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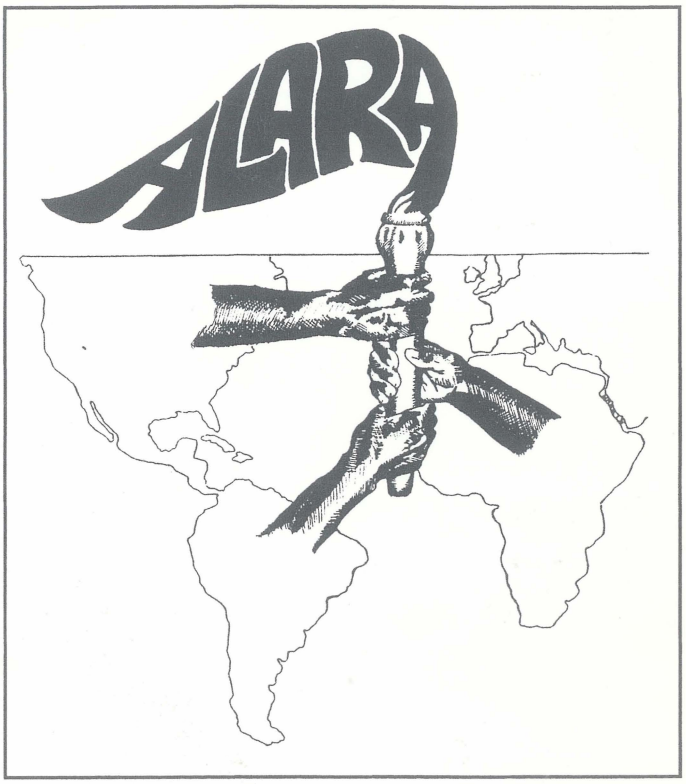


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## Blacks as Cultural Currency: Dissident Discourse in the Spanish *Comedia*.[1]

By Moses E. Panford, Jr.

[T]he Jew can be unknown in his Jewishness. He is not wholly what he is. [H]is actions, his behavior are the final determinant. He is a white man, and, apart from some rather debatable characteristics, he can sometimes go unnoticed. [He] is disliked from the moment he is tracked down. But in my case everything takes on a *new* guise. I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not to the "idea" that others have of me but of my own appearance. (Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks* 115-16)

Pre-modern Spanish history was plagued by constant ethnic invasions and occupations which translated into a continuous rearrangement of a political hierarchy based on the postcolonial notion of a center antagonized by various margins; that is, different subjugated groups not only incessantly threatened the hegemonic power, some of them were successful in inverting the dominant-dominated political binary. On the basis of Osterhammel's affirmation that

> [C]olonialism is not just any relationship between masters and servants, but one in which an entire society is robbed of its historical line of development, externally manipulated and transformed according to the needs and interests of the colonial rulers. [T]he kind of dissimilarity between colonizers and colonized is of crucial importance. Characteristic of colonialism [...] is the unwillingness of the new rulers to make cultural concessions to subjugated societies [...]. Extensive acculturation to the values and customs of [the colonizer] was expected of the colonized" (15-16),

it is of interest to note that the peninsula was occupied as a colony by different empires. Beginning with the Roman occupation, religion and political power would be dovetailed into a mechanism of domination. As a colony of the Roman Empire, Hispania's population would maintain slaves at the bottom of a vertically hierarchized society. The Roman legacy would be the eventual foundation of modern Spanish political structure. The importance of religion in the political domain would influence some Visigoth kings to convert to Catholicism in order to insure their political power. The religion-political power symbiosis would also highlight the cultural innuendos of the eight-century Arab occupation, which was followed by the Christian Re-conquest and the institution of the Inquisition, which, in turn, led to the persecution of religious minorities.

The fervor with which the Spanish Inquisition persecuted heretics, and the autos-de-fé generated acute anguish among minority religious groups, namely Jews and Muslims. The dynamics of forced conversion to Catholicism led to the emergence of marginalized groups such as the *conversos, marranos, moriscos,* and, ultimately, *cristianos nuevos*.[2] As a logical consequence of the increased importance of religion as a tool for political domination, the concepts of honor, *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood), and religious faith, together with their array of implications, became major thematic cornerstones of early Spanish literature, especially theater. Many members of the discriminated groups eventually sought haven in the New World, while many of those who remained on the peninsula looked for ways and means of negotiating their despised origin. These included false claims to Old Christian ancestry, and writing as a tool for self-identification with dominant ideology which provided relief from

persecution. Their writing style and manner of articulating thematic content were often indicative of their descent. In addition, some of these writers assimilated themselves into the hegemonic class by signaling other minorities, especially blacks, as false Christians, thereby averting attention from their own lineage.

The dynamics of early modern Spanish identity must, therefore, be viewed in terms of the two notions applied by Stuart Hall in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." On one hand, Spain sought what I will call a dynamic identity to encompass what they had become. This notion of identity, in Hall's words "is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history, culture" (394). At stake was Spain's political and religious unity. Alongside the notion of dynamic identity persisted what I call fixed identity, which, in Hall's terms, provides a people "with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of [their] actual history" (393). Paradoxically, religious affiliation would be the common defining parameter of this notion of identity, as seen by the Inquisition. Religious minorities were marginalized on the basis of their native faith. Color, with all its connotations, would be the single defining factor for blacks.

Most successful pre-Lopean playwrights were New Christians, and one of their preferred characters was the *pastor* (shepherd). The latter's early image as uncouth, glutton, and fool eventually made him the ideal candidate for exegetic theologian and inquisitor of religious minorities.[3] The role and power of the *pastor-bobo* exegete was synonymous and analogous to what Michel Foucault terms the *pastorate* or pastoral power. In the Christian domain Jesus is the ideal pastor who lays down his life for the benefit of his flock and mankind. The pastor (priest) of the ecclesiastic establishment becomes His counterpart, with the power over his congregation, to make them publicize their private lives through confession, under the fear of condemnation. Thus, the power of hegemonic religious ideology in relation to political control becomes evident. For Foucault, Christianity generated "new techniques for imposing [...] a new mechanism or an ensemble of new mechanisms of power for inculcating [...] new moral imperatives [...] which had already ceased to be new at the moment when Christianity entered the Roman Empire and rapidly became the state religion" (Sexuality...121); and "the power of the pastor consists precisely in that he has the authority to require the people to do everything necessary for their salvation: obligatory salvation" (Sexuality...124). Analogously, the *pastor-bobo* as exegete is employed by Sánchez de Badajoz to accost suspect New Christians, just as his ecclesiastic counterpart persecuted suspected heretics. The roles of both the *pastor eclesiasticus* and the *pastor dramatis persona* reflect the attitude of both the Spanish Monarchy and the Church against religious minorities. As Foucault correctly notes, the growth and imposition of political rationality throughout the history of Western societies "first took its stand on the idea of *pastoral power*" (Pastoral... 152).

As stated by Grossberg, "identity is always constituted out of difference" (93). For the New Christian dramatists to be successful at assimilating themselves into

the hegemonic echelons, they had to distinguish themselves, that is differentiate themselves from other minorities. Among the latter were Afro-Spaniards; and in that regard, the power of New Christian playwrights came from negating the positivity of the Afro-Spanish population "with all its diversity, for example, to nothing but a singular constitutive other, to the different."[4] That is, the success of the New Christian writers' attempt to assimilate into the hegemonic group depended on their ability to represent blacks (and other minorities) as the Other, evil, false Christian; in order to avert the inquisitorial gaze from themselves. Such representation was based on what I have called fixed identity, which emphasized the evil and demonic connotations of the black color. The New-Christian dramatist Sánchez de Badajoz was the most influential in the stage depiction of blacks as false Christians. He adeptly subjected his black characters to the unfaltering inquisitorial exigency of the *pastor-bobo*. The greater realism of Black Spanish in the works of earlier dramatists such as Juan Timoneda was lost to the overriding attempt to underline the linguistic ineptitude and, by extension, religious "misfitness" of blacks.

Sánchez de Badajoz's Manichean representation of blacks, that is the colonialist imaginary representation that fuses the signifier/black with the signified/evil/false Christian/inhuman is exemplified in the *Farsa de la fortuna o hado* in which a shepherd compares Black Spanish to barking: "Ser todos hijos de vn padre, / no es mucho q*ue* el ho*m*bre ladre / porque Dios no nos yguala?" (vv 110-12). *Farsa theologal* presents a *bozal* black female whose name, as well as her husband's (Magdalena and Francisco) suggest that they have been previously baptized. Her Black Spanish provokes laughter from a priest; a shepherd subjects her to dehumanizing epithets such as "negra maldita", "doña negra de azauache", "negra mandinga", "choza", "puta guinea", "escarauajo"; and yet her Moorish master calls her "perra", "tonta", "lebrona", "hazcona," claiming her to be the devil. As soon as the shepherd questions her Christian identity ("¡Abraçar! ¿Tú eres christiana?" [vv 1015]), she is made into a muted other. She is denied a voice, and her Moorish master claims not to know if she has been baptized nor if she knows the Creed. The priest brands her as a non-baptized Moor; that is, an enemy of the State: "... tan gran herrada: / ¡no estar ésta bautizada! / ¡ Entre christianos, y mora!" (vv. 1030-32). In the end, the priest requests that the shepherd teach the black the "Pater noster .../ la Salue, Aue y el Credo" (vv 1205-06) while he himself instructs the Moor (master). As indicated by Maria Grazia Profeti, "se trata de una verdadera forma de exorcismo; se ríe de los estratos descalificados para separarlos y alejarlos de sí .... Y se puede imaginar que la risa era tanto más fuerte cuanto más lo era el temor de ser asimilado a la casta condenada" (15). Evidently, as soon as the black's religiosity is doubted, she is inferred with an*other* image which makes her better assume that of a false Christian. Her Black Spanish and her ability to sing a Christmas carol are ridiculed and cause comicality because they are "una especie de atentado contra ... diferentes niveles de lo que se llama en general el orden..." (Jammes 7). Furthermore, notes Jammes, when such mockery is directed at the lower, marginalized classes, it no longer remains subversive but rather "una risa recuperada por las clases dominantes y de

carácter conservador" (10). Sánchez de Badajoz problematizes the paradoxical baptism of blacks which preoccupied the Church, and thereby inscribes his authorial voice into hegemonic ideology while his black female character is marginalized as a false convert.[5]

The fixed identity of the black figure would persist on the Spanish stage until the advent of the Lopean theater, with which the figure would acquire broader cultural value and be consolidated as a protagonist to symbolize monarchical interests. The objective of this study is to analyze the various ideological underpinnings of the black protagonist in Spanish baroque theater. It will be argued that despite the re-humanization by the Lopean theater, the black figure was never completely absolved of his fixed identity.[6] Furthermore, Lope de Vega's contemporaries as well as followers would avail themselves of his exaltation of blacks, and represent distinguished blacks not only to uphold hegemonic interests but also burgeoning dissident voices within Spanish society. Thus acquired black dissident discourse was misappropriated and converted into a hybrid dissident discourse to manifest dissatisfaction with contemporary decadence and unsuccessful hegemonic endeavors and ideology.

On one hand, it is important to note that the presence of blacks on the Iberian peninsula dates back to the pre-Roman era. The advent of the African slave trade at the end of the 13th Century would eventually establish a sizeable Afro-Spanish population with economic, social, political, and religious involvement in Spanish society, to the extent that many of them were involved in expeditionary incursions and conquest in the New World. In the religious domain, Blacks were receptive to Catholicism and were, therefore, not subjected to overt religious persecution. Nonetheless, they were prohibited from entering churches.[7] Hence, the significance of the confraternities which they formed to serve as a platform for participation and resistance, claiming their right to participate fully in Spanish religious life.[8] It is not surprising then that the black figure was initially introduced onto the Spanish stage as a religious figure in the *Auto de los Reyes Magos* but later banished to the *teatro menor* (minor theater) as a false Christian until he was resurrected by the Lopean theater.

On the other hand, the stage excellence of blacks—as humanist, saint, and soldier—responded to contemporary political ideological manifestations. It is not by chance that the emergence of black saints coincided with the Counter-Reformation, and that of the valiant black soldier with the failures of the Spanish expansionist endeavors. The image of Juan Latino, as an obedient humanist, is best explained within the current debates on the nature of blacks. Except for him, early Spanish literature cannot claim any prominent Afro-Spanish writers. The question is whose is the black voice on the Spanish stage? Is it existent at all? Framed in Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?," the black figure in early Spanish theater becomes a muted other. If I may adopt Spivak's paraphrasis, despite Foucault's and Deleuze's claim that "the oppressed, if given the chance..., and on the way to solidarity through alliance politics...*can speak and know their conditions*" (283), we cannot ignore the stark absence of Afro-Spanish playwrights who could have dramatized their black experience. Thus,

early modern Spanish theater's black character, as an Other, must be viewed as a symbol, a sender that points to an irretrievable consciousness. The receiver, the writer/playwright transforms the black act into "text for knowledge;" but how authentic or dependable is this text/knowledge, especially since the author/"representer" himself does not understand the represented Other whose *bozal* Spanish supposedly makes him (the latter) unintelligible?

A remarkable attempt at re-humanizing blacks on the pre-Lopean Spanish stage is seen in Simón Aguado's 1602 *Entremés de los negros*, in which the author advocates for a better treatment of black slaves. Apart from presenting two black protagonists (Gaspar and Dominga), he stages their unusual defiance against their masters. Dominga's questioning of the justice in denying blacks the right to marriage ("Pues señolo de mi entraña, ¿en qué libro habemus leiro que una pobre negra, aunque sea cra de Poncio Pliato, no pora namorar? ¿Hay alguna premática que diga que negro con negra no poramo hace negriyo cuando acamo de acosar a nuesamo?" [232]), makes Castro de Moux believe that Aguado conceived of a learned slave whose discourse "se inscribe en el marco de las autorizaciones y pragmáticas reales" (60).

Nevertheless, the ideologically constrained ending of *Entremés de los negros* weakens Aguado's attempt at the re-humanization of the black figure. In order to avoid censorship from the ideological establishment, he symbolically annuls all public acknowledgement of the wedding of the black protagonists by "staging" it out of sight, presumably in the house of an indisposed priest. The effort to invert the slave-master dialectic is aborted. The resulting subtext is that although black slaves ought to be treated better, they cannot enjoy the same rights as the dominant class. In Homi Bhabha's terms, they become a "reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (86). Furthermore, they enjoyed a peculiar status because despite their politically subjugated class, as slaves, they were not persecuted according to any official edict, as were heretics, for example. At the same time, as subjects without any kind of honor to risk, they could threaten to be defiant. Their kind of subversive discourse, nevertheless, had to be mitigated in order to avoid reprisal. The distinguishing aspect of such discourse is that it pertains to the authorial voice, which at best only empathizes with the protagonist. Black experience in Spain was always represented by non-black writers who had undoubtedly been in contact with the Afro-Spanish population. Black dissident discourse only implicated blacks insofar as agents of authorial ideologies. Theirs was nothing more than a bestowed voice, which, contrary to displaced and subjugated discourses, had the uniqueness of representing dynamic dissent within Spanish society without being officially stifled as in the case of the *moriscos*, for example.[9] The new, recognizable black Other will persist through the Spanish *comedia nueva.* For now, however, the authorial voice, as "representer" of text for knowledge is not yet totally dependable, for his subject (the recognizable black Other) continues to be a *bozal*, unintelligible.

Simón Aguado's *entremés* and recognizable black Other mark the beginning of the symbolic representation of blacks in Spanish Golden Age theater.

With regard to the black figure, the dramatic text—*comedia nueva*—becomes a symbolic text which, as JanMohamed put it, without specific reference to the Iberian context, "attempts to find syncretic solutions to the Manichean opposition of [whites] and [blacks]" (66). In order to be successful, the recognizable black Other as subject has to be imbued with the faculty of speech. He/She will, therefore, become a *ladino/ladina*, a black who speaks standard Spanish. With this mode of representation, the new recognizable black Other will be variously drafted as a distinguished subject—an intellectual, a soldier, a saint—to defend national interests, and to be emulated. The newfound identity, as we shall see, will subsequently be expanded to incorporate dissenting voices that will convert the subject into a hybrid Other.

The representation of blacks as "a recognizable Other" is exemplified by Lope de Vega's *El negro del mejor amo* (1599-1603) in which he underlines the importance of baptism as a Christian conduit. Antiobo the protagonist is Muslim by birth. However, the miraculous effects of Christian breast milk and baptism by Lucinda, his wet nurse, are consolidated about two decades later. Since Antiobo's impure phenotype detracts from his ability to be a good Christian based on his royal descent, we witness the symbolic whitening/metamorphosis of the protagonist into a saint. This, in turn, enables Lope de Vega to emphasize "royal blood" (dialogically equated with purity of blood and, by extension, Old Christian lineage), and not "color," as fundamental in human beings who are comparable to kings (that is, noble beings): "no es la blancura en el hombre / la color más importante en el hombre" (45). Antiobo can now be referred to as "white." That also explains the author's approval of inter-racial marriage, one of the factors that contribute to the uniqueness of the play: Antiobo's mother, Sofonisba, is black, but an extremely beautiful Ethiopian princess whose beauty is motivation enough for war. Thus, Lope subtly introduces the characteristic Spanish stage Guinean (=African/evil/uncivilized/infidel) versus Ethiopian (=good/noble/civilized/Christian) binary.[10] The white (piety)-black (sin) dichotomy is further emphasized at the end of the play when doña Juana, a white prostitute, sarcastically considers herself black because she has been rejected by Antiobo's cadaver: "[...] adiós, que estoy perdida / ¡La negra soy yo, que vos / ya sois *blanco*!" (108).

Undoubtedly, Lope de Vega subscribes to the concepts of nobility, docility, baptism/conversion, and whitening as factors pertinent to the elevation of former "national enemies" to the category of sainthood to serve as exemplary figures. As a playwright who subscribes to the aristocratic ideology that governed Spanish drama, his black characters, as new, recognizable others, almost the same but not quite, are never absolved of the most fundamental distinguishing factor of their former fixed identity. Febo's Black Spanish in *El negro del mejor amo* is more than a mere linguistic identifier: besides his status as a slave, he is the servant of the ruthless Dulimán. Sofonisba's own metaphoric use of "black" as "noche obscura" underlines the ideological connotations of the color:

> No alabéis la noche obscura,
> que hasta las fieras se esconden
> de su sombra, y no responden

hasta que ven la luz pura. (25)

In line with contemporary characterizations, a black person's tears ought to be black: "Febo: Turmento en verte me das, / los ojos de tinta llenos" (19); "Antiobo: ...y yo, por llorar mejor, tinta en vez de sangre lloro" (85-86). The possessed Lidonio screams:

Que no me llevéis os pido
donde ese negro me espanta.
.....
¿Pues no queréis que me espante
viendo una cara tan fea?
¡Ay, no me pongáis delante!
¿Queréis que mi muerte sea?
.....
Las estampas de sus pies
me asombran en su ausencia:
¡mirad qué haré viendo aquí
aquella tan negra cara! (91-92)

The apparent Lopean prerequisites for insertion into the dominant echelons, or the shedding of fixed black identity, seem to explain why, in opposition to pure black servants, his *mulata* servants, considered part of his re-humanization of black characters on the Spanish stage, are defined by the intersection of linguistic proficiency, geographic origin and color, for example, in *Servir a señor discreto* (1610-12). Elvira, for instance, speaks standard Spanish and knows how to read. She is of New World origin, daughter of a Biáfra-born black woman and a Lima-born white father who "honored blacks":

Pedro: [...]¡Bien haya, amen,
el caballero que amó
tu madre, pues engastó
ébano en marfil tan bien!
(vv. 822-25)[11]

Elvira is described as a tablet of fragrance; that is, a solution to black people's supposed foul odor (v. 898). The evocation of fixed black identity is reinforced through a series of indirect references to the intrinsic value of blacks. Fernando, in his anger, calls Elvira a dog (1728); Girón, her suitor, is presumably going after "el hollín de aquella perra" (v. 1413) whose valuable body is preferable to her heart: "Mejor tu cuerpo quisiera, / que, en efeto, le vendiera / y me valiera dinero" (vv. 1333-35). At one point she herself sarcastically addresses Girón in Black Spanish: "Andamo disimulanda" (v. 2434); hence her acquiescent recognition of fixed black identity. Elvira's high sense of pride parallels that of Leonor, her white mistress, who even addresses her as "hermana" (v.285). Lope de Vega's favorable representation of the former is backed up by her being a "hija de algo" (v. 2751). Thus, descent, a gradation of phenotypes, purity of blood (dialogically equated with royalty/nobility, that is) and a series of virtuous acts serve as the basis for the identification, or differentiation, of Lope's black characters. These distinguished blacks are justifiably distanced from pure, fixed black identity but they are not quite the same as "whites."

The symbolic metamorphosis or whitening (of the souls) of blacks in order to be accepted into the hegemonic class, and the subtle references to their inherently evil nature are two fundamental tropes in black-saint dramas. Subsequent Lopean black-saint plays will "signify" earlier models.[12] Such is the case of *El Santo negro Rosambuco de la ciudad de Palermo* (a. 1607), in which the famous playwright dramatizes the life of Saint Benito de Palermo (1526-1589).[13] This originally

black Turk of blue blood, in other words a political and religious enemy of Spain, is captured and enslaved. Not only does he convert to Christianity, he embraces his new socio-political standing. As a saint, he is an example for all potential heretics and enemies, as well as the Spanish aristocratic class to follow. The inter-/ ideotexts discernible in the play allow for the identification of multiple ideologically subjugated voices. As an originally black Turkish slave, Spanish aristocratic ideology can only afford him the status of a recognizable Other. There needs to be a residue to serve as a reminder of his original identity. Hence, he is accused of being a sorcerer and a false Christian, while his own master claims that: "¡[...] es gran bajeza / Creer [en la religiosidad] de un negro!" (157b). Like Lidonio in *El negro del mejor amo*, the viceroy's sick sister, Inés, resorts to Black Spanish in *El santo negro* when she is furious, possessed:

> Ni tú, ni el cielo, ni Dios,
> no sois bastantes. ¿No ven
> el hocico de lechón,
> el azabache, el tizón,
> el aforro de sartén?
> Nenglo Angola, de donceya
> Querer sacar... ¡toma higa!
> .....
> Sar demoni, dar fatiga,
> No te estimar, para eya,
> no la puedes a la diabla
> sacar de cuerpo negrino. (168a)

This linguistic switch serves as a poetic reminder of the black's original association with the demonic. Similarly, his Ethiopian geographic origin is changed to Angolan when he is being degraded. He must undergo symbolic whitening in order to be assimilated into the dominant class. He is told: "[...] aunque eres Negro, habrá día / que estés bello, hermoso y *blanco* (152b, emphasis added). His fiercest opponent, Pedrisco, comparable to Sánchez de Badajoz's inquisitor *pastor* who condemned blacks as false Christians, is therefore the representative of Rosambuco's Christian opponents. Thus, the play presents two opposing ecclesiastic ideologies: the dominant ideology that avows the integration of Afro-Spaniards, and the dissenting ideology that advocates the homogeneity of the Christian caste. The "whitened" saint also engages in the marginalization of other blacks. Contrary to his compassion towards Pedrisco who is a symbol of the dominant class, Rosambuco is hostile to Lucrecia because she is *bozal*, in essence a despicable black female, and any unfitting association with her would taint his image. As a representative of monarchical interests, however, he triumphs over all of his opponents. Upon his death, Lucrecia recommends establishing a confraternity in his honor.[14] Lope has transformed his black saint into a polysemic symbol that represents multiple ideological voices.

Despite the black protagonists' newfound identities, audiences had to be constantly reminded of the stalking silhouette of the former. In other words, fixed black identity is an ethos endemic to Spanish *comedias* with black protagonists. Lope de Vega's contemporaries and followers would take advantage of certain tropes in the representation of blacks to consolidate the figure as a symbol of different ideological sentiments. Consequently, the cultural value acquired by exemplary blacks on the Spanish stage would, in turn, become the cultural currency certain writers would use to

negotiate their ideological differences. Such tropes are employed by Antonio Mira de Amescua, who fuses Lope de Vega's *El negro del mejor amo* and *El santo negro* into his own *El negro del mejor amo* (1607-1631). Put differently, Mira de Amescua engages in what Michel Pêcheux has termed the "political organizations of a new type" or "disidentification," which "constitutes a *working* (transformation-displacement) *of the subject-form* and not just its *abolition*" (158-59). In his play, Mira de Amescua inserts the ideological voices of Lope's *El negro del mejor amo* into the framework of *El santo negro...* and contextualizes them for greater verisimilitude. The protagonist is initially averse to conversion. We observe the same whitening of the black protagonist, as in other plays; and the Saint's ascent is also limited by denigrating acts. Despite his conversion and baptism, he is refused entry into the Franciscan order. He is presented as a liar. The author reminds the public of his protagonist's endemic nature: "Hagamos hermana mía, / que las almas no [...] sean [negras], / ya que los cuerpos lo son" (247ib); implying a color correspondence between the souls and phenotype of blacks, as we observe in Lope's *Servir a señor discreto*. Rosambuco's sexual orientation is also questioned when he threatens to assault Mortero, who retorts that he wants to be a practicing eunuch and, therefore, does not want the former's hand on him. Authorial criticism is leveled against the clergy in standard Spanish curiously spoken by the *bozal* Catalina. In other words, she serves as a medium of attack on the clergy. This clever poetic ploy designed to avoid censorship, is further insured by tagging Catalina as "invencionero" (liar, 248b) by Mortero; thus even de-gendering her.

The most interesting reworked aspects of the play are the staging of the buying and selling of Rosambuco, and the writing of his "carta de horro." He never ceases to be Don Pedro's slave. Although he had been granted freedom, he still acknowledges don Pedro as his master, at the same time that he acknowledges a calling from heaven: "y don Pedro / Portocarrero, y mi amo / (*que es justo que assi le nombre*) (253b, emphasis added). Within the contemporary debate on slavery, the protagonist makes a surprisingly dissident statement in support of slave masters, vis-à-vis Lope's ideological presentation. It must be noted, however, that the "speaking voice," so to speak, is that of Mira de Amescua. His use of the black's voice both distances him and insures him against possible censorship. In other words, the author appropriates and corrupts existing Spanish-stage black dissident discourse, to transfer to the slave master any possible divine ownership in Lope's version of the work; thereby displaying his own authorial ideology in favor of slavery. Such mis-appropriated dissident discourse, coupled with the protagonist's initial aversion to conversion, becomes even more important in the light of the author's origin. Besides Jewish, he was the illegitimate son of a descendant of conquistadors and a gypsy woman; which is known to have caused him a great sense of inferiority. The juxtaposition of dissident and hegemonic discourses was his conduit for *writing* himself into the hegemonic class, as was typical of New Christian writers of the period.

In *La comedia famosa de Juan Latino* (1610-1626), the *converso* dramatist Diego Jiménez de Enciso manipulates his black

Latin-professor protagonist as a means of consolidating himself in the dominant class. He treats the historical figure of Juan Latino as an on-stage representative of monarchical interests who has to compete against, among others, a New Christian opponent for a teaching position. As to be expected, Juan is degraded; but as an "untouchable" figure, he still triumphs over all his *morisco* opponents and even gets to marry a noble white woman. Like Diego Sánchez de Badajoz, Jiménez de Enciso exorcises his own ethnic group and alienates himself from it. Fra-Molinero notes that the protagonist uses Villanueva's incriminating last name to assault his Jewish origin (152). The playwright, however, resorts to a double dissident discourse: despite the condemnation and dissociation from his own ethnic group for fear of being associated with it, he defends slavery. The *morisco* Fernando de Valor marks Juan Latino as a dog, and denigrates his phenotype through ideologically motivated associations:

Don Fernando:
¡Que me deis, airados cielos,
negro agüero, y negra suerte,
negra vida, y negra muerte,
negro amor, y negros celos! (191)

Villanueva anchors his reasoning within the Aristotelian thought on the humanity of blacks: "Los esclavos no son hombres; / son nada, son cuerpos muertos" (270). Again, he tells de Duke: "A mí me espanta, / que Vuexcelencia dese negro crea, / que alcance de la sciencia parte tanta" (198). Ironically, Juan Latino is made an accomplice to his own treatment by acknowledging his merchandise identity:

Paréme a considerar
quién era, y halléme al cabo
un pobre negro, un esclavo,
para vender y comprar;(206)

His unique outstanding intellect subjects him to slavery because it is a source of pride for the Duke, who refuses to grant him freedom. As an esteemed trophy, his cultural worth becomes a liability, a debt that is exponentially impossible to redeem in order to free himself from slavery:

...no estimo en tanto el ser Duque
de Sesa y Conde de Cabra,
como el teneros por mío. (314)

The documented fact that Enciso did own slaves further reaffirms the authorial support of slavery (Juliá Martínez ix). As readers, we are made to wonder if the recognizable black Other can really speak. Where he is concerned, any semblance of acquired dynamic identity is subverted by the fixed black identity that continually haunts him. He is granted no other choice than submission to authorial ideological expectations.

