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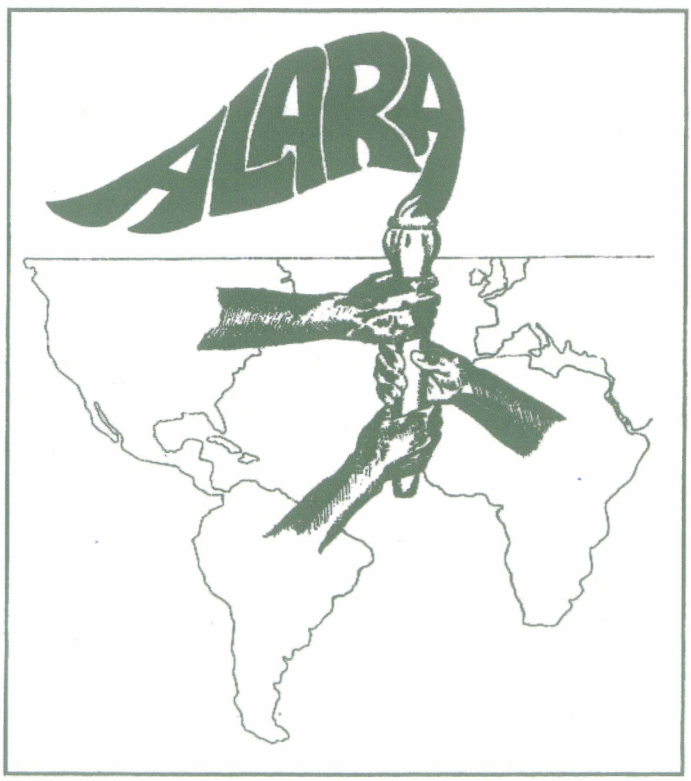


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*PALARA*

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## Haiti and the Literature of the Earthquake

**by Flore Zéphir**

On January 12, 2010, the capital city of Port-au-Prince, and several other towns in Haiti were destroyed by a major earthquake, referred to by Haitians at times by the French word "*séisme*" or "*tremblement de terre*;" at others by the Haitian Creole word "*bagay*" (meaning the "thing"), or the more onomatopoeic expression the "*goudou-goudou.*" In fact when the earthquake occurred, Haitians—all of whom have never witnessed such a catastrophic event in their lifetime—did not know what to call it. Hence the word "*bagay*" was used to refer to this most unusual (from their perspectives) and devastating event of nature. As Nancy Dorsinville, a Haitian working as an advisor for NGOs and Civil Society at the United Nations Office of the Special Envoy for Haiti, explains: "this vague, amorphous term … underscored that what had happened had no name and was so outside what we considered livable or bearable, that it could not be named" (2011: 280). Therefore, Haitians had to invent a new word for "this thing," which had engulfed their loved ones, their homes, their belongings, and their lives. The "thing" became known as the "*goudou-goudou,*" referring to the cavernous noise of the earth in fury, swallowing everything and everyone up. Needless to say, since January 2010, Haitians' lives have changed forever.

Indeed, this tragedy has altered fundamentally and profoundly the way Haitians themselves, be they at home or in the diaspora, see their role both in Haiti and in their countries of resettlement, in this case mostly the United States and Canada. Generally speaking, Haitians are now significantly more involved with the greater issues involving the reconstruction of their country. While many lament the significant loss of lives, they hope that positive changes can emerge from this tragedy. All efforts are focused on rebuilding the country, and on re-creating a nation that the world will cease to pity for all its troubles and miseries. While it is undeniable that the Haitian diaspora has always been involved with issues in the homeland and lives what has been referred to as "transnational lives," generally speaking, this involvement has tended to be more on a micro-level, such as remittances to networks of family and friends, or financial assistance to sponsor smaller projects in one's hometown (Pierre-Louis 2006, Zéphir 2004, Wah 2003, and Fouron 2003). However, since the tragedy, their involvement has increased to the macro level. They seem more preoccupied with the country as a whole, and the role that they can play in the so-called movement of Haitians rebuilding Haiti. Indeed, as Charlotin, an editor for the Haitian diasporic newspaper, *The Boston Haitian Reporter*, observes, "In the 20 months since the earthquake, the Haitian Diaspora Community has fervently remained involved in Haiti's recovery and reconstruction. Diaspora leaders, Haiti scholars, and human rights advocates have held numerous conferences, community meetings, and forums" (2012: 208).

This article explores the various ways in which Haitians abroad, primarily writers, academics, and members of important organizations, have chosen to focus their energies on documenting such a catastrophic event, and giving a voice to those afflicted by this tragedy in an attempt to raise world awareness about the Haitian situation. Moreover, the article argues that Haitian writers of the diaspora write as a form of healing to soothe the horror caused by the *goudou-goudou*, which is forever engrained in Haitian collective memory. By so doing, diasporic Haitian writers are creating another form of literature that may well be called "earthquake literature," a literature that parallels other forms of literature that have arisen from a series of deadening situations experienced by their writers, such as "exile literature," (Said 1999, 2000;

Siedel 1986; Mukherjee, Rushdie, and V.S. Naipaul 2007; and Rosenfeld 2008), or testimonial literature (Dauge-Roth 2010; Loew 2011; and Marzec 2011).[1]

This essay focuses on several post-earthquake works that have been released in the past two years, in particular Dany Lerrière's *Tout bouge autour de moi*, Rodney Saint-Éloi's *Haiti, Kenbe la!*, Martin Munro's *Haiti Rising: Haitian History, Culture, and the Earthquake of 2010*, Paul Farmer's *Haiti After the Earthquake*, and Mark Schuller and Pablo Morales's *Tectonic Shifts: Haiti Since the Earthquake*.[2] Collectively, these works represent an honest attempt to tell the world that, according to official estimates, the death toll is 316,000 people, and that one in seven people (primarily in the Port-au-Prince area) were suddenly rendered homeless (Schuller and Morales 2012: 1). They endeavor to situate this tragedy in the historical, sociological, economic, and political context of Haiti. Perhaps most important, these writers and academics forcefully argue, in the words of Beverly Bell, a long time advocate for social justice, that "another Haiti is possible" (2012: 221). They invite all of us to join forces with them, to honor the memory of the thousands of people who perished, and not let their deaths "pass silently into history" (Trouillot 2010: 59). They urge us to transform images of destruction back into images of reconstruction.

**Dany Laferrière's *Tout bouge autour de moi***

In April 2010, three months after the earthquake, well known Haitian Canadian writer, Dany Laferrière, released his moving eyewitness account of the earthquake, *Tout bouge autour de moi* (Everything Is Moving Around Me).[3] Laferrière happened to be in Haiti at the time of the earthquake, having arrived a week earlier to attend an international literary festival called *Étonnants Voyageurs*.

This particular international festival started in 1990 as a forum to explore *les littératures du monde* (world literatures). In 2001, the festival was held in the Francophone African country of Mali, in Bamako. In 2006, Francophone writers decided to create specifically *une littérature-monde en français* (world literature in French) within the wider organization, in order to give this group of writers who write in French *une ouverture sur le monde* (a window on the world). In March 2007, *Littérature-monde en français* established its own manifesto. Among the forty-four signatories to this document were Dany Laferrière (Haiti), Lyonel Trouillot (Haiti), Maryse Condé (Guadeloupe), Edouard Glissant (Martinique), and Gisèle Pineau (Guadeloupe), along with other Francophone writers. In December 2007, Haiti hosted *Étonnants Voyageurs* for the first time under the leadership of Dany Laferrière and Lyonel Trouillot, another well-known Haitian writer. Port-au-Prince was chosen again as the venue of the festival, slated to take place in January 2010. As Laferrière noted (p. 15), this was an exciting moment, since Haitian writers in 2009 had earned collectively "thirteen literary prizes."[4] Laferrière had another book manuscript that was due to his editor in a few months, but instead he decided to put that project on hold, and to focus his energy on recording on paper what he witnessed during the earthquake. As he states in the book:

> I write here for those who do not write. It is not their trade; they neither have the taste or the time for all of this. For me, those impressions jotted down hastily, will have their importance later, when one would want to know how people got through those difficult moments. Of course, I am speaking only about what I saw, felt, or lived... I write also for all those who are busy helping others (carpenters, nurses, doctors, engineers, workers, etc.) by contributing in their respective fields. I try to recover emotions and sensations so subtle that they could not be of any interest to the media hungrier for sensationalism (p. 97).

Laferrière endeavors to give a voice to the voiceless Haitians, and to tell the situation of Haiti. He wants people "to hear a voice with which they can identify. Someone who knows them from the inside" (*du dedans*, p. 99). As another Haitian immigrant writer Rodney Saint-Éloi—also in Haiti for the literary festival at the time of the earthquake—told Laferrière when he had the opportunity to be evacuated a few days later by the Canadian government since he is a Canadian citizen: "There are not only the Haitians from here [in Haiti]; there are also those who are abroad, they need to know what happened. From someone they can trust, one of them, who has lived 'this.' They want to hear 'this' in their own words and according to their own sensibility" (p. 87). This is precisely what Laferrière does in *Tout bouge autour de moi*: Each page is a short vignette of what he saw and heard at that particular moment in the time of disaster. He transmits the voice of the little girl who asked whether there would be school tomorrow, as well as the voices of hundreds of people singing through the night of darkness, believing that the end of time that Jehovah had predicted had arrived (p. 37). Laferrière takes us to where the international media do not take us: to the home of authoritative Haitian poet, playwright, painter and musician Frankétienne, well known in all Haitian, Francophone, and Caribbean literary and artistic circles in Haiti and around the world.[5] His house—home to a collection of more than two thousand paintings—is gutted (*éventrée*, p. 57), and the paintings are all over the floor. But the poet is alive, *rouge comme une tomate* (red like a tomato), and *nu dans sa douleur* (naked in his grief). An emotional Frankétienne tells the story to Laferrière and other fellow writers and artists: "It is the blast of what Port-au Prince contains that is being smashed" (*C'est le bruit de ce que contient Port-au-Prince qui se fracasse*)... "It was my city in dust (*C'était ma ville en poussière*)," Port-au-Prince being ripped apart, being shattered (p. 57). Through Laferrière, one hears and feels the emotions of the poet, from the inside, as he cries for the city that he has never left, the city that is part and parcel of his very being. At the same time, in spite of his affliction and loss, one knows that Frankétienne will remain the depository of Haitian culture and that he will come out of his hideaway, as he knows too well that poets and writers are "landmarks in time" (*repères dans le temps*, p. 60), and as such he must move forward in spite of the quake and create new art. After all, in the words of Laferrière, "Art, in my view, is not a luxury, it structures our lives and is as necessary as bread" (p. 72). In fact, in the summer of 2010, I came across an interview with Frankétienne published in the French news magazine *L'Express* on July 16, 2010. Frankétienne told French journalist Delphine Peras that "he is a survivor of all catastrophes, a survivor of the Duvaliers, the two Duvaliers, a cancer survivor, and an earthquake survivor." This statement augurs well for what the literary and artistic world can expect from the seventy-seven-year-old writer who assures his audience and readership that he has another ten good years to complete his theatrical and literary oeuvre. Incidentally let me mention here that Frankétienne was nominated for the 2010 Nobel Prize in Literature; he did not get it. As can be remembered, the Nobel Prize went to Peruvian Mario Vargas-Llosa.

Laferrière's account is non-linear; the fragmented tone reflects the gruesome reality that happened so unexpectedly and so quickly, which he tried to paint. The halting style enables the reader to feel how the *goudou-goudou* has forced everything and everyone to come to a screeching halt. In the prologue of the book (p. 12), ironically, Laferrière wrote "*Tant que j'écris, rien ne bouge. L'écriture empêche les choses de se briser*" (as long as I write, nothing moves. Writing prevents things from breaking). Did Laferrière write *Tout bouge autour de moi* to stop the living and all material things from being engulfed by the *goudou-goudou*? Did he write to give life to the dead? While this work is a poignant testimony to something unimaginable, it is also

a form of healing, a cathartic endeavor. Perhaps without knowing it, Laferrière was providing the literary world with a new form of literature: earthquake literature or *l'écriture du séisme,* which at first glance bears some resemblance with what Maurice Blanchot (1995) has called "writing of the disaster" (or *l'écriture du désastre*), where "loss goes with writing" (p. 121).

