demand. It never did and never will." (164) In it McClaurin speaks with honesty, clarity, and poetic emotion. She appears to genuinely feel the lives of her "sisters" from the years she spent observing, digesting, and loving these strong and determined women. She sees them as various, yet one. In wonderful language she tells us:

> They come, young and old, with a host of children straggling behind them. They are married, common law, divorced, widowed, and single .... Some of the women must rise before 5:00 a.m. to catch the bus that passes through their village or town at that unseemly hour. Others have been up early to cook rice or bake tortillas for husbands who will not tolerate left overs. They cook, wash and clean houses at the approach of dawn so that there can be no excuse to detain them.... They come wrapping a few tortillas or pieces of Creole bread in a towel to snack along the way... . they refute the male belief that women only come together to gossip; and they tolerate the male fear that women coming together means that soon the woman will try to wear the pants .... In every district, they meet in schools, or rooms over bars, in community centers, wherever space is available. They travel far because they believe in this entity called a women's group. (164-65)

McClaurin's sincerity and understanding and empathy is obvious, because I have some familiarity with Caribbean women and "country women" in particular, from my native Jamaica, and friends and family members from Trinidad, Barbados, the Cayman Islands, Haiti, Santo Domingo and Curacao, there is an affinity and understanding of these wonderful, profound and vivid images of strength and determination. None of these women wear pants, they are in skirts, feminine and confident. I also know well how time-consuming the fieldwork of collecting narratives, developing rapport and trust can be. And how, when the bonding happens, what a glorious exercise ethnographic work can be.

The fact that Belize is so complex, almost an anomaly in the Caribbean, makes this work important, unique and original. In an age when these culturally rich islands are advertised as tax havens, cruise ship stops and tropical "fun" places, it is refreshing to see that Belize is holding well against Americanization and that its women are central to change there. McClaurin also mentions one of Belize's best known "exports"—novelist Zee Edgell, who at one time headed the "Belize Women's Bureau." In a word, she explored many avenues to get "the story."

There is no formal bibliography, but McClaurin's notes are thorough, informative, extends the reader's knowledge, and directs us to other sources for inquiry. *Women of Belize: Gender and Change in Central America*, is a major contribution to ethnography in the Caribbean, how gender impacts on women of various races and classes, as well as how they are organizing, especially at the grass roots level, for change in their country, community and self. The reading is "easy," engaging and free of the "academic" language of anthropology. The book is useful for other disciplines besides Gender Studies, Anthropology and Caribbean Studies. It is also recommended for those interested in travel to Belize for either research or respite!

Transculturation and Resistance in Lusophone African Narrative

by Phyllis Peres

Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997. 132 pages.

Reviewed by Niyi Afolabi

In the last two decades, repeated attempts have been made by pioneering scholars such as Manuel Ferreira, Gerald Moser and Russell Hamilton to call attention to the neglect of an area of academic inquiry that has remained periferic. Of such calls, I find Hamilton's the most compelling in his demand for a more "cogent literary criticism"[1] on Portuguese-speaking African countries and their cultural production. Instead of the panoramic analysis and reviews of these textual windows into human suffering and survival, Phyllis Peres's *Transculturation and Resistance in Lusophone African Narrative* provides the first book-length attempt in blending Lusophone African history, contemporary theory with cogent critical practice. This is a definite beginning in legitimizing a neglected field in African literary studies.

Divided into six chapters comprising four of the most important Angolan writers, Luandino Vieira, Pepetela, Uanhenga Xitu and Manuel Rui, this book compellingly analyzes Angolan narrative fiction and the problematic of national identity. Providing a historical context that engages Portuguese colonialism and Angolan resistance and drawing upon post-colonial theories of Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak among others, *Transculturation* redefines "acculturation" as used to justify Portuguese colonialism while constructing "transculturation" as the subversive transformation of Portuguese dominant discourse.

In chapter One, Peres establishes the interconnected nature of Angolan past (acculturation) and present (transculturation) while insisting on the fallacy of shifting Portuguese colonial ideologies (civilizing mission, cultural assimilation, miscegenation) as well as Lusotropicalism as developed by Gilberto Freyre and as critiqued by Gerald Bender. Peres argues that while the Portuguese attempted to justify their colonial mission through assimilationist policies, they equally contradicted themselves in their imposition of their alien cultural values on the colonized. On the one hand, it was important for Portugal to see itself as a "nation" even if it meant imperialistically "recharting the borders of Portuguese nationess" (7) at the expense of the Angolan nation. On the other hand, it was imperative for Angola to resist Portuguese domination through affirmation of self-identity. As the author puts it: "In a critical sense, transculturation is important as it counters the colonial or dominant practices presumed with acculturation as well as uncomplicated synthesis often assumed with either creolization or *mestiçagem* (10)." In this blend of socio-political context and critical theory, Peres displays a profound knowledge of post-coloniality and its (dis)contents as she engages Frantz Fanon's notion of "act of culture" and Homi Bhabha's "hybridity" while

suggesting that Angolan act of national liberation must be seen as a form of counternarrative that intersects race, class, gender, ethnicity, tribe, region and generation.

Chapters Two to Five are devoted to practical analysis of the works of four significant Angolan writers. "Counter-mapping Luanda" focuses on the linguistic innovation in the works of Luandino Vieira in which he recreates the language of the *musseques* (slums) and the oral narrative formula as forms of subversion and resistance to acculturation. *A Cidade e a Infância*, *Vidas Novas*, *Luuanda*, *Velhas estórias*, *A vida verdadeira de Domingos Xavier*, *Nós, os do Makulusu* and *Macandumba* testify to both Viera's personal experience under Portuguese colonial brutality and the lives of the common Angolan people. "Mimicry in the Contact Zone" explores the works of Uanhenga Xitu as both a mockery of colonial discourse as well as an ambivalent hybrid construct through the use of orature and linguistic polyphony found in *"Mestre" Tamoda e outros contos*, *Manana*, *O Ministro* and *Os Sobreviventes da máquina colonial depõem*. "Visions of Utopia, Counternarrations of Nation" captures the illusions and disillusionment of the Angolan revolution through the use of mythology and allegories in the works of Pepetela: *As aventuras de Ngunga*, *Mayombe*, *O Cão e os Caluandas*, *Muana Puó*, *Yaka*, *A Geração da Utopia*, *Lueji* and *O desejo de Kianda*. In "After the Revolution: The Irony of Independence" Peres analyzes Manuel Rui's uniquely dramatic portrayal of the contradictions of colonialism and independence as textualized in *Regresso adiado*, *Sim Camarada!*, *Quem me dera ser onda*, *Crónica de um mujimbo* and *1 morto e os vivos*.