It is Andrés de Claramonte who finally represents a black who rejects his socially imposed space and intends to subvert the white/black, master/slave, dominant /dominated binary. In his *El valiente negro en Flandes* (before 1626), the fictionalized historical life of the black conqueror Juan Valiente presents Juan de Mérida who defends his phenotype against racial prejudices.[15] He retorts to the epithet of "carbón con alma" in a style reminiscent of the classical apologia:

Y carbón
Que, encendido en la ocasión,
Rayos da por chispas; Juan
De Mérida el apellido

Y aunque moreno a ser vengo,
Valor de Mérida tengo,
[. . . . . .]
[. . .] es siempre la mas honrada
La gente de capa negra.
El azabache se aplica
A la garganta mas bella;
Negra es la tinta, y con ella
El mundo se comunica;
[. . . . . .]
Negra es la pólvora, y es
El alma de los imperios;
Negro es el pórfido hermoso
Y el ébano, que al sol media;
Negra es la pentarbe piedra
Contra el fuego riguroso;
Negra pule la ballena
La barba, que el mar honora. (491 b-c)[16]

Within the spirit of contemporary dialogue on the humanity of blacks, he asserts his superiority over Muslim descendants: "Ser moreno no es ser perro; / Que ese nombre se le da / a un alarbe, a un moro" (491a); and rejects maltreatment of any kind:

Palos ya mas
Este negro consintió
De nadie; y cuando el Rey fuera
El que los palos me diera,
Ansi le matara yo. (492a)

His military prowess in Flanders, highlighted by the single-handed capture of the Prince of Orange, glorifies Spain and culminates in his position as Commander-In-Chief. He is not content with being anybody's equal; and through his individual feats, he rises to the top military echelons. As an exemplary protagonist who would not content himself with being anybody's equal, he had to be whitened. The Duke of Alba renames him Juan de Alba (dawn) to symbolize his new "birth"/life. That is, he is the conferee of a new identity that places him at the same socio-political level as his "white" counterparts, and permits him to pursue his aspirations, generously rewarded by the King. He attains enough "honor" to marry the noble, white doña Juana, at the same time that his former enemies become his subordinates. Thus, the authorial ideology subscribes to a complete, revolutionary inversion of power. The postcolonial black/white, margin/center, dominant/dominated dialogic is reversed. Claramonte, therefore, is the one who effects Simón Aguado's tentative attempt at re-humanizing blacks. It must be noted that in the play, Antón's *bozal* character serves two basic ideological functions: he represents the down-trodden slave-status blacks and, by the same token, functions to further underline the protagonist's unique exemplary achievements. In other words, he is the confirmation that color does not hinder the protagonist's success. It is also remarkable that Juan de Alba's symbolic appropriation of power, at the center, was not well taken by contemporary society. On the one hand, it violated the established dramatic aesthetic which had hitherto contained the black as a recognizable Other, at best. On another, more ideological level, it represented a protest against the assumed privileges of the aristocratic class, which was being blamed for the setbacks in Spain's European expansionist endeavor. Suddenly, Spain's glory depended not on the dominant center, but the despised (black) periphery.[17] It is, therefore, not surprising that the original play was heavily censored, with the result that it ends differently in different manuscripts.[18] Paradoxically, censorship was not enough to prevent various reprints, and a *signifying* second part by Manuel Vicente

Guerrero, entitled *El negro valiente en Flandes.*[19]

*Conclusions:*

By the end of the 16th century, the black population in major Spanish urban centers had visibly increased, with concomitant social, political, economic and religious implications. With the Counter-Reformation and hegemony in decadence, blacks acquired cultural value as symbols of instruction on the Spanish stage. Playwrights lent a voice to the old pre-Lopean muted black other and revised his identity into that of a visible recognizable Other whose humanistic, religious and military capabilities, through symbolic representations, both upheld as well as challenged certain assumed privileges of the dominant caste. Extensive acculturation to the values of the masters (those with the power of the pen) was expected of blacks (as an Other), who were manipulated on the Spanish stage and transformed according to the needs and interests of the former. They were expected to strive for the national dynamic identity; and yet they were not allowed to shed their fixed identity. If they were allowed to speak, it was in the voice of the masters, who also mis-appropriated their dissident discourse and dictated its ideological content. The disruption of the Self/Other, dominant/dominated binary at the hands of non-black writers only conformed to different authorial ideologies. Black subjects were "disidentified," and their resulting figure was utilized as a site of contestation. Their new, shifting space within the oppositional binary would ultimately remold them into a composite hybrid figure whose positioning on the socio-political axis was principally determined by linguistic differentiation: *bozales* and *ladinos* as diametrical opposites. As Homi Bhabha indicates:

> In the seizure of the sign, [...] there is neither dialectical [sublimation] nor the empty signifier: there is a contestation of the given symbols of authority that shift the terrains of antagonism. The synchronicity in the social ordering of symbols is challenged within its own terms, but the grounds of engagement have been displaced in a supplementary movement that exceeds those terms. This is the historical movement of hybridity as camouflage, as a contesting, antagonistic agency functioning in the time lag of sign/ symbol, which is a space in-between the rules of engagement.(193)

The sublimation of the black figure on the Spanish stage was always accompanied by parallel ridicule. His cultural value and turn-of-century dissident discourse would provide Lopean contemporaries and followers the avenue for the secure literary manifestation and negotiation of ideological differences.

*Virginia Tech*

## Notes

[1] This paper is a product of my participation in the 2003 National Endowment for the Humanities summer seminar on *Afro-Hispanic Writers and the Canon*, held at the University of Missouri-Columbia, and directed by Professor Marvin A. Lewis.

[2] Jews who truthfully converted to Catholicism were known as *conversos*, unlike *marranos* who publicly professed Catholicism while secretly practicing their Jewish religion; *moriscos* were the Muslim counterparts of the *marranos*. *Christianos nuevos* (New Christians) would eventually

refer to descendants of all converts.

[3]See Brotherton's *The "Pastor-Bobo in the Spanish Theatre....*

[4]See Grossberg 96. Here, I adopt his paraphrasis of Edward Said with respect to the Arab world.

[5]For a more detailed study of the dramatist's representation of blacks, see Moses Panford, "Diego Sánchez de Badajoz...."

[6]On the Lopean re-humanization of blacks, see Weber de Kurlat (359) and Edward Mullen (232).

[7]See Arcadio de Larrea Palacín 51.

[8]See Gual Camarena's "Una cofradía de negros..., for example.

[9]Juan Villegas has identified four basic types of discourse in Spanish and Spanish-American drama: hegemonic discourse, produced by the culturally hegemonic sectors (127); displaced discourse, that which used to be hegemonic but whose codes are no longer valid within the culturally hegemonic sectors (136); marginal discourses, all those manifestations which do not coincide with the aesthetic and ideological codes of the senders of critical hegemonic discourse (131-32), whose marginality depends on that of both the sender and the receiver; and subjugated discourse, that whose public or private existence is explicitly or implicitly prohibited by the established Order (138). Black dissident discourse merits special attention because it is not determined by the "marginality" of its sender/receiver.

[10]It is remarkable that all the black characters in the play speak standard Spanish, with the exception of Febo, presumably because they are Ethiopian. For a relation between blacks, Ethiopia, and Christianity, see Martínez López.

[11]All references are to Weber de Kurlat's edition.

[12]Gates defines "signifyin'" as the manner "in which a specific trope is repeated, with differences, between two or more texts" (xxv).

[13]The saint was born in Sicily to slave parents, and was also known as "San Benedetto da Santo Fratello" or "San Benedetto il Moro."

[14]This saint was worshipped by the Sevillian "Cofradía de los negros," thus the allusion adds to the historical realism of the play.

[15]Since the exact date of composition is unknown, it is safe to assume that it was written before the author's death in 1626. The earliest known edition was published in Barcelona in 1638.

[16]All references are from the *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles,* t. 43. The letters indicate the corresponding columns of the text.

[17]See Rodríguez López-Vázquez, 5; and Fra-Molinero, 164.

[18]See especially Alex Treviño Trejo, 14-15; and also Ródriguez López-Vázquez, 5.

[19]Its date of publication, 1751, puts it out of the scope of the present study. Interested readers may consult the critical edition by Moses Panford.

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## Contemplando las rutas de los 500 años: Aportes y resistencia africana por las campiñas de América.

**por Juan Angola Maconde***

*...podemos decir que desde 1545, hasta el de 1661 (que es de que vamos diciendo), ha dado el cerro de Potosí 2.960 millones de 13 1/4 reales cada peso, que es un espanto sin ejemplar del mundo, un tesoro, que ha conquistado al orbe, y un escándalo, que ha trabucado a las naciones.*
*Bartolomé Martínez y Vela.*

A grandes pinceladas, voy a referirme a esos aciagos siglos (XVI y los siguientes), de *deportación forzada* de nuestros antepasados a las Américas, donde con su aporte acompañaron al proceso de formación de la historia americana, puesto que, sus contornos quedaron jalonados por la prosapia y la esencia africana.

Al contemplar los siglos de recorrido de la "trata" africana por el mapa del Nuevo Mundo, sin temor a equivocarnos y de forma general, no podemos desconocer la gran corriente de transformaciones y cambios que ha promovido con su aporte en las Américas, quienes, movidos por el impulso de sus detractores fueron obligados a encausar fuerzas dispares por la compleja configuración de las tres Américas, donde todos sus "pueblos participaron de elementos africanos": en la economía de plantación del café, la caña de azúcar, el algodón, el tabaco, el cacao, la coca, la minera y la servidumbre; como también fue notorio su rótulo de patriota por la independencia de su patria adoptativa. Pero, lo cierto es que, por el influjo de sus andadas por los diferentes sitios del Nuevo Mundo, han dejado señales imborrables que perpetúan la presencia africana, cuyos signos de pertenencia delimitan una marcada influencia cultural sobre la topografía americana.

Como afirma Farregad, en ciertos aspectos de la vida social cotidiana en la que actuaban en grupos aportaron influencias manifiestas, sobre todo bajo la forma de sincretismos integrados dentro de la cultura religiosa, de la música y la danza del folklore y los diversos idiomas nacionales, así como en la alimentación, en hábitos menores e incluso, en determinados componentes de la ideología social.

En cualquier caso, asevera; lo africano constituye un fondo biológico y cultural muy significativo en la vida de los pueblos americanos, no sólo porque son sustantivos su número y calidad, sino también porque el fenómeno de la africanización en América es asunto profundo de la psicología y el alma de cada uno de los hombres que en América cuentan, por lo menos, con varias generaciones de antepasados nacidos en el Nuevo Mundo.

Por lo expuesto, con pasos imaginarios propongo hacer un rastreo por las huellas invisibles de la historia encubiertas de sudor y sangre que los africanos dejaron en el extenso lienzo del Nuevo Mundo. Peculiaridad que se devela en el quehacer económico y en los elementos principales de nuestro cofre ancestral: el tambor o caja, que le pone el rótulo de supremacía al ritmo negro con el que los parientes del infortunio unimos nuestros lazos de identidad por los confines de América y la marimba, que tiene semejanza con el balafón, instrumento musical que no goza de preferencia común entre los de raigambre africana. Pero, al parecer, instrumentos como la cora[a], guitarra africana, no forma parte de nuestro acervo

instrumental.

De manera que, en este corto recuento, preciso es detener un poco la mirada por el paisaje suramericano, para concluir a paso lento por los tujurios del espacio boliviano.

**Breve reseña histórica**

El penoso transitar de nuestros antepasados por los distintos enclaves geográficos del Nuevo Mundo, como registran los anales de la historia, ha estado marcado por el genio temperamental y sanguíneo de los colonizadores.

Durante los siglo (XVI-XIX), los autores que concuerdan en opinión, afirman, "por lo tanto, fijando los años 1518 y 1873 como las fechas límites, tendríamos 355 años de comercio de esclavos africanos, durante los cuales tiene lugar el proceso de traslado coercitivo de seres humanos más gigantesco que ha conocido la historia. A lo largo de ese periodo se estima que llegaron a América no menos de nueve millones y medio de negros africanos, en función de seis producciones fundamentales: azúcar, café, tabaco, algodón, arroz y minería" (Caramés et al. 1992: 469). De esta manera las "piezas de ébano" fueron el principal recurso que ha sustentado el sistema económico colonialista. En torno a este orden de operación productiva el Viejo Mundo ha generando entre África subsahariana y América una zona económica de desbroce de recursos más grande y sin precedentes de la historia.

En este sentido, las Américas se han visto parceladas por hordas de africanos y, en la mayoría de los casos, los países sudamericanos han acogido esos "puntos vacíos" de marginar a los protagonistas del proceso histórico. Argentina[1], Paraguay[2] y Chile[3] han colocado el "ingrediente negro" en la categoría del anonimato demográfico. En tanto que: en Brasil, Colombia, Perú, Ecuador, Venezuela y Uruguay, la imagen africana no ha pasado por el tamiz del desconocimiento—aunque en Bolivia, lo africano no se matiza con "pinzas" dentro la variable demográfica—, sino que; el elemento patrimonial como: las danzas, la música, los instrumentos musicales, las tradiciones orales, peinados, artesanías, nuestras formas de hablar, la religión y sus diferentes prácticas, medicina tradicional, etc., se constituyeron en hilos que matizaron el entarimado de la identidad nacional.

La trama de las hordas africanas se acentúa en la gélida zona de Potosí, Villa Imperial de Carlos V, a partir del siglo XVI, para siglos después diseminarse por los otros departamentos.[4]

**Las Américas, el gran laboratorio**

Por cada cuadrícula del espacio americano, hilos de sangre, sudor y muerte han labrado por "casi cuatro siglos" los rastros de hordas humanas que, al ser desarraigadas de su medio fueron transplantadas a fuerza por la abrupta y hostil topografía de las distintas áreas de la franja americana, cuyos monopolios mercantilistas a su turno, escudados tras el relieve esclavista medraron sus "*buenos provechos*".

Los sometidos al brutal exilio pasaron por el colador del gran laboratorio, en el que unos y otros fueron destinados a la industria de sementeras y extractivas respectivamente, escenarios donde se generó una explotación económica sin precedentes.

El nefasto modelo económico

implantado en las "paradisiacas" áreas de las Américas, durante siglos, generó un flujo de doble entrada en el que salieron beneficiados, quienes, ostentaban el monopolio del comercio y, a su turno, para el logro de tal categoría, han tenido que sacrificar los intereses de los que ofrecían la masa de brazos que fueron sometidos al dañoso intercambio.

De modo que, el Nuevo Mundo fue el laboratorio financiero más próspero que la historia económica pudo gozar. Se implementó el modelo "económico del Virreinato" bajo una hegemonía donde la violencia, el odio y el sadismo eran el procedimiento común, decreto con que los europeos aplicaron a las clases productoras el epíteto de exterminio de nacionalidades indígenas y pueblos traídos del África a la fuerza.

## El paradigma económico

El comercio de esclavos ha puesto en movimiento los engranajes de un modelo económico de gran escala, donde todos sus sectores han alcanzado una considerable especialización en base de una férrea división del trabajo que fue atribuida en todas las operaciones productivas y comerciales, como dice (Romero 1994: 80): invertir en Europa algo de dinero comprando baratijas, alcohol y fusiles, (pólvora, diamantes de cristal, espadas, cañones viejos), para cambiar todo aquello en territorio africano por negros esclavos; llevar ese cargamento humano a las Américas para pagar, en "piezas de ébano" el valor de toda la azúcar que fuera posible comprar (adquirir plata y oro y volver con ella a Europa para venderla a pingüe precio). Era un negocio que constituía un gran triángulo de transacciones comerciales, que permitía una triple ganancia. No existía ningún riesgo pues el *producto* siempre encontraba mercado, dado que la demanda crecía con el aumento del número de plantaciones de caña (y la plata con la expoliación de indígenas y africanos).

En consecuencia, el modelo ha estructurado su funcionamiento, cuyas poleas han puesto en movimiento dos flujos, uno de entrada y otro de salida

De ese comercio triangular que generó un flujo económico de doble entrada y, que desangró recursos de África y de América, me voy a permitir esbozar en los acápites siguientes.

## Flujos de salida del África

Del continente *africano*: el principal flujo de salida a cargo de las empresas negreras legales e ilegales de contrabandistas y piratas de propiedad de españoles, ingleses, franceses, portugueses y holandeses fueron recursos—*capital humano*—destinados a la inversión de las factorías que pululaban en las Américas. Miguel Rojas brinda información sobre el particular: "La mayoría de los esclavos provenían de la Costa de los Esclavos en el Golfo de Benin, del Dahomey y de Nigeria", fueron parte también; Elmina, en la Costa del Oro, las de Luanda y toda la costa de Angola (Klein 1986: 40). Benín, por siglos (XVII, XVIII y XIX) fue entre otros emplazamientos de la costa Atlántica, uno de los importantes centros de exportación donde el portugués Francisco Da Sousa apodado el "Chacha I" y sus descendientes—que actualmente viven en la Atlántica Villa de Ouidah en cuyo interior de la casa se conserva el cementerio familiar—monopolizaron el comercio de esclavos por el puerto del mismo nombre y Cotonou.

Como nos da a conocer Romero a quien glosamos, "Para dar una idea de la magnitud de este tráfico ofrecemos algunas cifras: en los años 1575 a 1591, cincuenta y dos mil esclavos fueron enviados desde Angola hacia Brasil y las Indias españolas... De 1680 a 1700, fueron embarcados trescientos mil esclavos en navíos ingleses solamente. De 1680 a 1688, la Real Compañía Africana (de la cual el rey y la familia real inglesa eran grandes accionistas) tenían doscientos cuarenta y nueve negreros en actividad, logrando embarcar sesenta mil setecientos ochenta y tres esclavos, de los cuales sólo cuarenta y seis mil trescientos noventa y seis sobrevivieron a la travesía (o lo que es lo mismo, en la travesía del Atlántico murieron 14.397, el 23%)" (Caramés et al. 39).

Hace notar también que: De las costas de África para el cultivo agrícola y otros productos tropicales, vino la importación de familias de negros del Senegal, la Guinea y el Brasil (Morales 1929:22), de Cabo Verde y Angola (Martínez y Vela 1939:169), también de las mismas costas la "cera blanca" (con destino a Potosí (ibid).

En consecuencia, las páginas de registros de la trata señalan como principales sitios de salida del África a: Isla de Gorée en Senegal, Costa de Guinea, El Mina, Sierra Leona, Ouidah, Costa de Oro, Costa de los esclavos y Loango en Angola.

**Flujos de entrada al África**

En cambio: para África, el flujo de *entrada* fue chucherías y baratijas a las que nos referimos líneas arriba, que eran utilizadas para el trueque con hombres, mujeres y niños. Los traficantes entregaban un fusil viejo por cada esclavo vigoroso (Galeano 1974:124). Esto con la astucia de que los mismos no puedan ser utilizados en contra de los traficantes y opresores.

**Flujo de *salida* de las Américas**

De América: salieron los metales preciosos—plata y oro—que era el riego sanguíneo de conexión entre la colonia y la metrópoli. Así, en el siglo XVI, el 95,6% de las exportaciones de la colonia hacia la metrópoli lo constituían cargamentos de dichos metales, es decir, el 80% del total era plata, el 19% oro y el 1% piedras preciosas (Caramés et al. 79).

La producción de azúcar fue el rubro "infernal", calificativo con el cual los contemporáneos describían las plantaciones.

Por lo que han dicho del "oro blanco" que generó tanta riqueza, atrajo capital y esclavos para transformar la "naturaleza montuosa" del suelo americano, Galeano hace notar que: "El largo ciclo del azúcar dio origen, (...), a prosperidades tan mortales como las que engendraron, en Potosí, Ouro Preto, Zacatecas y Guanajuato, los furores de la plata y el oro; al mismo tiempo, impulsó con fuerza decisiva, directa e indirectamente, el desarrollo industrial de Holanda, Francia, Inglaterra y Estados Unidos" (Galeano 90). "Lo referente al azúcar resulta así congénito a la esclavitud del negro en las Antillas: nació como una influencia que en los primeros siglos orientó la trata, y terminó como una realidad expresable mediante una ecuación que resume la política del siglo XIX y parte del XX: producción de azúcar ( mercado de azúcar) explotación de masas por una esclavitud declarada o encubierta" (Romero 86). Los

comerciantes norteamericanos también se suman a la pujante economía, compran caña de azúcar en las Antillas. En sus "clippers",..., la transportan hasta las destilerías de Baltimore y otras ciudades norteamericanas, para convertirlas en ron. El ron irá, una parte a África donde será cambiado por hombres, mujeres y niños; otra la venderán a los "indios" de América del Norte. Los clippers, por último, llegan a las Antillas de nuevo para vender allí su carga humana como esclavos e iniciar de nuevo el ciclo (Caramés et al. 42).

**Flujo de entrada a las Américas**

El principal recurso fue las cargazones de "*piezas de ébano*". América y África tejieron esa red de intercambio. Pero, entre ambos—proveedor y receptor—nunca hubo una relación directa, sino que esa atribución correspondía a los intermediarios, quienes cumplían esa importante función de hacer circular las mercancías dentro del modelo imperante.

Al margen de las "recuas humanas", también formaron parte de esa corriente variedad de plantas: como la caña de azúcar, el café, tabaco, algodón, cacao, etc., para ser cultivadas por los mismos esclavos. Maquinarias para añadir valor agregado a los productos que producían los sometidos, quienes eran exportados a Europa. Pero, no sólo el mercado se extendió al continente europeo, también gozaron de ese beneficio de exportar sus productos a las Américas otras economías; el Asia, con marfil; la India Oriental, con grana, cristales, careyes, marfiles y perlas preciosas; Ceylan, con diamantes; Arabia, con aromas; Persia, el Cairo y Turquía, con alfombras, Terrenate, Malaca y Goa, con todo género de especias, almizcle, algalia y losa blanca, y la China, con ropa extraordinaria de seda (Martinez y Vela 169).

En este sentido, los principales puertos de entrada a las tres Américas fueron: América del Norte, Boston Nueva York. Centro América; Cuba, Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico, Guadalupe, Martinica, Barbados y Cartagena. América del Sur; Cartagena de las Indias, Recife, Salvador (Bahía), Río de Janeiro y la Plata, también se suma Panamá y el Callao en Perú.

**Flujo de salida del continente europeo**

Los autores concuerdan que de Europa salieron: "aguardientes, telas, armas y cañones viejos, y una gama de productos suntuarios, etc.", que no tienen paradoja con el capital productivo. Salieron también plantas de caña de azúcar, hacia Las Antillas (s. XVI), donde españoles, ingleses, franceses y holandeses se dedicaron de manera extensiva al cultivo azucarero en las islas caribeñas. Más tarde (s. XVIII), a las plantaciones de azúcar se unieron las del café—cultivo originario de Arabia—y, por último, las de tabaco (Caramés et al. 40).

**Flujo de *entrada* al continente europeo**

El modelo fundado en la explotación de mano de obra impaga ha generado una acumulación de capital sin precedentes en el Viejo Mundo. Acumulación que ha reportado a lo largo de varios siglos un crecimiento apoteósico en diferentes rubros de la economía, cuyo resultados hoy por hoy siguen redituando en las arcas financieras del continente y del orbe grandes retornos, supremacía que le permite seguir fustigando a las economías

paupérismas de las Américas. Así hace referencia Galeano sobre el particular: "Por cierto que la trata de negros en Nueva Inglaterra dio origen a gran parte del capital que facilitó la Revolución industrial en Estados Unidos de América" (Ibid. 125). Prosigue, "*Con capitales obtenidos de este tráfico de esclavos, los hermanos Brown, de Providence, instalaron el horno de fundición que proveyó de cañones al general George Washington para la guerra de la independencia"*(Ibid).

Los beneficios formidables derivados del comercio de brazos se canalizaron en direcciones muy diversas. (...) los Saná (marqueses de Saná y Marianao), se convirtieron en impresionantes propietarios de tierras tanto en Cuba como en Cataluña; (...) Miguel Biada promotor del ferrocarril Barcelosn-Mataró; Guell Ferrer, banquero, terrateniente, fabricante de puñas y copropietario de La Maquinista; los Canela, Capella, Plandolit i Salom vinculados al mundo de las finanzas y propietarios de imponentes empresas navieras"(Caramés et al. 44).

Por lo referido líneas arriba, la trata y el trabajo gratuito se han constituido en poderosísimos medios por los cuales, se han forjado los emporios financieros del mundo, aunque los que lucraron se resistan a reconocer que el stock de capital acumulado procede de los hilos de sudor y sangre de los africanos.

## Participación histórica

La participación africana en la trama histórica del Nuevo Mundo, estuvo registrada en todos los caminos que le ha tocado transitar desde su "arribada forzosa". Su llegada, desde sus inicios al margen de las actividades productivas y de servidumbre, estuvo ligada a los aprestos de conquista como lo hizo Diego de Almagro para someter a los aborígenes de Chile que además de ser lazarillos y abrir sendas, también debían ser escudos para salvar la vida de sus propios ajusticiadores contra las flechas de los nativos, precisamente el mismo Almagro fue uno de los que preservó la vida gracias a la intervención de un esclavo negro que lo salvó de morir en manos de los aborígenes en el lugar llamado *Pueblo Quemado* (Romero 98).

Así, a la independencia de América hay que sumar: el esfuerzo, el valor, la voluntad y la sangre con que escribieron la palabra Patria los de ancestría africana, pero, de tal decoro y tal rango no gozaron, a cambio, los conminaron a seguir capoteando su trajinar por los azarosos riscos del entramado étnico de cada país. Lo propio ha ocurrido romper con las cadenas de la esclavitud y con la conquista de los derechos.

Trashojando la historiografía negra, a pesar de que su libertad ha sido amordazada por los grilletes de la ignominia, nos encontramos con nombres de ilustres personalidades que estamparon sus huellas en el camino de la historia: el temple de François Dominique Toussaint, conocido por el General Toussaint Louverture, nacido en una plantación como esclavo, le concedieron la libertad, recibió una buena educación de su amo, fue el padre de la independencia de Haití, para luego morir prisionero el 7 de abril de 1803 en el fuerte de Joux Francia. La osadía de líderes como Martín Luther King y Nelson Mandela, a su turno, dejaron las imborrables cicatrices en las páginas de las historia.

Así, a pesar de que el africano ha enarbolado su estirpe por los parajes de la América y que se ha infiltrado por las

"concavidades y cimientos" de su geografía conformando los mosaicos demográficos de cada nación, la exclusión cierra la puerta de entrada a las Constituciones y, en algunos países—acaso la mayoría—, ni siquiera nos es permitido la espera en el tras patio, actitud que ha invalidado el acompañamiento africano en el proceso histórico de la patria americana.

**Resistencia cultural**

La trata en su contexto general ha sido el eslabón que sin ambages ha procurado sumergir el patrimonio de los grupos étnicos que cruzaron el Atlántico bajo el velo de la tiranía. Tal infamia, no ha logrado socavar la connatural conducta africanista, quienes; bajo el amparo "de un profundo subconsciente colectivo" han mantenido en algunos casos casi semi intacto los lazos de vínculos con la familia, la tribu, el clan o "las sociedades de pertenencia". Subconsciente que, ha avivado la reinterpretación de valores, los mismos que se han constituido en el bastión de tradiciones del entramado cultural de las Américas.

Esta reinterpretación ha permitido a los grupos diseminados por la franja americana y el Caribe forzar el muro de los sincretismos culturales que, en todo caso, nos han permitido hasta el presente emparentarnos con los tambores, principal expresión de identidad africana que junto a voces y ritmo desbordan las melodías de nuestro folklore. Así, por ejemplo, el *son*, la *guaracha* o el *danzón,* "que los plantadores bailaban a la hora de la tertulia, tomaron otro ritmo y otro sentido cuando fueron interpretados por los esclavos" cubanos, la *samba* brasileña "que viene de *semba*, nombre bantú angolés, que quiere decir ombligo u ombligada, gesto característico de la danza africana, que hace su aparición a fines del siglo XIX cuando los esclavos podían manifestar libremente su religión y su cultura"(Rojas 1998: 102). Ritmos con tinte de espectáculo que han expuesto su melopea en la vitrina comercial como el *mambo* "que quiere decir hablar en lengua conga", el *chachachá* cubano, la *cumbia* colombiana, la *punta* hondureña y el *candombe* uruguayo. En el Perú no se utiliza la caja que ha sido prohibida por el Estado y remplazada por el cajón, instrumento con el que interpretan sus ritmos como la *marinera* peruana y la *saya* boliviana. Las "polkas, las mazurcas, las cuadrillas y los minoes", interpretaciones como los *blues*, "que representa la música de los esclavos, la aceptación del dolor", *jazz*, *congas*, *calipso*, *rumbas*, *boleros, tango*. etc., son expresiones que marcan con sus acordes una significativa influencia africana en el mosaico folklórico americano y forman parte de "los rincones más exclusivistas" de la cultura popular común.

Si bien estos "aires musicales y giros dancísticos nos son comunes", y se empoderaron de los parajes de las tres Américas, a su turno como contraparte resurgen las tradiciones de añejas raíces que con su sello mantuvieron la convivencia entre el catolicismo y el paganismo que dieron vida a la santería y a los cultos populares. Una "a través de sus diferentes *orishás* o divinidades identificándose con las católicas" y otras como los "estados de posesión espiritual" como "el *vodú* en Haití, el culto del *candomblé* en Bahía, "síntesis de las religiones africanas con el catolicismo, que se practicaba de noche, entre las favelas, en un aire de fiesta y de clandestinidad" y, el *capoeira*, "esa lucha inventada por los esclavos, en la que sólo

se golpean con los pies", la *macumba* en Río de Janeiro" o en "Recife el baile del *maracutu,* reminiscencia de los antiguos congos".

Según M. Rojas, "numerosas son las danzas rituales que han pasado de generación en generación: danzas en homenaje a Shangó, a Ogún, dioses congos y yorubas, danzas en que los espíritus, *orishas*, descienden y poseen a los hombres"(Rojas 145).

Creo tener la certeza en decir que, esta resistencia en parte se debe al cimarronaje que dieron vida a los: palenques, quilombos, macombos, cumbes, ladeiras o mambises (Caramés et al 26), "porque las ceremonias secretas estaban íntimamente relacionadas con la actividad de los cimarrones" (Ibid 44).

En los espacios geográficos de Sur América, Brasil y Colombia han sido escenarios donde se han conformado estos sitios de salvaguardas que favorecieron la protección de los valores africanos. A esta fortaleza, se suma la metáfora literaria que ha tenido en Nicolás Guillén a uno de sus mayores exponentes.