**Rodney Saint-Éloi's *Haïti Kenbe la! 35 secondes et mon pays à reconstruire***

Shortly after the publication of Laferrière's *Tout bouge autour de moi*, another Haitian writer living in Montreal, Rodney Saint-Éloi, released in the summer of 2010 his own eyewitness account of the earthquake, *Haïti, Kenbe la! 35 secondes et mon pays à reconstruire* (Haiti, Hold on! 35 Seconds and my Country Is To Be Rebuilt). Like Laferrière, he was in Haiti attending the same international literary festival, *Étonnants Voyageurs*, when the earthquake struck; and when, as he recounted in his book, *la terre a fait goudou-goudou* (when the earth collapsed). As he tells the reader, the earthquake or the *goudou-goudou* needs a voice to force it to stop (p. 266). He endeavors to be that voice, to be the depository of Haitian collective memory of those 35 seconds in hell, which felt like an eternity, as he remembers:

- There is no more country
- The earth betrayed us
- The earth went *goudou-goudou*
- Nothing any more
- And the night was so long (pp. 17-18)

Saint-Éloi's words enable the reader to experience the range of emotions that filled Haitians' lives at the time of the earthquake: Shock, horror, sorrow, grief, anger, anguish, destitution, madness, disbelief, helplessness, and, yes, hope. Like Dany Laferrière, he too visited Franketienne who reminded him that hope is not utopian, but indeed Haitian (p. 256). *Haiti, Kenbe la!* underscores strongly Haitians' faith in God. Throughout the darkest hours of their lives, Haitians were praying to the *Dieu of Nazareth,* or to *Jésus de Nazareth, roi des Juifs*. Here is Saint-Éloi in his own words,

> Fervent prayers and songs of glory were climbing the stairs to Heaven, thanking Jesus of Nazareth and the Lord's Army.... On the porch of a house, an elderly lady spends her entire time doing the sign of the cross, interspersed with songs of praise to the Lord (pp. 178-179).

Saint-Éloi wonders "how to open a window on this luminous word called 'tomorrow'" (p. 39). He goes on to say: "We need to consent to be together tomorrow to weep and to count the dead. Muffled cries. Moans. Whispers. *Se lavi.* This is life. Life goes on" (p. 46). In the end, Saint-Éloi, in spite of the horror of the *goudou-goudou* well depicted in his book, brings a resounding message of hope out of the rubble: "I write this book to say that life never trembles. A people on its feet search its way by candlelight. A people on its feet look for water and bread, and bury its dead. Because the dead can cross gardens and knock at the windows of dreams to bring hope to the living" (p. 267). As he reminds the reader, hope is a Haitian thing, and nothing is ever hopeless because "*Bon Dieu bon*" (God is Good).

Like fellow writer, Dany Laferrière, Saint-Éloi uses writing as therapy, as a form of healing. As he says so movingly, "I wrote this book to keep silent inside of me the fury of *the goudou-goudou*" (267). *Haiti, Kenbe la* belongs to this nascent earthquake literature, which ultimately seeks to bring new life to death, to create sustenance, and to

provide a new form of nourishment. Haitian earthquake literature takes Haitians and all readers out of the specter of horror, and transports them into the realm of new possibilities. While remembering "things" past, it is possible to come out of darkness, imagine a bright future, and use the power of memory in the creation of something new. Indeed, the world can learn a lesson or two from Haitian collective imaginary: No one ever dies, as death signals the passage to another life. Haiti will rise again.

**Martin Munro's *Haiti Rising***

Another important academic book published nine months after the earthquake to document this colossal tragedy is *Haiti Rising: Haitian History, Culture, and the Earthquake of 2010*, edited by well known francophone scholar Martin Munro.[6] Munro sought the contributions of twenty-five writers, scholars, artists, and filmmakers—some Haitian born, others with strong interests in, and ties with, Haiti—to offer a moving portrayal of the resiliency of the Haitian people, their culture and Haiti. Some of the Haitian-born authors well known to an academic readership specializing in Haitian and Caribbean Studies include literature professor Nadève Ménard (based in Haiti); writer Yanick Lahens (who resides in Haiti); social historian Patrick Bellegarde-Smith from the University of Madison-Milwaukee; Leslie Desmangles, professor of religion and international studies at Trinity College; and filmmaker Raoul Peck. Some of the non-native born authors include francophone scholars Michael Dash from NYU; Thomas Spear from the City University of New York; Deborah Jenson from Duke University; Laurent Dubois, professor of history at Duke University; Elizabeth McAlister, professor of religion at Wesleyan University; and Guadeloupean writer Maryse Condé, among others. The book is intended to raise awareness about the plight of the Haitian people resulting from the earthquake and to generate funds from authors' royalties that will be donated to the Haitian Arts Relief Funds (p. 2).

The book is divided in four parts: Part I, Survivor Testimonies, comprises nine short essays recounting the authors' heart-wrenching experiences during and immediately following the earthquake. Nevertheless, every single one of these essays brings a message of hope that Haiti will rise again. Lahens, for example, has faith in Haitian creativity and in the ability of the Haitian people to transform "pain into the light of creation" (p.11). American anthropologist Laura Wagner, who survived the earthquake in Haiti, writes that "amid the injustice of everyday life and amid extraordinary upheaval, acts of decency and nobility are a way of controlling what one can, of salvaging and reaffirming one's humanity in inhuman circumstances" (p.18). In the words of Ménard, "terrible as it was, the earthquake created a moment of opportunity" (p. 53). The reader understands the call to all to seize this opportunity, and to allow Haiti to rise again from the ruins.

Part II, Politics, Culture, and Society, provides important information on Haitian social, political and economic structures, as well as on societal divisions along the lines of social class, gender and religion. Several chapters in this section (in particular 13 by Benson, and 14 by McAlister) highlight the importance of music, religion, and art in the healing process, and how Haitians use these important elements of their culture "to sing life back into the space of death" (McAlister, p. 97). Indeed, McAlister recounts the story of a woman trapped for five days "who came out the rubble singing" a song that sounded like a Protestant hymn (p. 96). She underscores powerfully how Haitians caught in the trauma of the *goudou-goudou* used music "reflectively, … to push back death and to orient themselves and their songs, towards life" (p. 101). Deborah Jenson's chapter 15, perspicaciously titled "The Writing of Disaster in Haiti: Signifying Cataclysm from Slave Revolution to Earthquake," reminds the reader that Haiti has

always been perceived as a "catastrophe," or a "disaster" by both French and American colonists.[7] She offers a well documented review of how the various historical, social, and "natural" events, that have occurred in Haiti since its emergence as the first Black Republic in the Western Hemisphere to present day, have been described in Haitian scholarship and letters produced by both Haitians and non-Haitians alike as "writing of disaster." However she warns that in attempting to "claw" Haiti's future out of the disaster caused by the earthquake, we should not "consign Haiti, its state and history, to disaster" (p. 110). She forcefully contends: "In the midst of crisis, we need to repeat and repeat to ourselves something simple: that Haiti, dear Haiti, no matter how tested and remapped by disaster, is *not*, in itself, disaster.... *Haiti is not disaster*" (p. 110).

Part III, History, focuses on major historical events since colonial times, which have influenced the development of important social, political and economic structures that still exist in present-day Haiti. This section addresses the central question: How can history inform our understanding of what should happen next? As Casimir and Dubois argue, "history can be both an inspiration and a caution" (p. 131). This note of caution is well echoed in Bellegarde-Smith's recollection of his mother's remarks made in 1957, which he quotes at the beginning of his essay: "We could have done much better" (p. 134). Indeed, "we"—referring to the Haitian government, the Haitian bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie—could have done a better job in terms of empowering "the common" Haitians, in terms of eradicating illiteracy, in terms of eliminating "black, brown, and beige class divisions," in terms of achieving an equilibrium between the different sectors of Haitian society, in terms of promoting social justice, and in terms of realizing that *tout moun se moun* (all people are human beings) (pp 134-142). The reader is left with the hope that the *goudou-goudou*, which did not make any color or class distinctions when it was taking so many lives, will provide Haiti with an opportunity to do better for its people, and to create a new, fairer and more just society. The message is clear: We should do better.

The final section of the book, Haiti and Me, offers personal accounts and recollections of non-Haitian born authors' intense connections and relationships with Haiti. These authors include (among others) well-known Guadeloupean-born writer Maryse Condé, who "discovered Haiti in the 1950s" and dreams that "this catastrophe would bring to an end the old demons of selfishness, corruption, and materialism" (p.147, and 153); Madison Smart Bell, who writes about "art in the time of catastrophe" (p. 166); and Beverly Bell, who expresses her hope that "rebuilt Haiti is based on justice, rights, and equity" (2010: 165.[8]

In *Haiti Rising*, readers hear the voices of those who lived through the earthquake, and they can place this tragedy in the full context of the history of the country. After reading those compelling essays, the reader is left convinced that Haiti will rise again, for in the words of authoritative Haitian filmmaker Raoul Peck, known for his movies *Lumumba* and *The Man by the Shore*, "a country never dies" (p. 48). While being "a testament to a moment," *Haiti Rising* is a narrative of hope; it is, indeed, in the words of Beckett (2011:183), a "kaleidoscopic vision of the possibility that things can, and must, get better." By sending their message of hope, the authors of *Haiti Rising* add their contributions to earthquake literature, in which the wounded and the hurt take center stage and rise from the debris to sing, to create art, to spring new life, and to rebuild a new Haiti. After all, as Blanchot reminds us (1995:7), "it is dark disaster that brings the light."

**Paul Farmer's *Haiti after the Earthquake***

In 2011, Dr. Paul Farmer of Harvard University, expert in global health and social medicine, co-founder of Partners in Health (an international health and social justice organization), and well known for his work in and on Haiti (and Rwanda), published his gripping book, *Haiti after the Earthquake*, as "a humble tribute to those who perished that day, to those who live on with their injuries, visible and invisible, and to those who continue to stand with the Haitian people" (p. 5). The first part of the book, Writing About Suffering, comprising some 245 pages written by Farmer himself, explains the magnitude of the catastrophe from medical and health-related perspectives. It also underscores the relationship that exists between health and politics in Haiti, and the challenges involved in providing medical relief to the victims of the earthquake and in coordinating the efforts of the various government agencies and non-government organizations (NGOs). This section provides abundant information about the recovery efforts undertaken by the international community and the difficulty of the task at hand:

> Building safe schools and safe hospitals, even makeshift ones, were obvious needs, and installing storm-resistant housing was a priority with the rainy season approaching… Hastily cobbled together camps—Port-au-Prince alone had hundreds of them—were at risk of outbreaks of cholera and waterborne diseases; camp residents needed more tents, tarpaulins, and latrines (or composting toilets). The Haitian government has hoped to avoid huge camps, which are difficult to manage, but these were precisely what came to fill every open space of the capital. In my 2010 testimony, I told those gathered in the Senate Office Building how humbling it was to see ambitious efforts more slowly, in large part because of delivery challenges that predated the quake. Recovery faced acute-on-chronic problems. (p. 99)

At the end of his single-authored section, Farmer echoes the same call to rebuild a better Haiti. He, too, thinks that: "We could have done better, and can do better in the future. We *must* do better at reconstruction as we have to date." He urges all of us "to make 'build back better' more than an empty slogan" (p. 245).

The contributors of the subsequent section, titled "Other Voices," are for the most part non-Haitian-born professionals involved in the recovery and relief efforts. However, Farmer added the voices of Haitian-born authors as well: One is unquestionably well known to the PALARA readership. This is Haitian-American writer Edwidge Danticat, recipient of a McArthur Genius grant. Another is Michelle Montas-Dominique who, for readers who might not recognize the name at first, is the wife of slain Haitian journalist Jean Dominique, whose life is depicted is Jonathan Demme's film *The Agronomist*. Herself a journalist, Montas-Dominique worked as Spokesperson of the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. Currently, she is a Senior Advisor to the UN Secretary General Special Representative in Haiti.