Chapter Six, "Narrations of a Nation Deferred," like her "Preface," returns to the issues of border narrative, nationhood and hybridity. Although the "pessimistic" visions of pepetela and Manuel Rui may have crept into the consciousness of the author in the concluding chapter, these apparent disenchanting portraitures of life in post-independence Angola are not necessarily a sign of a dream deferred but an on-going process of self-reconstruction and self-redefinition. The Angolan nation will continue to be textualized as an "open-ended narrative" which can be read multivalently. The Angolan civil war is not enough a setback to suggest that "history has defeated imagination" (104) or that the revolutionary dream was an illusion. On the contrary, without the initial subversive dream of liberation and armed struggle, Lusophone Africa may still be languishing under the fangs of Portuguese colonial yoke. The present challenge lies in (re)defining the new Angolan identity following the lessons of the civil war.

The title of the book may appear somewhat more ambitious than the scope it actually covers. This may be due to the dire anxiety in legitimizing the neglected field. Instead of the impression that the book is on the entire Lusophone Africa (that is Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and São Tomé and Príncipe), it is specifically on Angolan narrative fiction. Its Angolan focus notwithstanding, the reader will find the book quite informative and theoretically grounded. *Transculturation* is a significant and timely revivalistic contribution to the hidden beauty of Lusophone Africa which is only beginning to catch the attention of

American Lusophiles and Africanists.

Note

[1]Cited in Gerald Moser, "Lusophone Literatures," *Research Priorities in African Literatures*, Bernth Lindfors ed., (New York: Hans Zell, 1984). 161.

The Woman with the Artistic Brush: A Life History of Yoruba Batik Artist Nike Davies

by Kim Marie Vaz

"An Eastgate Book." Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1995, 137 pages, 17 black and white illustrations.

Reviewed by Adrienne W. Hoard

Monica Olufunmilayo Oyenike Davies (Nike Davies by her preference), an extraordinary woman artist of Yoruba tradition, is telling her story to Kim Marie Vaz in this epic of self-revelation. Craving trust and freedom, Nike Davies has lived a "fable" that wrenches and pulls at whatever a *Westerner* may know and believe is human and decent in the circumstance of life experience. Who would believe in the twentieth century that to be born female and desire to be treated as mortal equal to any man would be revolutionary, anti-societal and life threatening? A disturbing and intriguing narrative unfolds in the words of Nike Davies, documented in the pen of Kim Marie Vaz, excellently footnoted with descriptive, contextural definitions, which provide passage for the non-Nigerian reader into a temporal "understanding" of tradition and gender in the realm of the Yoruba [*king*dom] world.

Dr. Vaz, as an educational psychologist, is interested in the lived perspective of Nike Davies and the other Yoruba women of focus in this manuscript. A meticulous researcher, Vaz documents the orthography along with a glossary of the Yoruba language, and presents the viewpoints of the women almost completely in their own words transcribed from her taped interviews over a six-year period. "Quite by accident" Vaz and Davies were introduced in summer 1988, while Vaz was conducting her dissertation research on marriages between Yoruba men and Western women. Davies was in the exact opposite circumstance, thus invalid for the dissertation study, but the impact of the initial meeting and conversations between the two women impelled Vaz to listen introspectively and begin a second research project.

This book evolved into a joint project among the "community" of all but one of the co-wives of this one particular male Yoruba artist, Davies's first husband. This man remains nameless throughout this volume, in keeping with the Yoruba proverb to irritate and restrain your enemy by talking about them without calling their name. With the exception of the third wife, Muniratu Temilade Bello, who is the focus of the book's Appendix, all of the other co-wives are referred to only by their marriage position, i.e., "fourth wife or sixth wife, etc." As the stories are revealed, the admiration Vaz feels approaches the level of awe for the "resilience" of Nike and her six co-wives. Vaz contributes Nike's multi-leveled successes to internal resources, such as her artistic talent, her fearless spirit, her traditional religious beliefs, her historical knowledge of the strong women in her family and her ability to infuse others with her faith in entrepreneurial dreams to become "a big madam [is] someone who

is *independent*" (p. 40). By publication of their accounts, Vaz imparts to these women some of the *freedom* they seek. She writes "to remain silent was to remain ensorcelled. Davies's determination to 'set the record straight' is the primary motivation for telling her story here in *The Woman with the Artistic Brush* (p. xxxiv) .

The layout of this book represents orality in good African narrative tradition, in which the intent is to tell you something in highlight verbal mode, then repeat it in more detailed fashion, and finally to tell you once again in synopsis of the underlying or representative meanings of the story. The expansive Introduction section of the book carries the reader chronologically through the tragedies and the triumphs in the life of this young Nigerian girl visionary. The ensuing chapters each cover in greater detail the people, events and circumstances of her life to date (1994) as told by Nike. The extensive Appendix is the life story of the third wife and close sister-friend of Davies's, Muniratu Temilade Bello. Her narration not only reveals her feelings about the events and circumstances under which she developed into womanhood, but also echoes and confirms the life of Nike Davies, in that here are presented two women from the same home area. Given different types of family backgrounds, however, due to the limited, abusive options for young Yoruba women, they end up together, co-wives, co-artists and co-survivors.

Nike Davies, born into a traditional Yoruba household in Ogidi, Kwara State, Nigeria of the early 1950s, has consistently *overcome* to become one of Nigeria's contemporary cultural treasures as a batik artist, a teacher and as an economic liaison to the rest of the world for Nigerian artwork. The issues in her life mirror the global societal issues of how to protect, honor, cherish and *serve* the *female* in our families. Sisterhood and *coalition* of all types, among women and between women and men, is a central theme in this book. Equal value for women and their dreams and abilities is mandatory in our worldview if society is to maintain a constructive balance of power. Fifty-one percent of the planet population must be nurtured and sustained, or the *conflicts* in families, between gender groups, among ethnic populations and across nation states will never subside. "Sacrifice accomplishes wonders," quotes *Ifa, Oracle of the Yoruba* (Gleason, 1992, p. 27; Vaz, 1995, p. ix), but how many more women's spirits and bodies must be sacrificed before we each personally say, "enough"?