M. Rojas también reconoce que la poesía negra se concentra en Cuba. Fue una poesía estrechamente ligada al ritmo de los bailes y al golpe de los instrumentos. Maestro de ese movimiento ha sido Nicolás Guillén con una poesía temática apoyada en el ritmo del son.

**Por las rutas de Bolivia**

Bolivia, país "pluricultural y multiétnico", se encuentra en el centro de América del Sur, tiene una superficie total de 1,098.581 $Km^2$, limita con Brasil, al norte y este, Paraguay, al sureste; Argentina, al sur, y Chile y el Perú al oeste. No tiene salida al mar. Se divide en nueve departamentos, La Paz, que oficia de capital, Santa Cruz, Beni, Pando, Tarija, Cochabamba , Sucre, Potosí y Oruro. El Censo Nacional de Población y Vivienda, realizado el 5 de septiembre de 2001, empadronó a 8,274.325 habitantes. Aunque el trato con "pinzas" haya escrito el epíteto de "muerte estadística", los afrodescendientes aún invisibilizados seguimos formando parte de la patria.

Está atravesado por dos cordilleras: la cordillera Occidental y la Cordillera Oriental o Real (cf. con la revista *Raíces*). Se divide en tres grandes regiones: la zona oriental o de los llanos, se encuentran a una altura aproximada de 600 m., la zona occidental o montañosa cuya altura alcanza hasta los 4.800 m., región considerada la más fría, como afirma Galeano cuando se refiere a Potosí, "se pagaba el frío como si fuera un impuesto" (p.33), la zona de los valles con una altura promedio de 2.500 m., los Yungas paceños que se encuentra a 1600 m. es parte de la región en cuyos parajes se han conformado los enclaves africanos hasta el presente.

**Entrada de africanos**

La presencia africana en el Alto Perú—hoy Bolivia—data desde la llegada de los conquistadores como afirman los cronistas. Pero, con el descubrimiento del cerro que "vomitaba plata" en la gélida Potosí en 1545, comienza la masiva deportación involuntaria de africanos por casi tres siglos. Muy a pesar de que la historia no precisa con claridad de que fue significativa la participación africana en la actividad extractiva de la plata, en el sentido de que haya gravitado en este rubro, el africano; ya pisa ese inhóspito suelo desde cuando comienza la fiebre argentífera, esto se nota en un documento fechado en 1549 a tan

sólo cuatro años de haberse descubierto el "coloso de plata" a la letra dice; Potosí. Carta de compañía: Juan Albertos y Juan de la Puerta. Estantes en este asiento de Potosí, para trabajar una mina en la veta del Estaño en el cerro de dicho asiento, con los indios yanaconas que ambos poseen y con tres esclavos negros, que pone Juan de la Puerta (ANB, Ep Soto, t1, fiiii-v). Así, la masa demográfica de la Villa Imperial de Carlos V en su configuración, en lo sucesivo se habría visto moteado por las "piezas de ébano", a sabiendas que estos contaban con dos desventajas: su alto costo en el mercado y su poca resistencia a los climas fríos (Picotti 2001:130). Esto se nota cuando en 1611 numeran once por padrón, 160 mil almas; con esta división, 66 mil indios, de entrambos sexos y edades, con los 5 mil de la mita del cerro; 40 mil forasteros de los reinos de España, y extranjeros; 3 mil españoles, nacidos en Potosí de entrambos sexos y edades; 35 mil españoles criollos de todos los reinos de las indias, de entrambos sexos, 6 mil negros, mulatos y zambos, de entrambos sexos, de diversas provincias del mundo (africano), con que sustentaba Potosí 160 mil almas (Martinez y Vela 70-1). Autores como Crespo y Portugal reconocen su paso por la Casa de Moneda donde sí, la mano de obra esclava confrontados con las "máquinas de sangre" tuvo su peso económico, acuñando moneda para la Corona, en el proceso de fundición, laminación y sellado de las macuqinas[b] como los llamaban los españoles. Las macuquinas se fabricaron de 1575 a 1773. Deriva de la voz quechua "makkaikuna" que quiere decir "eran golpeadas".

Las rutas comerciales de internación de esclavos era Buenos Aires, ó Río de la plata, de estos puertos de tránsito, las mercaderías tenían que arribar hasta Potosí vía Charcas. A eso se sumaba el Brasil y en más de los casos Panamá y Lima (Picotti 140 y ss).

De la ostentosa sociedad potosina (s. XVII), los cronistas hacen referencia con la fastuosidad que vivían ciertas castas, como la famosa señora Dra. Clara, comúnmente llamada la Almatea. Fue la mujer más opulenta de Potosí..., la que tenía criadas blancas, y muchas negras esclavas (que de seguro formaban parte de los 6 mil de progenie africana, tan sobradas de servicio, que dos de ellas sólo servían para limpiar con toallas las salivas que escupían en el suelo, los que entraban a visitarla (Martinez y Vela 245).

Tiempo después fueros también llevados como "nubes sin agua" por las otras regiones geográficas, en 1662—a 73 años de los primeros africanos llegados a Potosí-Bolivia aseveración que es exclusivamente mía—los valles de Cinti que se encuentran en promedio a 2500 msnm, recibieron a los plantadores de la vid (PRESTA, 1988:44) y en 1828—a 279 de la llegada de los primeros africanos a la montaña de plata y a tres años de la independencia—las haciendas yungueñas del departamento de La Paz, ya contaban con la mano de obra esclava, reducto en el que asumieron una nueva *cultura productiva andina*[c], en el cultivo de la coca (*Historia y Cultura* 1992:53), enclave que se encuentra a 1600 msnm, zona que se ha constituido en albergue definitivo de la descendencia africana, como certifican los archivos parroquiales de los curatos yungueños que en 1804, ya estuvieron en esta generosa región—generosa en el sentido de que se ha constituido hasta el presente en la circunscripción con identidad africana—como dan a conocer los registros de la conservaduría de la Parroquia Santiago de Coripata, segunda sección de

la provincia Nor yungas, Municipio de Coripata que en sus notaciones dice lo siguiente: En el año del señor de mil ochocientos quatro años en treinta de mayo, María Luisa Iriondo negra africana esclava de la Hacienda de Calacala de edad de doce años, murió en dicha hacienda y en la comunión de nuestra Sta. Iglesia. Sepulté en el Sementerio el día treinta y uno del mismo mes yo el Presvitero D. Calixto Mantilla cura Ferviente de esta Doctrina de Santiago de Coripata. No recurro sacramentos porque no llamaron a tiempo y para que conste lo firmo, Calixto Mantrilla (Archv. curato Coripata 1804-1810: fojas 9).

Así, sucesivamente la *deportación forzada* a 255 años de la llegada de los tres "esclavos negros" en 1549 a Potosí, prosigue con la Sociedad de Productores de Yungas, quienes para poner a tono el desarrollo económico de sus haciendas, recurren a la importación de esclavos. Uno de los socios el General Andrés de Santa Cruz, que tenía propiedades en Yungas (Coroico), importó en su administración (1831-1845) ochenta familias de negros de los puertos del Perú (Morales 23).

Pero, se debe recordar la referencia hecha líneas arriba en la que se dijo: que en el censo de 1900, los africanos estaban diseminados por toda la geografía del país, excepto Pando, regiones en las cuales han desaparecido por completo por el proceso de miscegeneración[d], anomalía que no ocurrió en los Yungas del Departamento de La Paz. Presencia que evidencia que los africanos terminaron su largo caminar por "la ruta de los esclavos" en América.

En los últimos años, las áreas urbanas de los departamentos de: Santa Cruz—que es de mayor preferencia—seguido de La Paz, por el proceso de migración yungueña, el espejo demográfico urbano ha vuelto a retratar el rostro del afrodescendiente.

## Aporte económico

Potosí pasó a ser "el nervio principal del reino"(Galeano 33), fue la "vena yugular" que ha movido los hilos económicos del mundo. Autores que concuerdan en opinión afirman, "podemos decir que desde 1545, hasta el de 1661 (que es de que vamos diciendo), ha dado el cerro de Potosí 2.960 millones de $13^{1}/_{4}$ reales cada peso, que es un espanto sin ejemplar del mundo, un tesoro, que ha conquistado al orbe, y un escándalo, que ha trabucado a las naciones" (Martínez y Vela 187-8).

En este girón patrio que fue el delirio económico del mundo, el africano aportó desde la Casa de la Moneda con su trabajo en las hornazas como fundidores de plata y acuñadores de moneda, se los prohibía que salieran de la Casa ni siquiera los domingos y fiestas de guardar, bajo la pena de doscientos azotes (Crespo 1977: 25) y pasaban la noche en las duenderas o buardillas del entretecho de la Casa de la Moneda (Angola 2000: 32).

Si bien en opinión entusiasta de las personas que afirmaban, que con toda la riqueza extraída del cerro se podía construir un puente de plata, desde Potosí hasta España, y claro, si se contara el holocausto de las vidas, en sentido antagónico, lo más paradójico es que debería decirse: *con los huesos de los muertos de indígenas y africanos, se podían construir dos puentes, uno de ida y otro de vuelta.*

Pero Potosí (s. XVI), ha potenciado también la economía de la coca yungueña —sector que por excelencia se ha especializado en el monocultivo de esta plantación, hasta el extremo de que en el presente ha dejado de producir los bienes de

subsistencia y que tiene que depender de la alimentación—, permitiendo la circulación del producto de esta región a la zona minera de Potosí que entraban anualmente cien mil cestos, con un millón de kilos de hoja de coca (Galeano 71).

**Las huellas de la independencia**

En cada girón del Alto Perú, hoy Bolivia, los descendientes africanos se entroparon en las reyertas a cambio de la residencia recibida: unos alineados bajo las huestes de los patriotas y otros a merced de los realistas. Así dan a conocer los fastos episodios coloniales de 1622 en Potosí que dice: "en este año, habiendo asaltado ocho veces a la bien fortalecida casa de Oyanume los Vicuñas, en varias ocasiones, la defendieron con sumo valor los arcabuceros vascongados, y con muchas muertes; pero en el último asalto, entraron: murieron al entrar en ella seis Vicuñas criollos, y dentro de la casa, 40 nobles vascongados, 19 negros, muchísimos indios" (Martínez y Vela 95). En los siglos de recorrido por los riscos de las Américas, se ha visto envuelto en confrontaciones como lo sucedido en 1623 los que murieron en diversas guerras en las plazas, calles, campos y casas de Potosí, desde principio de enero fueron 1600, sin los negros, indios y mulatos, que pasaron de 300 (Martínez y Vela 103).

Participó también en la guerra de la independencia en 1809, en el que actuó sin ningún disfraz en los sucesos que le indujeron por voluntad propia ser protagonista. En el camino de Ocobaya a Irupana—provincia Sud Yungas del departamento de La Paz—mientras se trasladaban las cabezas de los revolucionarios Manuel Victorio García Lanza y Gabriel Antonio Castro, un grupo de negros de Chicaloma comunidad de afro-descendientes que corresponde al cantón Irupana, hoy por los matrimonios interétnicos la población de ancestría africana ha disminuido considerablemente y la composición demográfica está compuesta por zambos, mulatos e indígenas provincia Sud Yungas atacó en Caturi (parte baja de los cerros Púlpito y Jaraña) con la intención de recuperar las cabezas de los héroes. El intento no prosperó porque los soldados realistas los eliminaron (Villanueva 2002: 37).

Acudieron también a defender la patria en los escabrosos páramos del Chaco en la guerra contra el Paraguay (1932-1935) (Angola 48). En esta contienda se destacó el afro-descendiene Pedro Andaverez Peralta, que fue reconocido y galardonado por sus méritos de guerra.

**Aprestos de cimarronaje**

En Bolivia, no se ha dado propiamente el cimarronaje como en los países vecinos (Brasil y Colombia), han existido pequeñas sublevaciones de esclavos en la región yungueña, como afirman los cronistas. Sincrónicamente, en cuanto las chacras de Songo y Challana fueron declaradas zonas liberadas, atrajo a muchos negros, que en calidad de cimarrones buscaron y encontraron asilo. Los Yunguinos los admitieron comenzando a accionar en conjunto. Tales entendimientos entre negros e indígenas no eran comunes entonces, pero en Songo lo lograron (Espinoza 2003: 422). Otro hecho de disturbio ocurrido en las provincias paceñas fue el de 1854, cuando se produjo la emancipación de los negros en las haciendas de los propietarios de Yungas, hecho que diezmó la mano de obra en los citados latifundios (Carter y

Mamani 1986: 91).

## Resistencia cultural

Como se hizo refencia en párrafos anteriores, las sublevaciones africanas no llegaron más allá de ser meras reacciones en contra de los opresores, esto, en razón de que hayan existido bastiones de resistencia, puesto que los registros históricos no hacen referencia de tales cobijos. Más al contrario, han tenido que soportar una lucha sin tregua contra las atronadoras fuerzas culturales que fueron las constantes amenazas en su difícil caminar por los parajes de las comarcas de la geografía boliviana.

En cuanto a influencias de religiosidad africana, no se han conservado cultos como el vudú, pero, la santería se ha constituido en la metáfora que ha encarnado los cimientos de los africanos diseminados por los hogares de los Yungas paceños. Rezos cantados como el mauchi[e] (Angola 88-91) que en contadas ocasiones aún se entonan, de seguro son manifestaciones que evocan a las deidades ancestrales no develadas.

Como fundamentos de resistencia—en el caso boliviano—que se ha erguido incólume soportando los embates de las influencias culturales de españoles, nativos y el propio medio geográfico, es el ritmo de la *saya*[e], el folklore afro, que marca la diferencia étnica no sólo de color, de cajas, voces y ritmo en el mosaico cultural, sino que ha tendido una soga atiborrada de sudor y sangre por los sinuosos caminos desde África a América. Hoy por hoy, es la señal que a los descendientes africanos a lo largo de siglos nos permite seguir atados a ese cofre de percepciones ancestrales que enarbolan los signos en el tejido patrimonial, que al presente promueven el colorido en la vitrina cultural de la diáspora africana.

## Consideraciones finales

El aporte y el enraizamiento de las "piezas de ébano" por los enclaves de las Américas, se ha constituido en el cuajo socioeconómico que se ha visto aparejado por dos corrientes: Una orientó su accionar en torno a la actividad económica, bajo el patrón de un modelo productivo esclavista, dirigido a la expoliación de los recursos no renovables por un lado y, por el otro, los renovables que han transformado las campiñas montuosas dando paso a la producción agrícola. Para transformar estos campos en unidades productoras de bienes con destino intermedio y/o final, se requería una fuerte dosis de inversión productiva; para tal efecto, vino la importación de mano de obra, principal recurso que ha puesto el combustible al modelo económico, y que ha dado origen a un comercio triangular con acumulación de excedentes económicos sin precedentes.

La otra se centra en el patrimonio cultural que es la vertiente de donde mana la vida de un pueblo. Las manifestaciones del acervo cultural que han logrado a su paso por los siglos soportar todas las arremetidas, han hecho que entre la generación de parientes deportados exista un lazo de identidad colectiva que nos ha permitido, hasta el presente, comunicarnos con ese lenguaje que ha dado uniformidad a los ritos, signos, gestos y el folklore y que ha permitido crear vínculos entre los grupos de progenie africana desperdigados a lo largo de la franja de las tres Américas.

De la impronta africana estampada en el tramado de las Américas, de su aporte en el ámbito económico, del temple que esgrimieron en su forzado deambular, de

la resistencia cultural que nos han legado y que nos ha permitido no perecer de sed cultural en el Nuevo Mundo, que nos permite entreverarnos por ese cordón de la melodía con los tambores y demás códigos, eso es lo que que he abordado en este trabajo.

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## Glosario

[a]La cora, es la guitarra africana.

[b]Las macuquinas son monedas de plata acuñadas en la época colonial para España (y parte de la república). De todo el proceso, desde la fundición, laminación hasta el sellado, participaron los esclavos en la Casa de la Moneda de Potosí. Los esclavos las elaboraban en forma manual, de ello hasta hoy quedan las huellas tanto en el empedrado donde se encuentra el eje central como en la parte alta donde se encontraban las maquinarias y las mesas de sellado.

[c]Cultura productiva: se da ese denominativo al sistema de producción andina de la coca. Este modo de cultivo ha asumido sólo en los Yungas, ya que tenían conocimiento del laboreo de la caña de azúcar, la vid y otros procedentes del otro lado del continente.

[d]Por miscegeneración (definición que da Aillón) se entiende un proceso por el que la población se trans-cultura en forma intensiva, a través de la adopción de símbolos nuevos de identidad y sobre todo, de matrimonios y cruzamientos inter- étnicos que dentro de un tiempo histórico, hacen indistinguibles los grupos de origen.

[e]El mauchi es un rezo cantado que es interpretado sólo en ceremonias mortuorias y por personas mayores. Este rezo se entona de regreso a la casa de los dolientes, después de haber sido sepultado el difunto.

[f]La saya es el folklore de raigambre africano compuesto por hombres y mujeres. Los hombres tocan las cajas, las mismas que tienen diferentes tamaños, desde el más grande al más pequeño. El tambor mayor es el que marca el compás, le siguen el sobre tambor, los cambiadores, requintos, sobre requintos y el canguingo que es el más pequeño de todos. También armonizan los acordes la cuancha y el cascabel. A esto se suman las voces de las mujeres.

## Notas

[1]Este epígrafe acaso confronta el mito falaz de que "Argentina es blanca y europea", cambiando absolutamente esa óptica engañosa. En toda la gobernación del Tucumán el número de esclavos de las temporalidades fue muy importante. Tan sólo en Córdoda y en el Tucumán estos sumaban más de 3.000. Luego de 1770, en dos estancias cordobesas se rematarón más de 2.000 piezas y casi 1.000 entre las ciudades de Salta. Tucumán, Santiago del Estero y Catamarca (Pícotti, 2001: 91). Como la que se solaza en el silencio sobre la participación profunda y continua de los africanos negros en la historia de la Argentina (Liboreiro 2004: 25). Hoy la comunidad caboverdiana es ese reflejo de inmigrantes del pasado.

[2]Paraguay: ...de los muchos africanos que fueron objeto de la trata—los *senegaleses*, "los más fáciles de disciplinar, los más adecuados al servicio doméstico; los *bambaras*, famosos por su afición al hurto; los *aradas*, hábiles en la agricultura, pero orgullosos; los *congos*, diestros pescadores, pero de pequeña talla, y predispuestos a la fuga; los *nagos*, los más humanos; los *mondongos*, los más crueles; los *minas*, los más resueltos, caprichosos y proclives a la desesperación" (Molinari Diego Luis, *La trata de negros*, citado por Pla 1972: 52). En el presente los Camba kua son la estampa de

los antiguos africanos.

[3]Chile: No puede dejar en el olvido esa imagen natural de los afrochilenos afincados en el valle de Azapa.

[4]Según censo de 1900 los resultados demográficos por departamento fueron como sigue: La Paz 2.056, Potosí 101, Santa Cruz 930, Cochabamba 161, Tarija 206, Oruro 35, Beni 245, Chuquisaca 205. FUENTE CENSO GENERAL DE POBLACIÓN DE LA REPÚBLICA. Según el empadronamiento de 1° de Septiembre de 1900, Tomo II.

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# The Subversion of the Concept of "Home" in Loida Maritza Pérez's *Geographies of Home*

**by Janet Jones Hampton**

*Geographies of Home*, published in 1999, is the first novel of the young Dominican writer, Loida Maritza Pérez, who now makes her home in the United States. In this novel, she uses the metaphor of "home" to reveal the complexity and contradictions of issues of family and identity, of race and gender, and the problems and challenges of exile, displacement and the search for self.

The traditional concept of "home," suggests a place of shelter, family support and of the observance of family customs. In Loida Maritza Pérez's novel, *Geographies of Home,* however, the idea of "home" is much more complex. In his review of this novel, Jim Hannan suggests this complexity as he observes that: "Pérez adds to a tradition in Caribbean fiction, in which the house offers beleaguered individuals illusory stability and independence but does not help them find a place for themselves in the world" (Hannan 596). In her analysis of the novel, Mónica Ayuso shows how Pérez "...expertly combines the metaphor of the house with changing gender/racial roles of contemporary characters living in border cultures ..." My reading of the novel reveals the absence of even "illusory stability and independence" and finds instead that "home" is the locus of conflict, played out in issues of gender, sexual orientation, color and class, depicted in many forms; in graphic and sobering detail at times, in dreamy, idealistic images at others. There is a constant tension between the idealized memory of "home" in the Dominican Republic, from which the main characters emigrated, and the reality of "home" in dreary neighborhoods of New York, where the topography of the multi-storied residences inhabited by the principal characters symbolizes a corresponding topography of human spirit and behavior. This essay seeks to examine these multiple spaces of the text and to elaborate their significance.

The cover of the hard copy version of the novel portrays a scene that contradicts the images that one normally associates with home. We see what seem to be the ruins of a once elegant series of rooms, one replete with an elaborate chandelier, another whose crumbling walls are illuminated by a pair of elegant sconces, cobwebs suspended from wainscoting, crumbling plaster, falling chicken feathers, a series of open doorways leading to nowhere. Flying birds soar in the background and tropical fruits, bananas and mangoes, clutter the floor. In the foreground we see the beginnings of a fire as it sweeps up the walls of the first room. The scene evokes abandonment and destruction although the lights still illuminate the rooms, and the open doors suggest possibilities of escape. No one is present. The concept of home and all its images of comfort and refuge are vanquished through this image on the cover. As the reader enters the novel, it becomes clear that each aspect of the cover image informs its text. These images of home explore domestic spaces that expand to reveal intimate aspects of the interior lives of those who inhabit them. Houston Baker notes the significance of such images:

> ...poetic images such as *house* serve as analytical tools. They allow us not only to map a topography of intimate human space but also to follow moments of human consciousness to the very functions (signaled by the verb "to

> inhabit") of intimacy and protection that are coextensive and coterminous with an image such as *house*. The "objective," "remembered," or "retained" corner of a childhood house is less important for an understanding of corners than felicitous images of *corner* presented by poetic reverie. (51)

In this novel the reader is led through such spaces by the protagonist, Iliana, a young woman of Dominican descent, transplanted to the United States, who in her quest for a true home seeks a sense of self and of her place in a community. Her story weaves a continuing thread through the fabric of the novel, but it does not dominate those of her parents and of other siblings. Their stories and insights provide multiple perspectives of the meaning of home.

The novel opens at a university, a space which due to its temporal nature is not usually considered "home," but it is the space that Iliana had chosen to put ample distance between herself and the grasp of her parents' restrictive, controlling ways. However, at the novel's beginning, Iliana is leaving the university, returning to the home of her parents, Aurelia and Papito, because of telepathic messages she had been receiving, indicating that her parents were in need of her help. She was escaping also from that campus whose depiction in glossy photographs belied the reality of its wretched weather and its hidden racism and homophobia. As she packs up to leave, she casts aside such objects as her cherished clip-on earrings, her above-the-knee skirts, her books, both textbooks and those read for pleasure, items that would incite the righteous anger of her fundamentalist father. As she packs, she considers the implications of her choice to return home. She would have to surrender her newly cultivated sense of independence and of assertiveness, subjecting herself to her father's dictates, obeying him without resistance, attending his church and Bible study sessions, dressing in a manner that suppressed any individuality. In spite of her reservations, she feels compelled to return home. Her sense of ambivalence is underscored when she arrives home and confronts a structure that is totally unlike what she had expected, one that has replaced the "home" of her memory.

> She had expected to find the house cloaked in mourning and somehow, as she approached it, to get a sense of what waited for her inside. Yet, despite the news she had received, the house seemed festive. And compared with neighboring buildings, grey and stooped like the bodies of old men, her parents' residence appeared deceptively new." (*Geographies* 27)

As she approached the house, she reminded herself that she was coming to a place that she should not fear for it was home. However, in the year and a half of her absence, the house had been totally transformed, appearing to Iliana "a version of what her parents believed a rich person's house, or at least an American's, might look like." (30) Most domestic objects brought from the Dominican Republic, "images imbued with the warmth of a Caribbean sun magically transported to New York and of a house furnished with objects lovingly carved by the inhabitants of an island she had dreamed of" (30) had disappeared, replaced by elaborate, overwrought symbols of American opulence. Thus, begins her sense of dislocation, of displacement. Like

the objects that bespoke a tie to tradition, to a Dominican heritage, Iliana's past seems now discarded, substituted by an artificial veneer of American style. These new aspects of material culture, such as the chairs and sofas, protected by plastic coverings are objects to be seen and interpreted as symbols of a new reality for those who inhabit and visit this space; objects that replace and displace that Dominican past.

Pérez's construction of the home of Aurelia and Papito, Iliana's parents, allows the reader to explore its rooms and its structure, each of which reveals aspects of the lives of its inhabitants. The house is two-storied. The lower level consists of the bedrooms of her deranged sister, Marina and of her youngest and beloved brother, Tico, and of the space where her sister, Rebecca, with her children, stays when seeking a reprieve from the abuse of her husband, Pasión. It is a site of gross dysfunction, of perceived and genuine sexual abuse, of verbal abuse, of psychotic episodes. The upper level is the center of domestic activity, accommodating the bedroom of Aurelia and Papito, the site of their shared dreams and affection; the kitchen where Aurelia maintains aspects of Dominican culture through her cooking and her evoking of traditions and memories of her native land; and the living and dining rooms where her grandchildren play and seek her comfort and where on special occasions the entire family comes together, temporarily setting aside the issues that divide them. The exterior of the home suggests an oasis of material success and domesticity in a desert of gray, desolate buildings. In the yard there is a garden of roses and vegetables that defies the concrete starkness of the neighborhood, a garden that attests to Papito's determination to give life to a dream that began to take shape in the Dominican Republic, a dream of owning and cultivating his own land and of providing for his family therein. Later, we discover that the appearance of this lovely garden, like that of the house, masks the reality of Papito's depression and disillusion. Aurelia, too, had worked hard to create a domestic refuge for her family. She, like Papito, had invested years of labor and all of their financial resources to transform a nondescript house into a home that would anchor her family in a sea of tranquility and ultimately serve as a comforting haven for herself and Papito in their old age. But she never feels a sense of "home" in any of their abodes away from the Dominican Republic. Instead she finds herself thinking of her land of birth where although she was poor, "...something had flourished from within which had enabled her to greet each day rather than cringe from it in dread. Yet assaulted by the unfamiliar and surrounded by hard concrete and looming buildings, she had become as vulnerable as even the Trujillo regime had failed to make her feel." (23)

It is within this home that the lives of their family members are laid bare, where issues of race, class, religion and sexuality are omnipresent. The concept of home as shelter is underscored at such times when it serves as a temporary refuge for Rebecca and her children, lending them solace, providing for their basic needs, and protecting them from the abuse of Pasión, Rebecca's husband. That sense of "shelter" proves to be deceptive, however, when their home encapsulates and prolongs, rather than addressing Marina's continual nightmare of psychosis. It is revealed to be a hostile place, when it fails to provide

for Iliana the ambiance she needs to define and accept her identity. It severs Aurelia from the behest of her mother, Bienvenida, a gift of clairvoyance and memories of her past by failing to provide a space where they could thrive

Home is the locus of Iliana's lonely battles with questions of identity. In a family of fourteen siblings who range in color from fair-skinned to dark, many with features that underscored an Afro-Hispanic identity, the highest value was placed on those whose physical traits underscored an appearance of whiteness. Iliana, with her dark skin, wide lips and wild eyebrows, finds herself lacking, even though her finely honed cheeks and her narrow nose incite the jealousy of her sisters.She dislikes the way she looks and the way she walks, not understanding that her gait attracts stares of appreciation in the world beyond her home. Her envious sisters insist that she walks and looks like a man. Her sister, Marina, even accuses her of being a man. Even her mother, Aurelia, at Iliana's birth, was surprised to discover that she had given birth to a girl; Iliana was supposed to be a boy according to the pattern in which her previous twelve children had been born. Compounding her anxieties concerning her sexuality was her attraction to men who proved to be gay. Home, rather than providing a space where she can confront her uncertainties in a positive manner, instead exacerbates them. Home, the site of her father's dictums on dress and behavior, enforces the nullification of sexuality.

Home is also the stage on which issues of race and color are presented, the locus of the racial polarity that is so much a part of the discourse of the United States. Because of her dark skin and physical features, Iliana is seen as unattractive. The nuance and complexity of the significance of color in the United States differed greatly from that of the Dominican Republic.

Indeed, the Dominican writer and critic, Sherezada "Chiqui" Vicioso addresses the issue of race in the Dominican psyche in her essays, "Testimonio" and "Dominican-yorkness." When she came to New York from the Dominican Republic she left behind a world in which people were classified through a broad range of colors, one in which members of the same family would be described as "india clara," "india india," "morena," "jabao" or in multiple other terms of physical appearance and color, and encountered one in which people were identified simply in terms of black or white.[1] Loida Maritza Pérez, too, addresses issues of racial identity and denial in the Dominican Republic in an interview with Myriam Chancy and notes an attitude of ambivalence concerning race that she finds pervasive. (Chancy 7)

Papito's rigid, fundamentalist faith is the controlling element in the home, thwarting freedom of expression in manner of dress, of speech, of reading, even restricting what is consumed. Perhaps of all of his impositions, the prohibition against drinking coffee weighed most heavily on Aurelia, depriving her of an aspect not only of Dominican culture and pleasure but also of a bond between herself and her now deceased mother.