Danticat's essay focuses on what it was to experience the earthquake from a distance, from "the other side of the water." She describes the paralyzing fear of not knowing whether loved ones were alive or dead. However, most importantly, she underscores the resilience of the Haitian people, a resilience that "has shown itself in many home-grown efforts, in the beauty parlors and the barbershops in the camps" (p. 257). She dreams of a new Haiti: "For us creative types, especially those who have spent most of our lives outside Haiti, yet still consider ourselves bound to it as the umbilical cords that joined us to our mothers, another Haiti occasionally sparks our imagination" (p. 258). In many ways, Danticat's words encapsulate the voices of all Haitians of the diaspora, who rose from their initial stupor, to network and transform their fear into actions. Indeed, she expresses the hopes of all of those who call

themselves Haitian, or who love Haiti, to see "a society emerge out of the rubble that comes closest to the ideal vision that the majority of Haitians who are mostly poor and marginalized have for Haiti's future" (p. 258).

Dominique-Montas echoes Danticat's sentiments and dreams for a new country. She accepted Farmer's invitation because in her own words, "I owe this small contribution to so many friends forever silenced... I owe this small contribution to the mother I saw carrying on her back at 5 o'clock that terrible morning of the 13th, a wounded son twice her size, rescued from the rubble. I do not know her name. I don't know if she ever found a hospital. We never spoke. But I know in my soul how much her voice should count" (p. 259). As a senior member of the Office of the United Nations Special Envoy to Haiti, she was asked to be the voice of the "ordinary" Haitian citizens, "peasants, fishermen, market women, the jobless, traditional healers, teachers, camp dwellers, and students" (pp. 261-264). At the International Donors' Conference, titled "Toward a New Future of Haiti" held in New York on March 31, 2010, she was the spokesperson for the voiceless. She reported their convictions that Haiti can change for the better; and their hopes for "a complete transformation in the way individuals and institutions act, through a new awakening, fostering a greater sense of civic responsibilities and a new sense of unity" (pp. 271-272).

The authors of *Haiti After the Earthquake* offer their own testimonies of this catastrophic event, and express their aspirations and those of the Haitian people to have their country rebuilt, the way it should: a country where everyone, whether rich or poor, darked-skinned or light-skinned, "is united as one, without divisions" (Dominique-Montas, 272); and "as they dream it to be, not as it once was" (Sedky 2011: 360). Just as the authors of *Haiti Rising*, they let the "victims" speak, not as a resigned people, mortally wounded on their way to social death (since they have escaped the physical one), but as powerful agents in charge of the reconstruction of their lives. As Haitian writer Frankétienne tells us from under the ruins, writing is "counter resignation," and this is what the Haitian people are all about.

***Tectonic Shifts: Haiti Since the Earthquake***

In early 2012, Schuller and Morales released *Tectonic Shifts: Haiti Since the Earthquake*. The book, a collection of 46 pieces, is authored by both Haitian and non-Haitian writers, scholars, journalists, organization members, and activists, who collectively seek "to help inspire, empower, educate, and challenge readers to help accompany the Haitian people in their quest for justice and dignity" (p. 8). All authors' royalties will go toward supporting the various grassroots organizations discussed in the third section of the book. The descriptive (and, to some extent, analytical) volume is divided into three parts. Contributors to the first part, Geopolitical Structures, argue that Haiti's earthquake was a "human" (as opposed to "natural") disaster, deeply embedded in the political, economic, social, and environmental history of Haiti. The summary offered by anthropologist Anthony Oliver-Smith is compelling:

> In the final analysis, much of the devastation and misery caused in Haiti by the earthquake of January 12 was a product of historical processes set in motion since the time of independence, and even earlier. These processes emerging from the international response to the abolition of slavery and the struggle for independence, cumulatively, over time, produced the conditions of profound vulnerability in which most of Haiti's population lived. (p. 23)

Part II, On-the-Ground Realities, offers a heart-breaking discussion of the plight of the homeless, labeled Internally Displaced Persons, and their living conditions

in the precarious camps to which they have been relegated. These descriptions are more painful and graphic than the images seen on television immediately after the earthquake. The reader can only attempt to fathom what the physical environment without sanitation and drainage can be, and the consequences for human beings entrapped in those camps (see Schuller, pp.119-125). This particular situation, in the words of Trouillot (2012: 103)—also a contributor to *Haiti Rising*—, has been described as "an abscess on an open wound," which is the translation of the well known Haitian saying *absè sou klou* (insult to injury). One grasps the urgency of the situation, where the impoverished masses are "rotting relentlessly, deeper in their decomposition" (p. 108), and feels compelled to respond to the call for social justice, where the reality of decomposition and rot must be transfigured in a new reality of human decency, dignity, respect, and rebirth. This message permeates Haitian writer and scholar Myriam Chancy, who needs no introduction to the PALARA readership. In her essay titled "Hearing our Mothers: Safeguarding Haitian Women's Representations and Practices of Survival," Chancy urges us to "ensure that we respect how Haitian women in particular choose to represent themselves before the camera eye in fullness or self or to tell us, in no uncertain terms, what needs to be done" (p. 157).

Part III, Emerging Movements, describes the importance of grassroots organizations in the rebuilding efforts, and of Haitian popular struggle to bring about bottom-up changes. Those organizations advocate the creation of participatory democracy; the protection of the environment; the placement of social needs at the center; the prioritization of agriculture; and the advocacy of women and children's rights (Bell, pp. 215-221). The book ends with two powerful pieces. The first one is an essay written by Haitian American anthropology professor at Wesleyan University and performance artist, Gina Ulysse, titled "Why Haiti Needs New Narratives Now More Than Ever." In her piece, Ulysse vehemently laments the fact that the international media, including the American media, use what she calls a "dehumanization narrative," which portrays traumatized Haitians as "indifferent," and she warns against the racial tone of this narrative. (p. 242). The last piece of the volume, "The 1987 Constitution: A Lever for the True 'Re-Foundation' of the Nation," is written by economics professor Fritz Deshommes from the State University of Haiti. Reviewing the various articles of the constitution, Deshommes concludes that the country needs not only to be rebuilt, but "re-founded." This re-founding entails " a true overhaul of the state and nation," one that addresses the country's structural problems and that proposes solutions in the interest of the entire nation and its citizens (p. 247).

Based on the review and analysis of the works discussed in this paper, it is self evident that Haitian writers of the diaspora cannot be perceived as being "indifferent" or insensitive to the plight of their compatriots in Haiti, still trying to put their lives together. Haitian diasporic writers are making their contributions to the rebuilding efforts by creating the literature of the earthquake and preserving Haitian collective memory; by speaking out for those who cannot speak; and by rescuing dignity, respect, resilience, and humanization. In many ways, they use their writings to heal their own wounds and those of others who have been profoundly afflicted by this tragedy. Indeed, their situation in post-earthquake Haiti is painfully reminiscent of the statement made by German-Jewish philosopher and critical theorist Theodor Adorno that I am paraphrasing a bit: For a man or a woman who has seen his or her country gutted, "writing becomes a place to live," and certainly a place from which one rebuilds.[9]

**Literature of the Earthquake**

Many important characteristics permeate earthquake literature. *First* of all, it is a literature that seeks to give links to life that has been dismembered. If the earthquake, as a "natural" event, destroyed life and created emptiness, writing about the earthquake is intended to create a foundation, a solid ground from which the victims and the wounded can reconstruct their space.[10] It is a literature that puts back the pieces of one's fragmented and shattered life together; it is a literature of "re-memberment" (as opposed to dismemberment). *Second*, earthquake literature is a narrative, in which the victims become the narrators, propelled by a burning desire to communicate the urgency of the catastrophe, in order to accomplish something "better." It is a narrative about "betterness," and consciousness-raising. In this regard, earthquake literature shares similarities with *testimonio*, a literary genre that emerged in the Caribbean and Central America, which is ultimately a call for change in the social and political order.[11] *Third*, earthquake literature is a discourse of social justice, a discourse that urges the nation (in this case, Haiti) to abolish class privilege and to forge new relationships between all sectors of society in order to create a nation that is socially just. In this discourse, earthquake is not disaster; it is the site of "hope and new beginnings," a site from which new models of development are created, where the so-called margin moves to the center, and where the so-called periphery moves to the core. It is a new location where all members of society reassemble, reconfigure, and rebuild.[12] *Fourth*, earthquake literature is a form of catharsis, aimed at transforming pain into action, despair into hope, destruction into reconstruction, and death into new life. In sum, earthquake literature compels all members of the human race, while living with pain, to respond to a higher calling and to "begin to tend to the sacredness of our shared humanity" (Dauge-Roth 2010: 148).

All the authors/editors/contributors discussed in this article, Laferrière, Saint-Éloi, Munro, Farmer, Schuller and Morales, Bell, Bellegarde-Smith, Danticat, Chancy, Trouillot, and Dorsinville, to recall only those, have used their writings to heal, to instill hope, to give a voice to the dead and the voiceless, to denounce injustice, and to send a call to action. In so doing, they have turned the *goudou-goudou* on its head, urging us to remember that the earth, which at times can be the site of hurt, is primarily the source of strength and nourishment. They have truly transformed dis-membering into re-membering. The earthquake literature they produced is universal: It speaks to the totality of the human existence, the relentless pursuit of social justice; it is "a resounding cry for healing, renewal, and collective solidarity" (Zéphir 2008: 47).

Finally in this discussion, it is important to mention an earlier work by Danticat, *The Farming of Bones*, which is considered a form of *testimonio*, because the protagonist, Amabelle Désir, is a "witness" who portrays her own experience as an "agent" of Haitian collective memory of a particular somber event in history (Shemak 2011: 109-111). The novel tells the stories of Haitians who were massacred in 1937 in the Dominican Republic at the orders of President Trujillo in an effort to whiten his country. As Munro (2007: 231) contends, *The Farming of Bones* "is an example of Danticat, personalizing the political, and of her politicizing the personal: the testimony is a means of validating personal experience and of exploring the effects of the massacre on individual lives." Therefore, Haitian diasporic writers who write about the Haiti earthquake follow in Danticat's footprints, as they seek to raise the voices of the lifeless and those who grieve, while at the same time exposing the sociopolitical ills of the country. For them the personal is the political. The point of departure of the writings of authors such as Laferrière, Saint-Éloi, Munro, Farmer, Schuller and Morales (and all the others) is the earthquake; however, the earthquake is not the end. For them, it

symbolizes the dawn of a new Haiti, a country united as one in the process of rebuilding and of re-membering. To borrow the phrase from Munro (2007: 178), these writers are truly the "Masters of the New."[13]

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## Notes

[1]A good reference for Salman Rushdie, Bharati Mukherjee, and V.S. Vepaul is Cristina Emanuela Dascalu (2007).

[2]All translations from Laferrière and Saint-Éloi's works written in French are mine.

[3]For a succinct review of Laferrière, see Skallerup 2010.

[4]These writers include Laferrière who earned the Prix Medicis for his novel, *L'Énigme du retour*; Lyonel Trouillot, the Prix Wepler, for his novel, *Yanvalou pour Charlie*, and Edwidge Danticat, who received a 2009 MacArthur Genius grant. The list also includes Anthony Phelps and Franketienne.

[5]For more on Frankétienne, see in particular Jean Jonassaint's book, *Typo/Topo/Poéthique sur Frankétienne,* Paris: L'Harmattan 2008; and the special issue of the *Journal of Haitian Studies* on Frankétienne 14:1, 2008, of which Jonassaint is also the guest editor.

[6]Some of the information provided here has appeared in my review of the book, published in the *Journal of Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34.10 (2011): 1772-1773. However, the present article offers a deeper analysis of the book, and includes more contributions.

[7]Jenson's title echoes Maurice Blanchot's book, *L'écriture du désastre*. Moreover, she provides a discussion of Blanchot's original work (p. 104).