The dictionary qualification of the term "trauma" describes a shocking personal experience that has a lasting effect on one's mental life. Psychologists document devastating potential life repercussions on the self concept and worldview of a trauma victim. Nike Davies has surmounted a series of personal injuries that would stagger an active imagination, annihilate a lesser spirit, and disarm an undeveloped character. Beginning with the death of her natural mother when she was six years old, followed a year later by the death of her maternal grandmother, Nike's life has been visited by abandonment, clitoridectomy, physical and psychological abuse, *voodoo* and witchcraft, domestic violence, rape, the rivalry and sisterhood of polygyny, the joy and powerlessness of motherhood and ultimately divorce, all taking place within the context of intense "ethnic chauvinism" (Patterson, 1977) and

the strictly observed Yoruba patrilineal social order.

In the subsequent nine chapters horrible, degrading, terrifying events are described in matter-of-fact phrases that only hint at the passionate sadness underlying this non-fictional account. Encounter after encounter reveals to the reader Nike's renegade spirit with her courage to survive no matter what. Her "*life* has been spent negotiating patriarchal systems at every turn: first in her father's house, then in Olosunta's traveling theater [company], in her first husband's compound and in her marriage to a European man whose patriarchal worldview is tinged with racism" (p. xii). Nike expresses the values of a unique woman, one who always recognized *options* in a society that permitted almost zero options and effectively dictated the life of a female from literally "cradle to grave."

"A Yoruba father wields an uncanny amount of authority over his daughter —the type and amount of health care she will receive, whether she will be educated, and when and whom she will marry" (p. xvi). Nike reminiscences about her father's feelings toward her as she approached adolescence, "as I grew older, he saw me becoming more independent and he began to make me feel bad for being a girl" (p. 25). "All men want when they have a daughter is to sell her to a man, who in turn uses her like a slave" (p. 26). "In...marriage it was like a business, like master and slave or landlord and tenant" (p. 42). Generation after generation of Yoruba women, including Davies's own mother, reportedly suffer loveless, forced marriages and learn to acquiesce in order to live and provide life for their children.

Irrespective of the disharmony, violence, abuse and treachery flowing from the husband to any one [or more] of his wives, of great importance to both male and female members of the Yoruba household is the appearance of *unity* among family. Nike recalls, "we [co-wives] knew we were not happy, but we did not want to make him [the husband] look small in front of his visitors" (p. 43). Even with all the encumbrances, the traditional Yoruba societal training for females expected Nike and her co-wives to protect the status of their husband and consider him above themselves, safeguard *his* public image and reputation. Fear, respect and dispassionate loathing existed in distinct balance as an emotional stance toward him as an individual, a conventional solution even by North American feminist standards.

Living as one of multiple women and rival, diverse wives in a male-dominated world and household, there is no manner of strategy to exert a sense of self, or time to develop a sense of self-discovery. "For a good ten years we wives fought one another, said bad words to one another, and lied to one another at our husband's instigation" (p. 57). The wives sang their insults to one another in patterned song poems, and fought over position and seniority. The husband flourished in attention and *food* due to the jealousy and divisiveness. Nike Davies found a way in which to construct and solidify her temperament, develop her talents and art career, all the while raising the level of harmony, self-awareness and "longing" for a better condition among the other co-wives.

ART became her friend, her emotional and economic salvation. Nike's art sales have made her feel the most secure and complete, personally and professionally.

However, a financier to her core, Nike would do any good day's work to get money for her dreams. She has sold pepper, firewood, leaves and carried bricks and concrete on her head until her hair fell out. A consistent, secret saver, Davies impressed even the husband to be somewhat easier on her, because she tended to be a ready source of cash for him as well. She laughs, "I would loan him my own money and let him think I borrowed it to pay back myself" (p. 63).

Nike encouraged, cajoled and fought the other wives to make them prepare *adire* cloth or embroidery, and utilize other paint and dye techniques. *Art* evolved as their *bond thicker than blood.* Davies relates, "it was only when each wife became busy with her own work and stopped waiting to get money from our husband that our problems began to get solved. We began to see that when we were broke we could sell our work.When we could afford to buy things for ourselves, we stopped worrying about what he said about who he loved best. We wives stopped arguing among ourselves" (p. 58). A true sense of "community" among these now *independent* women was finally established.

Sixteen years passed for Nike in this polygynous family unit, and through the daily chaos and chores, incredibly she never lost her focus to develop her own artistic talents, encourage the talents of those Yoruba women artists around her, and to have her own land and school. In 1975, after four years of American and European exhibition/sales of her work, and sales in Kaduna and Lagos thanks to her brother, Joseph, Nike had the funds and the "opportunity" to purchase the land for the Nike Center for Arts and Culture [renamed such in 1991, as it was founded originally as the Osogbo Artist Cooperative in 1988]. The first building on that property took ten years to build. She recalls with glee, "my little house in Osogbo became a studio as well as a gallery, and we officially opened it in 1988" (p. 82). "My center is there to encourage women to try their hands at art" (p. 83).

Her dreams of land, home and school were about to manifest in the material world, just as Nike was ready to walk away from her first husband in 1986. Two of her European women artist friends, Victoria Scott and Georgina Beier, were encouraging Nike to forego the restrictive, *dangerous* life with her husband. Like the majority of her co-wives (without the husband's knowledge or consent), Davies had taken a boyfriend. The co-wives were impressed with her European gentleman who was in love with mixed-race children and "dated [her] for six months without touching [her]" (p. 63). It was not an immediate process, but over time Nike, was forced to make the most difficult choice in lifestyles.

She concedes, "I chose to leave completely, even though there were powerful reasons to stay in the relationship—my children, his [the husband's] *voodoo*, and my love for my co-wives. I did not have to legally divorce my first husband, because he didn't pay bride-price for me." Sadly, Nike admits, "I had to leave my children. I went to live with my second husband. A one man-one wife relationship was strange to me....I was very lonely....I had no friends. I used to say that my [art]work was my friend" (p. 64). Art now served as her avenue for expression and for activism. A mixture of folklore and her own life vision, the motifs of Nike's batiks visually document

her concerns for her own life and for the lives of traditional Yoruba women who "normally suffer more...because they have no help" (p. xxix).

Most numerous among Nike's batiks are images as prayers to her heroine, the female deity Osun, "warrior, *orisa*, mother, wife, worker, teacher of Ifa divination to other women, giver of children, and comforter of barren women," (p. xxix). Osun is the goddess that embodies both tremendous power and complete femininity in the eyes of her worshipers (Badejo, 1989). Her protection is healing and as the guardian of Osogbo, she has held the town in abundance on the Osun River for centuries (Neimark, 1993). It was important for Davies to place her school and her energies in this area of Osogbo. Recognizing herself as human embodiment of Osun confirmed Nike's commitment to uplift women in her own way, through creative and economic *independence.*

Nike Davies is *successful*! Her narrative serves as a workable template, her life a valid model, for *women and men* determined to break away from the stereotypes of male dominance, determined to surmount the moral defeat of not valuing one another, and determined to create new societal institutions which reflect anti-sexist, anti-racist and anti-ageist behaviors. Her vibrant artwork, her thriving art school and her four productive children are only a few of the phenomenal outcomes of the life of Monica Olufunmilayo Oyenike Davies, our Nike Davies. We are grateful for her strength and self-confidence. From her sacrifices, have come wonders. Ase!