> She missed the ritual of making coffee. Before her conversion to Seven-Day Adventist and while she still lived with her mother, she and Bienvenida had built a fire behind the house. While darkness lingered and roosters crowed, Bienvenida had roasted coffee beans which Aurelia had ground into a fine powder with a mortar and pestle held snugly between her knees. Then, as the

> embers faded, they had sat drinking the coffee whose scent had mingled with the green, wet smell of dawn. (23)

Memories of their homeland, the Dominican Republic, call them back, and they return to it if only through memories. Papito evokes this distant land by cultivating of a garden of roses and vegetables in his small Brooklyn yard, as does Aurelia by feeding her pigeons. They had considered returning to the Dominican Republic, but their younger children "considered it a backward, poverty-ridden place" so instead they settled for their life in Brooklyn replete with its challenges (21-22). This recourse to tradition is commented on by Witold Rybczynski in his book, *Home: A Short History of an Idea*. He observes that: "Domestic well-being is a fundamental human need that is deeply rooted in us, and that must be satisfied. If this need is not met in the present, it is not unnatural to look for comfort in tradition". (217) Indeed, in their looking back from the perspective of their shattered dreams in the United States to the Dominican Republic, forgetting the harshness of the place they had left to seek a better life, Papito and Aurelia begin to re-create memories of their native land in a virtually utopian form. They were certain that by returning to the Dominican Republic, they would find solutions to the many problems of their dysfunctional family and would capture that ever elusive sense of home.

The reality of home in the Dominican Republic differed for Aurelia and Papito. She, who was the daughter of a respected healer who lived in a small stagnated, village, had rejected both the village and the responsibility of continuing the profession of her mother, a gifted seer and practitioner of the art of healing. Aurelia had wanted something different. She had sought a place where she could rid herself of that terrible psychic legacy which her mother, Bienvenida, had sought to impose on her. One of the tangible aspects of that legacy was a quilt formed of faded and worn fragments of fabric, each piece of which evoked the story of a deceased member of her family. When a resisting, rejecting, Aurelia asks her mother why she is thrusting the quilt on her, Bienvenida replies: "Because the future can hurt if you deny the past. Because I want you to never forget. Because as the youngest of my children, it is for you to sew me in." (132) Aurelia had rejected the quilt as she had denied and suppressed the gift of clairvoyance that she, like her brother Virgilio, had inherited from their mother. That gift had driven Virgilio to suicide and had caused Aurelia to see and hear what others could not. Aurelia had tried to find a home that would shield her from Bienvenida's legacy. Only many years later, when Aurelia realized the power of this legacy was she able to evoke it and rid herself of her fears, thereby freeing herself to help her needy family. By then, after more than fifteen years of moving from place to place, she understood "that her soul had yearned not for a geographical site but for a frame of mind able to accommodate any place as home." (137)

Papito, on the other hand, who had struggled through a difficult childhood, eventually inherited land from his father, land which he cherished, on which he hoped to build a secure home and to raise a loving family. His dreams were destroyed by a vicious hurricane that took away his land and the life of his beloved Anabelle. Later, however, he would evoke an idealized version of his native land when

difficulties in accommodating to life in America began to overwhelm him and Aurelia. Although this evocation of a happy domestic life in the Dominican Republic seems to contradict the discarding of Dominican objects of domesticity in their home and their replacement with icons of American domesticity, this is only one of many such contradictions concerning their identity.

Evocation of an idealized homeland and a farmer's lifestyle, communicated through stories of his father, motivates the abusive Pasión, the son-in-law of Aurelia and Papito, who had no land, to raise chickens and to collect "junk" in his three story home in Brooklyn. He imposed on the confining, fetid space of the house he shared with Rebecca, his children and his beloved chickens a terrifying sense of authority and brutality. His home, never a refuge for himself or his family, will eventually become the locus of his horrendous death.

Papito, too, tried to control the lives of Aurelia and their children. The other characters have given names, but Papito is referred to only by a word that conveys responsibility and authority, and as well, affection. The reader learns about his life as son, suitor, and father, but never learns his name. Thus, his image as father is the dominant aspect of his identity. In his endeavor to be a good father, he was driven by his perceptions of the tenets of his church, tenets which sucked from his family the joy of being, of taking pleasure in self-expression, of developing self-confidence and self-satisfaction. He had forced his family to participate in the church activities and to adhere to its dictates, thus, inadvertently driving them away from the core of their home and away from him. He had sought the church as home, a place of refuge, but it had failed to support him and his family in their time of need. The church, too, for his family was a locus of despair.

It was the youngest son, Tico, who saw beyond the sparkling facade of his family's house to the secrets held within. A house that harbored a suicidally insane and destructive sister and that gave shelter to a filthy, masochistic one whose comings and goings continually disrupted their lives of its residents. His compelling desire was to escape from it and its madness:

> Not once would he look back at the two-story house his father was so grateful to have purchased. Nor would he glance sideways at the neighborhoods's up-turned garbage cans spilling rotten food, threadbare rags, bloody napkins, condoms, crack vials and hypodermic needles onto the sidewalk. He would not even bid farewell to the people whom he considered a sorry excuse for a family. (175-176)

The dysfunctional aspect of the household is symbolized by jarring images of such domestic items as a refrigerator that is found to be full of rotten food or a kitchen sink befouled by vomitus. The displacement of the habitat of chickens to the interior of Pasión's home is another such indicator. The image of "chicken" is totally deformed. Its connotation of agrarian life and of succulent food is subverted. Through the course of the novel, the chickens move closer and closer toward the living quarters of the house, ultimately having free range of it. Driven by the spell cast on them by Aurelia, who evokes the psychic powers passed on to her by her mother, to avenge the

mistreatment of her daughter and her grandchildren, the chickens attack Pasión and bring about his painful death. Thus, the image of the chicken feathers on the cover of the novel.

The forces of Nature, too, seem to conspire to destroy the homes of Papito and Aurelia. The house that Papito had built in the Dominican Republic, one which housed his dreams and desires was destroyed by a hurricane, sweeping away not only the structure but all of his plans and hopes for a happy, fulfilling future. The force of water is suggested in the form of Marina, whose name was carefully selected for her by Aurelia to keep her "floating above harm." (142) Marina, in her demented state, had tried to destroy her family's home by means of fire, a symbol of purity. In spite of her efforts the house stood firm, although its spirit of "home" had long since abandoned it.

Upon her return to her family, Iliana had judged them and found them wanting. They, in return, accused her of being arrogant and presumptuous in her insistence that she had returned only because she was needed there. She was not accepted by them nor did she accept them with all of their flaws until in a moment of epiphany she truly understands what had brought her home:

> She had wanted, more that anything, to belong. Having spent years plotting how to leave only to discover, when she finally did, that she felt as displaced out in the world as in her parent's house, she had made the decision to return and to re-establish a connection with her family so that, regardless of where she went thereafter, she would have comforting memories of home propping her up and lending her the courage to confront the prejudices she had encountered during eighteen months away. (312)

After enduring a brutal, sexual assault at the hands of her resentful, demented sister, Marina, and verbal abuse from her father, Iliana determines that she must leave the house. She begins to understand that her family's home serves only as an enclosure, enveloping the truth of the experiences of those who live there, enabling them to deny the harsh realities of the present, protecting them from confronting themselves and leading only to frustration and despair. She begins to understand home is not a material construct, but a state of mind.

> Everything she had experienced; everything she continued to feel for those whose lives would be inextricably bound with hers; everything she had inherited from her parents and had gleaned from her siblings would aid her in her passage through the world. She would leave no memories behind. All of them were her self. All of them were home. (321)

The transgressive elements that shape the image of home in this novel, subverting its meaning as a traditional place of inclusiveness and familial support, forge a different definition of home, one that transcends fixed, material structures or communities of people, one that is mobile, flexible, one that potentially resides within the spirit of each human being.

## Note

[1]In his essay, "The Tribulations of Blackness: Stages in Dominican Racial Identity," Silvio Torres-Saillant states: "A scholar looking at the city of Santiago de los

Caballeros alone arrived at an elaborate classification of 21 terms used by the people to denote racial traits (Guzman 37-40). Generally devoid of the language of racial polarity current in the United States, Dominicans have little familiarity with a discourse of black affirmation." (1090).

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**Semiótica del espacio en "Encancaranublado" de Ana Lydia Vega**

**por Magda Graniela**

1. Pretexto

Discutir, con enunciados de carácter general, la obra creativa de la escritora puertorriqueña Ana Lydia Vega resulta totalmente inapropiado cuando nos encontramos ante textos de constante interés popular y culto. Forzoso es, sin embargo, recurrir a conclusiones previas, tarea que se simplifica ante el hecho de que los análisis críticos realizados hasta el presente sobre "Encancaranublado" de Ana Lydia Vega, evidencian una ruta indiscutiblemente similar. Dejaremos pues comentados de forma sucinta los juicios interpretativos que se han emitido sobre este texto para posteriormente exponer lo que pretendemos sea otra lectura de un relato ampliamente conocido.

Al resumir las reacciones de los lectores y estudiosos de la literatura contemporánea ante los trabajos de Ana Lydia Vega, ha dicho María Solá que (y cito): "le han conferido aun más elogios que los jurados de certamen a sus textos chocantes, divertidos, que rompen con los usos de la literatura consagrada ... que hacen parodia de todo, comenzando por la literatura y siguiendo por los hombres, las mujeres, la cultura y la historia de PuertoRico..." A este planteamiento, que subraya el carácter desmitificador de los escritos de Vega, se une la síntesis que nos ofrece Efraín Barradas de los cuatro rasgos esenciales que, en su opinión, distinguen el discurso de esta escritora: "Feminismo, barroquismo verbal de base popular, humor e identificación con el mundo Caribeño." Considerando el marco enjuiciador precedente es lógico que se postule que "Encancaranublado" de Ana Lydia Vega constituye una escritura carnavalesca en la cual, por oposición, lo burlesco sugiere la seria formulación de esa utopía martiana que es el establecimiento de una Confederación Antillana.. Si bien expresado con distintas palabras, éste es en esencia el argumento que defiende Johanna Emmanuelli Huertas en su artículo "Antillanos, náufragos y trashumantes" y que reitera Arroyo en su disertación doctoral.

En años más recientes se han hecho aportaciones críticas a este texto que arguyen, como también nosotros lo hemos estado haciendo desde hace ya bastantes años y lo volveremos a hacer hoy, que "Encancaranublado" gira en torno a la identidad caribeña. A esto añaden que profundiza en aspectos tales como:

a. el fenómeno migratorio
b. la inversión del binomio colonizador/ colonizado
c. la presencia del arquetipo madre
d. la alegoría de una diáspora provocada por tres problemas de la sociedad caribeña: sobrepoblación, hambre y violencia
e. y deja espacio libre para las hipótesis en torno al futuro que enfrentarán los naúfragos al tocar el "infame precipicio de los monstruos" (o suelo estado-unidense) y sobre si el racismo del cual serán objeto en Estados Unidos contribuirá a unirlos más.

En resumen, la crítica que he consultado hasta hoy sobre "Encancaranublado" plantea que los aspectos culturales que el cuento enfoca son la diversidad lingüística y el racismo. Empero visualiza este último principalmente en función del encuentro de los náufragos con elementos externos al escenario del botecito que comparten. Estas entidades están

encarnados en el puertorriqueño y el anglosajón que los salvan del naufragio. De ahí que Fernando Valerio-Holguín, por ejemplo, puntualice que:

> "The story is directed to Latinos who reside in the United States, and Puerto Ricans who reside in the United States or Puerto Rico, that is to say, to readers that are implicated in the immigration problems, and the racial and cultural discrimination of the United States."

No obstante, llama poderosamente la atención que de los treinta párrafos del cuento sólo tres están dedicados a tal encuentro.

Nuestro ensayo no pretende ser algo nuevo, si se considera que la versión prístina del mismo fue leída en 1990 durante el "Simposio internacional sobre la integración del negro a la cultura de América." Sin embargo, pese al tiempo que ha transcurrido, no nos hemos topado con un escrito que profundice en idéntica interpretación. No rechazamos aspectos por otros subrayados, pero pretendemos contribuir a una lectura enfocada en una dirección distinta. Procedemos de inmediato a elaborar los objetivos y metas que ha regido nuestro análisis y las hipótesis sobre las cuales se sostuvo y se sostiene.

## 2. Texto

Nuestro acercamiento crítico visualiza el discurso de "Encancaranublado", como el espacio sémico de la ausencia. Espacio en el que la posibilidad de la semiosis se ve frustrada por la realidad concreta de la incomunicación entre los actantes. Utilizando algunas ideas de Eco, Génette, Bahktín y Derrida, y aplicándolas de forma reflexiva al cuento, intentaremos probar que ni el fortuito encuentro en ese selectivo exilio del saberse "a la deriva", permite a los actantes superar su imposibilidad de reconocerse parte integral de una comunidad étnica esencialmente mulata. "Encancaranublado", de Ana Lydia Vega, más que plantear, creemos, en términos generales el problema de la identidad caribeña, apunta a la ausencia de ese sema definidor que es el ser producto de la raza negra.

La semiótica -nos dice Eco- comprende una teoría de los códigos y una teoría de la producción de signos. Si bien la primera explora la posibilidad misma de significar, a la segunda le interesa el acto o proceso comunicativo. Así, de las convenciones lingüísticas que regulan el proceso, el semiólogo pasa a analizar el fenómeno de su concreción. Si una aseveración nos parece admisible sobre el cuento "Encancaranublado" de Ana Lydia Vega, es que los actos comunicativos que construye el discurso se definen en función del espacio, código primordial que los rige, más que cualquier otro que pueda regular las expresiones de los actantes o que obstaculice su captación de mensajes. Los mínimos procesos comunicativos que presenta la diégesis no se concretan como se esperaría en el caso de tres actantes que deambulan en el escenario de lo adverso. Aunque coexisten y cohabitan temporeramente en idéntico ámbito, (el de una embarcación de lo que se sugiere son menos de siete pies de largo), su incapacidad para llevar a cabo una lectura metonímica de su situación, para reconocer su "yo" en el otro y para aceptar plenamente los códigos culturales que los unen, provoca la progresiva desaparición del diálogo. Esta mudez (y de paso sordera) no surge de la disparidad de lenguas que utilizan los náufragos, sino que tiene sus

raíces en una incomprensión y rechazo a la lucha solidaria, que está basado primordialmente en el racismo. De ahí que el acto semiótico verbalizado sea sustituido en el espacio de la ausencia por el silencio.

Nos parece que es ésta la orientación interpretativa a la que apunta el trabalenguas que sirve como lema a la narración:

> El cielo está encancaranublado.
> ¿Quién lo encancaranublaría?
> El que lo encancaranubló
> Buen encancaranublador sería.

Este elemento intertextual funciona a modo de preludio. Como microtexto, sintetiza la semiosis que denota y connota el macrotexto que lo contiene:

> la confusión y la violencia generada en el espacio del exilio-ausencia, entre seres paródicamente imposibilitados para la colaboración entre hermanos. Establecida queda además en este segmento la naturaleza irónica y metafórica del macrodiscurso, que abre paso a la ambientación de la acción con el siguiente enunciado: "septiembre, agitador profesional de huracanes, avisa guerra llenando los mares de erizos y aguavivas" (595).

Mientras se intensifican los vientos huracanados de septiembre, Antenor (el náufrago haitiano que parte en busca de una vida mejor, pero que lleva dos días a la deriva), sostiene una comunicación consigo mismo que contiene las reflexiones que, dado su decaído estado de ánimo, va generando el miedo. Empero los significados que acuna su memoria modifican la percepción de las precarias condiciones en que se encuentra:

> "atrás quedan los mangós podridos de la diarrea y el hambre, la gritería de los macoutes, el miedo y la sequía. Acá el mareo y la amenaza de la sed cuando se agote la minúscula provisión de agua. Con todo y eso, la triste aventura marina es crucero de placer a la luz del recuerdo de la isla." (595)

El ámbito dentro del cual nos encontramos a Antenor es el espacio de la peripecia. Las relaciones tiempo y espacio son semejantes a lo que Bahktín ha llamado el cronotropo de la aventura. El escenario, físico y síquico, sólo permite el monólogo, por lo que el encuentro con el segundo actante, el dominicano Diógenes, ofrece la posibilidad de transgredir el ámbito del monologante. Inicialmente, podría pensarse que el hecho de que los actantes utilicen lenguas distintas, uno el francés y el otro el español, es determinante para la incomunicación que se da entre ambos; pero no es ésta la limitación real que afecta sus interacciones. De hecho, el contexto en el que ocurre el encuentro entre ellos, es más significativo que cualquier expresión verbalizada. Así lo confirma la entidad narradora cuando se asevera y cito, que "no había que saber español para entender que aquel náufrago quería pon". Y más adelante:

> "Tras largos intercambios de miradas, palabras mutuamente impermeables y gestos agotadores llegaron al alegre convencimiento de que Miami no podía estar muy lejos. Y cada cual contó, sin que el otro entendiera,lo que dejaba -que era poco- y lo que salía a buscar. Allí se dijo la jodienda de ser antillano, negro y pobre." (595-96)

Resulta también irónico que en estas

últimas tres palabras que, de acuerdo a la voz del/de la narrador/a extradiegético/a deambulan como náufragos en el mar de las múltiples quejas de los actantes, se aluda a una identidad formulada en términos geográficos, econónimos y raciales que no solamente ellos no expresan, sino cuyo tercer componente parece ajeno a la visión que de sí mismos tienen los náufragos. Si bien se saben caribeños y pobres, pues estos factores les llevaron a la búsqueda de superación, su mulatez, el matiz particular de su negritud, es algo con lo que viven en pugna y les es, por ende, prácticamente irreconocible. Ante la ausencia de este sema de identidad, el botecito funciona a modo de una "Torre de Babel" donde el acto comunicativo se queda a nivel de la enunciación, porque se enfrentan allí discursos enajenantes, destinados al vacío y, por ende, al silencio.

Un tercer actante, Carmelo, el náufrago cubano, entra en contacto con la pareja. De nuevo las instancias de mínima comunicación se logran mediante un código regido por la kinesis: la mano que se extiende para ofrecer ayuda. No obstante, este acto piadoso se desconstruye con la irónica pregunta: "¿Van para Miami, tú?". De aquí en adelante comienzan a erigirse mayores barreras a la semiosis. Diógenes y Carmelo, recogidos por el haitiano en su odisea, establecen su dominio del espacio de la nave bajo cuya bandera navegan. Antenor, dueño de la embarcación, es totalmente alienado; situación que se subraya en el uso del lexema "madamo" para dirigirse a su persona. Este signo apunta a la recreación y traslado al escenario del bote de los códigos culturales que provocaron su exilio voluntario.

La llegada del "mercader" cubano instaura una nueva jerarquía que emula actitudes y prejuicios prevalecientes en el escenario caribeño. No se suplica misericordia para el que está en desgracia, sino que se ordena, e inclusive se emplea la violencia para someter al otro:

> "Levanta el corcho, prieto, dijo (el cubano) sin preámbulo, clavándole el ojo a la caja de zapatos como si fuera la mismísima Arca de la Alianza...Al fin (ambos) impacientes e indignados por la resistencia pasiva de Antenor, le administraron tremendo empujón que por poco lomanda de excursión submarina fuera de su propio bote." (596-97)

La solidaridad antillana es sustituida por una lucha de poder basada, sobre todo, en prejuicios raciales, que les imposibilita asimilar plenamente su caribeñidad. Por ello, el apelativo "prieto" en boca del cubano que se siente superior a Antenor, es sintomático de un código sicosocial que asocia el poder, o la carencia del mismo, con determinados matices del color de la piel. De ahí la indiferencia con que Carmelo observa la discusión entre Antenor y Diógenes, cuando se nos dice que "el cubano seguía la pelea sonreído, con cierta condescendencia de adulto ante bronca de niños." (598)

Si el espacio del exilio-ausencia presentó la posibilidad de una salvación colectiva en la acción solidaria, dicha opción es sustituida por un progresivo deseo de aniquilamiento. "Mejor morir que saciarle la sed a un sarnoso dominicano -piensa Antenor- lanzando el envase del agua al mar y comenzando un forcejeo que termina por destruir el espacio reducido del botecito en el que interactuaban.

Un nuevo escenario vuelve a enfrentar a los actantes a la realidad de su comunidad étnica, a la vez que añade una cuarta

entidad a este trío de monologantes: la negrura de ese brazo puertorriqueño que se extiende para ofrecerles ropa seca. Los náufragos han sido rescatados por un barco estadounidense, en el que viaja el boricua y las instrucciones que ha impartido el capitán han sido claras: "Get those niggers down there and let the spiks take care of them." (598) Con la presencia de un puertorriqueño que se hermana a los náufragos y despotrica (desde el corazón del monstruo, como diría Martí), contra la mentalidad anglosajona, se otorga al relato no solamente un final abierto, sino la posibilidad de que el acto de significar sustituya la incomunicación, subrayando la promesa de un mañana donde impere el diálogo entre los caribeños. Por ello estamos muy de acuerdo con los que han planteado que "Encancaranublado" es un texto fundamentalmente optimista.

3. Subtexto

Si las teorías sicológicas conciben el significado como interno (I own meaning), por lo que en el monólogo se concreta la capacidad humana de significar y las teorías bahktinianas lo postulan como algo colectivo (We own meaning), por lo que la significación se concreta en el diálogo, en veintisiete de sus treinta párrafos, "Encancaranublado" de Ana Lydia Vega, se acerca a la posición desconstruccionista del significado como algo desplazado y evanescente. No obstante, al concluir el relato, no se impone la ausencia ni se niega la significación, sino que se deja abierta una ventana al diálogo. Este desenlace hace que la partida constituya en "Encancaranublado" de Ana Lydia Vega un regreso al origen. El "yo" se enfrenta a lo que es, el sema ausente se coloca en su justo lugar y la identidad se impone, por lo que el proceso relator se convierte en su propio mensaje. Un mensaje en espera de ser comunicado a un destinatario en quien el diálogo se concrete.

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# Hippolytus in Haiti: Classical Myth in Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo*

**by Katherine Thomas**

The modern Caribbean world, caught between African and European heritages, searches to create cultural definition through a shifting *métissage* of its multiple heritages. Such definition has been undermined through a systematic erasure of history, leaving only memories handed down through generations of exploitation of natural resources and political repression. As the Caribbean nations emerge into states, they seem to arise fully formed from the violently split head of some colonial Zeus, lacking a history, but searching to reclaim one through memory and narrative.

Caribbean writers have a mythological system in which to operate. "As a religious and belief system, vaudou is a total mythical ordering of the social experience of reality according to certain principles or loas (divinities)" (Taylor 4), helping them make sense of centuries of repression. Their history of slavery and oppression has almost destroyed the body of stories of these divinities. What remains is the oral memory of their functions and attributes, intertwined with Christian saints who shared similar functions and attributes and became identified with the loas as the colonial religion was imposed upon the colonized. This African-Caribbean myth serves as the immediate, surface mythic dimension that contributes to *lo real maravilloso* within which Alejo Carpentier operates. In Carpentie's novel *The Kingdom of This World,* the liberators Mackandal and Boukman are vaudou houngans who initiate significant liberating activities at vaudou ceremonies. Assuming power after the final success of the slave rebellion, Henri Christophe fails because he ignores the importance of vaudou to the populace, embracing the religion and imperialism of the newly overthrown colonizers to bring about his own downfall. Although Carpentier's characters operate within this myth system, underlying the more overt mythology we will also find ancient mythological underpinnings of western culture. The metaphors and paradigms of this well known myth system permeate the fabric of the narrative to establish patterns familiar to literature through use of specific myths and mythic archetypes. Myths are used socially and politically to point up the necessity of conflict and to assert the need for freedom.

Linking the Caribbean with its multiple heritages, Carpentier deals with the Caribbean past as "part of the recovery from the past...as a site for relocating the origins and problematics and questions facing [the Caribbean] today" (Cox 59). He uses a vide variety of allusions to the history and myth of Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean to indicate ironically great similarities across the ages (Cox 59), negating the theory of progress over time and affirming the cyclical tragedy of the human condition. The novel can be "understood as a comment upon the universally tragic outcome of a society's failure to use history to learn about previous failures to erect power or to instaur programs of national imagination and identity" (Cox 62).

Gonzalez-Echevarria has pointed out that the Latin American novel tends to imitate the voice of authority of its time, and in the twentieth century that voice is anthropological discourse which uses myth as a search for its beginnings. Thus Gonzalez asserts, "In fiction, Latin American history will now be cast in the form of myth, a form derived from

anthropological studies" (Gonzalez Echevarria 15). Myth appears within the Caribbean novel in many guises: stories that resemble classical or biblical myth, characters reminiscent of mythological heroes, stories with a general mythic character in that they contain supernatural elements. Without giving precedence to any mythological system, the various myths intertwine to weave baroque, multicultural metaphors.

Caribbean authors use myths ironically as part of a subtle intertext that takes on "parallel status in the parodic reworking of the textual past of both the [Caribbean] 'world' and literature" (Hutcheon 124). In *The Kingdom of this World*, the vaudou myth plays a pivotal role in the novel, but classical myth plays an ironic counterpoint similar to its use in Greek tragedy. As Segal points out, "From Nietzsche onward Greek tragedy has appeared to hold the key to that darker vision of existence, the irrational and violent in man and the world" (22). Such a vision seems particularly suited to the dark and troubled emergence of the Caribbean nations. Like vaudou, this tragic mythic view offers a vision contrary to the view of the dominant power, a view calling for resistance and struggle against oppressive odds.

In the fifth century B.C., Athens' great playwrights developed tragedy by using myth in political and social ways, to examine the emergence of civilization and its institutions as man fought to master both his hostile environment and his own savage nature (Segal 32). Greek tragedy is a literature of conflict, representing the many challenges within the emerging democracy. The authors return to their mythic past to awaken the people to the necessity of examining their situation and taking necessary action. The tragedians felt the need to speak to their polis as Fanon suggests in his third phase of national consciousness "to compose the sentence which expressed the heart of the people and to become the mouthpiece of a new reality in action" (41). Literature becomes a social activity. For later writers, the well known myths become ironic foreshadowings and parodic intertexts. Carpentier uses the language of myth to form a baroque metaphor which enkindles the surprise of difference within the illusion of sameness, creating such a parodic intertext. He makes use of much of Western literary culture, expecting his readers to recognize the allusions without explanation. He sees European culture as one contributing part of Caribbean *métissage*, but he uses this universal symbol system in ways that enable him to accentuate his unique Caribbean culture (Webb 21).

In narrating the liberation of Haiti as seen through the eyes of the slave Ti Noel, Alejo Carpentier makes use of the myth of Hippolytus and Phaedra, linking Athens and Crete as a baroque metaphor for the relationship between France and Haiti. It is baroque because it "was an aesthetic that consciously set out to break with classicism" (Pollard 134). In using the myth, but breaking from its conventions, he represents an antagonistic relationship with the European model. There are hints of the underlying myth in his naming of two early chapters "The Metamorphoses" and "The Great Flight." The myth becomes overt in the chapter entitled "The Daughter of Minos and Pasiphae." The daughter is Phaedra, the Cretan princess whom Theseus married after killing the Minotaur.

Theseus also has a son Hippolytus

whose mother was the queen of the Amazons. Burnett says that Theseus and Phaedra are the products of two different but equally valid cultures (167). Hippolytus was the scion of a third group, a savage race of hunters who were non-seagoers and members of a non-familial band located in the wilderness and concerned with the wild and beasts of the wild (Burnett 168). Phaedra, on the other hand, "derives from the south, the sea, and from a place that knows the architecture of both palaces and prisons" (Burnett 168). In the original myth, Hippolytus would represent the marginalized youth of the polis, the ephebes. Hunting is linked with the *agros* (field) in Greece, the land that lies outside the civilizing influence of the polis. The ephebes were sent to these liminal areas for their first military experience. There are references to an ephebe of this sort as Melanion, the black hunter, mentioned in Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*. The ephebe is a youth about to take up adult life (Vidal-Naquet 117-120). As such he is an excellent metaphor for the black slave population, marginalized, forced to flee to the wilds, living from hunting and gathering rather than cultivation, and offering blood sacrifice to the loas. Phaedra, however, is the queen from a foreign land who wants to impose her will on Hippolytus, to exploit him sexually. She does not hesitate to abuse kin. Refused by the black hunter, in Racine's version of the myth, Phaedra:

> *...respire a la fois l'inceste et l'imposture*
> *Mes homicides mains, promptes a me venger,*
> *Dans Ie sang innocent brulent de se plonger* (qtd. in Carpentier 61).

Just so did the white colonists rape and kill the slaves of Haiti. M. Lenormand de Mezy is one example of this ravaging mentality. "He suffered from a perpetual erotomania that kept him panting after adolescent slave girls [...]" (Carpentier 60). His hypocrisy makes his crimes even worse, for "He multiplied the corporal punishments meted out to the [slave] men, especially those guilty of fornication outside the marriage bed" (Carpentier 60) .

Carpentier represents Pauline Bonaparte as the ultimate Phaedra image. From the moment she sets out for Haiti, "Pauline had felt a little like a queen [...]" (Carpentier 90). As Phaedra she attempts to seduce the black hunter in the form of Solimon. Neither suffers the qualms of Phaedra or Hippolytus, but Pauline holds him off, denying both their desires, for she sees him as less than human. When he is especially good, she allows him merely "to kneel before her and kiss her feet in a gesture that Bernardin de Saint Pierre would have interpreted as a symbol of the noble gratitude of a simple soul brought into the generous teachings of the Enlightenment" (Carpentier 95).