[8]Madison Smartt Bell is well known for his 1995 novel *All Souls' Rising* (a fictional account of the Haitian Revolution, published by Pantheon Books); and Beverly Bell for her 2001 novel, *Walking on Fire: Haitian Women's Stories of Survival and Resistance* (Cornell University Press).

[9]Adorno, as quoted in Said 2000: 568.

[10] Here, I transposed the phrase, "life without links," used by María Cristina Rodríguez (2005, chapter 2).

[11] For more on *testimonio*, see John Beverly (2011), and also April Shemak (2011).

[12]Some of the language used here in this discussion of social justice is borrowed from Brah (1996: 193).

[13]The expression "Master of the New" was first used by no other than Martin Munro himself to refer to Dany Laferrière (2007, chapter 4, p. 178). This is a play on the title of Jacques Roumain's novel, *Masters of the Dew*.

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**From Rebola To Cali:**
**Leonardo Bueichekú Buako, an (Un) heard Voice**
**in the Equatorial Guinean Diaspora**

**by Alain Lawo-Sukam**

> ...Leornardo Bueichekú está llamado a ocupar posiciones encumbradas dentro de la literatura africana y mundial, en especial dentro del mundo hispanohablante. Es el nuevo y será uno de los grandes poetas de Guinea Ecuatorial, su país, la tierra que tanto ama, esa tierra del mar de sus sueños. (José Cuevas 16)

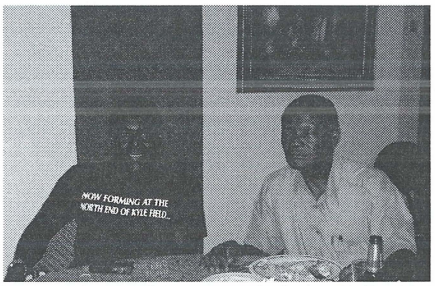
For more than two decades the study of Equatorial Guinean literature has blossomed in African and Afro-Hispanic literary studies, thanks to the scholarly work of critics such as Donato Ndongo Bidyogo, M'bare Ngom Faye, Marvin Lewis, Nicole Price, Sostene Onomo Abena, Elisa Rizo, among others. These pioneers have not only made known to the public a literature relatively unknown to Hispanists, but also they have paved the way for the multitude of dissertations, articles and books written on that unique body of African literature in Spanish. Even though Equatorial Guinean writers transcend trends, time periods and resist straitjacketing (Lewis x), they can be classified along generational lines. As Mbomio Bacheng puts it, "There are basically three main generations of literary expression in Equatorial Guinea. These are clearly defined by their historical and chronological context: The Elder generation (colonial period 1900-1968), the Exiled generation (1968-1985), and Contemporary generation (after 1985)" (qtd. in Lewis xi). The anthologies and work done on Equatorial Guinean literature have revealed both major and minor writers. Among them are Leoncio Evita, Donato Ndongo Bidyogo, María Nsue Angue, Marcelino Asistencia Ndongo Mba, Esteban Bualo, Maximiliano Nkogo Esono, Juan Balboa Boneké, Ocha'a Mve Bengobesama, Francisco Zamora, Joaquín Mbomio Bacheng, Jerónimo Rope Bomabá, Francisco Zamora Leboch, Justo Bolekia Boleká, Raquel Ilombé, Pancracio Esono Mitogo, Juan Tomás Avila Laurel, Trinidad Morgades Besari, Ciriaco Bokesa, José Siale Djangany, Guillermina Mekuy and César Mba Abogo. These writers are geographically divided in two groups: those living in the Diaspora and those remaining in the homeland. The vast majority of the writers living abroad are self-exiled or forced abroad by the dictatorial regimes of Francisco Macías Nguema and/or Theodoro Obiang Nguema.[1]

As a scholar of Afro-Hispanic studies, I have taught Equatorial Guinean literature for years, using my research publications as well as standard (canonical) texts in the field such as the *Antología de la literatura guineana* (1984) by Donato Ndongo Bidyogo; *Diálogos con Guinea: Panorama de la literatura guineoecuatoriana de expresión castellana a través de sus protagonistas* (1996) by Mbaré N'gom Faye or *Literatura emergente en español: literatura de Guinea Ecuatorial* (2004) by Sostene Onomo Abena.[2] Until now, all of critical attention has been devoted to the life and work of writers living in Equatorial Guinea and in the European Diaspora. Little consideration has been given to Equatorial Guinean writers from the American Diaspora.[3] This phenomenon is due to the lack of contact/connection between writers of the two Diasporic spaces, and the distance that separates those living in Latin America from the centers of Equatoguinean studies such as the United States, Spain, Equatorial Guinea and the Cameroon. In addition, writers from the American Diaspora face financial constraints that restrict the circulation of their literary work and, therefore,

make them less visible. One of such major writers is Leonardo Bueichekú Buako, who has lived in Colombia for more than 40 years, escaping the brutality of the dictatorial regimes of Macías and Obiang Nguema.

This article seeks to introduce the life and provide a first-time analysis of the literary production of Leonardo Buako, a professional writer and gifted poet, whose verses have enchanted the Colombian audience for decades, but is barely known in Equatorial Guinean literary circles. The study is based on a personal interview with Leonardo Buako and a close reading of his poetic work, which reveal the complexity of the postcolonial concepts of place/displacement and identity in the Equatorial Guinean Diaspora movement. Leonardo Buako's life sheds light on the difficult period that preceded the independence of Equatorial Guinea; adding a new (hi)story to the thousands of voiceless citizens who fled the country unwillingly. His work enriches the repertoire of Hispano African literature by giving a new (aesthetic) insight and challenging the socio-political activism that permeate Equatorial Guinean Diaspora literature.

**An Encounter With Leornardo Buako**

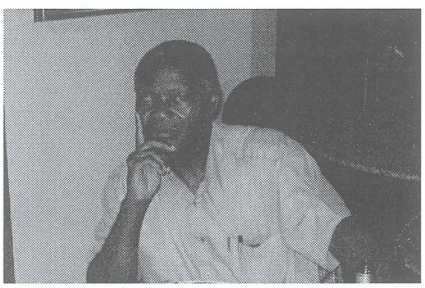



(Leonardo Buako on my left, in Cali 2009)

I met Leonardo Buako for the first time on July 15, 2009 at the Biblioteca Departamental in Cali (Colombia) while I was researching Afro-Colombian literature from the Pacific.[4] That day, after travelling back from the predominately Afro-Colombian cities of Puerta Tejada and Villa Rica, I attended the *Encuentro de poetas del Pacífico* in honor of the late Helcías Martán Gongora. The event was part of the celebration of the *Semana Cultural del Pacífico* (July 13th to July 20th). I was very surprised to find the name of a writer from Equatorial Guinea, a poet that I never heard of before, on the program that night. My first thought was that this writer either travelled from Equatorial Guinea or from Europe to attend the special event. Among the nine poets invited to the poetry recital, Buako walked to the podium last and was introduced by the Master of Ceremonies as the poet from Rebola (in Equatorial Guinea) and Cali. Buako slowly made his presence felt by the eloquence of his voice, and the beautiful lyricism and romantic flavor of his verses that culminated with huge ovations from the audience. I asked Alfredo Vanín Romero, one of the panelists (a friend and renowned Afro-Colombian poet) about this Equatorial Guinean poet. I was amazed to find that Buako has been living in Colombia for decades, has become a *caleño* and is a respected poet in Cali. Immediately after the ceremony, I introduced myself to Buako as a North American scholar and fellow African from his neighboring homeland (Cameroon). Very surprised and delighted by my presence in Cali, he gave me his phone contact before hurrying toward a table where copies of his latest book were on sale. That night, I bought and read his collection of poetry titled *Cantos de amor a Sonca* (2008).

We met for the second time on July 17th for over an hour in the lobby of my hotel where we shared stories of our lives, recent events happening in Africa and Equatorial Guinea. That day, Buako kindly gave me a copy of *Bisila* (1991), *Sueño de mar* (1994), *Nidos de sol* (1999) and *Lágrimas en el mar* (2003).[5] Toward the end of my trip to Colombia, I scheduled an interview with him on July 23th in the restaurant of my hotel. We talked extensively about his life in Equatorial Guinea and Colombia, and discussed his literary work (around *ceviche* and *arechón*).[6] I briefed him on the evolution of the literature of Equatorial Guinea and the momentum/attention it is having among Hispanists. He was aware of his anonymity as an Equatorial Guinean writer outside Colombia, but eager to be known by his counterparts in the Diaspora and scholars of Afro-Hispanic literature in general.

**Leonardo Bueichekú Buako: the Man and his Literary Production**[7]



(Leonardo Buako in Cali, 2009)

Leonardo Bueichekú Buako was born in Rebola, Fernando Poo on March 16th, 1948. The only child of his mother Montserrat Buako, his father Pastor Bueichekú was a polygamist and had twelve children. Leonardo Buako attended the Mahatma Gandhi primary school in Rebola and went to Malabo to pursue his high school education in the *Instituto Nacional de Enseñanza Media Cardenal Cisnero*. After receiving his high school diploma in 1968, he worked for almost a year for EAJ 205 Radio Santa Isabel and played soccer for *Real Rebola*. This post-independence period under the first elected president Macías Nguema was marked by terror and violence. The failed attempt to overthrow Macías Nguema in March 1969 led to the expulsion of Spaniards and widespread anti-colonial sentiment in the country. This event severely affected Radio Santa Isabel since most of the technicians were Spaniards. Buako was obliged to work different shifts and positions as news anchor and broadcaster. Macías Nguema's reign of terror plunged the country into a socio-economically chaotic situation, which led to the death or exile of up to a third of the country's population. Buako fled the country in August 1969, overwhelmed by an incident fit for surrealist novels.

The following incident precipitated Buako's exile. Eusebio Nsué, the General Manager of Information and Tourism, asked him to cover the *Fiestas Patronales de Bata* attended by Vice President Edmundo Bissio and Counsel of Mayors of Fernando Poo. The next day, Buako turned in his written report, which appeared in the state owned newspaper and was broadcast on Radio Santa Isabel. When it came to the last report on the governor's speech, Buako consulted first with Nsué to find a suitable title for the report and then sought the governor's approval for publication. The next day Nsué summoned Buako to come to his office. Buako was stunned to learn that the President was infuriated by his article and had directed his anger toward Nsué. To protect Leonardo and to avoid his execution, Nsué told the President that he did not know who wrote the article because at that time all the articles in the newspaper were

anonymous.[8] The severity of the case stemmed from a prepositional mistake that had enormous ideological consequences for the image of country. Instead of starting the article with: "La manera cómo el gobierno está trabajando CONTRA el neo colonialismo...", it was written "La manera cómo el gobierno está trabajando POR el neo-colonialismo...." Buako was certain he had written "contra" and denied categorically any involvement in this mistake; nevertheless, this was an intolerable sentence in a country were neocolonialism was considered a crime. The government did not view the use of "contra" instead of "por" as a mistake but considered it a betrayal to the newly formed republic. Buako's friends in the government urged him to leave the country on a study abroad scholarship before his name could be revealed to the authorities. In September 1969, he decided to go to Colombia instead of Spain because of his opposition to *franquismo* and the traumatic effects that Spanish colonization had on his psyche, persona and Equatorial Guinea in general.

Once in Cali, Buako registered at the *Facultad de Medicina de la Universidad del Valle*. After five years of studying, Macías Nguema's government abruptly withdrew its scholarship to Equatorial Guinean students abroad. Buako decided to move to Bogotá where he survived with the help of friends. He also took literature courses and received his Bachelor's degree in literature in 1982. He married on November 19, 1982 in Bogotá, and had a lovely daughter named Yanara. After divorcing his wife in 1986, Buako moved back to Cali in 1987 to resume his medical studies after applying for financial aid under the new Equatorial Guinean regime of Theodoro Obiang Nguema. Frustrated and exhausted by the bureaucratic slowness of the financial aid process, and the incipient racism prevailing in the College of Medicine, Buako grew disenchanted with medicine. In fact, instead of allowing him to finish the only clinical course remaining for his medical degree, the College of Medicine asked him to retake almost all his courses. Disheartened with medicine, Buako started writing. He found his own voice, passion, and talent for poetry in the process, and became convinced that literature was his life. As he states in the interview: "La poesía es buena como la medicina porque la poesía también tiene Premio Nobel igual que la Medicina" (Buako). Buako is a passionate reader of authors such as the Biblical Salomon, Alighieri Dante, Francesco Petrarca, Jorge Manrique, Lope de Vega, Francisco Quevedo, Garcilaso de la Vega, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, San Juan Bautista, Antonio Machado, Gustavo Adolfo Becquer, Walt Whitman, Giran Khalid, Manuel Zapata Olivella, Nicolás Guillén, Aimé Césaire, Léopold Sédar Senghor among others. These writers have influenced his literary journey.