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Sacred Possessions: Vodou, Santería, Obeah and the Caribbean

by Margarite Fernández Olmos and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, eds.

New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1997, 312 pp.

reviewed by Sw. Anand Prahlad

When I was asked to review *Sacred Possessions: Vodou, Santería, Obeah, and the Caribbean*, I was just developing a new course, "The Aesthetics of Vodou and African American Literary Criticism." I had also recently returned from visiting the University of California, Los Angeles, where not the first, but perhaps the most impressive, exhibit of Haitian vodou, assembled by Donald Cosentino and Marilyn Houlberg at the Fowler Museum of Cultural History, had met with great success and was subsequently touring the United States. Thus, the timing of this new collection of essays could not have been more fortuitous. The publication has been useful to my course design and continued research on the connections between New World African religions and literatures.

Sacred Possessions consists of 13 essays, an introduction, glossary, and an extensive bibliography. Its major premises are that the cultures of the Caribbean are linked together by the persistence of syncretic African-based religious systems and that cultural analysis must be informed by a knowledge of "the creative and powerful process of religious syncretism and its social relevance and widespread transcendence within Caribbean cultures (10-11)." The assembled articles take different approaches to the religions of Vodou, Santería, Obeah, and Quimbois, practices that become symbolic—at least in the context of the anthology—of the creolization that characterizes Caribbean societies. Within this conceptual framework, the title *Sacred Possessions* signifies on multiple levels. The most obvious is the idea of spirit possession, a trope connecting the ritual practices considered here. Viewed as symbols of resistance to Colonial and post Colonial forces, however, these religions become themselves sacred possessions. As such, they insinuate the importance of African-based metaphysics and philosophy to the survival and human-ness of Caribbean societies.

In many ways this collection of essays is an extension of the kind of analysis undertaken by Janhetz Jahn in *Muntu* (1959). The approaches represented here are all interdisciplinary and draw extensively upon anthropological, literary and historical data. Thus works treasured by scholars in Diasporan folklore experience a revival within these pages. For example, Roger Bastide's *African Civilizations in the New World* (1971), Maya Deren's *Divine Horseman: The Living Gods of Haiti* (1970), and William Bascom's *Ifá Divination: Communication between Gods and Men in West Africa* (1969), which are joined to more recent studies such as Karen McCarthy Brown's *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn* (1991), Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1993), and Michel S. Laguerre's *Voodoo and Politics in Haiti* (1989); are frames of reference for many of the assertions made.

The more ethnographically oriented

essays include "Vodoun, or the Voice of the Gods," by Joan Dayan; "'I Am Going to See Where My Oungan Is': The Artistry of a Haitian Vodou Flagmaker," by Anna Wexler; "La Regla de Ocha: The Religious System of Santería," by Miguel Barnet; and Hector Delgado's photo exhibit, "From The Sacred Wild to the City: Santería in Cuba Today." Dayan summarizes some of the basic ritual elements of Haitian Vodou, and focuses on developments in the religion in recent years. She concludes that due to economic pressures and the effects of Duvalier's tyrannical regime, traditional family structures and community relationships are unraveling. Hence, according to her, the religion is disintegrating and "...the loa have lost their ancestral places" (29). In place of vodou, she suggests, Haitian people are turning to Protestantism and sorcerers in increasing numbers. Barnet's essay, translated by Paravisini-Gebert, summarizes elements of Cuban Santería in a similar fashion, except that it ends with a more optimistic view of the religion's future: "The well of African religions in Cuba...will continue to overflow...Cuban Santería spreads throughout the world (990)."

In contrast to these two essays, which are based largely on ethnographies conducted by other scholars, Wexler takes us inside a world in which she is an apprentice to a traditional vodou flag-maker. She shares tremendous insights into the rituals and negotiations between personal, community and divine power articulated by a contemporary oungan, or priest. Through Wexler's observations, the reader comprehends more fully how oungans have been misrepresented in written accounts of vodou, as well as how material culture such as altars become in practice highly interactive and cathartic mediums. Another illuminating essay is Eugenio Matibag's "Ifá and Interpretation: An Afro-Caribbean Literary Practice," an informative look at a transplanted African system of divination and the narratives that are such an intricate part of this system, e.g., prayers, legends, tales, riddles, incantations, etc. He relies on ethnographical accounts and suggests how Ifá divination "supports a number of important notions in Afro-Caribbean studies (166)." For example, it demonstrates that religious discourse can be viewed as a canon and an "important source of Afro-Caribbean knowledge (166)."

Positioned between the Wexler and Dayan essays is Paravisini-Gebert's "Women Possessed: Eroticism and Exoticism in the Representation of Woman as Zombie," a penetrating analysis of how the "intertwinings of zombification and the erotic..." in literature, film and other popular culture "...seem aimed at emptying Haitian history of its content (47)." Her exegesis hinges primarily on the tendency of writers and filmmakers to use the zombie as a symbol for Haitian people, portraying them as devoid of will, a depiction that "...negates any possibility of their transcending a history of colonialism, slavery, postcolonial poverty, and political repression because, as zombies, they are incapable of rebellion (49)." In many such works, the weak and ineffectual Haitian is pictured in contrast to the white, female virgin who always recovers from attempts to zombify her. The author notes the connection between historical moments, e.g., the 1932 American military occupation of Haiti, and the proliferation of these zombie images, as well as the

long-lasting effect they have had on the Western imagination. She concludes by examining the novel, *La Cathédrale du Mois D'Août* (*The Cathedral of the August Heat*), which, in contrast to earlier works, celebrates and empowers the Haitian body.

The next articles also draw upon ethnographic research, but in different ways. José Piedra states in "From Monkey Tales to Cuban Songs: On Signification," that his main objective is "...to explore a variety of manifestations of the mythology of compromise (123)." He does this by considering the Monkey of oral tradition a symbolic figure of signification and discursive practices representing the colonized in Cuban society, and then critiquing literary works in reference to this rhetorical trope. His analysis is similar to that of Henry Louis Gates in *The Signifying Monkey*: and shares some of the same problematics, e.g., he employs a comparative, literary approach to mythology and oral traditions, asking the reader to take a leap of faith in accepting his sometimes broad interpretations of international, mythological motifs.