Like the mythic queen, "The self-centered, licentious Pauline [...] is totally insensitive to the urgency of the political events taking place all around her. She is portrayed as the epitome of European decadence and immorality" (Webb 34). Unlike Hippolytus, Soliman becomes the real master of Pauline's island when her husband is dying of yellow fever. (Phaedra, likewise, had felt free to importune Hippolytus when Theseus was presumed dead.) Here the vaudou myth system gains ascendance. Pauline's peasant Corsican blood, "which was more akin to the living cosmogony of the Negro than to the lies of the Directory" (Carpentier 99), answers to something in

Soliman's vaudou prayers and rituals. She falls under the vaudou spell in hopes of avoiding calamity. She finally departs with her husband's body accompanied by "an amulet to Papa Legba, wrought by Soliman, which was destined to open the paths to Rome [...]" (Carpentier 101) where they would meet again. Cox suggests that Pauline "emblematizes the dissolving of European logos into superstition and abomination" (65). The flight of Pauline and the other Europeans represents the failure of Enlightenment thought in trying to continue "a racialized, reparationist society living in denial of its collective American memory (Cox 64). Both cultures fail to establish their world view in the territory of the other, thus "Carpentier provides a vision of how utterly out of place colonial and voodoo systems are" (Cox 64). Neither can exist within the other's domain. Disoriented by plague and disintegrating social order in Haiti, Pauline's Western logos gives way to Soliman's vaudou. When Soliman follows her to Europe, abandoning his own gods, he finds the Western world as lifeless as the marble image of Pauline he tries to embrace. The only possibility for success is to create a "New World" order, a cultural synthesis that is distinctively Afro-Caribbean.

In Carpentier's version of the Hippolytus myth, Hipppolytus emerges the victor. Queen Pauline flees the island in terror having revealed that at heart she is just the same sort of superstitious peasant over whom she claimed superiority. But his victory is short lived.

Earlier another classical image for Pauline is invoked by M. d'Esmenard who "found himself dreaming with open eyes before the statue that was her body, evoking in her honor the Galatea of the Greeks" (Carpentier 93). In referring to her body as a statue, Carpentier refers to the Galatea who became Pygmalion's wife. He sculpted a statue with which he fell in love.

> *saepe manus operi templantes admouet, au sit*
> *corpus an illud ebur, nec adhuc ebur esse fatetur*
> *[oscula dat reddique putat loquiturque tenetque]*
> *sed credit tactis digitos insidere membris*
> *et metuit pressos ueniat ne liuor in artus.*
> (Ovid 10.254-58).
>
> (Often he moved his hands on his work, testing whether it was a real body or ivory, nor would he admit that it was ivory.
> He kisses it and thinks the kisses returned, he speaks to her and holds her, but believes that his fingers sink into the limbs he touched and feared that a bruise might come upon her pressed limbs.
> [Trans.from the Latin mine]).

Venus answered his prayers and turned his statue into a living woman to be his wife. This image foreshadows the appearance of Pauline in statue form near the end of the novel.

The reference, however, is equally evocative of another Galatea, a Nereid (sea nymph) with whom the wild, uncultivated Cyclops fell in love. In the *Metamorphoses* (13.750-897), Ovid "plays upon the incongruity of the passion of the monstrous and boorish giant for the delicate nymph" (Morford and Lenardon 86). The Cyclops is a wild and unkempt character who tries to appeal to the lovely nymph:

> *iam rigidos pectis rastris, Polypheme, capillos,*

*iam libet hirsutum tibi falce recidere barbam*
*et spectare feros in agua et componere uultus* (Ovid 13.765-7).
(now it is fitting, Polyphemos, to comb your bristling hair
with a rake and cut your hairy beard with a pruning hook,
to look into the water and compose your fierce countenance.)

This image suggests Pauline's relationship with Soliman, who, becoming enamored of Pauline, is coopted into the colonial system without sharing in its advantages. Soliman is enamored of the "mother country" civilization embodied in the promise of Pauline and represents those who, blinded by false promises, are co-opted into the colonial system. He follows first Pauline, then Henri Christophe, always hoping to find himself a part of the ruling class, but always finding himself enslaved in one way or another.

Soliman, having fled Haiti with the remaining members of the royal mulatto family, again finds his Pauline/Phaedra as Pygmalion's Galatea when he encounters her as the statue of Venus of Canova in Rome. Soliman traverses a garden filled with statuary depicting the bestial lusts of Zeus as he preyed upon mortals, so similar to the lusts the colonists perpetrated on their slaves. Keeping a tryst in a room guarded by the infant Dionysus, he discovers a statue of Venus modeled upon Pauline and recognizes her feel in the statue's contours. She represents a combination of all those fractured images of a white goddess who brings life, love, and death to mankind. In this final epiphany, through magical realism she appears as statue, goddess, living woman, and corpse. Soliman feels as if he has been possessed by a loa. Finally, abandoning "the white, cold motionless world" (Carpentier 164) of oppressors of all races, he turns his back on it all, "seeking a god who had his abode in far-off Dahomey, at some dark crossroad, his red phallus on a crutch he carried for that purpose" (Carpentier 168). Finding only slavery in this world, he finally turns to Africa for deathbed hope, rejecting the cold, white female image for the imposing, virile fertility of Papa Legba.

Soliman suffers through both white and black oppression, for after winning independence, Haiti is doomed to repeat colonial oppression under a new black tyrant, Henri Christophe. Again Carpentier returns to ancient Crete to draw on the metaphorical power of myth. Christophe begins a massive building campaign, creating a labyrinthine fortress reminiscent of that built by Phaedra's father, King Minos. Christophe enslaves his population, forcing them to work on his building projects. His slavery is equally as loathsome even though economically rather than racially motivated (Luis 192). He beats and starves his slaves just as the white colonials had in "a slavery as abominable as that [...] known on the plantation of M. Lenormand de Mezy" (Carpentier 122) and even worse for "There was a limitless affront in being beaten by a Negro as black as oneself, as thick-lipped and wooly-headed, as flat-nosed; as low-born, perhaps branded, too" (Carpentier 122). Christophe's worst political error was to force the people to adopt Christianity, ignoring the vaudou that provided a continual rallying point for rebellion.

The mythical Minos is best known for his wife's offspring, the Minotaur. There was a bull cult on Crete from earliest

times, probably imported from Egypt, that entailed bull worship and sacrifice. Minos built the labyrinth to contain the half man/half bull monster. Its builder, Daedalos, however, knew the secrets of the labyrinth and could not be allowed to reveal them, so he and his son Icarus were also immured in the labyrinth until they dared to escape on wings of feathers and wax.

Christophe's fortress rises from the sacrifice of bulls whose blood mixed into the mortar will render his labyrinth unconquerable. His citadel is described as a labyrinth "honeycombed with tunnels, passageways, secret corridors, and chimneys all heavy with shadows" (Carpentier 119). The labyrinth is also a metaphor for the whole region, "the natural and indispensable realm of marine currents, of waves, of folds and double folds, of fluidity and sinuosity in a chaos that returns" (Benitez-Rojo 11).

Christophe's Daedalos, Corneille Breille, is also immured "for the crime of having wanted to go to France knowing all the secrets of the Citadel [...]" (Carpentier 131). But for him there is no ingenious escape. Nor is there one for his Icarus represented by Christophe himself who also finds himself shut up in his palace at the mercy of those he has oppressed. He goes toward the room where he will kill himself, surrounded by images recalling Icarus' death predestined when he refused to heed paternal advice and over reached himself in the joy of flight. Similarly Christophe had not heeded the lessons of revolution and over reached himself, trying to recreate European patterns of domination. Although he came into power through the vaudou-inspired insurrection, he abandoned his faith and adopted that of the colonial masters which allowed him to inflict injustice and a new form of slavery like that of the French (Edison 122). Images recall the melting wax of Icarus' wings: "The candles were slowly melting in the candelabra" (Carpentier 144). Images of faltering flight appear. "After hurling itself against a gilded frame, an insect fell to the floor, first here, then there, with the unmistakable whirring of a flying beetle" (Carpentier 144). "A bat [...] was flying in clumsy circles beneath the dull gold of the ceiling" (Carpentier 145). Phosphorescent insects swarm through the edifice. Earlier Machandal had taken the form of such an insect which is the "collective symbol of bloodshed" (Edison 110). These insects represent the resistance of the Haitian people (Edison 111).

The final assault on the palace comes from the eruption of the Black populace again tyrannized by a master who had tried to emulate European oppression. The grand finale is announced by booming vaudou drums which drown out the Christian prayers. The accompanying fire and thunder are similar to the eruption of Thera that ended one phase of Minoan Crete. "Fiery ash was falling on the Palace terraces" (Carpentier 148). "The flames were everywhere" (Carpentier 149). Finally Christophe becomes one with his pretentious and no longer impregnable fortress, turning his labyrinth into his mausoleum.

At the close of the novel, Ti Noel, "obviously as delusional as the king [Henri Christophe], imagines himself as the black master among the ruins of colonial architecture and trappings" (Cox 66). He confronts his death only after he has undergone a series of animal metamorphoses from which he realizes that animal society is quite similar to

human society, creating its own inequalities which cry out for a continuous struggle for liberation (Luis 195). He establishes himself as king of the ruined plantation furnished with pillaged relics from the royal palace. He wears one of Henri Christophe's coats purloined from the Citadel and eats his meals seated upon volumes of the *Encyclopedie* of the French Enlightenment. Death comes in the form of a great green wind, a hurricane symbolic of the power of nature in the Caribbean to cleanse the land of imposed archives.

Carpentier uses a wealth of Greek mythology in the political and ironic manner of Greek tragedy, weaving it subtly into his novel. The myth is used, remade, signifying things old and new. Although the classical myth "must cause its two extremes to destroy each other, for only in this way can the danger of their opposition be fictionally conveyed" (Burnett 177), Carpentier proclaims that one side must find the way to survive by suffering for those who come after to find something better. Only in the struggle to create this new world can man find greatness: "bowed down by suffering and duties, thankful in the midst of his misery, capable of loving in the face of afflictions and trials, man finds his greatness, his fullest measure, only in the Kingdom of This World" (Carpentier 185).

Through such mythical references Carpentier mixes history with mythic archetypes, taking his characters beyond themselves into a world where cyclical repetitions of events makes history static and change illusory. His characters move across temporal boundaries, emerging as "archetypal beings...[who] help us to form a better understanding of the synchronic nature of reality" (Harvey 19). Time is fluid; characters and actions can exist in more than one time frame (Harvey 35). In communicating this magical reality of the Caribbean to others, Carpentier elaborates metaphor into a baroque style peculiarly his own. Walcott says, "[Caribbean] writers reject the idea of history as time for its original concept as myth, the partial recall of the race" (38). That recall is a syncretism of Africa, Europe, Asia, and Indoamerica that is constantly forming, reforming, and transforming itself with a dynamism that creates tensions and ambiguities similar to those of its Greek ancestors. The myths of its European past, like those of its African past, form metaphors for political imperatives. Perhaps the two are mixed at their roots for Martin Bernal sees special relationships between Egypt and Minoan Crete. Egyptian influence was very strong in Crete from 2100 to 1100 B.C. During this millennium there were several upper Egyptian Black pharoahs named Menthotpe who were represented by the hawk and the bull god. At this same time in Crete the imagery of the bull cult appeared on palace walls giving rise to the Greek myths of King Minos and the Minotaur (Bernal 18).

Using such mythic heritages in new metaphoric ways is one of the reasons Carpentier classifies Caribbean literature as essentially baroque. "Metaphor, the concrete logic of myth, functions in baroque imagery as a means of organizing differences and contrasts [...]" (Webb 20). The baroque goes beyond the classical inheritance of myth and elaborates into Carpentier's marvelous reality, forming another strand in the cultural fabric of the Caribbean constantly in production, always various, never complete, always striving to signify new things by weaving

threads old and new in multiplicitous, polychromatic patterns.

The myth of Phaedra and Hippolytus forms the archetypal link in the chain of cyclical sameness through time, "the ultimate goal being to cause readers to use the past to illuminate the post-World War II situation in Cuba and in the Caribbean" (Fox 50). Carpentier through references to both his mythic systems and to the historical example of Haiti demonstrates "how neo-colonial politics of exclusion and dominance based on color/ethnicity result in the destruction of those who dominate as much as those who are dominated" (Cox 59). By showing the cyclical nature of Haiti's rise to power and fall and linking it with a mythic model of the same type from ancient time, Carpentier asks his reader to question whether such a cycle is again repeating itself in his own time, ironically questioning the linearity of time and deconstructing the notion of progress. He makes use of both Western and Afro-Caribbean mythic systems linked with a reconstruction of history to suggest that the only possibility is to create a "New World" order, a cultural synthesis that is distinctively Afro-Caribbean.

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# *The Color of Our Skin*:[1] Are Mexicans of African Descent?

**by Marco Polo Hernández Cuevas**

> Black, Amerindian or Aborigine history and culture are omitted from official history and culture. A process of psychological whitening is carried out by which the victim comes to feel disdain for herself and toward everything having to do with her race and culture.
>
> Quince Duncan (53)

*El color de nuestra piel* (1952) (*The Color of Our Skin*), by Celestino Gorostiza (1904-1967), is a renowned[2] drama from *El Teatro de identidad hispanoamericano* (Hispanic American Identity Theatre). According to Herminio G. Neglia, Identity Theatre explores "the psychology of individuals of certain races and social classes [...] to find the hidden causes of their inhibitions" at the individual as well as collective levels "to unveil the forging of common people's aspirations" (164).

*El color* questions the belief that Mexico is a racial[3] democracy (Neglia 164). It exhibits the views on race of a mid-twentieth century Mexican bourgeois mestizo family and those around them. From the onset, the play establishes a relationship between color and economical status. The maid is of a "definite" mestizo type, meaning less white than her employers (11); she is one of those "prietas mugrosas" (filthy brownies) (14); while her employer tries to pass for a "pure criollo" (35). "Criollo" here refers to a white person born in the European colonies or a Spaniard born in America. In *El color*, whiter people form the upper classes, those moving up in the social ladder are the most whitened and the darker people are placed in the lower strata.

*El color*'s representation of the psychological effects of the "cosmic race" creed on the Mexican mestizo psyche is analyzed in this essay. By the time Gorostiza writes *El color*, the cultural face of the Mexican Revolution with its official whitening discourse is in its pinnacle.[4] The drama exposes the Hispanicize-ing desire, or white aesthetic, that informs the characters. Richard L. Jackson, in "Black Phobia and the White Aesthetic in Latin American Literature" (467), posits that minds conditioned by the ideology of whitening repudiate and deny non-white characteristics.

This study subscribes in part to *The Real Eve: Modern Man's Journey Out of Africa*. In that study, Stephen Oppenheimer reveals that humanity has one common African genealogy and that the differences in appearance, including "skin color," are a consequence of environmental exposure and adaptation. According to the theory, it takes twenty thousand years to go from white phenotype to black phenotype if exposed to hot environments, or vice versa in cold climates. From this position, it becomes clear that the idea of "races" is a social construct. Hence, Mexican mestizaje is viewed as an ethnic or cultural phenomenon. For the expressed purpose, after introducing Richard L. Jackson's critical theory, a summary of the play will follow, then a brief historical revision of Mexican mestizaje is made in support of the argument here; finally, *El color* is analyzed through Jackson's lens.

Jackson explains that miscegenation can be interpreted either as positive or

negative. "The first means a blending of cultures in which there is equal respect for all. The second means that a minority culture is absorbed as an inferior culture" (*Black Writers* 14). These notions are fundamental in decoding the paradox of a largely non-white society practicing the white aesthetic and black-Indian phobia.

According to Jackson:

> [...] the heritage of white racial consciousness in Spanish America, as in Brazil and the non-Iberian countries, defines superior and inferior as well as the concept of beauty in terms of light and dark, that is, on the amount of whiteness one has. ("Black Phobia" 467)

In his landmark Afrocentric studies of Hispanic American literature, Jackson unravels one of the most complex, misleading and misunderstood essentialist creations of the eugenicist mind: the myth of negative mestizaje; a Manichean approach to human experience that makes Europe the white bastion of civilization, and the rest of the planet, but in particular Africa a world of savages. Jackson subverts the Eurocentric discourse behind the negative mestizaje myth by analyzing it from an alternate angle.

Jackson's Afrocentric approach to literature sheds light on the nullified Black African heritage of Latin American miscegenation. While the Amerindian, Asian and Spanish heritages of the mestizo are fully acknowledged; this essay seeks to address the white aesthetic and black phobia of the characters in *El color* therefore it adopts Jackson's perspective. The Afrocentric literary theory is an anti-homogenizing critical perspective whose object is to unmask Eurocentric myths. It provides the tools to deconstruct and challenge the anti-black discourse found in part of Hispanic literature since the sixteenth century.

*El color* can be construed as part of the whitening discourse on nation. It is said to have caused considerable controversy since many critics of the time believed that Gorostiza was posing a problem that did not exist in modern Mexico. Gorostiza believed that, "the racial question was a problem only during the Colonial epoch; [and that] after independence, once slavery was abolished and equality declared, the problem ha[d] been vanishing gradually" (Soto Ruiz 5).

Gorostiza, nonetheless, concedes that there are those "who, though unable to accept it, have a secret inferiority complex toward white people due to the degree of darkness of their skin, particularly if the whites are foreigners" (Introduction 5). Gorostiza expresses that this inferiority complex "subsists in Mexico and in other Latin American countries, merely as a psychological problem, and it is in that sense that [he approaches] it in *The Color of Our Skin*" (Introduction 5).

*El color* focuses on a family whose views are governed by a white aesthetic, a Colonial legacy. Concomitantly, the play reaffirms that the Mexican mestizo is the product of the amalgam of Spaniards and Amerindians (34). Thereby, it erases by omission the ethnic African heritage of Mexican mestizaje while reinforcing the "cosmic race" belief that blacks and their "minor" ethnic legacy have been "integrated" or disappeared through absorption into a major European based culture.

On the surface, *El color*'s plot presents the trials and tribulations of a newly rich urban Mexican family named Torres Flores, owners of a pharmaceutical

company obtained through fraud. The youngest member of the family, a teenager, behaves like a spoiled brat. In complicity with his father's white European associate, he has sold outdated anti-diphtheria serum vials. One vial is suspected of causing the death of an infant. This wreaks havoc at the time when the daughter of the family is to be married with a member of the elite.

The story unfolds when "a mestizo of the agreeable type" (20), who is a mid level employee of the pharmaceutical company, discovers and unmasks the foreigner as the chief instigator of the crime. The European who had hoped to swindle the firm from the family, duped the teenage son. As a consequence the elite groom postpones the marriage due to the developing scandal. He says he must protect his family's name at all costs. In the end, the daughter falls for the chemist who exposed the crime; and the corrupted teenager commits suicide.

Observed from an Afrocentric angle, *El color* stages the racist psychocidal views of a new-money mestizo family in so-called revolutionary Mexico (35). Quince Duncan calls this behavior "racist psychocide" (53). The non-white person learns to hate his/her non-white characteristics through psychological conditioning. The drama opens a window into the white aesthetic that plagues their realm.

The play insists that Mexicans are the offspring of "two races" (34) (Spaniards and Amerindians), yet the worst offences are the Eurocentric referents to Africaness: "prieta" (14) (dark), "prietito" (36) (darky), "negro" (31) (black), and "changuita" (44) (little monkey). *El color* presents a light skin mestizo, who passes as a "pure criollo" trying to marry his daughter into the social elite. He looks forward to intermingling in the upper class circle. In like manner, he has complete trust of his white European associate.

The youngest son of the family is blond haired and blue-eyed. He thinks he is superior to others who appear darker, including his parents and siblings. The father feels that his white looking son is naturally the most intelligent of his children. He sees the teenager's tyrannical behavior toward darker people as befitting. The women, of various color shades, ages, and social status, are further marginalized by the expectation that they exist to serve and support the males.

According to Manuel Zapata Olivella, "the creative intelligence of the *Homosapiens Africano* was the original source of culture" (7-8). He places the origin of humanity in northeastern Africa two millions years ago (8). Thus, the five hundred year old idea of classifying the human species according to "races" is a recent and specious event, so is the predicate notion that people are linearly superior or inferior in relation to others based on appearances and/or ethnic behavior.

The beliefs of superiority/inferiority were propagated particularly by the Spanish imperialist discourse toward the end of the fifteenth century. The Spaniards sought to justify the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade and other phases of the enterprise they had engaged in by then. Whether they were aware of the human costs of their actions, the fact is that their ideas were so mesmerizing, literally, that they still dominate the contemporary world and its views.[5]

The myth of white physical and cultural superiority was produced around the time of the so-called discovery of the "New

World." White supremacy was used to rationalize, justify and *cosmify* the *Maafa* (Black Holocaust), the Amerindian Holocaust, and the Asian genocide.

Ian Isidore Smart elucidates that the first stone of the foundation of the white supremacist world order was set during the Treaty of Tordesillas (9). Spain and Portugal negotiated it under the authority of Pope Alexander VI in 1494 (9). Under the terms of this settlement, the two European nations divided among themselves the "newly" discovered territories.

Americo Castro explains that the Spanish notion of "limpieza de sangre" (untainted blood) was religious in its conception (29). He places the onset of the resistance against the Moors, initiated in Asturias, in the eighth century as the start of a Spanish lineage consciousness (29). Following a lexical analysis of the concept, he argues that the word "caste" in Spain had its own historical development and "castizo" (pure) referred to a lineage free of Jewish or Moorish blood.

Seven centuries later, nonetheless, the idea engendered a racist theory in support of business. The Spanish blood theory contained the bodily undertones necessary to produce the additional meaning. In the New World, "Spanish untainted blood" acquired the connotation of physical and cultural superiority. A social pyramid based on "purity of blood," or the amount of "whiteness" possessed by the individual, was established.

Physical appearance, including graduations of brownness and knowledge of cultural capital and/or certification of untainted blood, determined the social and economic position and treatment afforded to an (male) individual in New Spain (Aguirre 266-67). The mere suspicion of one drop of African blood was justification to assign a person an inferior rank.

This system of classification was fatally flawed. One of the inherent problems was that the Spaniards descended from various African or "colored" peoples and cultures including the Iberians (Crow 24), Phoenicians (Diop 118), Tartessians (Zapata 9), and Moors (Diop 200). Another predicament was that New World miscegenation made any rigid classification unworkable toward the end of the Colonial period due to the phenotype gamut. The structure was weakened further by the indiscriminate sale and purchase of certificates of "whiteness" (*licencias de dar gracias al sacar*).

People who appeared as, or could document to be, "white" comprised New Spain's elite. Aguirre Beltrán clarifies,

> dispossessed Spaniards, fleeing the misery of their homeland, upon arrival to the Colony became Gentlemen. Forced by a psychological climate (deeply rooted in the economy) Spaniards, nobles or plebeian, blond or colored, became white: the true defenders of a motherland where paradoxically they had been starving to death. (213-14)

Also, family names helped determine or establish a social position. Surnames were a powerful branding factor marking the individual an *Hidalgo*,[6] (literally "the child of somebody") or nobody.

The rest of the population, generally, were subject to taxation and identified as infamous (Aguirre 271-72). "Infamous" referred literally to unknown lineage or parentage; it made the subject a bastard. In this Spanish social pyramid, there were various degrees of "infamy" assigned according to: name, lack thereof, how

"black" a person looked, whether the person had money and/or whitening papers. There were sixty-four classifications for the various mixes (Davis 37); the people who appeared whiter received preferential treatment. Spanish language today still recognizes white features as "finas" (fine) and Negroid features as "toscas" (unrefined).

This centuries-old social practice cultivated the absurd situation (that still lingers) whereby non-white people discriminated against one another according to relative "whiteness," whether in appearance, behavior or certification, or simply because of what others believed to be the case.

Independence was declared in 1821, but the Colonial system of racial classification and slavery remained officially legal until 1829.[7] Thereafter, the "sixty-four" recognized mixes, between Africans, Amerindians, and Spaniards, among others, started to be officially grouped as "mestizos."[8] Opposition to that practice is unknown. This is understandable if one considers that many people may have thought they were moving up (even a notch) in a scale that, nevertheless, had ruled their psyches for three centuries. At this time, surnames became ever so important. Afterward, these "new" Mexican "mestizos," by then the majority of the population, were branded with other racially charged social nicknames such as: *léperos*, *pelados*, *chinos*, *chinacos, zaragates, etc.* A downtrodden Spaniard, criollo or light skin person, may be called a "lépero" if he spoke and behaved as a rogue but he would never be a "chino" or a "chinaco."

The late sociologist, F. James Davis (name written thus) explains that if you go "by the evidence of your eyes" the United States' Black people are "all colors" (1). This reference brings to the forefront that an important part of African Americans are the offspring of mixes of innumerable combinations among Africans, Amerindians and Europeans, among others. This maxim applies to the Mexican case as well. Mexicans or Mestizos are Afro people of diverse hues. Meaning that besides their Amerindian, Spanish and Asian heritage they descend from Africans as well. Mexico's Independence leader, Generalissimo D. José María Tecla Morelos y Pavón, is said to have been a "mestizo within the mulatto variety" (Vargas 8).

The Mexican under-classes, following Independence (or rather manumission) ceased to be "colored" legally; however, socially they remained marginalized. The majority of mestizos stayed poor; the darker ones could not "pass" and continued to be perceived, and saw themselves, as the Other. A circle of abuse based on "social color" emerged. The degree of mistreatment, even if officially denied, continued to be tied to skin color, non-white behavior and surname. It is well documented that following the War of Independence that ended in 1821, the criollos remained the landholders, commerce men, miners, ranchers, and *hacendados*; and that all colored Mexicans, save a few exceptions, remained dispossessed. This disparity would fuel one hundred years later the Mexican Revolution.

International as well as domestic wars between people seeking land and wealth distribution plagued the century following independence. In 1847, in the state of Yucatan, there was "The War of Castes." In 1848, Mexico lost almost half of its territory to the United States. The "War of

Reform" lasted from 1858-1861; Indigenous reserve lands were swindled out from their owners, Catholic Church real estate was nationalized, religious freedom was declared and education was secularized. From 1862 to 1866, France occupied Mexico.

The armed phase of the Mexican Revolution occurred between 1910 and 1920 after thirty years of dictatorship by Porfirio Díaz, a Francophile. Subsequently, systemic acculturation acquired a new dimension. Public education, cinematography, radio, and artistic propaganda, among other means for mass persuasion started to emerge as means for identity formation and nation building. The government armed with these technologies for psychological penetration launched the cultural phase of the Mexican Revolution. The education budget between 1921 and 1924 surpassed the United States education budget for the same period.

José Vasconcelos was the Minister of Education from 1921 to 1924. He posed that Christian love was the essence of his agenda (35). Vasconcelos professed that it was "the abundance of love that allowed the Spaniards to create a new race with Indians and Blacks" (14). He is credited with the conception and propagation of the "cosmic race" creed, a negative interpretation of mestizaje that reached all corners of Mexico, and various places abroad. Vasconcelos affirmed that a superior physical and cultural type of being was evolving from Mexican mestizaje. He used public education and teachers as missionaries of his faith.

In Vasconcelos' view, African, Amerindian and Asian physical features were naturally recessive due to their inferiority. He believed that Spanish white culture was the quintessential mark of civilization. Therefore, mestizos would logically adopt it. Vasconcelos eugenic views traveled through time and space unrestrained. They shaped, through education, the collective and progressive Mexican mind until 1968.[9]

*La población negra de México* by Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán was published in 1946. It was in cadence with Vasconcelos' racist thinking and with the rediscovery of blacks elsewhere in the Americas.[10] Aguirre Beltrán's ethno-historical work recognizes the existence of a Black African root of Mexican miscegenation. His work is the foundation of the idea of the so-called "third root;" a conception of Mexican mestizaje upon which a considerable body of contemporary, national as well as international, academic work rests. *La población* gives renewed credence to the assimilation theory or negative mestizaje.[11] It reinforces the belief that after nearly five centuries of amalgamation there are only a few Black Mexicans left.

*La población* argues that the Africaness of Mexican mestizaje has been assimilated nearly to the point of disappearance while other heritages, the Amerindian and particularly the Spanish, have not only survived but also somehow augmented. *La población*, under its academic cloak, re-certifies the whitening core of negative mestizaje.

Two syndromes describe the "cosmic race" legacy and its current effects[12] on Mexicans: the white superiority syndrome, and the false memory syndrome.[13] The first is marked by "a fraudulent denial of an African heritage, though running the risk of discovery" (Jackson, *The Black Image* 10). Those who deliberately ignore the existence of particular phenomena, in

this case the presence of Black Africa in the Mexican make-up, suffer the second condition, false memory.

*El color* has three acts. The third act is divided into two scenes. The set is the parlor of the modern bourgeois house of don Ricardo Torres Flores, his wife and family in Mexico City. The action starts in April 1952, at 6:30 p.m. and continues the following three evenings.

The characters, in order of appearance, are: Alicia, the house-maid; Héctor, the youngest son; *don* Ricardo Torres Flores, the head of the household; Carmela, don Ricardo's wife and the mother of his three children; Manuel Torres (not a relative), a chemist employed by don Ricardos firm; Beatriz, the daughter of the family; Carlos Ahumada, Beatriz's elite groom; Jorge, the family's oldest son; Daniel Zeyer, don Ricardo's European associate. Ramírez, a journalist; and *señora* Torres, Manuel's mother.

Alicia, the maid, is "definitely a mestizo type" (11) with a seductive figure (she has no last name). Héctor is 17 years old, blond haired and blue-eyed (92). Don Ricardo Torres Flores, is fifty-four years old, fit, self-assured, verily starting to turn gray, and his "still fresh skin is of a light tan hue" (13). Torres is his paternal surname and Flores is his maternal. The fact that he proudly uses his full last name announces that he is supposed to come from old families. Carmela is forty-four years old. Her physiognomy reveals "the classical beauty of the Mexican *mestiza* whose color of skin is tanned by the sun" (15). She lacks a last name (although it is implied she is a Torres Flores) as if she had no family history; at least none worthy of mentioning.

Manuel Torres is the son of a father unknown to him or others. Torres is his maternal surname. He is an "agreeable mestizo type, educated, active, serious and energetic" (20). He is thirty-two years old and works for Zeyer Pharmaceutical Company. Beatriz is a twenty-two year old free-spirited rich young woman somewhat snobbish and a little cynical: "[I]t couldn't be said whether her skin color, fairer than her mother's, but darker than her father's, is her natural tone or the result of playing outdoor sports" (25).