After writing the draft of *Bisila: versos y pensamientos*, Buako received good feedback from Father Luis Fernando Betancourt Sánchez, Dean of Academic Affairs of Colegio Saleciano San Bosco of Cali. Marveling at his talent for poetry, the dean offered him an office and typewriter for his literary activities, and graciously volunteered to write the prologue of *Bisila*, published in 1991. *Bisila* is a collection of poems in which the universality of nature, love and memories is transmitted through a combination of sonnets (*sonetos*), cinquains (*quintillas*) and décimas. Summarizing this first literary achievement, Father Sánchez wrote:

> La poesía es la memoria de los pueblos, escribió Octavio Paz. Leonardo Bueichekú con sus versos y pensamientos iniciales y con los muchos otros que seguirán brotando en su corazón privilegiado comprobará la veracidad de lo afirmado por el Premio Nobel de Literatura de 1990...Leonardo está llamado a ser guerrero de memorias y convergencias. (9)

## PALARA

With the success of his first book, Buako published the first edition of *Sueño de mar* in 1994, and the second in 1997. This collection of poems, centered on the symbolic image of the sea, follows the classical spirit of poetry in which *versos de arte menor y mayor* are embellished by sonnets, décimas, cinquains and lyric poems. The literary accomplishments of Buako, thus far, have been praised by Colombian scholars such as José Cuevas, who believes that:

> Con *Bisila* (1991), y ahora con *Sueño de mar*, el poeta Leornardo Bueichekú está llamado a ocupar posiciones encumbradas dentro de la literatura Africana y mundial, en especial dentro del mundo hispanohablante. Es el nuevo y será uno de los grandes poetas de Guinea Ecuatorial, su país, la tierra que tanto ama, esa tierra del mar de sus sueños. (16)

After *Sueño de mar*, Buako completed *Nidos de sol* in 1996, but due to financial constraints, the book was not published until 1999. In this collection of poems, the author remains faithful to his love of nature conveyed through sonnets and cinquains. The literary critic Gustavo Alvarez Gardeazábal wrote the following about *Nidos de sol*:

> Leer sus versos...es reencontrarse con el ritmo monofónico de un español africanizado, pero al mismo tiempo, abrirle la puerta a un Rosario de recuerdos rítmicos que van desde las calles de Rebola, su pueblo natal, hasta los amores apasionados por Teresa...No se trata de un libro de poemas que honre pedestales ni que ascienda a las nubes de la consegración, pero como está estructurado para que paralelamente se hunda en el dolor y el gozo, en el recuerdo y la vivencia, en el amor y el olvido, se va dejando leer con la misma suavidad conque eleva cometas entre geranios.... (10)

In 2003, Buako published *Lágrimas en la mar*, a collection oscillating between triplets, quatrains, and sonnets. In this collection, the poet also experiments with sestina and *silva* for the first time. Even though the title of the book refers to nature, the content is a lyrical song to life and love. As the critic Gustavo Ruiz puts it:

> La frescura de sus poemas, la inspiración sublime de sus cantos, la ternura casi ingénue de sus alegorías amorosas y de su lenguaje poético, en un derroche de construcciones metafóricas que además de gran belleza que solaza el alma, inspira profundas reflexiones filosóficas en torno al amor y al desamor, al eterno femenino, la nostalgia del amor perdido....(9)

In 2008, the poet from Rebola published *Cantos de amor a Sonca*; a collection comprised mostly of prose poetry. These epistolary poems are letters that the poet used to write to his muse but never published them. After the death of the renowned Afro-Colombian writer Manuel Zapata Olivella, Leonardo Buako presented to a friend a letter that he wrote about the deceased. Amazed by the favorable comments he received, Leonardo decided to publish some of them before someone else did it postmortem. As he recounts humour in the interview, "Decidí publicarlas antes de que alguien las publique después de que me muera" (Buako). Gustavo de Roux sums it thusly:

> En los *Cantos de amor a Sonca* lo estético se entrelaza con lo romántico. Leonardo, como Pablo Neruda, es un poeta del amor bellamente cantado... *Cantos de amor a Sonca* no solamente remueve sensibilidades por la finura con que el poeta expresa en ellos la nutrida variedad de sentimientos que fluyen del amor, sino también por el placer estético que proporciona. (12)

In 2011, Leonardo Buako published *Manizales catedral y luna*; a collection of poems mostly about Manizales, and selected from his previous books. As the poet traveled through the capital city of Caldas, he set his poetic eyes on the streets, the landscape, the beautiful neo-Gothic church (Catedral Basílica Metropolitana Nuestra Señora del Rosario), and the people who are still attached to their ancestral values despite the assault of modernity. Buako's inspiration by the beauty of nature and its creator is not only limited to Manizales but also extends to Rio de Janeiro through the statue of Christ the Redeemer. Talking about *Manizales catedral y luna*, Manuel Torres Moreno states the following:

> Tal como los pinctores prehistóricos que expresan la belleza de sus paisajes de manera simple y espontánea, los versos de Leonardo tienen la cualidad de adentrarse en los paisajes de su entorno y en los de sus evocaciones, con el sutil encanto de la sencillez y la ternura. (10)

Currently, Leonardo Buako is working on the next book project *Vuelo de cardenales*, and attends recitals around Colombia to promote and sell his work. Despite the philosophy and beauty of Buako's writing, the process of publication has not been easy for him, due to the lack of financial resources for publication. Except for *Sueño de mar* published by Editorial Guia Visual, all the other books were published in an artisanal way. Buako had to learn how to do diagramming, cover art and typography to reduce the cost of publication. He relied on loans and financial help from friends to buy paper and pay for cheap prints of his manuscripts.[9] In some cases he had to pay back the loans with copies of his books once they were published. Without money that could ensure the support of publishing houses in Cali (such as University of El Valle Press, Imprenta Departamental, Feriva and Editorial Norma), it has been difficult for Buako's books to get ISBNs, which would have facilitated their promotion and circulation among national and international libraries and bookstores. Leonardo Buako has become the promoter, advertiser and seller of his own work. Despite these financial challenges, he has managed to sell thousands of copies of his books, mostly in Colombia, and continues to gain literary fame in Cali.

**Leonardo Bueichekú Buako and the concept of Equatoguineanity/nationality.**[10]

Recent debates about nationality among Equatorial Guinean scholars have triggered a rethinking of the concept of Equatoguineanity. Since most of the writers in exile have become Spanish nationals (or European), they have lost their Equatorial Guinean passport and nationality in the process. By becoming foreign citizens, their identity as Equatorial Guinean writers has been put into question. As Justo Bolekia Boleká points out:

> Si tenemos en cuenta sus nacionalidades imperativas o instrumentales actuales, aquellos que hoy denominamos escritores guineoecuatorianos se han visto obligados a adoptar distintas nacionalidades (comenzando por la española) según las circunstancias políticas, personales e históricas de cada caso. Una de dos, o son o no son, es decir, o son escritores guineoecuatorianos con todas las de la ley, con reconocimiento (cosa impensable) y documentación guineoecuatoriana, o serán únicamente escritores guineoecuatorianos de origen, al tener que exhibir su nueva nacionalidad. (411)

Not having a passport from their country of origin does not have to be an impediment for those writers in the diaspora or in exile to claim their Equatoguineanity.

Defining them as Equatorial Guinean only by birth is reductionist or essentialist, and can delegitimize their work from a politico-cultural standpoint. Compelled by a totalitarian regime to adopt a new citizenship, does not necessarily mean an assimilation to a new identiy or a deculturation or rejection of Equatoguinean identity. Numerous are those writers who possess new nationalities and are still attached to the socio-political and cultural memory and destiny of their homeland. It would be a mistake to categorize the writers in the Diaspora as either Equatorial Guinean nationals or Equatorial Guineans by birth, because that tends to politicize their work, create a tension of belonging as well as a (controversial) feeling of cultural (in)exclusion and illegitimacy.[11] Nationality is fluid, not a fixed identity and can shift back and forth according to the political situation. If national identity is defined purely through official documentation (passport), then one can be a national today and a foreigner tomorrow or vice versa.

In my estimation, the dilemma of nationality does not apply to Leonardo Buako. He has not changed his nationality unlike most of his fellow countrymen and women who lived in Colombia, escaping from Macías Nguema's brutal regime. Even though the poet from Rebola has been geographically far away from his homeland, he has never seen himself as a political exile, but as an Equatorial Guinean in the Diaspora. He is not affiliated (yet) to any political party or engaged in any political movement or activity connected to the opposition abroad. As a Equatorial Guinean citizen, Leonardo Buako has maintained strong emotional and cultural ties with his homeland, which are also echoed in his poetry. The poem "Patria mía", for example, captures this bind with a romantic tone:

> Dios te bendiga, perla y flor dorada,
> aunque estoy lejos, nunca estoy ausente
> de tu mar de las aguas cristalinas. (*Lágrimas en el mar* 15)

Like his European counterparts in the Diaspora (exiled or not), Leonardo Buako forges, in his own way, an Equatorial Guinean micro-universe that resists political/cultural dislocations. This ethnocultural reality is expressed by Bolekia Boleká:

> ...dichos escritores y analistas de su propia realidad acaban construyendo su propio espacio psicológico, su propia "nacionalidad", desde el autoreconocimiento y fortalecimiento de su propia identidad cultural, y buscan ese espacio común desde el que construir un mundo socioliterario conciliador y conciliado, sin estar sometido a las fronteras políticas tantas veces exhibidas y promovidas por los poderdantes guineoecuatorianos. De esta manera, la literatura de cada uno se convierte en una pieza necesaria en el sostenimiento de la estructura de ese micro-universo guineoecuatoriano en el que cada uno, escritor o lector, narrador o poeta, tenga la oportunidad y la obligación de expresarse y de expresar su realidad etnocultural endoglósica como mejor le parezca. (413)

Leonardo Buako has managed to build in Colombia, a psychological space that sustains and affirms his Ecuatoguineanity in a nation that has shaped his destiny for over forty years. Because of the philosophical and sociocultural effects of dislocation, the Equatorial Guinean micro-universe can be viewed in light of the postcolonial notions of transculturation and hybridity. Since Leonardo Buako, as a subject of self-enunciation, has to define and represent himself within the geo-political and cultural parameters of Colombia, his Ecuatoguineanity is influenced by his new environment to a certain extent. In this context, it is hard not to believe that the poet of Rebola has not experienced the hybridization that comes from cultural dislocation and transculturation

(Bhabha 1-16). Thus, Leodardo Buako's Equatoguineanity, as well as that of his counterparts in the Diaspora, needs to be seen through the eyes of cultural hybridity.