These essays are followed by three discussions of Obeah and its relationship to culture and literature. In "Romantic Voodoo: Obeah and British Culture, 1797-1807," Alan Richardson traces the British response to Obeah from the eighteenth through the twentieth century as it is reflected in various genres of literature. He insightfully relates these responses, most of which are as one would expect, laced with contempt, to the socio-political climates of the times. In "'An Article of Faith': Obeah and Hybrid Identities in Elizabeth Nunez-Harrell's *When Rocks Dance*," Karla Y.E. Frye emphasizes Obeah as a signifier for the creolized, or hybrid, nature of Caribbean identity, and at the same time stresses the importance of the African element to Afro-Caribbean resistance. Elaine Savory focuses on the construction of Obeah in the texts of yet another author, in "'Another Poor Devil of a Human Being...': Jean Rhys and the Novel as Obeah." Savory takes the traditional arguments a step further in her contention that Rhys's writing is Obeah, "...that she thought of writing as summoning spirits... (217)." She engages particularly the problematics of a white Caribbean writer laying claim to religions grounded in African syncretisms, and concludes that despite the sensitivity to the subtleties of those religions reflected in Rhys's work, "For Rhys, the novel as Obeah can only demonstrate the spiritual isolation and agony of sensitive white women in the Caribbean (228)."

The final three essays in the book tackle much the same issues—the signification of syncretic spiritual motifs—in the literature of other women writers. In "The Shaman Woman, Resistance, and the Powers of Transformation: A Tribute to Ma Cia in Simone Schwarz-Bart's *The Bride of Beyond*," Brinda Mehta focuses on the female shaman in the French Antilles, "based on a reading of Simone Schwartz-Bart's *Pluie et vent sur Télumée Miracle* (1972) (English title: *The Bridge of Beyond*) (232)." Drawing upon Mircea Eliade's vision of shamanism, she theorizes the role of the female shaman in Caribbean societies, as illustrated by Ma Cia in the novel, as "...the reassertion of female space within the community, (237)" and "...a transformative energy capable of breaking down outmoded patterns of thinking and living (243)."

Ivette Romero-Cesareo has similar interests. Her essay, "Sorcerers, She-Devils, and Shipwrecked Women: Writing Religion in French-Caribbean Literature," considers the importance of religion in the quest for identity in the writings of four women authors: Myriam Warner-Vieyra, Simone Schwarz-Bart, Jacqueline Manicom and Dany Bébel-Gisler. She discusses, among other things, the significance of African-derived, female deities in Caribbean societies, and the reinterpretation of them in women's writing. Simple religious rituals such as bathing also receive attention and are sensitively examined by Romero-Cesareo. One gains from her essay a deeper understanding of the role that religion plays in gendered, racial and national identity, especially for women in the French-Caribbean and some of its literatures.

The book concludes with a knowledgeable article by Margarite Fernández Olmos, titled "Trans-Caribbean Identity and the Fictional World of Mayra Montero." Olmos explores the writings of Montero as an author who reflects "...a fasination with Afro-Caribbean spirituality and its potential as a unifying dimension of Caribbean cultural identity (267)." The essay discusses Montero in the historical context of the scholarly search to discover and articulate the "Caribbeanness" of Hispanic Caribbean cultures.

Olmos examines the differences in attitudes toward African cultural elements from Cuba to Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic. Whereas the Afro-Latino nature of their culture has been accepted by Cubans; Dominicans, on the other hand, still hold to the Hispanic perspective, denying the significance of African influences on their identities. The result of the Hispanicist point of view has been the neglect of research on African-derived spiritual practices, for instance, Gagá, a religion similar to Haitian Vodou. We learn from Olmos's discussion that Montero validates the work of the few researchers who have chosen to study the religion, incorporating elements of it into his fiction, which insists on the heterogeneity of cultures throughout the Caribbean.

The weaknesses of the book emerge at the moment that the reader seeks a guiding thematic or theoretical principle of organization. There are no sections, but simply a series of essays, leaving the reader to make sense of the connections between them and the order in which they come. At first glance, the book seems to be structured according to the religions discussed; for example, the first three essays focus on vodou, the next two on Santería, and so on. But this pattern is interrupted in a number of places by essays that extend beyond a single religion and, in fact, contradicts the work's major premise as well as the theoretical arguments of the essays themselves. The placement of several essays is particularly jarring. Paravisini-Gebert's essay, which focuses on images of zombies in literature and film, for instance, is sandwiched between the Dayan and Wexler articles, both of which are much more ethnographic. The studies most akin to theirs are Barnet's and Matibag's, which are concerned primarily with giving descriptive accounts of Santería and Ifá divination.

At the very least, the absence of a theoretical framework causes an uneasiness and disorientation for the reader. At most, it insinuates that the editors have not taken time to develop such a framework. One is often unclear about the scholarly

frames of reference for many assumptions made, leaving one at a disadvantage in evaluating individual essays and the work as a whole. A prominent problem is the omission of essays by scholars in related fields; notably religious studies, folkloristics, linguistics and socio-linguistics, and ethnomusicology. This is all the more curious given the publisher's disciplinary designations—Caribbean studies/ anthropology/religion—and the author's descriptives—religious syncretism and Caribbean culture. It is also striking that a work based on interdisciplinary perspectives does not include any theoretical disourse on this orientation or problems inherent with it. For instance, characters and events from fictional works are sometimes discussed as representatives of actual people and social interactions, without critical questioning of the differences between literary and material realities.

I was also puzzled by the omission of numerous Caribbean religions, particularly Rastafarianism. Again, the reader is left to ponder the rationale for such exclusions. Does this reflect a bias toward older religions? Does Rastafarianism contain features that would undermine the arguments made for Vodou, Santería and Obeah? Certainly no religion is more influential in contemporary Caribbean culture than Rastafarianism; so what accounts for its complete absence from this collection of essays? This points to another troubling aspect of the work. Although it purports to be a study of religion and culture, most of the essays, in fact, focus on relationships between religious motifs and literature. Of the many rich veins of artistic expression found in the Caribbean—dance, cooking, ritual and popular musics, for example —why do most of the articles discuss aspects of religions relative to literature?