Carlos Ahumada is Beatriz's groom. His surname is uncommon. It suggests an old family surname. He "is the typical cosmopolitan person, of fine features and manners, of a studied elegance within an apparent carelessness in his clothing and a laxity of movement traced from the latest Duke of Windsor" (25-26). Jorge is "twenty-four years old and as dark-skinned as his sister Beatriz, but he is immaculately clean and dressed up to the nines. His manners and tone of voice show self-sufficiency and pedantry" (31).

Daniel Zeyer is blond and could just as well be "Norwegian, Swiss or Czechoslovakian" (56). He is forty-eight years old. Zeyer is don Ricardo's junior associate and is in charge of the pharmaceutical company, named after him as a matter of prestige. He speaks Spanish almost like a Mexican, but his open articulation of the vowels and his systematic and excessive use of Mexican jargon give him away (56). Ramírez is the journalist who discovers that the sale of outdated vaccines from Zeyer Pharmaceuticals has caused death. He tries to blackmail don Ricardo (58-59). Señora Torres, an Indian-type maid, is Manuel Torres' abnegated mother (97-100).

Young Héctor enters the action trying to sexually abuse Alicia, the attractive mestiza housemaid. She frees herself from

him, rejects his physical advances and openly challenges him. Héctor perceives her defensive actions as an affront (11). Don Ricardo, who has observed the incident in passing, talks to him "man to man... As a friend:"

> What you are doing is not right. You are insulting your house, your family... and you shouldn't lower yourself to the level of a filthy swarthy...The world is full of women... white... beautiful, clean, women of all sorts who are at your disposal. (14-15)

Don Ricardo conveys his worldview to his beloved son (15). He firmly believes that Héctor's behavior is a sign of immaturity. Don Ricardo discloses,

> Young men of your age don't know what they want. They desire a woman and don't care what she looks like. They run behind anything with skirts. That is why most Mexican young men have been initiated with those lice-ridden Indian women without thinking about consequences. But I assure you that most of us have had to be sorry for the rest of our lives. (15)

By "consequences," don Ricardo alludes to siring bastard children.[14] These children, just as Manuel Torres, will have only a maternal surname, if any. For don Ricardo, the outcome of intermingling with lower class colored women is a life sentence "a well bred man of conscience can't get rid of" (16).

The mestizo woman's perspective is made evident in the play through Carmela rather than Alicia. Carmela suffers from the white superiority syndrome in her own way. She is the subject of a "secret long-standing suffering" (15), which she has done nothing about. She is incapable of rage and has accepted her situation as fate. Carmela is under control even when, her son Héctor tries to sexually abuse the maid, a mestiza like herself, in the Torres Flores residence.

Carmela lives under the influence of the white aesthetic and black-Indian phobia. Her complicity by omission becomes more apparent when she keeps quiet upon overhearing don Ricardo brag to Héctor that he himself, as most Mexican young men (of his class), has sexually abused non-white women. Moreover, Carmela has endured for years her husband's racism, something he practices even among their children. She finally protests but her complaints are meek in light of the tragedy enveloping everyone.

Carmela's deep black eyes (15) allow the reader to see don Ricardo's pride and preference for white looking Héctor over his darker children Jorge and Beatriz (18). Don Ricardo thinks Héctor is "more intelligent [and] brighter" (19). He sees darker Jorge as naturally prone to failure, and dark Beatriz as a vehicle into the elite's circle.

Manuel Torres breaks the silence on race. He speeds up the action. Manuel brings to the forefront the absence of a Mexican debate on race relations (33). He believes that the prevalent situation, where people are discriminated due to color of skin, is a type of "collective suicide" (35). Manuel posits that the root of the problem is that Mexicans think themselves distinct and exceptional when their skin is lighter (35). According to him, "after four hundred years the mix has settled enough to produce a normal and balanced type of man" (34).

In *El color*, Africaness is mentioned in passing. Through Manuel, one learns of

the presence of an herb called "*cabeza de negra*" (black woman's head) (49-50). Don Ricardo has the opinion that mestizos or *léperos* are to be feared more than Blacks (34). Héctor uses blackness and simian characteristics as epithets to provoke Jorge (31) and Beatriz (44) respectively. Although the play mostly omits mestizaje's African heritage while underlining its Spanish and Amerindian parts, it is evident that the African participation in the formation of mestizaje has to be acknowledged to fully grasp the paradox within the Mexican mentality on race exhibited in the play.

Most characters in *El color* suffer from black-Indian phobia and the white aesthetic. Often, don Ricardo and Héctor stand out as the embodiment of racism. Don Ricardo states that his father was a "pure *criollo*" (35). Thus, he introduces to the argument the topic of untainted blood. For don Ricardo, to be dark is to be dirty and to be white is to be clean (14-15). Darkness is equated with hypersexuality (15). Whiteness is beauty (14-15), and intelligence (19). He relates morality and mental capacity to white skin color (67). Blinded by white superiority, he is incapable of perceiving the contradictions of his views despite the non-white characteristics of his wife, his children, and himself. He is a "swarthy" according to Héctor (36).

Héctor's ultimate degradation of his older brother, Jorge, is to call him "*Negro*" (31) and to make fun of him taking showers often, which Héctor mocks as part of a cleansing desire (32). More absurd is that Jorge becomes enraged by Héctor's remarks and hates to be associated with "blackness" (32). In like manner, Beatriz abhors Héctor calling her "*changuita*" (little ape) (44).

*El color* exhibits some of the colors of the Mexican collective lie on ethnic heritage. It shows a socio-economic divide based on color with darker people, particularly those without a pompous surname, at the bottom of the "socio-economic" pyramid. The play depicts the remarkable relation between darkness of skin and subservience. *El color* presents a hierarchy where mestizos paradoxically divide themselves into "Euro-mestizos," "Indo-mestizos," "Afro-mestizos" and so forth (Aguirre 222).

Is it possible that the Africaness of mestizaje disappeared by assimilation while other heritages remained or even augmented? The number of Spaniards in New Spain during the Colonial period remained less than the number of Black *bozales* (those brought from Africa) (Aguirre 234). Spaniards did not socialize with slaves nor did they school them. In addition, there were the Black *bozal*'s offspring: mulattoes, *pardos*, *zambos*, *zambaigos, coyotes, tentenelaires, albinos, saltapatrás*, etc. who built Mexico with their parents' ethnic capital.

Aguirre Beltrán[15] points out that the Indian population was decimated. He explains that its "recovery" was due to miscegenation among Indian women, mestizos and mulattoes (243), thus it appears that an important part of Mexicans are Black-Indians. Under the positive mestizaje light, this assertion leads one to realize that the Africaness of mestizaje may be more pervasive than understood or accepted.

Mestizaje is "an indisputable fact of the black experience in Latin America" (Jackson, *Black Writers* 1). In positive terms, it can be understood as a survival strategy; even when the sons and daughters of heroic people have learned to negate

their African heritage.

The systematic flight from blackness while insisting on a supposed Spanish heritage, found elsewhere in the Americas by Jackson, is characteristic of the Mexican mestizo in the play.[16] Although *El color* disregards the African heritage of the Mexican mestizo, it depicts the white aesthetic and black-Indian phobia forming the mestizo psyche.

Frantz Fanon, a psychiatrist, in his landmark book-length essay, *Black Skin White Masks*, elucidates how a human being, after centuries of being told that he/she is inferior, comes to internalize it.

The mestizo mentality, in the play, can be explained as a consequence of having been exposed relentlessly to the cosmic race creed based on the myth of white superiority, through uncataloged and yet to be studied means of persuasion. The characters were taught, and learned that they are "colored" due to appearance. The white superiority ideology shaped their psyche to perceive their self-image as "logically" inferior. It drives them to deny and hate their color.

The mestizos, in *El color*, have learned to lie to themselves in spite of themselves. They see what does not exist, and are unable to distinguish their very image in the fogged up mirror of national character. They suffer the false identity syndrome because of their disenfranchisement from being of African heritage.

*El color* deals with the racial perspectives of a light skin Mestizo family that has achieved financial success. It presents a sober mestizo mentality presumably obtained by a mix of experience and education on the part of Manuel Torres. It proposes that race consciousness of a sort is possible among Mexican mestizos, particularly among Euromestizos or mestizos of "agreeable" appearance. This is supported by the marriage between Beatriz and Manuel (the Zeyer's Pharmaceutical chemist) and the family's ultimate acceptance of the relationship particularly, after Carlos Ahumada rejected the family due to the scandal. The play does not deal directly with the mentality of the majority of Mexicans who are uneducated mestizos, léperos or the "*hijos de la chingada*" (sons and daughters of the raped one); the carriers of Africaness who therefore are considered vulgar, rough, *léperos*, uncivilized savages, etc.

*El color* suggests that a level of consciousness exists among lower class mestizos. Alicia, the maid, does not give into Héctor's desires. This breaks away from the stereotype of the image of the *mulatta* in Latin America.[17] Also, Manuel's mother, the other *señora* Torres, a Virgin-like mother, has sacrificed everything to ensure her chemist son's ultimate success. Achievement is interpreted in economic terms and by whitening.

An important value of the play has to be acknowledged and underlined, as far as a Mexican ethnic debate and an attempt to find a Mexican identity. *El color* departs from the official fallacy that hailed Mexico as a racial paradise. However, from an Afrocentric angle, it endorses homogenizing and minimizes the severity of the abuse suffered by darker mestizos, particularly women. Black elements are present but as an historical oddity in the minds of the actors. The mestizos in the play are Hispanicized and well on their way into modernity by becoming aware of an alleged equality as opposed to diversity.

*El color* achieves a superb presentation

of the white aesthetic and black-Indian phobia informing the Mexican mind in the mestizo bourgeois class. The existence of this mentality in the urban Mexican mestizo population at large may be deduced from the type of products consumed, by observing their behavior, the discourse they respond to and their public views and humor referring to Blacks as the Other.

Some of the Mexican mestizos in *El color* are inevitably aware of their non-whiteness. Others live dreaming of a past that never existed. This make-believe past erases the African heritage of the Mexican mestizo and the nationality. Others are tolerant, stoic, and reason their situation in a "civilized" manner. Still others are capable of sacrifices to see the "race" advance.

In closing, it cannot be overstated that mestizaje, in *El color*, can be observed from more than one point of view. The essentialist perspective created by the Eurocentric mind proposes that the road to social-racial-economic success lies in the whitening (Europeanizing) of the population. This worldview, supported by the white aesthetic and black-Indian phobia, prevails in the play's characters. These people are trapped in a mental labyrinth. From the supremacist perspective, they are "non-white." If their blood is not thoroughly "pure," they cannot escape their inferiority. Moreover, within the "logic" of the one-drop rule, purity is unattainable.

An alternative perspective, however, has emerged. It offers a revised reading of history. From the perspective of positive mestizaje, the Mexican mestizo is a survivor of the Black Holocaust, Amerindian Holocaust and Asian genocide. She/he is the descendant of millions of heroes, of a centuries-old saga, who have endured European colonialism, and "First World" globalization through strategies such as mestizaje.

*Emporia State University*

## Notes

[1]All translations from Spanish to English are mine unless otherwise noted.

[2]The play is considered Gorstiza's most successful play. When it appeared, the author received "the coveted Juan Ruiz de Alarcón prize by the *Asociación Mexicana de Críticos Teatrales*" (Soto Ruiz 4). It is said to have caused considerable controversy since many critics of the time believed that Gorostiza was posing a problem that did not exist in modern Mexico. Gorostiza himself expressed, "the racial question was a problem only during the Colonial epoch...[and that] after independence, once slavery was abolished and equality declared, the problem has been vanishing gradually" (Soto Ruiz 5).

[3]This work subscribes to the position that races are a social construct and a biological misnomer. Also, that racism and the damages it inflicts are real. It supports that all humans are equal but concurrently recognizes that racism is promoted by this heavily charged terminology. This language is used while alternatives are under construction. The aim is to build a bridge out of Eurocentrism with the very stones that construct it.

[4]For an in-depth view of the Mexican whitening discourse on nation, see my book, *African Mexicans and the Discourse on Modern Nation*. Lanham: University Press of America, 2004.

[5]This ideology acquired a new dimension in the mid-nineteen century under Joseph de Gobineau. Also, around that time, the myth of the Aryan roots of Greek civilization was forged.

[6]According to the *Pequeño Larousse*

(1989), refers to "A person of noble blood (synonym of Gentleman)."

[7]Nevertheless, enslaved Black Africans continued to be illegally brought to Mexican territory for years.

[8]"Mestizo" and "mulatto" are synonyms according to *Pequeño Larousse.*

[9]In 1968, the oligarchic government's spell began to dissipate when its armed forces attacked and slaughtered thousands of unarmed mestizo student demonstrators October 2, in Tlatelolco, Mexico City.

[10]According to Jackson, "The dark-skinned peoples, nevertheless were 'discovered' in this [the twentieth] century and together with the land became the focal point for a new outlook on life, defined as *mundonovismo* ('New Worldism')" (*Black Writers*, 37).

[11]This position is illustrated further in my essay "*La población negra de México*: parte del discurso blanqueador para 'poner al negro en su lugar.'" *Afro-Hispanic Review.* Spring (2004): 3-9.

[12]Two articles describe the discrimination in Mexico of "Black-mestizos" in *La jornada* newspaper Online on April 19 and 20, 2003; last page and front page respectively. One is about a dental student of the University of Guerrero, Acapulco. He declares that a professor failed him repeatedly and denied him access to make up examinations. The student reports that the same teacher has told him, "Negroes should not be dentists." In the other article, "Black" peasants have a land dispute in Veracruz against so-called "Spanish descent" ranchers.

[13]This concept was adopted from a commentary published in *The Vancouver Sun*, Thursday, December 23, 1999, E 1. People affected with this condition have been persuaded that something that exists never was.

[14]This is a reference to the "hijos de la chingada" (children of the raped one).

[15]In my essay, "*La población negra de México*: parte del discurso blanqueador para 'poner al negro en su lugar'," *Afro-Hispanic Review.* Spring (2004): 3-9, I exhibit *La población* as part of the assimilation discourse of the latter part of the Cultural Phase of the Mexican Revolution.

[16]Aguirre Beltrán explains the flight from blackness in Mexico in "La línea de color" of *La población* (265-76).

[17]Under the "limpieza de sangre" (untainted blood) idea "mestizo" and "mulatto" are synonyms. "The image of the *mulatta* is inextricably tied to the violence of forced miscegenation of the female African slave by the European slaveholder beginning in the sixteen century. In the European imagination, the mulatta has come to signify the vulnerable yet highly sexualized woman whose sole ambition is to 'better' herself by marrying a white European man and bearing children whose African ancestry is not physically apparent" (González 990).

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## Poesía

### por Carlos-N. Nsué Otong

DEDICATORIA

A mi madre
Encarnación-Otong Oyono Esono,
la mujer que me hizo poeta.

A mis hijos

Esther-Restituta,
César-Miguel,
José-Samuel
Jesús-Pancho,
Winnie,
Myriam y
José-Carlos,
por que ellos vivan para siempre en una Guinea mejor.

A mis amigos Juan-Bautista Osubita y Santiago Nsué Medja.

Y a ti, Teresa,
querida esposa, poesía hecha carne y hueso,
porque te quise,
te quiero
y te querré.

Carlos-N. Nsué Otong

PRESENTACION

La literatura de Guinea Ecuatorial está recobrando, paulatinamente, su vigor creativo, bajo las perspectivas abiertas en estos últimos años, hacia la consolidación de la propia identiad.

La literatura, lo decimos con toda nuestra convicción, representa la legitimidad cultural de una nación, puesto que en ella vibra el pensamiento más profundo de la sociedad, convertido en musas rimadas de la emoción conjunta del pueblo, especie de metafísica de la realidad concreta.

Al tener el honor de presentar el poemario *Balbuceos* de don Carlos Nsué Otong, me permito reclamar el espacio tan injustamente ausente de las letras africanas de expresión espñola en la complementaridad del mosaico cultural de los pueblos. Y es que debe existir un espacio. O debe inventarse, si no existe ya, desde una justificación histórica que huelga demostar, con su propio código ideográfico, sus atavíos jurídicos y sociopolíticos, afro-hispano-bantú.

En la línea de toda obra literaria existen protagonistas personificados o temas que hacen de su protagonización un elemento gradual de comprensión y clasificación temática. La lectura pausada de estas poesías te lleva, de la mano del autor, a una consagración insistente de temas patrióticos, cantos a Guinea Ecuaorial mezclados inmediatamente con lirismo propuesto en los homenajes.

Poesía universal que proclama sin querer queriendo, coherencia histórica, donde sabe, a su manera, prestar, asimilar y adular las grandes expresiones y sentimientos de los más destacados exponentes de la literatura hispana, paradójicamente hechos de dolor y esperanzas y, sobre todo, amor-puente entre lo ramántico y lo realista.

La poesía de Carlos Nsué Otong presenta numerosos elementos de popularismo "naif", en el buen sentido de la expresión, haciéndola mercado fácil de los lectores.

A lo largo y ancho de estas poesías, se nota el desvanecer continuo de un canto sin fin. Esa cantabilidad que no significa, sin embargo, la musicalidad clásica (el

mismo autor lo descarta como intención primaria), hace nota armónica entre la intención poética y la vibración expresiva.

Por eso, las imágenes de Carlos Nsué Otong son fluídas, rebeldes y profundas. Sabe extarerlas con cierta maestría profusa de todos los rincones y las transforma en su laboratorio mental en musas tremendamente fértiles y prolijas. Y, a pesar de esa profusión, guarda reverente la línea intencional, por donde va y viene su mérito poético, con extraordinaria coherencia al mundo hispánico, a sus plumas inmortales: Rubén Darío, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Nicolás Guillén, para encontrar la justificación espiritual de lo africano de cualquier diáspora, e integrarlo en ese jardín silvestre de la hispanidad africana.

Guinea Ecuatorial, para Carlos, se funde en amores sensibles de helechos y manglares de su Mbini natal. Pedazo de tierra, ríos negros y playas, guardianes de las brisas vesperales.

Y es que debe ser así, como lo es. Así: de chico a grande. El amor "chico", con los condimentos específicos de la ternura infantil, cangrejos jugosos de la tarde espesa, para confundirse, inexorablemente con el "grande", amor con bandera, con himno e identidad. Caminante y explorador de emociones plúrimes, se encuentra así, de repente, cantando a Mbini y cantando a Guinea Ecuatorial. Y viceversa.

La pasión por las cosas, por los aconteceres efímeros y apabullantes, es curso legal en un alma, tan rica como pusílame en vicisitudes y altibajos. Carlos no sabe dónde está. Quisiera estar y ser. Situar su mirada fija en el horizonte juguetón e imprevisible de la historia. Por eso, cuando habla, monólogo a puerta cerrada, y en verso, por cierto libre y melancólico, de Guinea de dolores, angustias sobrias; en una palabra, de los reveses humanos, profundamente descabellados, lo hace rítmicamente, al son del corazón del tiempo; haciendo que el espacio de su entorno se aprisione en sus manos, en un puño de grito en alto, para abrirlo suavemente una vez, una mañana, y que salgan de sus dedos temblorosos, palomas que besan para siempre el aire, la paz y la libertad.

Y es en la melancolía más tierna y más absoluta con la que diseña y hace pasta de memoria henchida su patria chica, Mbini, (Río Benito), perla que completa en el litoral atlántico la dehesa del viento, abierto al mar azul. Guinea Ecuatorial, grande, universal destino evocado por todas las generaciones. Pequeña, no parcelaria, esencialista del uno al todo: Annobón, Punta Fernanda, recónditos, que hacen bisagra con el tiempo, el continente y las islas, las montañas con los lagos; los hombres con los hombres, en el todo patria de maravillas tartamudas, entre un estuario guardián de fronteras irradianas y pactos galománicos: Guinea Ecuatorial.

En el conjunto de las palabras que susurran los bosques, ensordecidos por el mar, hay un silencio huésped que se hace arena y conchas herméticas de costas inventadas de sal y calcarie negra. Hay un nervio de carretera en los corrales de la tarde. Digo del verso de Carlos; nervio que buscamos él y yo; y más, otros: Donato, Ciríaco, Balboa, Marcelo, Mary, entre otros, para transportar al vuelo de la nostalgia espacio-tiempo, y desde Africa-cuna las musas comunes, exiliadas en todas las diásporas negro-latinas.

Por eso Nicolás Guillén, cubano y poeta, en un viaje sin retorno, se hace tambor símil de recuerdos inconfesables de otros bosques, desde su poesía y ritmo del kandongo. Y si Guillén es musicalmente

africano, significa con otros intentones balbuciantes, que lo exótico, lo atlántico, lo ecuatorial, rumba, merengue o machacando, no riñe ni con Cervantes, ni con Rubén Darío ni siquiera con Juan Ramón Jiménez -Hispania ecuménica que aquí y en otros lugares todavía tímidos-, clama unas gotas de honor en el universo cielo de este luctuoso y disgregado mundo post-colonial.

El drama personal clausura estos poemas de sal y arena, en una nostalgia confesada de transformar muy pronto los días involuntarios, diría inconscientes, del exilio agrio, en un retorno irreversible; en un abrazo de cruz pródiga, a la tierra fértil y densa que en una mañana de viento , mar caída en los brazos de la tarde, recibido el llanto ambivalente de la vida y de la muerte."para no volver a las noches tristes que escoden cada día la esperanza", para cantar y sonreir, besar la caricia de las ninfas del país a la orilla del río, como un inocente arrepentido de todo y de nada, junto a los suyos.

*Anacleto Oló Mibuy.*

I

YO

Poeta es el que siente
y llora si duele la herida...

ARTE POETICA

Sin pecado concebida, pura,
limpia, inmaculada,
clara como el agua cristalina...
así la quiero a mi poesía

Sin sujeción al tiempo
ni al espacio:
unversal y tierna...,
así la quiero a mi a mi poesía

Sin ritmos ni medidas,
sin acentos,
rimas
ni tamopco musicalidad futiles...
así la quiero a mi poesía.

Estridente,
vibrante y honda,
abrasadora, llameante
como el fuego que penetra las entrañas
así quiero que sea mi poesía.

¿QUE ES POESIA?

¿Qué es poesía?
La fuerza, el vigor
que hace crecer la flor
y hace nacer los días.
¿Qué es poesía?
La brisa, el calor
que hace brillar el sol
en la lejanía.

Poesía es alegría,
el color de cada mañana
y la muerte temprana
de una joven vida.

Poesía es melodía
de una canción amorosa
que pone temblorosa
el alma de cualquier niña.

Poesía es un río azul

que desemboca en lo infinito
de un mar distinto
con gigantes olas de luz.

Poesía es la dimensión del mundo.
Poesía es vida,
Poesía es amor...
Poesía es aquello
que el anima o piedra
lleva en su ser.

Poesía es la distancia
que separa la vida
y la muerte.

Poesía es aquello que une
lo que tenemos de ser
o de nada.
Poesía es el misterio
de decir lo que sentimos
en verso o en prosa,
en palabra suelta,
en vida o sentimiento.

Poesía es la ambición
-eterna ambición- de lograr
resucitar lo muerto
o de hacer morir lo vivo
con palabras
o gestos de profeta.

Poesía es -¡qué sé yo!-
aquello que nadie supo decir,
y los peotas, vivos o muertos,
los hombres que si muertos, inmortales,
y sin vivos, más vivos aún.

Poesía es esto y aquello...
El agua que se bebe,
la luz que nos ilumina,
el aire que se respira,
que sopla y no se ve.

Poesía es un soplo
relampagueante
que arde en los corazones
y se escapa por las plumas
de todos los poetas.

Poesía es oración
en la boca de cualquier niño;
poesía es el amor de una madre,
el dolor de un huérfano.

Poesía es inocencia blanca
de un recién nacido,
el suspiro de un corazón enamorado,
el silencio de un desterrado.

¿Qué es poesía?
Poesía somos tú
y yo.

¿Qué es poesía?

Poesía es Dios.

AUTORRETRATO

No soy poeta
sino ángel
y comulgo con las estrellas.

Vivo en el aire
y en el mar me baño
entre las olas.

A veces digo AMOR,
LIBERTAD...

Sueño con ser ave
y me despierto sin plumas

cargado de ilusión...

MI VERDAD DE POETA

Mi
verdad
de
poeta
estallará
un
día
y todos
la oirán
y el mundo callará.

Mi
verdad
de poeta
un
día
brillará
y todos dirán
que era
VERDAD.

Mi verdad de poeta
es una realidad
que no he de callar.

Y en estas hojas va
mi verdad,
toda mi verdad.

CANCION

Como las aves nací
para volar
sobre la mar y las montañas.

Como las aves nací,
como las aves volaré
sobre las nubes,
lejos, en el aire.

Como las aves nací
al compás de una canción
para alegrar la mañana.

Como las aves nací
cantando una canción
de paz y alegría,
de amor y justicia.

Y como las aves volaré
llevando a los hombres mi cantar
más allá de las fronteras
de religión
y de color.

Como las aves nací
y como ellas moriré
volando hacia un nuevo día,
lejos del odio y del rencor

OPTIMISMO

Harto ya de cantarte, Tristeza,
canto a la Alegría que pregonan mis ojos,
y canto al Optimismo que viene en silencio.

Harto ya de llorar, Pesimismo,
canto a la Risa que dibujan mis labios,
canto a la paz que inunda mi alma.

Harto ya de decir mis dolores,
canto a la luz que brilla de día,
canto a la luna que vela mi sueño.

Harto ya de bucear en mi futuro,
harto ya de llorar el pasado,
canto a la Verdad presente.

¡OH! NO, NO, NO.
¡Oh! No, no, no.

¿Quién pasó?
¿Quién dejó
una flor
en el montón?

¡Oh! No, no, no.
Que la flor
es amor
en un corazón
de ilusión.

¡Oh! No, no, no.
Deja ya de llorar
que la paz
muerta está.

¡Oh! No, no, no.
Siempre aquí
perseguí
tras de ti el amor.

¡Oh! No, no, no.
Yo elegí
un sinfín
de jardines para ti.

¡Oh! No, no, no!
Si las flores se marchitan
yo no creo en el amor.

Si las yuntas se destruyen,
yo no creo en la pasión.

Si la luna se oscurece:
¿Quién será mi testigo?

Si la luna se apaga,
pobre de mí sin amigos.

I

Todo está dicho.
Nada nuevo inventarán
los poetas
para cantarte, Amor.

II

No quiero protestar.
No quiero gritar.
No vale la pena protestar
si nadie te escucha.

III

Llevo clavado en mi corazón
una espina con las púas al revés.
No intentéis arrancarla,
por favor,
que mi alma se hiere más y más.

IV

Poesía es la melodía
de una canción amorosa
que pone temblorosa
el alma de cualquiera niña.

II

PARA TI,

GUINEA ECUATORIAL

PREGON

Quiero con voz firme y serena
rasgar la calma que inunda tu cielo, Guinea,
y elevar mi grito de grandeza y alegría,
eco de felicidad
que se desborda por esta voz que traigo
juvenil y candente.

Quiero gritar, pregonar a los cuatro

vientos
la osada alegría
que visten las calles
en la sintonía de tus hijos que bailan
al compás del tam-tam tropical
la epopeya de tu libertad.

Quiero ser, Guinea, el pregonero de tu fiesta sublime;
quiero ser el Mensajero-Portador de la antorcha,
quiero desfilar por tus calles y avenidas
noche y día
y anunciar bajo la mirada de tus palmeras
la alegría de tu fiesta.

Quiero que suba por tus montes azules mi voz pregonera
y el mundo entero vea la grandeza de tu historia.
Y quiero, madre mía Guinea, que escuches mi voz de hijo
que canta y pregona tu fiesta.

Eres, Guinea, madre de tantos hijos, de tantos mártires,
de tantos héroes...

Y por eso, Guinea, quiero que escuches la voz de tus hijos
para que, cobijados en tu seno,
canten para siempre el canto de la libertad
que, con la independencia,nos viniste a dar.

## HOMENAJE A GUINEA

A los mártires del 3 de agosto de 1979.

El día que de nuevo amanece,
la estrella que empieza a brillar,
los sueños que ya hemos tejido:
Guinea, que sean realidad.

Que sean realidad los anhelos
de un pueblo que en ti confió,
de un pueblo que busca angustiado
la ruta que antaño perdió.

El árbol que hoy florece
sus frutos recojan maduros
tus hijos, tus nietos, biznietos...
Tu barca los guíe seguros.

Que brille por siempre tu estrella,
que brille por siempre jamás;
que al puerto seguro te guíe,
al puerto de la libertad.

Si al puerto del orden y progreso
conduces tu barca velera,
al puerto que todos buscamos,
felices seremos, Guinea.

## ACROSTICO A GUINEA

Guinea, mi libre Guinea.
Ubérrima tierra a la sazón floresta,
Inclita nación soberana,
Nuestra madre eres, Guinea.
En tu seno siempre cobijados:
Arriba Guinea Ecuatorial!

## CANTO A GUINEA

¡Guinea, Guinea!
Patria y madre a la par,
toda vestida de rosas
y jazmines junto a la mar.

¡Guinea! ¡Guinea!
No rehuses mi canción
que sin ritmo ni medida
te trae mi pobre corazón.

Ni digas, Guinea, que exagero
porque en lenguaje de poesía
las cosas más naturales
parecen locas fantasías.

Mira, Guinea, que yo no sé cantar,
que no sé decir con palabras
lo que quisiera entonar.

De tus jardines enamorada
llega cada mañana, Guinea,
mi alma de niño
y se lleva un clavel.

De tu belleza prendado
mi corazón en vilo
ondea noche y día
buscando lugar de asilo.