**The Poetic Essence of Leonardo Buako's Literary Production**

As diverse as Leonardo Buako's poetic style is, so is the thematic framework of his poetry. Leonardo's poetry draws upon a variety of topics: women, the sea, plants, corals, memory, beauty, loneliness, pain, death, language, seasons, life, body, happiness, weather, Christmas, friends, hope, dance, music and religion, among others. His work lacks the socio- political activism that permeates the work of his Equatorial Guinean counterparts (such as Juan Balboa Boneke, María Nsue Angue, Donato Ndongo, Juan Tomás Avila Laurel or Anacleto Oló Mibuy among other major writers), who are concerned about dictatorship, neo-colonialism and social justice. Leonardo Buako's poetry can be classified as personal and universal, expressing reality through the poetic "I." Even though Leonardo Buako's poetry can be categorized as "poesía elemental," the predominant themes are nature and body images, which become a poetic strategy and motif to explore the concepts of place/displacement, identity and love through sounds and rhythms.[12]

The dialectic of identity caused by physical displacement is central to the writing by Guinean authors in the Diaspora and manifests itself in different ways as the critic Antimo Esono states: "La nostalgia por el país perdido, la pobreza, la humillación a que son objeto en los países donde se encuentren; la rebeldía y ansias de lucha por recuperar la patria en poder del dictador" (24). The phenomenon of displacement in Leonardo Buako's poetry is not reflected through poverty, humiliation, rebellion or anxieties to retake the homeland from the dictator's power as Esono wrote it, but through nostalgia not only for the lost country but for the continent as a whole. Nostalgia is first expressed through a (Lacanian) feeling of lack, loneliness and remembrance of the motherland. In the poem "A solas," the poetic voice articulates his pain:

> A solas voy caminando/a solas con tristeza/y dolor. Sin su belleza/
> mi alma está sola y sangrando/sobre estos campos verdecidos./
> A solas voy recorriendo/a mis sueños de matorrales/y de recuerdos florales
> /con pasos que van sintiendo/la carga de la nostalgia./…/A solas voy caminando
> sin la belleza del mar,/mar de los preciados campos/donde el cantar es soñar/
> Juegos de infancia sin tiempos. (*Sueño del mar* 23)

The image of a lonely and sorrowful soul walking like a ghost in a foreign land captures the painful consequences of exile. The reference to the "sea of valued lands" is a metaphor of the vast resources and richness of the homeland, which is reinforced in the poem "Afirmación": "Mi cantar crece, crece y crece/con la fortaleza mágica de las ceibas/de los campos siempre verdes de Guinea" (*Sueño del mar* 18).

The green landscape is a poetic image that refers to the fertility of the soil. The "ceiba" in this context is not only a tree but also the representation of the traditional cultural belief system and practices of the Fang. "Ceiba" is sacred ancestral tree that some artists (Raquel Ilombé, María Nsue Angue and others) portray as being central to their cultural tradition (Lewis 48). The connection between humanity and nature is very profound in African societies. Natural elements like ceiba are sacred and possess mystical powers that can control or dominate human beings (Laverdiere 544). The poetic voice symbolically reaffirms his tie not only to the homeland as a geographical space but also to the culture. The poet's nostalgia is also directed toward the "beauty of the sea." It is important to point out that, like other prominent Afro-Colombian poets such as Helcías Martán Góngora and Hugo Salazar Valdés, Leonardo Buako is also a

poet of the sea (poeta del mar) in its poetic and physical forms.[13] But contrary to his Afro-Colombian counterparts, the physical sea ("mar") is not only a reference to the Pacific but also to the Gulf of Guinea. For example in "El golfo de mi Guinea" the poetic voice remembers the sea of his youth: "Allá en el mar lejano de mis entrañas/ hay un golfo donde las aguas/lucen siempre sonrientes.// Yo le canto a esa mar/ que me prestó, por días y años/ esta sonrisa que llevo aquí en mis labios" (*Canto de amores a Sonca* 91). The sea of his homeland has nurtured the speaker, providing joy to his life and material for his creative work. The Gulf of Guinea is also present and personified in "Mi mar":

> ¡Oh, mar de la tierra mía!/ ayer tu alma me decía:/navegarás mucho mares,/ soñarás muchos cantares/ ninguno como los míos.../he navegado otros mares/ los alejados del sur/ los más cercanos del este/ y los bravos del oeste/ ninguno con tus cantares/.../En todos busqué tu azul/en todo busqué tus cantos/ y en todos busqué tus brillos,/ solo soledad de llantos/ en sus tristes arbolillos. (*Sueño del mar* 45)

The bond to the Gulf of Guinea, where the poet used to spend countless hours of meditation, communion and enjoyment, is now a distant memory. Nevertheless, it serves as a contrast to other seas, especially the Pacific, where the poet is emotionally lonely.

Dislocated from his birthplace, the poet expresses a nostalgic yearning for the lost country that once was a source of personal joy and happiness. From nostalgia for Equatorial Guinea, the poetic voice turns his attention toward Africa as a continent. In the poem "Afirmación" the prodigy of African cities, lakes, fauna, flora and historical figures becomes a motif of longing, and is expressed in a celebratory and romantic tone:

> Llevo en mi frente tallado/el despertar sonoro y diáfano/de los campos de Casamance y Natal/ y las perfumadas primaveras/de los jardines de Marrakech/y en mi cuerpo un tambor dorado,/Tambor con canto a Itoji/y tambor con canto solemne de ceiba.//Mi tambor es de caña y de marfil/y llevo en mi alma el eco tranquilo/ y profundo de las minas de Kolwesi/ y de la inmensidad de las aguas del Zaire.// Mi corazón guarda el rugido de los leopardos/y el calor sereno del Kala-Hari/brazo perdido del imbatible Sahara,/y en el verde campo de mis esperanzas/pastan las jirafas y los leones/ y los elefantes del Niokolo koba/y con el freco sol de Amboseli /Serpentean los atardeceres suaves/llenos de ternura sin fin del Serengeti.//Mi alma conserva la esencia del ébano,/esencia de los bosques de Basupú y batete /y mi cantar es el cantar de los sueños,/.../ sueños de Soweto y de Somalia/sueños que navegan las profundidades/ del lago Tchad y del Niger/.../del Zambezi y la placidez del Mbini/ Mi Cantar es el despertar del sueño/ Sueño de Lumumba y de Mandela/ Sueño de Soweto y de Rebola/Sueño del mar de la tierra mía. (*Sueño del mar* 19-20)

A paradisiacal image permeates these verses, where the poetic voice reflects a deep desire to make connections with Africa through its historical and geographical landmarks. Africa is not only a space of great cities (Marrakech, Natal, Casamance), lakes and rivers (Tchad, Niger, Zaire, Zambezi), resources (mines, sugar cane, ivory), fauna (leopard, lions, giraffes, elephants), touristic attractions (Kala-Hari, Sahara, Serengeti, Basupú, Batete), but also a continent of great civilizations/culture and freedom fighters/ nationalists such as Lumumba and Mandela.

In this context, the concept of longing can be viewed as a valid and active sense of self that may have been eroded by dislocation, producing a crisis of identity through alienation and the urgency of the construction of place.[14] In order to construct a sense of place and identity in the Americas, the poet turns toward his Equatoguineanity and

Africanity. The assertion of his Equatorial Guinean identity is evident in "Mi pueblo", in which the poetic voice asserts his origin in his village (Rebola):

> Yo soy de un pueblo pequeño, /.../Mi pueblo es como el pequeño/ y común de nuestros pueblos/.../Soy de un pueblo que le canta/al cielo y al mar inmenso/.../ Soy de un pueblo de caminos empedrados y callados/.../Yo soy de un pueblo que baila y da gracias al Señor,/cuando la ceiba destila /en su copos al cantor/ que brota de sus entrañas. (*Nidos de sol* 19-20)

As if the claim of his Equatoguineanity were not sufficient enough, the poetic voice metonymically embraces an African identity, which is manifested in the poem "Afirmación": "Del África vengo/ del África soy....Éste es mi cantar/cantar del Africa" (*Sueño del mar* 18-19).

The vivid affirmation of his Africanity is a discursive strategy against the deculturation and assimilation that is prevalent among African writers and Africans living in the Diaspora.

Besides place/displacement, Leonardo Buako explores the concept of love in three dimensions: Eros, Phillia and Agape.[15] The quest for sensual and physical love (Eros) is projected through the poetic images of male and female bodies In the poem "Dulce romero" the female speaker describes an orgasmic bliss in the hand of her male lover:

> Oh, mi dulce amado/ qué más quieres de mí./ Te posas sobre mis senos/como la mariposa/al polen que germina./Siento tus aguijones/que recorren mi ser,/me tiembla la voz/me eriza la piel/me derrito en tus fuegos/me fundo en tus besos/ y te deslizas en mi nido./Succiones con placer/ el dulce romero/del lagar de mis entrañas,/me devoras ávidamente/y apagan mis ojos,/se enciende mi frenesí/ cuando entras a mi mundo/te sumerges en mi espacio/con tu mágica aurora./Oh, mi dulce amado/ te doy todo mi ser. (*Bisila* 15)

If in these verses the male body is transformed into a source of female joy or "jouissance," in "Aroma de manzanos" the female body became a source of happiness for the male lover:

> Si mi amada me besara/con los besos de sus labios/mi boca alegraría el hilo/que envuelve el perfil de su boca/.../Tu hermosura, amada mía, /como suave aroma del manzano,/florece más altiva cada día/.../recogeré el agua de tu pozo dormido,/beberé de ella la miel de tus besos/ y mi sed fundida morará en tu panal. (*Bisila* 39)

In these verses, reminiscent of Salomon love poems "Song of Songs," the (female) lover's body is saturated in romantic and erotic imagery. Athough male and female bodies constitute objects of gaze and desire in Leonardo Buako's poetry, romantic and passionate love is mostly directed toward the female (either generic or named) in a sexual/sensual or platonic form. For example, the female body is eulogized in the poems "Dormitar," "Frágil," "Eva del mar," "Margarita," "Tus ojos," "Negra negrita," "María," "Siempre bellas," "Silvia," "¿Quieres?" "Tu cuerpo," "Sueños," "Déjame," and "No te vayas". The descriptive and attractive images of woman body are present in verses such as "Mujer de labios candorosos," "Mirada dulce como miel," "Mujer de línea perfecta," "Labios dulces," "Besos puros, sonoros," "Contemplar tus mejillas", "Mejillas rosada," "Hermosa como rosa," "Cuerpo de dulzores" among others. In this context, female body parts are eroticized and objectified by male gaze.[16]

The female gender constitutes for the poetic voice a motif of remembrance, affection and comfort in numerous poetic works by Buako including "¿Por qué te

quiero tanto?," "Mi guajira," "Si volviera a nacer," "Teresa," "Negrita de mis amores," "Negra negrita," "La niña de mis ojos," "Señora," "Mujer sin tiempo," "Gracias a Dios," "Quieres," "Tus lagrimas," "Eres," "Negritas," and "Ven." In these poems, the woman is a source of well being and companionship. This awareness is summed up in the poem "¿Por qué te quiero tanto?":

> ¿Quieres saber por qué te quiero tanto?/Porque encontré en tu mar la luz del día/ porque eres manatial de la armonía/ porque tu corazón es todo un canto./.../y porque en tí mi voz calló su llanto/.../empezó a vivir con la alegría/.../Junto a tí conocí la eterna calma/y pude desterrar los tristes vientos/ de estas tus noches claras y sencillas./ Si, a tu lado encontré la paz de mi alma....(*Lágrimas en la mar* 45)

Besides the physical attraction, the moral and emotional satisfaction, and the support that women provide to the male poetic voice, they are also a source of pain and suffering. The feeling of anguish from missing the female presence and love is palpable in the poems "Tú sabes," " Te acuerdas," "Dolor y recuerdo," " Tus pasos," "Mi dolor mi pena," "Si supieras," "¿Cómo podré calmar?" and "Cuando tú te alejas." For example, in "Dolor y recuerdo" the poetic voice expresses his sadness as follows:

> ¡Cómo me duele/ esta noche!/ Nunca imaginé/que tu recuerdo/ podría causarme/ tanto dolor/y producirme/tanto llanto/y tanta angustia./.../Cómo me duele/ recordar sus bellas noches/ y cómo me duele/ soñar sin su regazo/y sin su frágil murmullo. (*Lágrimas en la mar* 101)

For the speaker, love for a woman can be a source of joy and anguish. Among women, the author is particularly seduced by black females to whom he dedicates the poems "Negra negrita", "Negrita", "Quieres", "Tus lagrimas", "Para tener tu amor", "Eres" "Negritas", "Negrita de mis amores" and "Ven". The images of the black woman reproduce the sensuality of her body as well as the beauty of her care and love through verses such as "cuerpo de dulce armonía," "dulzura primaveral", "rosa matituna," "amada de mis sueños", "el manantial del rocio/que refresca mis sentimientos."[17] The companionship of the black woman is encapsulated in the poem "Ven": "Ven y contemplemos juntos/este bello atardecer/ y deshojemos la estrella/que engalana nuestro idilio/y canteremos nuestra gloria/ a la espera de la luna" (*Lágrimas en el mar* 45).