Despite these problems, *Sacred Possessions* remains a significant publication. A number of its contributors break new ground in the thinking and analysis of the Caribbean. Not only will it be valuable to students and scholars new to this area of discourse, but also a refreshing find for scholars already deeply engaged in Caribbean cultural studies. Although the editors choose not to promote the work as literary analysis, it will prove invaluable to scholars of Caribbean and other post-colonial literatures; and perhaps, even moreso to students in search of models for integrating ethnographic data into literary analysis. As such, it can be an excellent text book. To some extent, the work achieves one of its primary goals; it demonstrates not only the polyvocality and syncretic nature of Caribbean societies, but suggests that a similar conceptualization of other Western societies is appropriate and can possibly transform the academic critiques made of them.

Cristina Rodríguez Cabral
Indiana University - Pennsylvania

A Conversation With Quince Duncan

CRISTINA: The invisibility of Blacks in South America is not only a chronic social disease, as the liberal social scientists chose to say, but one of the discriminatory resources developed by the South American societies. While in the so-called "First World" countries we are constantly taken for Africans, Brazilians or North Americans, the surprised faces make it very clear that the general idea is that there are no Blacks in South America except in Brazil. I find these countries in a state prior to their acceptance of racism as part of their reality and still very far from a true incorporation of the Afro-South Americans as part of their social structure.

So, if you accept the above enunciation of the problem, what strategies do you believe the communities and Black organizations should develop to make themselves visible?

QUINCE: That is a big one...

CRISTINA: Well, yes, but I mean, what is our responsibility as citizens of those countries and members of the Black community? What is our role as writers?

QUINCE: The "invisibilization" of Blacks is one way in which racism manifests itself. And racism is the Blacks' only specific problem. Historically, it is the great ideology of colonialism. Through racism it has been possible to justify barbarism. Racism today, in the form of Eurocentrism, is the classical alienation of Latin Americans. Whether from the right or the left, or just a bohemian, the Latin American *persona* suffers from this malady. In spite of the fact that our nations are racially and culturally *mestizas* we have not been able to reconcile with ourselves. Latin Americans tend to believe that they are Spanish, Italians or whatever. They dance all those Afro dances, you know, tangos and milongas, and candombes, rumbas, and mambos, and puntas, and they create music with the instruments of the whole world; and when they dance you can see their Afro-Indian-Latin-Asian mestizaje jumping out. And yet they cannot see themselves.

Talking of invisibility, the problem for the Latin American is that he looks very much like his Afro-Indian-Asian grandmother and the look deprives him of his "pure" "Caucasian-ness."

CRISTINA: So you agree that it is a sickness. Is it not also a mechanism devised to...?

QUINCE: It is complex. Just look at television. In some of our countries one must conclude that all blond women work on TV because there are not that many of them in the country. There are so few Black or Amerindian faces, but when you walk through the streets, especially if you go to the poorer sections, you find the real Latin American, and he does not look like the ones you see on TV.

CRISTINA: But in relation to the organizations...

QUINCE: It's the same. No matter if they are from the right or from the left, or if they are worker union leaders. The leaders are the whiter ones; white and masculine, with the exception of the sport secretary, the social secretary or the lovely lady that takes care of the minutes. Look at the Congress, at the Bishops, at the ministers... but we all descend from Quetzalcoatl, Manco Capac, Nzinga's

captives and Mio Cid. Why are we so scared about that? It works against us. We get into the international community in disadvantage, with our identity severed. So, no one takes us seriously.

CRISTINA: Now, if I understand you properly, we have to move beyond the invisibility of the Blacks.

QUINCE: Well, yes. But I should elaborate a little more on that. There is no such thing as the Black problem, or the Indian problem in Latin America. What we confront is Eurocentrism. That is the problem. Invisibility is just one way in which the phenomenon manifests itself. There is an implant in our culture, devised by the Spanish: the idea that we should "mejorar la raza," that is, *better the race* through miscegenation. This is a very problematic thing, because in the first place, Spain itself is "mestizo." The struggle is far beyond visibility. It is not only to be seen, it is also HOW we choose to be seen. (Remember the derogatory comic strip called Memin?) We must work to redefine our tri-ethnicity and to forge a dignified status for our Afro heritage, for our Samamfo.

CRISTINA: I have noticed your use of the word Samamfo. Could you elaborate on the concept...?

QUINCE: Our heritage, our lore, our ancestral lore. We want a place for our Samamfo in the mainstream, not in the ghetto. A dignified place. A respected one. Our right to be what we are with no preconditions or ties to it. And that is our responsibility as citizens and writers.

CRISTINA: In your story "Mis Premios y Casi Premios" you declare that in Costa Rica it is still exotic to speak about "Afro-Costa Rican" because the population at large has not assimilated those of African descent as an integral part.

QUINCE: It is not solely a Costa Rican phenomenon...

CRISTINA: Oh, of course not! Just look at Argentina, Peru, Chile, Paraguay, or my own country, Uruguay. But considering that as a reality beyond doubt, do you still think that Black authors should continue to stress the "Afro" component? I mean, if you go back to invisibility, could it be better to present a literature without color? Or maybe a brown one. One that would have more possibility of massive circulation. What's your opinion on this point?

QUINCE: First, a writer should have no boundaries. Second, there is no recipe. If I may speak from my own experience, I have done it all.

CRISTINA: Is that true? I mean, all?

QUINCE: You got me on that one. While my main subject is the culture and people of African Diaspora, I have written about other subjects. For example, *Final de Calle*...

CRISTINA: Is that the novel that won the National Novel Award in your country?

QUINCE: Yes. The Editorial Costa Rica novel award and the National "Aquileo Echeverría" award. It has very little to do with Black people. Although Ian Smart has suggested that while the issues are not directly related to the Black community, the aesthetic is still Black. Anyway, it is just a good novel, written by a Black author. Now from the point of view of our struggle against Eurocentrism, this is important.

CRISTINA: What is the point here? Were you trying to prove something?

QUINCE: Yes, I had my discussion going on, with myself and with the Costa Rican society at large. *Final de Calle* was a demonstration that I wrote about Blacks

because I chose to, not because I had to. And that my writings were as good as anybody else's. Now once I made the point, once I shattered the myth, I could just move on.

CRISTINA: So it is not a matter of A to Z...

QUINCE: No. The truth is that in Latin America, there are White people, as there are Black people. You cannot write about our countries and ignore that reality. But you will, of course, have your favorite subjects. One big contribution we can all make is to write and act like we are the best. We may not be the best, but just try hard to be. Just believe you are. Dreams do become real.