¡Guinea! ¡Guinea!
¡Quién pudiera cantar!
¡Quién pudiera entonar una canción
que a ti haga enamorar!

¡Guinea! ¡Guinea!
Deja que llegue hasta mí
tu perfume de rosas blancas
y rojas, tu perfume sagrado
y mi alma se vuelva santa.

¡Guinea! ¡Guinea!
Déjame robar
una flor de belleza sin fin
y con ella engalone cada mañana
mi alma y mi jardín.

¡Guinea! ¡Guinea!
Déjame clavar la mirada en el horizonte,
déjame, Guinea,
ver la belleza azul que serpea tu monte...

¡Guinea! ¡Guinea!
Deja que acabe mi canto,
deja que mi alma en ti navegue
antes que el sol poniente
me cubra con su manto.

¡Guinea! ¡Guinea!
Patria y madre a la par
toda vestida de rosas
eres, Guinea, belleza de la mar.

PUNTA FERNANDA

Pensé arrancarme el corazón y echarlo..."
Juan Ramón Jiménez, Octubre.

Punta Fernanda,
rincón fugitivo de belleza,
se yergue risueña sobre la mar
y sus pies bañan bulliciosas olas
donde se saldan la tierra y el agua.

En el silencio que arrulla tus tades
de amor y de poesía planté mi corazón sediento
y sobre mi frente cantando tenía
la brisa del mar y el viento.
Y con mi corazón en tus entrañas partido,
simiente de ilusión y esperanza,
dejé mi alma y mi vida
como se deja la semilla en el surco
esperando despertar radiante
al sol que alumbre, definitivo, en aurora nueva,
mi corazón
en un horizonte más allá de la mirada humana.

ANNOBON

Sin conocerte, te sueño
lejana,
mi isla de Annobón
florida.

Perla tropical

de Guinea Ecuatorial
por el Atlántico bañada
de Norte a Sur,
de Este a Oeste.

Tu cantar atraviesa
mi Mbini natal
y se hace eco en el Pico
que protege nuestro cielo
para perderse en Kie-Ntem.

Sin conocerte, te veo
hermosa:
verdes montes,
blancas playas
y un sol muy fuerte acariciando tu gente
entre el azul del mar y las olas
que besan tus riberas.
Sin conocerte, te imagino
a la hora de la tarde
esperando impaciente los cayucos

que vuelven de la mar
y un tiburón
o un ballenato te traerán
para la cena.

Sin conocerte, te entrego
mi corazón
porque eres mía, Annobón.
Cuando sufres,
sufro yo.
Cuando gozas,
yo también.

Tu caminar es mi caminar
y abriendo sendas
vamos los dos:
tú desde la mar,
y yo por la selva ecuatorial
corriendo hacia ti.

MELANCOLIA

Quiero para ti, patria chica, Río Benito
quiero por ti cantar desde esta lejanía
un himno que disipe mi melancolía
y tejerte mi canción de amor infinito.

Quiero que por ti mi amor navegue unido
a la esperanza que alberga mi fantasía,
y quiero para ti cantar un nuevo día
cobijado en tu seno, por ti protegido

Al grito de tus hijos quiero siempre unirme,
bajo la sombra de tus verdes cocoteros
echar mis raíces, sembrar en tierra firme.

Quiero ya volver y trazar mis derroteros,
quiero volver para nunca jamás huirme,
quiero volver a pisar libre tus senderos.

Malabo, Guinea Ecuatorial

**Herman L. Bennett, *Africans in Colonial Mexico—Absolutism, Christianity, and Afro-Creole Consciousness, 1570-1640.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003. 312 pp.**

**Reviewed by Kwame Dixon**

Herman Bennett's *Africans in Colonial Mexico* is a compelling historical narrative that examines the unexplored history of the urban African experience in Mexico City from 1570 until 1640. It is mainly focused on the ways in which Christian absolutism shaped the African experience in New Spain—the Castilian name for Mexico. From this point of view, Bennett provides a fresh angle from which to see and comprehend the African presence in colonial Mexico. Using ecclesiastical records and inquisition sources from this period, Bennett offers a novel interpretation on ways to understand the complexities of multiple African identities in New Spain.

It is argued that Slavery per se, as a juridical category, did not fully constitute the totality of the African slave experience. Bennett moves beyond the thesis that slaves and slavery were primary commodity relations or property. He is more interested in exploring 'competing' and 'conflicting' African identities in the context of imperial expansion. According to Bennett— slave status— a legal category describing property in persons, represented one of several identities that enslaved African acquired in their forced migration from Guinea to the Americas (5).

African descended populations are found in most Latin American countries, as far north as Mexico, and as far south as Chile. However, it is the African presence in New Spain—that confounds many observers. It is estimated that in 1640 the Kingdom of New Spain had the second largest population of enslaved Africans and the greatest number of free blacks in the Americas (2). The African presence in New Spain, both enslaved and free, was vibrant, dynamic, and culturally diverse; Afro-Mexicans, moreover, played an essential socio-economic role in the colonial life of Mexico.

The presence of blacks in Mexico had a significant effect on life throughout the Americas. For example, the Mexican market for slaves during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries provided critical incentives for the institution-alization of the Atlantic slave trade. Moreover, after successful implementation of Africa slave labor in New Spain, its use was encouraged elsewhere. Afro-Mexicans contributed essential labor to the colonial Mexican economy just as it boomed. The wealth produced in New Spain attracted European settlement in other parts of the Americas (Carroll).

In order to better understand and assess the significance of *Africans in Colonial Mexico* it is important to note how other similar historical works have examined the African presence in New Spain. These works include Aguirre Beltran's, *La población negra de Mexíco,* Colin Palmer's, *Slaves of the White God*, and Patrick J. Carroll's, *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz, Race Ethnicity and Regional Development* – only to name a few. These works made significant contributions in assessing the slave trade, slave labor, the nature of slave treatment, social control, manumission, and race relations in New Spain and the Americas (11). Unlike many works on the slave experience in the Americas, *Africans in Colonial Mexico* does not "privilege the laboring process" (11). Bennett argues that the laboring process was but one factor influencing the cultural formation of blacks in New

Spain. Labor, he argues, simply did not have a monopoly over social relations (11).

In advancing this argument and focusing on the cultural process known as *'creolization,'* the author is staking out new ground on the slave cultural process and experience in the Americas. *Creole* was the term used to refer to descendants of Africans in the Americas. Becoming a *Creole*, according to Bennett, literally involved navigating the judicial maze with the intent of exploiting the possibilities offered by legal obligations and rights. Creole culture included the customs, laws, and institutions that upheld the larger social structure and came to include the ability to navigate the various institutions of absolutism. Cognizant that their competing juridical identities created an exploitable tool, Africans and their descendant seized the opportunity (3).

For example, *bozales*, who were slaves recently arrived from Africa, quickly immersed themselves in the new linguistic environ soon after arriving in New Spain, acquiring fluency in the Castilian lexicon and the morphology of power. Eventually, *bozales* learned to enlist the protection of the crown and clergy, who, as representatives of the Spanish sovereign, often stood at odds with the individual patricians (3).

By examining how Africans in New Spain formed communities, networks, and sustained particular relationships, Bennett reveals how such relations reflected cultural and social power of the enslaved and free persons. Many of the debates assume that race and slavery formed the basis of the material oppression, and thus constituted the essential basis of slave identity. However, Bennett argues that specific experiences like memory, marriages, the selections of witnesses (for marriages) and other forms of relationships brought individual Africans together. These relationships played a central role in defining the individual and the community (82).

Through the examination of 4,000 church records from 1584 to 1640, the author emphasizes the ethnic and cultural self-fashioning in an attempt to demonstrate the complexity of community formation. In selecting their witnesses, Africans and their descendants in New Spain simultaneously manifested their identities and expressed agency in ways that the Church never intended (80).

The slave experience as shaped by absolutism, Christianity, and catholic reform, constructed the strategic performances of Africans and their descendants as refracted in the language, cultural norms and the laws which contributed to the cultivation of particular strategic awareness or consciousness among the African population. Moreover, the African population constituted a broad ensemble of social groups and ethnicities which at times overlapped or intersected. For example, there were the free persons and the enslaved, bozales and ladino (an African culturally conversant in Castilian), as well as males and females.

According to Bennett, ethnicity, like cross-cultural ties, constituted a social expression. In the context of existing constraints, individuals made efforts to sustain specific social relationships. It is argued, that such relationships carried multiple meanings which enabled Africans and their descendants to define themselves thereby acquiring a specific cultural significance (106).

In availing themselves of their Christian rights, Africans and creoles did more than

restrict their master's dominion over them. The selection of spouses and marriage sponsors underscores, in Bennett's view, the multiple ways in which Africans and their descendants constituted themselves ethnically and culturally within Christianity's boundaries. (193).

The question as to whether this work charts new grounds by focusing on how Christian absolutism shaped the African experience in New Spain will be vigorously debated from different points of intervention. At the same time, Bennett's work is important in several respects. First, its pieces together slave life in the urban setting of Mexico City and by doing so provides a unique glimpse into the slave experience. Second, the focus on culture, consciousness and social networks helps to make the African experience 'human' within the existing constraints of a society based on African slave labor. It is in this way that this work expands the scope of the existing literature and creates innovative possibilities for new research on the presence of African peoples in the Americas. This book is recommended only for aficionados of the African experience.

*Syracuse University*

**Mosby, Dorothy E. *Place, Language, and Identity in Afro-Costa Rican Literature*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003. 248 pp.**

**Reviewed by Donald K. Gordon**

Dorothy E. Mosby's *Place, Language, and Identity in Afro-Costa Rican Literature* is an incisive and thorough analytical study of black Costa Rican literature from its roots with the late Jamaican-born pioneer Alderman Johnson Roden (b.1893), Limón-born (St. Lucian mother, Trinidadian father) Jamaica-educated Dolores Joseph (1904-1991) (Chap.1); through the cultural poetry of Eulalia Bernard (1935- ) (Chap.2), Limón-born daughter of Jamaican immigrants; the socially investigative writings of the short story writer, essayist, and novelist Quince Duncan (Chap.3), born in San José (1940-), grandson of Jamaican and Barbadian immigrants; up to the young black-conscious poets Shirley Campbell Barr, born in San José (1965), and Delia McDonald (1965) (Chap.4), who was born in Colón, Panama, and grew up in San José, Costa Rica.

Experiential places are crucial to identity, Mosby demonstrates, as she employs a "post-colonial theoretical approach" (p.24) in her study, the term referring to "the impact of the processes of political, economic and cultural domination on the culture of the Other" (p.4).

Consisting of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, and a very useful bibliography and index, *Place, Language and Identity in Afro-Costa Rican Literature*, treats of the "process" of cultural identity, defined as "becoming" and "being" (p.5). It delineates the play of tensions between West Indian and Hispanic cultures, and tells how and why "the space of Jamaica, for example, is real for the first generation, but for the fourth generation the island occupies space in the imagination" (p.3). So Roden and Joseph wrote in English, Campbell and McDonald work in Spanish. All in all, "through literature, black Costa Ricans have examined their identity as Costa Ricans, the dominant Latin culture, and the historical relationship to the West Indies" (p.18).

Place for Afro-Costa Ricans is centered in Limón, and Mosby first of all in her introduction presents a very good historical background of Costa Rica, including the important role of Marcus Garvey in Limón (p.28). Mosby will deal with the "preoccupation of place, nation, and identity of the black immigrants and their descendants ... in Afro-Costa Rican literature" (pp.17-18).

Her study of Roden and Joseph is good. She shows the former's perspective on exile and his longing for Jamaica in "Nostalgia," and in "White Justice–Reality," his opposition to racism in the U.S. She presents a cogent analysis of Joseph's "Limón on the Raw" with its mixture of English and French patois, Spanish, while depicting the pre-occupations of Limón's blacks.

Mosby's solid research is seen when she cites the influences of Caribbean oral culture, in the style of Jamaica folklorist Louise Bennett in the orality of the poetry of Eulalia Bernard. "Nosotros," from *Ritmohéroe* (1982) treats of the displacement of West Indians in the Caribbean of Central America, and employs devices like anaphora, assonant rhyme, and alliteration.

Mosby comments in detail on three novels of the prolific Quince Duncan. She chooses *Hombres curtidos* (1971), *Los cuatro espejos* (1973), and *La paz del pueblo* (1976) as having at their core

"issues of place, displacement, and exile" (p.123). She observes that Duncan connects a technically innovative style with a serious treatment of ethnic and national identity, and notes the circularity of *La paz del pueblo*, a novel which does not follow a chronological order.

A particular virtue of Mosby's treatise is her superb translation of important poems, such as Shirley Campbell's "De frente"—"Forward," making them accessible to English-only readers. Add to that her fine analysis—"A una abuela cualquiera"—"To anybody's grandmother," where she perceives "the embodiment of memory in the form of dreams and melancholy" (p,184), the symbolic linking of time—past, present and future—and we get a good picture of Campbell's poetic dexterity.

As in Campbell, one may appreciate Mosby's translation skills with respect to Delia McDonald. From the collection *La lluvia es una piel* (1999), the poem dedicated to Sonia Jones captures the essence of West Indian foods. Poem 13 has as its locus Barrio México, in San José, giving her a particular place and identity, though she may be marginalized there.

In McDonald and Campbell, Mosby perceives a similarity in train imagery, related to the migration of West Indian immigrants and their descendants. In McDonald "El tren... viene recortando las nubes" (p.227); in Campbell "El tren ... vistió luto recorriendo navidades sin regalos." (p.228).

It doubtless would have been very instructive had Mosby chosen to offer a comparison between "Soy una mujer negra," by Delia McDonald, Poem VIII from *Rotundamente negra* by Shirley Campbell, and "Mujer negra," by Nancy Morejón, bringing to bear, especially on identity, the same acuity she shows in her article "Identity, Female Genealogy, and Memory in the Poetry of Delia McDonald" (*Afro-Hispanic Review*, Vol. 23, No.2, Fall 2004, pp.20-26).

Mosby is not averse to using some of the newer vocabulary such as "problematized" (pp.7, 77), and "foregrounds" (p.26) as a verb. Traditionalists will however certainly prefer the accusative to the nominative pronoun: "More educated than *her*," rather than "she," (p.158), "to live with more certainty than *us*," rather than "we" (p.191). Perfect accuracy might dictate the spelling "Joice Anglin Edward*s*" rather than "Joyce Anglin Edward's," and "forebears" ("Limón on the Raw') as in the original *Tres relatos del caribe costarricense* (1984) from which Mosby quotes. Likewise "when *the* month come," rather than the attractive vernacular "de" (p.70) ("Adina"). There are only a couple of typographical errors, corrections for which would read "Yo *sé* que desciendes" (p.155), "que te afectan los ojos" (p.196).

These minutiae really cannot detract from the inestimable value of a book which is excellently constructed, very well written, and provides a wealth of information on the content and style of the works of important Costa Rican writers and who are black. Mosby has set a sterling example which other young scholars could do well to emulate by focusing on the contributions of black authors in particular Spanish American countries. Dorothy E. Mosby has made a solid contribution to our understanding of Costa Rican letters with her fine study *Place, Language, and Identity in Afro-Costa Rican Literature.*

*The University of Manitoba*

**Anita González. *Jarocho's Soul: Cultural Identity and Afro Mexican Dance*. Lanham: University Press of America, 2004. 172 pp.**

**Reviewed by Marco Polo Hernández Cuevas**

*Jarocho's Soul: Cultural Identity and Afro-Mexican Dance* by Anita González purports to chart the development and ongoing transformation of *Jarocho* dancing and the manner in which the Mexican revolutionary government influenced the performance and performers through subsidies to propagate the current homogenizing mestizo identity. Analyzing Jarocho dancing as "a fluid art form that can surface as community festival, as government-sponsored spectacle, as historical memory, as folk heritage, and as stereotype," *Jarocho's Soul* exhibits how this originally African Mexican site is appropriated by the modern nation ideologues and shaped into a countrywide symbol in support of the narrative of a Mexican "mixed-race" heritage where the European legacy prevails due to a supposed inherent superiority. Using a postcolonial cultural comparative approach—by contrasting official *Jarocho* dance with United States' minority forms of expression, the work challenges the notion that the aesthetics of a work are determined by a given ethnic or "racial" orientation. The 172-page work is divided into five chapters.

*Jarocho's Soul* opens a window into performed Mexican nationalism "providing a background template through which the reader [is] able to interpret the various signs that collectively define *Jarocho* dance." It situates official *Jarocho* dancing within "international art forms transported to the country during the period of colonization [...], indigenous Mexican culture and forms developed through the process of cultural mixing, and [...] post-revolutionary notions about the efficacy of socialist reform" (21). According to *Jarocho's Soul*, Mexican artists incorporated pre-Colombian notions into a "'universal' Mexican ideology that was itself a synthesis of colonial Spanish and modern European and American artistic movements" (27). The artist sought to unearth Mexico's Amerindian past and reinterpret it in line with the officially supported *cosmic race* perception of mestizaje, or miscegenation, where the European heritage, given its believed inherent superiority, would be controlling.

*Jarocho's Soul* reports, "In Mexico there was a vast difference between the theory and practice of mestizaje. Art and educational programs instilled a sense of pride in pre-Colombian ancestral roots while failing to speak to the basic economic needs of the deeply impoverished mixed-race Mexican majority" (27). The work correctly finds that the arts, as well as education, were employed by the revolutionary government to advance the notion of what Richard L. Jackson has described as "negative mestizaje." In this perception, a supposedly superior culture engulfs the other, due to its hypothetical inferiority (14). At this juncture however, *Jarocho's Soul* overlooks the African heritage of "the deeply impoverished mixed-race Mexican majority" it is addressing. The work also fails to underline at this point that "race" is a social construct, and instead, reinforces the idea of dealing with a biological phenomenon.

*Jarocho's Soul* veers from the popular culture sites where the African Mexican dances being studied are generated, regenerated and transmitted. Instead, the work focuses on the mass culture "mestizo" professional interpretations (or appropriations, of Jarocho discourse); for instance, that of choreographer, Amalia

Hernández (the founder of the internationally known Ballet Folclórico de México) who "mixed regional folkloric forms with classical European and Euro-American dance techniques" (31). Gonzalez's contention is that "Not only do artists [while imagining the nation] mold images of themselves from preexisting symbols, they also, if they aim toward professionalism, sell these images of culture (sometimes under the banner of authenticity) to the public."

The analysis presents *Jarocho* dance as a development of "unique syncretic performance styles that were common to field workers of Indian and African ancestry" (50). From here, *Jarocho's Soul* deploys the perspective that "Jarocho dancing is one of many art forms that transform and realign themselves within diverse performance settings to represent both ethnically specific and assimilated mainstream cultural aesthetics" (49). Thereafter, *Jarocho's Soul* brings into the discussion US tap dancing as a highbred form of "Irish clog dancing, African American plantation dances, and square and round step [Caucasian] dances" (50). *Jarocho's Soul* reads "Jarocho [dance] evolution from a dance style with distinctive African performance aesthetics to a national folkloric dance and later to a symbolic maker of regional identity" (51).

To explain a supposed process of syncretism undergone by the African dances brought to New Spain by enslaved Africans from the Congo region, *Jarocho's Soul* adopts Fernando Ortiz's concept of "transculturation." It understands the cultural phenomenon as a "process of adjusting to the New World environment as a loss of previous cultural frames for all constituent communities (deculturation) and consequent rebuilding of a new ethnographic context" (53). *Jarocho's Soul* fails to distinguish between the enslaved and the Maroon "New World" experiences. Although acknowledging the existence of various Maroon settlements throughout New Spain, as Aguirre Beltrán does, it conceives the *Maafa* as a linear process. *Jarocho's Soul* overlooks that in fact there is a "New World" African "counter-plantation" culture being created and recreated in spaces such as the *palenques*, that sprouted all over New Spain and the Americas under various names such as *quilombos*, free villages and "Bush societies" (Casimir 308).

*Jarocho's Soul* adopts the "cosmic race" perspective whereby Africaness is absorbed to disappearance through a so-called whitening process. The Jarocho or Pardo Soul that emerged from the encounter of the Africans and Amerindians in Veracruz and their cultural sites that survived and proliferated in renewed cultural forms notwithstanding the governmental appropriation of part of their discourse is seen exclusively under the official light. In *Jarocho's Soul* appreciation, Jarochos "transculturate," cease to be African, and unite to the rest of the imagined nation "under the umbrella of an assimilating mixed-race identity" (146). And while apparently this is the case among professional government sponsored performers (the agents and propagators of the official discourse), outside of the mass culture paradigm, popular culture, with its *zandunga* flavor, continues to create and recreate itself in the streets of many towns among the unofficial Jarochos and their cultural expressions.

*Jarocho's Soul* is nevertheless fascinating. It captures and untangles the official discourse as expressed in the nationalistic folkloric ballet performances

developed by government sponsored individuals and institutions during the cultural phase of the Mexican Revolution, 1920-1968. It traces part of the history of official Jarocho dancing from Africa into some of the Veracruz regions on the Gulf of Mexico coast. In fact, it exposes through omission that there are two parallel experiences co-existing in the modern nation, one that developed from the plantation and feeds from that mentality and a counter experience bred and reproduced in maroon settlements among Mexican Maroons who disseminate it to the rest of the nation.

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**Carlos B. Vega. *Conquistadoras: mujeres heróicas de la conquista de América.* Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2003. 241 pp.**

**Reviewed by Moses E. Panford, Jr.**

Los estudios culturales y postcoloniales, junto con la multiplicidad de perspectivas discernibles en la nueva novela histórica dan pie a creer que el interés en las crónicas de la conquista y sus concomitantes controversias se sostendrán de una manera insospechable. Dentro de la vertiente histórica de este fomentado interés se enmarca *Conquistadoras: mujeres heroicas de la conquista de América*, aunque resulta difícil señalar la acepción del rótulo "conquistadora" en que se fundamenta el trabajo de Carlos Vega. El libro consta de un prólogo, una introducción, ocho capítulos—el último de los cuales constituye las conclusiones —seguidos de las notas a capítulos, la bibliografía y el índice.

La razón de ser de *Conquistadoras* es el sexto capítulo, titulado "Nuestras protagonistas." Estas son María de Toledo, Isabel de Bobadilla, Ana Francisca de Borja, Isabel Barreto y Quirós, Beatriz de la Cueva, María de Peñalosa, Francisca Pizarro, y Leonor de Alvarado. Los segmentos dedicados a ellas se dividen, a su vez, en información sobre sus personas, datos biográficos tanto sobre ellas como sobre sus esposos, casamiento y descendencia, antecedentes de sus viajes a América, vida en América, y, quizás de mayor interés para los lectores, los hechos históricos que les dan renombre. Estos últimos, en su mayoría, no se asemejan a hazañas de conquista propiamente dichas. Para Carlos Vega, el "más importante factor" que hace de María de Toledo una conquistadora es "el haber logrado por su propio esfuerzo la concesión de muchos de los derechos de la familia Colón" (134). Ana Francisca de Borja "fue designada virreina el [sic] Perú por su marido, el conde de Lemos, mediante provisión firmada por él con fecha de 30 de mayo de 1668" (163). De modo semejante, Isabel de Bobadilla fue nombrada gobernadora de Cuba por su marido al ausentarse éste de la isla. Respecto de Francisca Pizarro, sin embargo, parece ser el haber sufrido la orfandad y haber vivido en España—país extraño para ella—adonde llegó a los 17 años de edad. Pues, a "España llegó niña, allí pasó toda su vida y allí murió" (186). El autor opina que "cualquier mujer (u hombre) que en el siglo XVI se decidise [sic] a viajar a América era ya de por sí una persona excepcional, heroica" (148). El mismo reconoce que:

> Si se piensa que la gallardía de una mujer ha de encontrarse solamente en las armas, aunque indiscutiblemente tal don la singulariza, ennoblece y le da honra, muchas de las mujeres aquí presentadas carecerían de importancia. [...] Leonor de Alvarado no fue una mujer guerrera, como tampoco lo fue Francisca Pizarro y muchas otras, aunque vivían y respiraban guerras a su derredor; todo el que viviese en aquellos tiempos vivía en guerra constante, ante el peligro personal o el de algún pariente o amigo. (191).

El capítulo 7, sobre "Otras mujeres célebres," se abre con la promesa de "dar una relación lo más completa posible de otras mujeres que se destacaron durante aquella época," seguida de la advertencia de que "no vale hacerse vanas ilusiones. Estas mujeres, por más que se busque y rastree en cuanto documento histórico pueda existir en el mundo, en los mejores archivos y bibliotecas, jamás verán la luz, quedando siempre sepultadas en perpetuo

silencio" (193). Lo que no se explica es la causa de ese "perpetuo silencio." La selección de las "conquistadoras" es más que estrambótica. De manera contradictoria incluye a Inés Suárez sobre quien dice el autor: "Incluimos a esta bizarra mujer española por deber, pero nos limitaremos a unas pocas palabras por gozar ya de gran fama" (196); porque resulta que no obstante la sepultura "en perpetuo silencio," Inés Suárez es el objeto de estudio de *The Conqueror's Lady* (1930) de Stella Burke May. De igual manera se presentan a Doña Marina y La monja alférez (Catalina de Erauso), por ejemplo. Aquella es "famosa en demasía" mientras ésta es "bien conocida." De la monja afirma Carlos Vega: "Aun reconociendo sus méritos como mujer valiente y decidida, no vemos en ella nada más que la haga digna de nuestra admiración. *Fue una rebelde más que tuvo la suerte de lograr su propósito*" (198, énfasis mío). Cabe llamarle la atención al autor y mencionar la comedia de *La Monja Alférez* de Pérez de Montalbán e *Historia de la Monja Alférez [...] con notas y documentos* de Joaquín María de Ferrer (Paris, 1829); y añadir que M. Romera-Navarro refiere de manera acertada que "en la vida española y en los mismos días de muchas de [las] disfrazadas de la comedia se da un caso real de mujer vestida de hombre, el de doña Catalina de Erauso, 'La Monja alférez' (1592-1650), que en hábito varonil tomó parte bravísimamente en las campañas contra los indios de Chile y Perú, sin ser reconocida ni por su hermano, a cuyo lado luchó" ("Las disfrazadas de varón en la comedia," *Hispanic Review* 2.4,1934, 269-286).

Las paradojas abundan en *Conquistadoras*: Tras reconocer que:

> Ciertamente andan por ahí algunas obras que han [intentado] singularizar a la mujer en tiempos de la conquista, y aunque se les reconoce su mérito, adolecen no sólo de originalidad pues se repiten sus nombres de una obra a otra, sino que ignoran el hecho cierto de que al hablar de la mujer en América han de incluirse, forzosamente, las tres razas que la componen y no exclusivamente la española (6),

el mismo autor afirma: "Y nos duele enormemente el haber dejado fuera, por necesidad, a una buena representación de la mujer negra y, aunque le dedicamos a ella y a su raza todo un capítulo, no nos ha sido posible mencionar los nombres de todas aquellas mujeres negras o mulatas que nos consta procedieron con gran dignidad e hidalguía" (6). Con las "Consideraciones preliminares" pretende abordar el tema de la convivencia del español con los indígenas y el resultante mestizaje. No obstante, salta a la vista la parcialidad con que el autor defiende a los conquistadores, asegurando que "ni el español ultrajó a la india ni ella se dejó ultrajar por él. Es más, nunca hubo tal ultraje sino simplemente amor, cariño, compañerismo" (20); y que "el español se unió a la indígena y posteriormente a la negra porque se enamoró de ella y porque la quiso, y no digamos a sus hijos mestizos, incluyendo a los ilegítimos" (18). La frase retórica "Dígase qué otra nación dominadora en tiempos modernos u aún antiguos se ha esforzado por despertar amor y comprensión en la raza subyugada" (27) hace preguntarse si el autor desconoce la historia de España y, por ejemplo, lo que motivó la conversión de los reyes visigodos al cristianismo.

Pese a la falta de rigor científico, los capítulos iniciales sirven de trasfondo

panorámico para enmarcar las "hazañas singulares" de las supuestas conquistadoras. El segundo, "La mujer y su época: Cronología histórica, siglos XV-XVII," esquematiza los eventos sobresalientes de la época, algunos de los cuales se fechan de manera equivocada; verbigracia, el trueque del 6 de agosto en el 27 de abril como la fecha de la fundación de la ciudad de Bogotá (41). El tercer capítulo delinea aspectos generales de la vida de la mujer española, subrayando "la castidad y pundonor [como] sus mayores virtudes por las cuales tenía que velar celosamente" (57). Las primeras en llegar al Nuevo Mundo eran en su mayoría andaluzas y acompañadas de esclavos africanos. De nuevo, el autor insiste en la compenetración entre el hombre español y los demás grupos étnicos, reiterando que eso dio lugar a una raza mestiza que surgió por amor. El carácter poco científico y el tono mayormente publicitario vuelven a perfilarse:

> El español hizo de la india su concubina y de la negra y mulata meros vehículos con que satisfacer su libido. ¿Pero es cierto? De haber sido así, tendría que admitirse algo horrendo, infame, despreciable y es que la raza hispánica fue fruto de la lascivia, del atropello, del ensañamiento, por cuanto fue y es una raza ilegítima, bastarda, innoble, destinada a perecer. ¿Lo hemos de creer? ¡A ver mexicanos, peruanos, cubanos, colombianos y todos los otros hispanos, ¿qué respuesta ha de dársele a esta gente? ¿Somos efectivamente los hispanos una raza mancillada y maldita? Por nuestra parte diremos lo siguiente: que sólo por amor, por profundo y tierno amor se crea una de las razas más gloriosas y augustas que jamás haya existido en el mundo y que, si alguien ha de creer o mantener lo contrario, que lo compruebe con hechos fehacientes" (60).