In addition to the passionate love that the poet has for women, including his lovers, he also develops an appreciation of the other. This brotherly/sisterly love (phillia) is mostly expresses through the remembrance of the friendship that the speaker had with his deceased Colombian friends such as Carmen in "Carmen," Fabiola Duhe in "Llanto por la muerte de Fabiola Duhe," Carmen Palomeque in "In Memorian," and Zapata Olivella in "A la muerte de Manuel Zapata O." In this last poem, the poetic voice gives a farewell to Manuel Zapata Olivella, a dear friend of his and an iconic figure in Colombian letters:

> Yo te canto a ti, tú, mi hermano del alma. Yo te canto en esta tierra que tanto amaste. Yo te canto aquella canción que juntos entonamos aquel día de abril, cuando el sol iluminaba los caminos que llevan a África: 'Mañana nos reuniremos en Mzoli, cuando el alba del Serengeti refresque las mañanas del majestuoso Kilimandjaro". !Buen regreso Manuel. África te espera! (*Canto de amor a Sonca* 16)

As noted in the intimacy of the verses above, the body becomes a poetic platform in which the poetic voice reflects on love in its passionate and friendly forms.

In Leonardo Buako's poetry, the concept of love is also transcendental and derived from the New Testament Christian appropriation of the Greek word for unconditional love (agape).[18] This unconditional love is manifested in the poems "El bautista", "Gracias Señor," "Alleluya" and "¡Oh, tú, Señor!" For example in "Gracias Señor," the poetic voice gives thanks to the Lord for his love, kindness and truthfulness in a faithless and lonely world: "Gracias Señor por tu bondad/ y por todo ese amor que me confias,/al darle a mi cantar las alegrías,/en un mundo sin fe y en soledad./.../Doy gracias por tu luz de la verdad,/ luz que da aromas a mis días,/.../(*Nidos de sol* 35). Love from God and faith in Him are ingredients for happiness as portrayed also in "Alleluya": "Id en silencio, confiad/ y rogad siempre al Señor./Conservad la luz de amor/ en la senda de vuestra alma,/y tener fe, y mucha calma" (*Nidos de sol* 43). In this context, God's love constitutes a powerful existential asset for human being, through grace, faith, and prayer. The boundless nature of love rises above fear, loneliness, selfishness and egocentrism.

The image of the Lord is also poetically and symbolically significant in "Plegaria lunar"; a poem about "Cristo Redentor" (Christ the Redeemer) in Rio de Janeiro at nightfall. The poem is preceded by a visual image of the statue and the moon behind it. The poet (like David, the biblical psalmist) sings verses of supplication to the Lord, asking for personal and collective strength, hope and peace: "...brilla la luz naciente de las glorias, /luz inmortal de la alegría/.../Yo canto a ti, Señor crucificado/Tú, que abrazas la bella luna;/con tu infinito amor de paz y triunfo/colmas de fé los ojos verdecidos/y el corazón de mi lunita luna" (*Manizales catedral y luna* 63). The poetic voice captures the statue's iconic appeal in such a cinematic way. The illusion of Christ embracing the full moon gives a magical radiant beauty to the Christian effigy as well as a mystical dimension to one of the Wonders of the World. The juxtaposition of the giant statue to the supermoon represents symbolically the encounter of two powerful forces of love/ peace and illumination that can have a positive impact in the society.[19] The idea of Christ "crucificado" and "inmortal" not only encapsulates the painful and glorious life's journey of the Lord, but also represents hope for humanity through his infinite love ("infinito amor"). The often negative connotation of the crucifixion as a painful loss of life is overridden by the triumph of eternal life. Death is not always the end of human existence in a metaphysical context as the Senegalese writer Birago Diop reaffirms it in "Les souffles": "Ceux qui sont morts ne sont jamais partis/.../Les morts ne sont pas morts" (*Leurres et Lueurs* 64).

In conclusion, Leonardo Bueicheku Buako is one of the prominent authors of Equatorial Guinean writing. His isolation from the centers of Equatorial Guinean literary studies has been detrimental to his early international recognition. Writer by profession, Buako lives from and for his literary creativity. His work not only enriches the panorama of Equatorial Guinean literature but also African literature as a whole. For now, the poet of Rebola departs from the typical preoccupation of Equatorial Guinean literature [in terms of "its fight to deconstruct colonial hierarchy and its articulation of the problems encountered in post-independence" (Lewis 200)]. However his poetry reflects on the concept of place/displacement, identity and love which are central not only to the Equatorial Guinean Diapora but also to humankind in general. It is poetry full of music, rhythm, images and symbols in which pain and happiness flow in a harmonic symphony, revealing the passion of the poet for nature, sea, and women. By adopting the classical structure of the poetic form (at a time when many Equatorial Guinean poets are seeking refuge in free style poetry), Leonrado Buako resurrects the traditional poetry form and creates an atmosphere in which he effectively generates a logical rhythm and ornamental structure, distancing himself in the process from other

Equatorial Guinean poets such as Carlos Nsue Otong, Ciríaco Bokesa, Raquel Ilombé and Juian Tómas Avila Laurel.[20]

This study constitutes a first step toward the exploration and analysis of writings of Leonardo Buako and Equatorial Guinean writers from the American Diaspora, undocumented in the annals of Hispano-African literature. It is also another landmark event in the evolution of the literature of Equatorial Guinea, a literature always on the move.

*Texas A&M University*

## Notes

[1]Donato Ndongo Bidyogo, María Nsue Angue, Leoncio Evita, Tomás Avila Laurel, Raquel Ilombé, Juan Balboa Boneké, Joaquín Mbomio Bacheng, Justo Bolekia Boleká are major writers and the better known. The rest are minors writers, mostly with one or two literary creative work published.

[2] My research publications on Equatoguinean literature focus mostly on the work of María Nsue Angue: "*El proceso* de Kafka, *Crónica de una muerte anunciada* de Gabriel García Márquez y *Ekomo* de Nsue Angue: la problemática de la cuestión existencial." *Neophilologus* (2010); and "Lo 'real maravilloso' en la literatura africana/española: El caso de *Ekomo*." *Hispania* (2009).

[3] Donato Ndongo would have been considered a writer form the American Diaspora but he has moved back to Spain recently. He lived in Missouri for some time, working at the University of Missouri.

[4] I want to take this opportunity to thank Texas A&M University for the research grant that made the trip to Colombia possible and allowed me to meet Leonardo Buako in the process. I am also greatful for the precious remarks and insights of Dr. David Donkor and Prof. Linda Collins.

[5]*Bisila*, *Sueño de mar* and *Nidos de sol* are out of print. I had to make copies from the original books that Leonardo preciously preserves.

[6]Local dish and drink.

[7]All the information about Leonardo's biography come from the (unpublished) interview with Leornardo Buako on July 23th, 2011 in Cali.

[8]In subsequent conversations with Leonardo Buako about Eusebio Nsué, the poet reiterated that he owes his life to Eusebio Nsué. He stated the following: "No sé si [Eusebio] todavía vive o no. Respiro por él" (E-mail).

[9]I was financially involved in the publication of *Manizales catedral y luna* after receiving a call for help from Leonardo Buako whose limited funding threatened to postpon again the publication of the book.

[10]I use the term "equatoguineanity" instead of "guineanity" to avoid confusion and/or to distinguish between Equatorial Guinea and other guinean countries In Africa such as Guinea-Conakry and Guinea-Bissau for example.

[11]The writers (nationals) who have an Equatorial Guinean passport might pretend to be more legitimate than those who don't (by birth). They might portrayed themselves as the voice of equatoguineanity because of their (political) nationality than those who don't have a passport. Having an Equatorial Guinean passport or not doesn't have to be the only criteria in which to judge or legitimate a writer equatoguineanity.

[12]In this context the "poesía elemental" refers to poetry that contains a variety of poems with different titles and thematics.

[13]The sea as a poetic image is recurrent in the literary production of Leornardo Buako; from the title of the books (*Lágrimas en el mar* and *Sueño del mar*) to the multitud of poems, verses and expressions (containing the word sea or aluding to its elements). For example: "Érase una vez en la mar", "Sentado a orillas del mar", "Mi mar", "La brisa marina", "Amiga mar", "...mar amigo", "...a orilas de mi mar", "...verdades que brotan de la mar", "...sendas de mi mar" etc... The sea is feminized in some poems, "La mar" instead of "el mar".

[14]The discourse of place, displacement as well as its implcation/ relation to the concept of identity are analyzed in depth by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (2002).

[15]Based in part on Ancient Greek, Eros, Phillia and Agape explore the nature of pleasure (next to Storge). C.S Lewis in *The Four Loves* (1960) analyzes these categories of love from a Christian perspective, ephasizing that Agape is the greatest of loves and a Christian virtue.

[16]Laura Mulvey (1975) and bell hooks (1992) have studied the concept of the (male) gaze and the female spectator. They analyzed how (dominant) male characters sexualy objectify women In film's narratives as well as in the society in general, through feminist and black feminist perpectives.

[17]The sensuality of black women is abundant in the literary production of Afro-Colombian writers such as Helcías Martán Góngora, María Grueso Romero and Elcina Valencia as well as other caribbean (negristas) poets like Palés Matos.

[18]The agape love is summarized by the apostle Paul "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres" (*New King James Version Bible,* 1 Cor. 13.4-7).

[19]For example in Christian mythology, Jesus Christ is associated with love, kindness and peace. In Old Mesopotamia, the moon (Sin or Nanna) was associated with kindness and wisdom. In West Africa, particularly in the Adinkra symbols, the moon and the stars are symbol of faithfulness, love and harmony.

[20]Lyrical poetry is a common denominator of Leonardo Buako's work. It is embellished by his constant use of sonnets, cinquains, sestina, and décimas. For example, sonnets are found in the following poemas "El retorno," "Soneto a Manizales," "Catedral de Manizales," "La rosa de abril," "El bautista," "Teresa," "María," "Campesina," "Bienvenido," "Gracias Señor," "Ojos negros," "Para tener tu amor," and "El brillo de tus ojos"among others. Cuartetos are present in "Hoy," "Señora negrita," "Si pudiera," and etc… Cinquains are found in "Alma del mundo," "Soledades," "Tus palabras," "Gloria a mis amores," "Eres," "Margarita," "Tus ojos," "La felicidad," "Mi mar," "Luz del llanto," "Noche de ensueños," "Carmen," and "Me sobra corazón" among others. Sestinas are found in "Alegría," "No sé," "Saeta," "Llanto por la muerte de Fabiola Duhe," "Reflexiones," and etc… "Décimas poems are present in "Luna de manizales" and "Conciencia" among others.

# A Derrota do Sistema de Cotas no Processo de Aprovação do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial

por Sales Augusto dos Santos

**Resumo**

Este artigo discute o processo de aprovação do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial e, consequentemente, a não aprovação de uma proposta importante de política de ação afirmativa para a população negra ingressar nos espaços de prestígio, mando e poder, qual seja, o sistema de cotas. Foram dez anos de discussão desse Estatuto no Congresso Nacional, período que pode ser dividido didaticamente em dois quinquênios. O primeiro que vai de 07 de junho de 2000 a 9 de novembro de 2005, com uma trajetória em geral positiva de avanços e apoios importantes às suas propostas de ação afirmativa. O segundo quinquênio, que vai de dezembro de 2005 a 16 de junho de 2010, com trajetória inversa, ou seja, da retirada dessas propostas.