CRISTINA: Well, let us go to another subject. Here I choose to break all feminist stereotypes and just take a stand as a Black mother. A Black activist mother. Now this includes my feelings. Why is it that on our Continent, the majority of Afro Diaspora men, including leaders, activists, and intellectuals, systematically choose white women as their life companions? Is it coincidence, fashion or another slave problem that Black men have not solved?

QUINCE: I have no statistics on this matter, but again, there is no single answer to your question. Racial mixing is a substantial part of the Latin American experience, and except among the higher classes, it has never been considered a tragedy. The Spaniards who chose to mix with Indian and Black women, from the very genesis of colonial times, promoted it. Black families as a means to have free children promoted it. They mixed with free Indian women, since the children of free women were free. The Maroons...

CRISTINA: That is "Cimarrones," runaway slaves...

QUINCE: Exactly. Those who ran away from the haciendas organized alliances with the Indian tribes that included the possibility of getting an Indian wife. Remember that the proportion of Black women and Black men brought to some of our countries was sometimes one to four. Now some authors, like Franz Fanon, have studied cases and developed a general theory according to which colonized Black men and women use miscegenation as their means of social self-promotion. You have to look at Brother Fanon with a critical eye: remember he was a psychiatrist, a non-scientific and extremely racist discipline. So although he himself was brilliant and by no means deserved the term racist, we must take the same critical attitude that we have about race and religion. I will concede that there are cases of self-promotion efforts going on. But let us go back to Eurocentrism. If it is true (and I am not accepting that this is a general rule), but if there is some truth in Fanon's hypothesis, one must take a wider look at our societies. The rich and powerful tend to marry among themselves, or marry white women from Europe. The middle classes marry among themselves or try to marry one of the whiter, richer women. Low class men are not as systematically prejudiced, but still there is a tendency to "raise the color"—the old Spanish implant that is the base of our Eurocentrism. The big issue here is that the Black woman, although a very distinguished target of white men's fantasy, has less social promotion to offer than her white counterpart. On the other hand, she is less inclined to indulge in a permanent relationship with a white man, because experience has proven that white men tend to give in to social pressure when their personal prestige is at stake,

and so she might be dumped at any moment. Now, having said all this, I must add that there are people who just fall in love. You work with a woman or a man, you study together, you share hours and days with them, and you fall in love with them. If you live in a society that is racially intolerant, it becomes a tragedy. But in the case of traditional "generational" Latin Americans, very few, Black or White, can claim "racial purity," if there is such a thing. Our societies function on the basis of the myth of racial equality, and to a certain extent, tolerates miscegenation. In such a case, you may find yourself choosing and being chosen, not on the basis of color, but on the basis of plain common sense-love.

CRISTINA: To insist on the matter of Black women, although miscegenation was promoted, it was done so in direct assault on the image of Black women. So our image has deteriorated much more than that of Black men or other women.

QUINCE: Yes, which is true.

CRISTINA: So world-wide, in the last 500 years, racism and sexism have placed Black women at the bottom of the social scale.

QUINCE: Yes... that is also true.

CRISTINA: So this historically defined lack of prestige and resulting low self-esteem is augmented by the historically defined absence of the adequate life companion. And this is true for any ethnic group. What effect will this have on our children and on us as a community?

QUINCE: This is a very delicate matter, and I do not want to pretend that I have all the answers, and please tolerate a very personal note on this one. I have been married twice, once to a Black woman, and now my wife is Hispanic. Race had nothing to do with the end of my first marriage, and not only did I not need any promotion, but also, it would have been more "political" for me to choose a Black woman. Furthermore, my wife and I come from the very bottom of the social classes, hard working-class, common people. My children are all Afro-Hispanic, and both mothers and myself take credit for this. Now I am not bragging, but I could give you a list of Black people whose children's only "Africanity" is the color of their skin. What I am saying is it all depends on what we teach our children. My present wife and I, starting when they were in the womb, told our daughters that they were of African descent. They are now adults, and I am proud to see them function with no devastating racial complex. They do not live in a Black ghetto. But they know who they are. So it can be done. Let's do it.

CRISTINA: Ever since we came to the Americas, a number of writers, artists and musicians have exalted the "Black Mother" image, and the beauty of young Black girls. Is it not time that the artists and historians get beyond this to a wider dimension? What about the struggle and the daily resistance of millions of poor Black women, struggling without companions, caring for their children, hard-working, activists in organizations, bearing their crosses, all along. Since the majority of us descend from those women, don't you believe that we have an historical debt to transcend folklorism and stereotypes?

QUINCE: Yes, indeed. I am the son of one such woman, Eunice. She was a hotel cook and she died trying to give her children a better education. And although this is not a specific Black problem, racism makes it harder on the Black woman. Now Eunice was the grand-

daughter of a man born in slavery who went to Panama and worked himself to death on the Canal, trying to pay for his son James's education. Now James did not succeed, and although he tried hard, he did not manage to give his daughter higher education, but she succeeded with her children, although she did not live to witness it. The present position of my children is the result of family effort over at least five generations, and a result of the children's mother's effort as well. So we have to work together, men and women. We have been torn apart by slavery, by poverty, by racism. We are all victims, men and women. We have to rebuild our relations on the basis of partnership. That is why women are an essential part of my work, and that is why men should be an essential part of any female writer's work. There is no one-sided solution. We have to educate the men to respect women, and the women to make themselves respected, and we have to have parents set the example, teach and preach to their children.

CRISTINA: Moving on to another subject, English is your native language...

QUINCE: Yes, my first language. My grandparents were from Jamaica, and I grew up in the Province of Limón, Costa Rica, where until the fifties, English was the main language.

CRISTINA: But the majority of your literary work is written in Spanish. What relations are there between author, work, and the language you use? Did you use Spanish simply because you live in a Spanish-speaking country?

QUINCE: Well, I'm going to let you in on a secret. One of my first short stories was written in English, and sent to an American agent. But he wanted $50 to market the story. If I had gone along and some publisher would have published my story, maybe this tale would be quite different. What I am saying is simple: none of the languages I use in writing is really mine. Just look at it this way: there were less than 2 million Costa Ricans in the sixties when I started publishing, and less than 50,000 were English-speaking Afro-Caribbean, with a lot of story-telling and reading. But the reading was a lot of Saint James Bible reading, a lot of Tennyson, Shakespeare, and a lot of Victorian literature, but not a single modern novel. They had never seen a writer, and surely had difficulties understanding that the young boy they saw playing ball could become a published writer. They could have related immediately and accepted a priest or a pastor, but a writer was unheard of. And there were no publishers around, anyway. Now that has changed, of course, but it took time. So, you see, there was no discussion over what language I had to use.