Es más, el énfasis del capítulo se traspasa de la mujer española a la negra y la mulata.

Pese al rotulo "Aspectos generales de la vida de la mujer india," el capítulo 4 también pierde el enfoque, para tratarse más bien de los indígenas en general. De nuevo, se dedica gran parte del capítulo a la justificación y exoneración del español y la conquista española en general. A veces la condición de la indígena es explicada mediante la condición de la mujer negra (utilizando ejemplos del siglo XVIII, como en la página 68). A pesar de que nuestro autor acosa a los "historiadores ineptos y envidiosos" (67), la mitad del capítulo consta de citas directas, algunas de las cuales ocupan más de dos páginas. Por otra parte, grandes porcentajes del material o no tienen nada que ver con la conquista o tratan de otros grupos étnicos. Choca la abundancia de las repeticiones. Al mismo tiempo, éstas dejan en evidencia la falta de cobertura de ciertos temas que sólo hubieran mejorado la calidad de la obra: no obstante la profesada preocupación por los subalternos, no se discuten, por ejemplo, los debates contemporáneos sobre la esclavitud o la (in)humanidad de los esclavos. La sofocante defensa incondicional del amor del español hacia los grupos indígenas (igualmente apoyada con citas un tanto contradictorias) lleva a la pregunta de por qué los padres españoles no permitían que se casaran sus hijos con indios, y por qué semejante relación se consideraría un "desastradísimo fin," como se deduce de las palabras directas de Juan Suárez Peralta (77-78).

El Capítulo 5, "Aspectos generales de

la vida de la mujer negra," sigue el mismo tono de los capítulos anteriores: se traslada el enfoque a otros grupos étnicos como "el indio" "las españolas," "las indígenas," etc., (véanse las páginas 117-124). Carlos Vega documenta la llegada de "los primeros negros a América" como mano de obra; pero opina que "España nunca se involucró en la trata [esclavista], empresa en la que se especializaron los otros [países]" (111).

A pesar del título *Conquistadoras: mujeres heroicas de la conquista de América*, el autor concluye, tal vez para justificar la lista de mujeres incluídas, que "es injusto y hasta inmoral no reconocer en la mujer su gran valer en toda empresa humana, bien haya sido dentro del hogar o fuera de él, pues en uno y otro siempre cumplió a cabalidad con su deber y cometido" (211). Las "Notas a capítulos" están hechas a modo de referencias bibliográficas, y sin uniformidad organizadora respecto del orden de lugar de impresión, la imprenta y el año de impresión. Contienen títulos de obras que no se señalan como tal, además de información que pertenece más bien a la "Bibliografía." Eso sí, el "Indice" le servirá al lector curioso para una consulta rápida. Es de notar también que el libro carece de un apéndice, pese a las promesas del autor: "Vienen aquí muy a propósito unas palabras de Martín Fernández de Navarrete sobre la conducta de España y otras naciones, muy dignas de leerse. Pensándolo bien, y por ser texto prolijo, en vez de consignarlo aquí lo incluimos como un apéndice a la obra. Sugerimos que se lea y se madure bien lo que se dice" (69).

En resumidas cuentas, pese a la reseña publicitaria de "[p]lentiful notes, an extensive bibliography, and a thorough index make the book an excellent tool for researchers looking for more information on this fascinating topic" (cubierta) y el aval de un "autor de numerosas obras" (cubierta), la valía de *Conquistadoras* queda en tela de juicio no sólo por lo susodicho sino también por los errores tanto de gramática como de tipografía. Quizás yazca la clave en el prólogo:

> Después de todo, no se espera de un carpintero que sea relojero, o de un albañil que sea herrero. Como bien dice el refrán, *zapatero a tus zapatos*, que equivale a decir cada cual en lo suyo.
>
> En realidad, siendo zapatero, y de los de remendón, de esos que ponen la suela con la punta del clavo traspasándola hacia arriba, me las quise dar de sabio, o al menos de erudito y ducho en materias historiográficas, y me metí en un laberinto del que no sé aún si he salido ileso, andando con los pies y no con la cabeza. Poca o ninguna excusa puedo ofrecer, a no ser la temeridad propia de un descabellado, de un señor que quiere decir mucho pero que no sabe cómo hacerlo, que es un escritor pobretón y novato, al menos en materias de grande envergadura que quedan fuera de su campo. (1)

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**Martin-Ogunsola, Dellita. *The Eve/Hagar Paradigm in the Fiction of Quince Duncan.* Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2004. 192 pp.**

**Reviewed by Paulette Ramsay**

Dellita Martin-Ogunsola ends her stellar work *The Eve/Hagar Paradigm in the Fiction of Ouince Duncan* (2004) with the firm declaration: "For that Quince Duncan is to be commended"( 171). "That" refers to her characterisation of Duncan's portrayal of black female characters as "writing through the reconstructed voice of the black female [which] is an approach that augurs well for the healing and restoration of human identity in Contemporary Latin American and Western Literature." (171) But in fact, it is Martin-Ogunsola herself who must be commended for producing an outstanding and thoroughly researched work. This, the first book-length, comprehensive study of Duncan's portrayal of female characters and male/female relationships, is intricately and beautifully crafted. It is obvious from the claims made, the evidence comprising specific and typical examples, the thoroughly analysed data drawn from a wide variety of sources, and the language used, that the critic cares about the subject and the writer's work in general. The evidence of extensive research, the longstanding relationship between this critic and the author and a genuine interest in understanding the complexities of the writer's work help to establish her credibility. But Martin-Ogunsola has long established her credibility as a critic of Duncan's works, not only because of her impressive credentials, but also because as one of the leading Afro-Hispanists, she has published extensively on Duncan's works, even at the time when it received little critical attention.

Martin-Ogunsola takes two well-known female characters from the Bible-Hagar the Egyptian slave, who was banished from the house of Abraham and Eve, the first woman who was created in the Garden of Eden to establish an evaluative reading strategy, based on the establishment of patterns of opposition for understanding Duncan's treatment of female characters, male/female relationships and gender related issues.

The Eve/Hagar paradigm is "a double-edged metaphor" which derives its meaning first from Eve's fall in the creation story and secondly from Hagar's example of resilience and strength in the relationship with Sarai and Abraham in which she was (Hagar) victimised but was never defeated. The fall of Eve explains the existence of patriarchy, a system which is in opposition to what God initially intended for men/women since God created man and woman equally. The Eve/Hagar paradigm then, at one and the same time, offers an explanation for the existence of patriarchy and issues of male supremacy, and serves as a model for responding to patriarchy. Hagar is also important for showing how Duncan deconstructs popular perceptions of the black woman—for Hagar emerges as a woman of strength despite being punished in her dealings with Sara and Abraham.

The Eve/Hagar paradigm allows Ogunsola to explore the interconnections between race, class and gender although she focuses mainly on the roles of female characters in different works. In order to highligt how Duncan's the works disrupt the traditional portrayal of black woman and gender roles in Latin American literature in general and in Costa Rican discourse specifically, she examines texts by white writers who presented for the most part "sexist class based and racist stereotypes—even in works which

attempted to present fairly balanced pictures of Afro-Costa Rican life (11). Moreover, this paradigm also works given the complexity and ambivalence which often characterises Duncan's portrayal of female characters. For although Eve is first a "fallenwoman", "there is a constant effort to redeem her" (8) and Hagar is a figure who simultaneously "commands respect and admiration" and "elicits responses like rejection and condemnation" (8). According to the critic:

> Many of the women characters in Duncan's fiction are imaginary representations of Eve and Hagar by virtue of their subordinate roles in postcolonial societies that are still stratified along racial lines, gender and class lines.., the Eve archetype and the Hagar prototype are coupled to determine how the confluence of race, gender and class operates in the social constructs in which women find themselves (8).

Martin-Ogunsola dismisses any notion that the paradigm is limited or contradictory by providing a historiography of the multiple ways in which the Hagar figure has previously been interpreted by both black and white writers. Additionally, in the introduction she explains the multi-dimensional nature of the paradigm arguing that it embodies a range of subtropes such as the womb/tongue, mind/body, head/hand dialectic and signifies those who try to reconstitute themselves (9). It allows us to explore Duncan's efforts to speak to the "exotic othering of black womanhood," and allows for the portrayal of West Indian culture, and a self-analysis of cultural syncretism.

In addition to the Introduction, there are five chapters and a conclusion. Each chapter analyses a different work by Duncan to illustrate different ways in which the Eve/Hagar paradigm functions. Chapter 1, "Intimations of Womanism in **Dawn Song"** highlights the early period of Antillean migration to Costa Rica, and the efforts by the women to adjust to their new environment. Through the analysis of how six female characters face various challenges presented by poverty, segregation and exploitation, Martin-Ogunsola explores how the Eve/Hagar paradigm unfolds through a range of values such as—self-confidence, independence and interdependence that the women exhibit in their relationships with their men and children.

Chapter 2—entitled "Womanist Footprints in **The Pocomía Rebellion"** focuses on the increased struggle against oppression based on race, gender and class. Here the emphasis is on showing how the Eve/Hagar paradigm allows us to see how the female characters begin "to break through the cracks and crevices of the national myth of white supremacy" (56). Several female characters from the collection are studied for their daring and rebellious postures although there are also those who are submissive, passive and vulnerable. But this contradiction in their characters is also explained by the Eve/Hagar paradox which "embraces the temporal and spatial circumstances of the bearers," so they are sometimes balanced and sometimes not— which explains why the manifestations of the Eve/Hagar paradigm in **The Pocomia Rebellion** "elicits ambiguous responses" (79).

"A Tale of Two Wives in The **Four Mirrors"** is the title given to Chapter 3. This seems to be the chapter in which the paradigm is most difficult to understand because so much of its analysis is really

linked to the central male character, Charles McForbes. Martin-Ogunsola does an excellent job, however of explaining the complex ways in which the paradigm works to reveal the way in which "The **Four Mirrors"** speaks to a text within a counterdiscourse of resistance that challenges the practice of excluding the black female subject in Latin American literature.

Chapter 4—is the most interesting chapter because it deals with one of Duncan's more structurally and artistically mature and intriguing works—**For the Sake of Peace.** The female characters represent different historical periods, social positions and races. The erudite discussions in this chapter illustrate different aspects of the Eve/Hagar paradigm which are exhibited by both black and white female characters. According to Martin-Ogunsola:

> In their efforts to inscribe their own identities in history, the women of *For the Sake of Peace* display numerous aspects of the Eve/Hagar paradigm. Because they represent the human condition, they are automatically connected to Eve, but in their capacity for dealing with pain, dislocation and trauma they evoke Hagar (110).

Chapter 5—entitled "A Voice from Down Under in Dead-End Street" focuses on a critical juncture in Costa Rica's political development, the period following the 1948 Civil War. A female rebel —Doña Carmen is presented as the model of the Eve/Hagar paradigm in different ways but mainly because she is a metaphorical Anancy who is simultaneously shrewd and assertive.

Martin-Ogunsola skilfully traces not just the representations of the metaphor but its evolution through Duncan's works, beginning with the short stories through to the novels. But it is also intriguing that at the end of each chapter she points to the way in which ideas presented in that chapter will be developed in the subsequent chapters and in this way, she establishes important interconnections between Duncan's works.

The conclusion, like the introduction is solid. It is a firm summation of the multifaceted ways in which the paradigm operates. It underlines the difficulty that is encountered when members of hegemonic groups, attempt to portray marginalised groups, such as male authors' attempts to depict female characters. An important aspect of Martin-Ogunsola's agenda is to show how the Eve/Hagar paradigm attempts to come to terms with this problem by revealing that some of Duncan's female characters are cast in the feminine mode, while some who "talk back" are cast in the feminist/womanist mode and still there are others who are self-reliant and in positive relationships with their male counterparts.

This is a well-articulated book which also highlights Martin-Ogunsola's work as a translator of Duncan's works, a skill which is important for disseminating her work in the field of Afro-Hispanic Studies, as well as Duncan's works to a wider audience. I am particularly pleased to see that despite her status as a distinguished and leading Afro-Hispanist in North America, Martin-Ogunsola has taken time to read and draw on the research of younger women—a definite demonstration of sisterhood and nurturing. And finally, this work brings an acknowledgment from a leading Afro-Hispanist, of the theory of Africana Womanism which was advanced some years ago but met with silence from

leading Afro-Hispanists. I commend the fine, honest, critic of intellectual integrity that Martin-Ogunsola has proved herself to be, in the past and more so with this fine explication and application of the Eve/Hagar paradigm and her acknowledgement of how it satisfies a similar agenda as Clenora Hudson-Weems' Africana Womanism, in its attempts to apply African-centred theories to the literature produced by blacks.

This book will be well used, for it is not only very important for shedding light on the ways in which race, gender and class intersect in Duncan's works, but will help to elucidate come complex aspects of some of his works. This book fills an important gap and contributes significantly to the discussion on finding suitable theoretical approaches to the study of the portrayal of gender by black writers.

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*Azúcar!: The Story of Sugar.* **Alán Cambeira.**
**Atlanta: Kearney, Belecam and Associates, 2001. 290 pp.**

**Reviewed by Thomas Wayne Edison**

The literary experiences of individuals of African descent in the Caribbean have been broadening in the last half century thanks to writers that have use their talents to entertain as well a reclaim collective black histories and realities. One such text is Alan Cambeira's first novel entitled *Azúcar!: The Story of Sugar.* The novel expands on traditional Afro-Caribbean themes found in Afro-Caribbean novels such as Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo*; Duncan's *La paz del pueblo*; and Guillermo Wilson's *Los nietos de Felicidad Dolores*. His novel also includes unique elements that underscore under-represented elements of the black experience. The text is well written, informative, and revolutionary on many different levels. The novel is published in English with chapter headings that are numbered in Spanish.

The novel centers on the oppressive lives of the local plantation workers and focuses on the relationship between a maturing young girl named Azúcar and her maternal grandmother Doña Fela. The grandmother's love and nurturing cannot protect Azúcar from being brutally raped by the overseer's eldest son Mario. This rape is one of many unjust attacks that constantly plague the workers and remind them that they are nothing more than chattel. Nature is an intricate part of the worker's lives therefore there are repeated references to the oppressive heat, the stench produced by the open sewage that borders the *batey*, and the detailed process of sugar cane production. The novel also documents the problems of social mobility and miscegenation within the region. The novel's structure is linear and the omniscient narration provides details in a manner consistent with a detective novel. Examples of intrigue include the mysterious owners of the community brothel, a secret letter that Azúcar must deliver to a mysterious man in Toronto, and her future husband's true identity maintain suspense throughout the novel.

The novel's setting is a Dominican sugar plantation named *Esperanza Dulce* in the mid-twentieth century. The use of the Dominican Republic as a backdrop makes it unique because this nation has historically possessed an ambivalent attitude regarding its African heritage. The text includes references to the nation's President that advanced the nation's "fear of blackness" by organizing a plan known as *Operación perejíl*. In chapter eighteen, Doña Fela explains to her granddaughter this national movement to purge the country of Haitian's: "'The Parsley Test,' was the way the death squads determined just who was and who wasn't Haitian. When one of the soldiers held up in the front of you a twig of parsley, *'perejíl'* an' then asked you what it was the way pronounced the word 'perejíl' in Spanish told the soldier whether you lived or died....So that is what told Trujillo's militia if a person was Haitian or not." (205). President Rafael Leónidas Trujillo's plan is documented in historical accounts. The text abounds with other references to mytho-historical figures that have played a major role in the island's struggle for independence: Bouckman, Macandal, and Dessalines. The text also includes other references to Papá Lemba, Laups-garous, Baaka, Gran Oyá, Chotacabras, Papá Gede; all recalling great forces in the region's collective past.

Language is one of the work's richest qualities. The Afro-Caribbean oral tradition is ever present as characters sing

songs, repeat folk sayings, and recount tales from the past. The use of expressions in Spanish, English, and Creole is distractive at the beginning but later serves to reinforce the multi-cultural milieu that exists among the workers that originate from diverse linguistic communities. During a spiritual ceremony to protect the member of the *batey* against further abuses the diverse nature of the community is illustrated:

The faces and sounds registered a culturally diverse assemblage of destitute souls. From all across the wide [the] Caribbean: there was Spanish, English, pidgin English, St. Lucian, Guadeloupean and Martiniquean patois, Hatian Kreyòl,Domínico-Haitian nagô; beliefs like Catholic, Protestant, Haitian Vodou, Santería,Regla de Ocha, Obeah, Changó. But not one was vying for dominance ...not here. No. They were collectively searching how to best define 'Lafanmi'— 'Family' Under the most difficult conditions of trying to survive their shared misery" (sic) (61).

One of the often-repeated expressions said by members of the batey reflects their awareness of self determination: "*Sé pa vouazin ka va ranjé sa pou nou.*' Cesaire translated for long neck Teresa's brother, Ramó. '*No es el vecino el que va a arreglar esto por nosotros.*' It's not our neighbor who is gonna fix things for us'" (138). This concept of *Lafanmi* is similar to the expressions used by Carlos Guillermo Wilson (Cubena's) concept of *sodinu*; Duncan's concept of the samamfo; and Zapata-Olivella's concept of *muntu*.

The text includes references to syncretic religious traditions that illustrate the role that African-inspired spirituality has played in the lives of the oppressed. After Azúcar's rape, Doña Fela organizes a ceremonial ritual dedicated to *Mayanét* (the Goddess of Retribution). Even as Azúcar enters the Western world beyond the *batey*, she still respects the *loas* and their forces despite her great personal loss, which occurs in response to a Neo-African spiritual tradition known as *Marasa Bwa* (twins of the forest).

The novel contains two revolutionary elements. The first is the inclusion of an open homosexual couple: Marcelo and Harold. This pair serves as a positive element within the community that will forever change the direction of Azúcar's life. After Harold, a Canadian scientist arrives to the community to study the declining sugar production levels on behalf of the corporation that purchases the sugar, he enters into a romantic relationship with the overseer's youngest son, Marcelo. When the couple first meets Azúcar they risk exposing their secret relationship to the homophobic community by helping the injured and pregnant youth to safely return home. They later educate her and send her to Canada to continue developing her full potential. The presentation of positive homosexual characters is a revolutionary element within Afro-Caribbean Literature. Traditionally Afro-Hispanic literature has tended to shy away from the topic of homosexuality or in the case of Cubena's two novels: *Chombo* and *Los nietos de Felicidad Dolores* homosexuality serves to define character's dysfunctional nature. This element of the novel is important because it addresses another authentic part f the black experience. The novel is also revolutionary in the presentation of strong and determined female characters. Women like the youthful Azúcar and Doña Fela wok s hard as the men and struggle in a community that forces them to produce or

perish.

The novel's ending is one of the work's shortcomings. It is reminiscent of the ambiguous ending of Carpentier's novel *El reino de este mundo*. While the black community is initially oppressed by the *maldito caña de Azúcar* (dam sugar cane), dropping sugar prices makes tourism the new national industry. As this shift takes place, Azúcar earns wealth developing resorts and hotels that employ members of the local community including the *batey*. In this economic shift, the immigrant workers that come to the region suffer the same injustices as their counterparts that came to work on the sugar plantation. Don Anselmo the local *pret savann* (Country priest) reacts with anger after he sees the same cycle of abuses commonly committed during the heyday of the sugar industry repeated as workers descend from the back of trucks to work low-paying jobs: "Coño. The bastards won't even call out the names of those poor souls; they're just numbers on a fuckin clipboard. Oh, *mi* Azúcar, *m'hita morenita*, if you only realized what you have done! Maldita caña'" (289-290). This conclusion reflects that humanity does not change; while Azúcar and her friends benefit from the development of the tourism industry, the traditional paradigm pattern of importing and abusing cheap labor continues.

Cambeira's novel offers a wide range or intellectual terrain, especially in the area of Feminist and Queer theory. This novel offers a fresh perspective of the black experience in the Dominican Republic, thus adding to the growing circle of Hispanic writers that use their literature to better reflect the struggle of African-Americans outside the United States.

*Hanover College*

***African Mexicans and the Discourse of the Modern Nation***
**by Marco Polo Hernández Cuevas. Foreword by Richard L. Jackson**
**University Press of America, 2004. 117 pp.**

**Reviewed by Elisa Rizo**

In this, his first book, Marco Polo Hernández asserts that African heritage has been silenced in the official national discourse through a whitening rhetoric promoted by the post revolutionary government between 1920 and 1968. Drawing on theoretical insights from Richard Jackson's "Black Phobia and the White Aesthetic in Spanish American Literature" and James Snead's "White Screens Black Images: The Dark Side of Hollywood," Hernández examines specific cultural objects (one essay, two novels, one film, and several collective practices) to illustrate different ways in which Mexico's African legacy has been denied by the homogenizing official culture.

The conceptual core of the book is enclosed in chapter one: "The Revolution and Invisibility: African Mexicans and the Ideology of Mestizaje in *La raza cósmica*." In this piece, Hernández follows Jackson's theory to recognize the previous existence of racist thought in Mexican laws since colonial times and after independence. He also concentrates on the racial paradigm of "Hispanic *mestizo*" that Vasconcelos presented in *La raza cósmica* (1925). Vasconcelos' doctrine is proposed as a key element in the de-authorization or fixation of non-European/Spanish groups within Mexico's official national image. Most importantly, this first essay of the book sets the critical view —to be extended into the following chapters—about the inherent discrimination against blacks within the cultural politics promoted by the *PRI-gobierno* in different spheres of Mexican life.

In chapter two, Hernández locates the African legacy within Mexico's institutionalized traditions. "The Erased Africaness of Mexican Icons" delves into different expressions of collective behaviors as they have been selected and homogenized into an unproblematic, state-licensed, discourse of Mexican folklore. The author looks at a variety of national emblems: social types (*china, chinaco*), music (*mariachi, son*), food (*menudo, mondongo*), celebrations (*fandango*), and words (*chingar*) and traces their African genesis. For example, on the study of the word *chingar*, Hernández states:

> In "*El verbo chingar: una palabra clave*" (The verb *chingar*: a key word), Rolando Antonio Pérez Fernández tracks the African legacy of the word. Contrary to all previous affirmations about the roots of the word *chingar*, including that of Octavio Paz in *El laberinto,* he finds that *chingar* is of Kimbundu origin, a language of the Bantu family. According to Pérez Fernández, *chingar* is a word bequeathed by Angolan slaves (307) whose presence and influence in Mexico as well as in all of the Americas is well established (Aguirre Beltrán 139, 141) (...)

He continues on the same page:

> In the Mexican context, this theory becomes plausible in light of the location of colonial *obrajes* (textile industry slave shops) legally restricted to Puebla, Michoacan, Guanajuato, Queretaro, Tlaxcala, Oaxaca and Mexico; that in the seventeenth century a good number of black slaves labored in that industry (Reynoso 23); and that there was continuous commercial contact with other parts of the Colony where the word *chingar*, or a derivative, is present.

And continues:

> The word *chingar* may be traced from Veracruz to practically all of Mexico and the Americas where the black African presence is an integral part of the making of the nations and identities in addition to being an historical fact. *Chingar* can be found in the company of the *Fandango* or "great parties," where the foul word called poetry by Paz may be heard. (49)

By engaging in the re-visitation such a representative "Mexican" word, Hernández raises a valid question regarding the simplicity of the proclaimed ethnic background of the so-called Mexican race. This approach to the word *chingar* illustrates the method of questioning utilized by Hernández to examine settled "*Mestizo*/Mexican" emblems, where the recognized constitutive parts refer to Mexican Indians and Spanish only, thus negating a crucial part of the Colonial enterprise in Mexico: the slave trade. Throughout the chapter, Hernández puts forward the presence of African cultures in today's Mexico, calls for further identification of the problematic relationships between the state's cultural policy and collective memory, and also appeals for the recognition of denied tensions of class and ethnicity that have existed—and still exist—within the Mexican population.

The mapping of the African presence in Mexican cultural expressions and its erasure through Vasconcelos' white aesthetics resumes with the analysis of a 1938 Mexican novel in "*La vida inútil de Pito Pérez*: Tracking the African Contribution to the Mexican Picaresque Sense of Humor." In this third chapter, Hernández employs the ethnographic and historical accounts of Gonzalo Aguirre Beltran, Manuel Payno, and Alvaro Ochoa Serrano to complement his analytical framework in the analysis of the portrayal of African Mexicans. Hernández relates the represented population in the novel to the culture of the *inter-castas* or *mezclas* described by the above mentioned intellectuals. Payno's descriptions of the *léperos*, together with Aguirre's and Ochoa's historical observations about the Black culture in the state of Michoacán support Hernández's proposal. The main character, Pito Pérez, is highlighted as an inheritor of the *mezclas'* culture. Hernández proposes:

> Throughout the narrative, there are other keys and "psycho-alcoholic" digressions (221) that, although blurred and diluted, point toward the African dimension of the area where the anecdotes that divide this work take place. (64)

However, the author does not go into deep textual analysis of the African component depicted in this narrative. For example, Hernández establishes:

> Among the keys that point out the African element in the area's *mezclas* are the inference that Pito does not belong to the "privileged *castas*" (15); and that Pito is a *lépero* prototype, identified as a knave (21); who mocks modernity (280), who laughs at humanist precepts (183), who satirizes the clergy (210), and the privileged *castas* (58) and scorns the government (59, 82, 85), thus echoing his daring African ancestors who would gather in plazas to drink spirits, sing profanities and dance lasciviously openly challenging the Catholic Church and the State. (64)

The selected list of descriptions of Pito

Pérez—taking in to consideration the ethnographic references provided earlier in this essay—are offered as obvious proof of the survival of the *mezcla's* cultures in this area of Mexico. However, for those interested in this topic, further dissertation on the correlation of ethnographic accounts, official discourse and fiction would have been desirable. That does not mean that the essay is not a good evaluation of the issue. Hernández effectively unveils the inherent racist discourse in the text, and identifies ethnic tensions within the represented historical context of the novel in other instances where secondary characters are identified with direct derogatory connotations. All together, Hernández's argument that Vasconcelos' eugenic ideology permeates over the fictionalization of Mexican Black characters in this novel through the presentation of stereotypical characters that obey "the criollo world view" (66) is maintained. This study of *La vida inútil de Pito Pérez* presents an important contribution to Mexican cultural studies because it positions debate of African Mexican culture at the center.

Chapter four, "*Angelitos Negros*, a Film from the 'Golden Age' of Mexican Cinema: Coding Visibly Black Mestizos By and Through a Far Reaching Medium," observes open racism perpetrated against African Mexicans through condescending portrayals. An asset of this inquest of Mexican pop-culture is Hernández's proposal of the potential influence that the U.S. movie "Imitation of Life" may have had on the depiction of a *whitened/modernized/Americanized* society in this 1948 Mexican film, thus, pointing out the (not always recognized) influence of U.S. ethnic discourse on its Mexican counterpart. Moreover, *Angelitos negros* is identified within a group of Mexican movies that target the African theme, thus posing the problematic nature of the "*Mestizo* = Indian + Spanish" equation to the public. The central part of the essay can be identified in the following statements:

> The "rediscovery" of visibly black Mexicans or *mestizos* in the mid forties, dealt a heavy blow to the myth of a purely Amerindian and "Spanish" *mestizaje*. It brought to the forefront the question of diversity in Mexico. (75)

However:

> *Angelitos negros* reinforces the power relationships instituted since colonial times between visibly black people and lighter skinned people by positioning the darker people as subservient. (75)

As these quotes show, Hernández recognizes the lost opportunity for revindication of African Mexicans and denounces the perpetuation of colonial dynamics of power through "modern media." Likewise, Hernández pays attention to problematic features of this Mexican movie, such as the appearance of light-skinned actors with painted faces to play the roles of blacks, and the recognition of a plot that promotes discrimination as an acceptable practice. This re-visitation of a widely dispersed depiction of Mexican Blacks presents a useful assessment of the ways in which Mexico's multicultural reality is processed and presented. Hernández's proposal is to acknowledge once and for all, the racist thought engrained in official Mexican culture and to extend an invitation toward its revision.

Hernández ends his critique of the effects

of Mexican post revolutionary whitening discourse with a fifth chapter: "Modern National Discourse and *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*: the Illusory Death of African Mexican Lineage." His reading of Fuentes's narrative studies the political, ethnic and historical nuances used in the development of the central character of the novel, Artemio Cruz. Cruz is identified by Hernández as a Mexican of African descent, more specifically, as a whitened black. The author traces Cruz's Afro-Mexican origins and characteristics, pointing to the symbolic detriment imposed on African Mexicans through the depiction of Cruz as a traitor of the Revolution, and thus, as a corrupt and undesirable Mexican citizen. In spite of the significance of this appreciation of *La muerte de Artemio Cruz*, the exclusion of explicit textual evidence within the argumentation of the essay hinders a more profound analysis of the negative imagery utilized by Fuentes to depict African Mexicans and, by extension, hampers his attempt to establish a solid conceptual link between this novel and Vasconcelos' *Raza cósmica* ideology. Nevertheless, Hernández's clever underlining of certain passages in the novel reveals a new viewpoint on the cultural materials employed by such a celebrated writer as Fuentes in this negative—problematic, to say the least—depiction of Mexicans of African descent.

In *African Mexicans and the Discourse of the Modern Nation*, Hernández demonstrates a sharp eye for identifying symbolic fissures within the official discourse of "Mexicannes" and the actual history and culture of Mexico. He responds to the gap in Mexican cultural studies by offering an analysis of a broad range of instances—across many media —of denial and discrimination against Blacks in Mexico. By tracking evidence of overt and veiled racism in official governmental discourse and by identifying its infiltrations into popular Mexican culture and literature; this study contests the relegation of African-Mexican cultures to the realm of a Colonial past or as a marginal element of today's Mexican ethnicity by greater part of academia. Hernández shows us several paths toward increasing our understanding of the African Diaspora and its part in the development of the national cultures of the Americas.

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