CRISTINA: Good. To end this thematic "ensemble"—and this is the advantage of speaking to a scholar—you can ask him about any subject.

QUINCE: Don't be so sure about that..

CRISTINA: I am. What do you believe that the African American community and organizations can teach their Afro-Latin American colleagues? And vice-versa, of course...

QUINCE: Learn to listen to each other. We have had a common experience with colonialism, slavery and racism. We have had our way of resisting. We have come through the worst now and the future can be ours if we play our parts adequately in our time. I think we should start by listening to each other, recognizing each other, and visiting each other. We must celebrate our reunion as African people.

There is a lot of work to be done. We have to build, heal and change our self-perception. Let us just get together around the tree of remembrance, as it always used to be, kindle a fire, and listen to each other.

CRISTINA: All right, then. Setting aside the cultural and social differences and emphasizing the similarities, what is your proposal for the unity and pacification of the Black people facing the new century, where racism is still far from being overcome?

QUINCE: We may not have the power to change the world, but each one of us has the power to change ourselves and to make a difference in our sphere of influence, whether it may be our own families, friends, neighborhood, club, or... Now pay attention to this one. *We may have the power and the responsibility to influence our readers.* So let's do our job. Let's do it well. Let's be the best writers around. And best means the very best of you, and the very best of me. And please take note that I didn't say the best Black writer. I said the best writer. Our own people will hear the drums of the Samamfo coming from our voices and they will vibrate with life. And others will listen too, and they will feel the power of healing. And maybe, just maybe, children, all the children...Do you care for a cup of coffee?

CRISTINA: Is it Costa Rican coffee?

QUINCE: Yes, smell... Pure Costa Rican Mestizo coffee, originally from Mother Africa.

La Verne M. Seales-Soley
Canisius College

Entrevista con Nelson Estupiñán Bass

Para mi es motivo de gran placer el compartir con ustedes esta breve serie de preguntas que el prolífico escritor Nelson Estupiñán Bass tuvo la gentileza de contestar en el mes de enero de 1998.

L.M.S.S.: ¿Cuál considera usted que es la función de la literatura afro-hispana dentro de la literatura hispanoamericana?

Nelson Estupiñán Bass: La expresión de nuestra identidad, con sus frustraciones y sus penumbras, sus recuperaciones y sus fulgores.

L.M.S.S.: ¿A su juicio cuál es la mayor aportación de la literatura afro-hispana a la literatura hispano-americana?

N.E.B.: Nuestra cosmovisión social y estética que conlleva nuestras reivindicaciones, desoídas durante siglos por las clases dominantes.

L.M.S.S.: ¿Cree usted que el escritor afro-hispano de hoy enfrenta dificultades especiales para ser aceptado dentro de la literatura hispanoamericana?

N.E.B.: La marginación impuesta por el poder económico y político, que impone su tipo de cultura, obstaculiza la publicación de muchas obras mediante sutiles medidas invisibles para el ojo que no sabe ver.

L.M.S.S.: ¿Considera que desde que empezó a escribir su función como escritor ha cambiado?

N.E.B.: Naturalmente, pues nadie puede permanecre estático ante los cambios que tan vertiginosamente se operan en el mundo. Además, creo que nadie escribe siempre con una misma tinta.

L.M.S.S.: ¿Cómo ve su obra con respecto a la labor de otros escritores afro-hispanos de esta época?

N.E.B.: Con bastante similitud, porque una fraternidad racial, económica, sentimental y reivindicativa nos une, por encima de las fronteras y el idioma.

L.M.S.S.: ¿Para qué y para quién escribe?

N.E.B.: Escribo para realizarme y llevar a los lectores mi mensaje, inspirado en el reintegro de la materia prima, un tanto modificada que ellos me brindan, pues considero a mi obra como un reflejo social condicionado.

Ahora pasemos a comentar sus obras.

L.M.S.S.: ¿Con cuál de sus obras se identifica usted más?, ¿por qué?

N.E.B.: Todas, porque al concebirlas y lanzarlas por el mundo les inyecté mi espíritu, las equipé con panoplias para que se defiendan por sí mismas y pregonen mi convicción de que en el mundo hay una sola raza que es el ser humano y se abracen todas las especies semejantes.

L.M.S.S.: ¿Qué está escribiendo en estos días, y qué proyecta escribir?

N.E.B.: Dos novelas y un poemario.

L.M.S.S.: ¿Puede darme una idea global de esas dos novelas?

N.E.B.: Una describirá un segmento de nuestra realidad semidesconocida fuera de nuestro país. La otra mostrará algunas cúspides de la alta sociedad.

L.M.S.S.: ¿Ha creado obras cuyo propósito principal sea solamente el de entretener?

N.E.B.: Jamás he escrito libros de ese tipo. Siempre me he considerado un franco tirador, como lo digo en un poema que anda por ahí: ... // y traigo mi palabra, /

de registrar fuentes bibliográficas ecuatorianas en busca de valoraciones críticas de la narrativa de Nelson Estupiñán Bass, concluí que este distinguido escritor esmeraldeño no es profeta en su tierra, ya que su obra no ha recibido en el Ecuador la atención que merece." Comparto la opinión de Ezra Pound: Se mide mejor a un árbol cuando ya está caído.

L.M.S.S.: ¿Cuál es su tema preferido? ¿por qué?

N.E.B.: La realidad social y la realidad espiritual, porque ambas son concomitantes, que confluyen, como dos ríos, en esa expresión eterna que es ser humano.

L.M.S.S.: Para finalizar me gustaría saber ¿qué ha significado para usted la nominación para la obtención del premio Nobel de Literatura 1998?

N.E.B.: Uno de los más altos honores recibidos hasta hoy.

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The Modern Language Association's book publication program seeks proposals for a new book series, Teaching Language, Literature, and Cultures. The series aims to establish cross-specialty dialogue so that post-secondary and secondary teachers can examine the ways different languages, literatures, and cultures intersect in theory, research, curricula, and program design. Proposals for both single-author volumes and edited volumes of original essays are welcome. For more information, please write or call: Martha Evans, Director of Book Publications, Modern Language Association, 10 Astor Place, New York, NY 10003. Tel: (212) 614-6338. E-mail: evans@mla.org.

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An international research conference sponsored by the Afro-Latin/American Research Association, will take place August 11-16, 1998 in the Hotel Lina, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The conference theme is "Afro-Latin/America and the Diaspora: Cultural Hybridity, Miscegenation, Creolization." For information, contact:

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