**Palavras-chave**: Sistema de Cotas; Ensino Superior no Brasil; Estatuto da Igualdade Racial.

## Introdução

Ao contrário do que pregam alguns cientistas sociais, o Estatuto da Igualdade Racial não é fruto de geração espontânea. Ele não surgiu de um vácuo sócio-político, ou seja, sem história de luta por políticas de promoção da igualdade racial encabeçada pelos movimentos negros e/ou com o apoio de seus aliados dentro e fora do parlamento brasileiro, menos ainda surgiu de um vácuo de propostas relativas aos marcos normativos que dizem respeito à questão racial brasileira. A proposta formal desse Estatuto apresentada pelo parlamentar Paulo Paim (PT/RS) foi, em realidade, um agregamento de várias outras proposições que visavam a igualdade racial por meio de legislação, como as apresentadas anteriormente por vários outros parlamentares, a exemplo do ex-deputado federal e ex-senador Abdias do Nascimento,[1] histórico militante do Movimento Negro (cf. Santos, 2007).

Envolvendo vários atores sociais e, consequentemente, vários interesses sócio-políticos, a discussão sobre o Estatuto da Igualdade Racial não foi tranquila nem rápida. Ela levou uma década para ser "finalizada": de 7 de junho de 2000 a 16 junho de 2010. Mais ainda, pode-se dividir didaticamente este decêncio em dois quinquênios aproximadamente. O primeiro que vai de 07 de junho de 2000 a 9 de novembro de 2005, com uma trajetória em geral positiva de avanços e apoios importantes ao projeto do Estatuto no Congresso Nacional, especialmente no que diz respeito ao apoio às suas propostas de ação afirmativa. O segundo quinquênio, que vai de dezembro de 2005 a 16 de junho de 2010, com trajetória inversa, ou seja, da retirada ou retrocesso dessas propostas.

Ao longo desses dez anos de tramitação da proposta desse estatuto no Senado Federal e na Câmara dos Deputados, houve muita discussão em torno de alguns temas, entre os quais, a) o racismo e suas consequências virulentas para a população negra brasileira; e b) formas de combatê-lo ou minimizá-lo, quer por meio de políticas de ações punitivas, valorizativas e/ou de ações afirmativas, (cf. Joccoud e Beghin, 2002). Todo esse processo de discussão no Congresso Brasileiro fez com que a questão racial fosse incluída na agenda política brasileira (cf. Santos, 2007). Assim sendo, o objetivo deste artigo é discutir o processo de aprovação do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial e, consequentemente, descrever, entre outras, a não aprovação de uma proposta importante política de ação afirmativa para a população negra ingressar nos espaços de

prestígio, mando e poder, qual seja, o sistema de cotas para a população negra brasileira.

## 1. A Primeira versão do Estatuto

A primeira apresentação formal do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial no parlamento brasileiro foi em 7 de junho de 2000. Esse projeto, ao ser formalmente apresentado na Câmara dos Deputados, recebeu o número 3198/2000, e tinha a seguinte ementa: "Institui o Estatuto da Igualdade Racial, em defesa dos que sofrem preconceito ou discriminação em função de sua etnia, raça e/ou cor, e dá outras providências".

Foi criada uma Comissão Especial destinada a apreciar e proferir parecer a esse projeto de lei. Mas esta Comissão Especial foi instalada somente em 12 de setembro de 2001. Ela, a comissão, apresentou um Substitutivo ao PL 3198/2000, cujo autor/relator foi o então deputado federal Reginaldo Germano (PFL/BA),[2] que é negro. Substitutivo esse que foi aprovado nessa comissão em 3 de dezembro de 2002, sendo o projeto submetido ao Plenário da Câmara, mas nunca apreciado.

Comparando o projeto original do Estatuto, o que foi apresentado formalmente em 7 de junho de 2000, com o Substitutivo que foi aprovado na Comissão Especial em 3 de dezembro de 2002, percebe-se que o primeiro era um embrião que iria começar a se desenvolver, por meio das discussões entre os parlamentares, assim como na sociedade brasileira, especialmente da parte mais interessada, a população negra, e de sua parte organizada, os movimentos negros. O que de fato ocorreu, conforme havia previsto o senador Paulo Paim (PT/RS), autor do projeto.

Ao comparar esses dois projetos, o original com o Substitutivo, verifica-se que o primeiro, de autoria do deputado federal Paulo Paim (PT/RS), tinha 36 artigos, enquanto o Substitutivo proposto pelo relator Reginaldo Germano (PFL/BA) tinha 67 artigos. Ou seja, a proposta do relator ampliou significativamente o projeto original do parlamentar Paulo Paim, quase dobrando o número de artigos do projeto. Essa ampliação do Estatuto aconteceu, entre outros fatores, porque foram incorporados ao projeto original novos artigos ou proposições, assim como muitos artigos do projeto original receberam uma nova redação, apesar de alguns artigos ou proposições, bem como capítulos, terem sidos suprimidos. Por outro lado, na proposta original do senador Paulo Paim já havia algumas técnicas de implementação de ação afirmativa, como, por exemplo, o sistema de cotas para negros em instituições de ensino superior (artigos 11 e 23), nos serviços públicos e privados (artigos 20 e 22), em vagas de partidos políticos para candidaturas a cargos eletivos proporcionais (artigo 21), em filmes e programas veiculados pelas emissoras de televisão e em peças publicitárias (artigo 24). Havia também a tentativa de reconhecimento e titulação das terras dos remanescentes das comunidades de quilombos (artigos 15 e 16). Todos esses artigos do PL 3198/2000 receberam novas redações e/ou foram ampliados, visando garantir direitos à população negra, assim como tornar viável a constitucionalidade, juridicidade e técnica legislativa, bem como a adequação financeira e orçamentária do projeto, garantido desse modo o seu mérito.

Como exemplo dessas mudanças amplas, assim como da ampliação de direitos, podemos citar a tentativa de regulamentar o processo de titulação das terras dos remanescentes das comunidades de quilombos, que tinha apenas dois artigos no projeto original, o 15 e o 16, e passou a ter doze artigos no projeto Substitutivo do deputado Reginaldo Germano (dos artigos 30 ao 41, do Capítulo "Da Questão da Terra"). Essas mudanças, ao que tudo indica, melhoravam significativamente a proposta de regulamentar a titulação de terras aos remanescentes de quilombos.

Melhoras de proposições e/ou direitos também podem ser observadas no Capítulo V do projeto original, "Da Profissionalização e do Trabalho", que tinha apenas três artigos (17, 18 e 19). Estes basicamente visavam alterar as Leis n.$^{os}$ 7.716, de 5 de janeiro de 1989,[3] e 9.029, de 13 de abril de 1995,[4] assim como proibir a exigência de fotografia de canditatos a empregos em seus currículos *vitae*. No projeto Substitutivo do deputado Reginaldo Germano (PFL/BA) esse Capítulo passou a ser chamado "Do Mercado de Trabalho". Tais proposições foram mantidas e outras foram incorporadas, como a ratificação de o Brasil respeitar a Convenção n.° 111, de 1958, da Organização Internacional do Trabalho (OIT), que trata da discriminação no emprego e na profissão (artigo 42, inciso III), assim como respeitar e implementar as orientações e compromissos assumidos enquanto país signatário do documento estabelecido na III Conferência Mundial contra o Racismo, a Discminação Racial, a Xenofobia e Intolerâncias Correlatas, realizada entre agosto e setembro de 2001 (artigo 42, inciso IV).

Houve também neste Capítulo "Do Mercado de Trabalho" a introdução de dois outros artigos que estabeleciam ações afirmativas na contratação preferencial de trabalhadores(as) negros(as) no setor público em todos os seus níveis (federal, estadual, distrital e municipal) (artigo 43), assim como um artigo que estabelecia uma cota de 20% para o preenchimento de cargos em comissão do Grupo-Direção e Assessoramento Superiores (DAS) da administração pública federal (artigo 46, inciso II). E, falando em cotas, buscou-se uma melhor redação para o Capítulo "Do Sistema de Cotas", assim como para o Capítulo "Dos Meios de Comunicação", onde também havia propostas de cotas para negros(as) serem incluídos(as) nos filmes, nas peças publicitárias e nos programas veiculados pelas emissoras de televisão.

Figuram, ademais, no Substitutivo, três outras mudanças ou novas proposições significativas. A primeira foi a introdução de alguns parágrafos no artigo primeiro, que visaram definir: a) discriminação racial; b) desigualdades raciais; c) afro-brasileiros; d) políticas públicas; e e) ações afirmativas (artigo 1°, §§ 1° a 5°). A segunda foi a inclusão do Capítulo "Do direito à Liberdade de Consciência e de Crença e ao Livre Exercício dos Cultos Religiosos", onde se visava proteger e tirar da marginalidade a prática das religiões de matrizes africanas (artigos 24 e 25). A terceira mudança proposta pelo Substitutivo do deputado Reginaldo Germano (PFL/BA), que consideramos um avanço em relação ao projeto original do então deputado Paulo Paim (PT/RS), foi a proposição de um Capítulo entitulado "Do Fundo de Promoção da Igualdade Racial" (artigos 26 a 29), que visava, de acordo com o artigo 26, financiar e implementar "políticas públicas que tenham como objetivo promover a igualdade de oportunidades e a inclusão social dos afro-brasileiros" em várias áreas, como, por exemplo, educação e emprego.

Essas mudanças do Substitutivo propostas ao projeto original o ampliaram e o melhoraram significativamente e até foram endossadas e ratificadas pelo autor do PL 3198/2000, o deputado federal Paulo Paim (PT/RS), como se verá a seguir. Entretanto, não se pode esquecer de um "detalhe": todas essas modificações e ampliações de direitos propostas à população negra foram apresentadas por um deputado federal baiano do então PFL, atual Democratas (DEM), partido esse que mutilou o Estatuto em sua fase final de aprovação.

## 2. A Segunda versão do Estatuto

No final do ano de 2002 o Deputado federal Paulo Paim foi eleito senador pelo PT do estado do Rio Grande do Sul, e, em 1° de fevereiro de 2003, ele investiu-se no cargo de senador da República. Como o Substitutivo ao PL 3198/2000 não andava, ou seja, não tramitava na Câmara dos Deputados, não indo ao Plenário para votação definitiva

na Casa iniciadora, o já senador Paulo Paim (PT/RS) resolveu apresentar formalmente no Senado Federal uma nova proposta do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial.[5] Contudo, essa nova proposição assumiu o mesmo texto do Substitutivo do Deputado Reginaldo Germano (PFL/BA) ao projeto original outrora apresentado na Câmara dos Deputados. Ou seja, percebendo que o seu projeto havia sido ampliado, aperfeiçoado e melhorado muito com as alterações na Comissão Especial durante a tramitação na Câmara dos Deputados, o senador Paulo Paim endossou e ratificou todas as mudanças e/ou inovações feitas pela referida comissão. Dessa forma, o Senador Paulo Paim foi coerente com a afirmação feita na justificativa do projeto: "sabemos que esta proposta poderá ser questionionada e, consequentemente, aperfeiçoada para que no dia de sua aprovação se torne um forte instrumento de combate ao preconceito racial e favorável às ações afirmativas em favor dos discriminados".[6] Eis que surge, apresentado formalmente ao Senado Federal por esse senador, o Projeto de Lei do Senado (PLS) n.º 213/03, de 29 de maio de 2003.

Entretanto, para aprová-lo no Senado Federal o senador Paulo precisava construir apoio de fato e não somente protocolares. E ele o conseguiu, pois o projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial obtém sua aprovação no Senado Federal em 9 de novembro 2005, encerrando-se aí sua trajetória em geral positiva de avanços e apoios importantes nas duas Casas dos Congresso Nacional, que abrangeu praticamente um quinquênio – de 7 de junho de 2000 a 9 de novembro de 2005. Entre os apoiadores do PLS 213/2003 se destacaram grandes nomes da política nacional, como Roseana (PFL/MA) e José Sarney[7] (PMDB/AP) e, especialmente pela atuação, a liderança política do senador Antônio Carlos Magalhães (PFL/BA). Esse, juntamente com os outros dois senadores pela Bahia que compunham seu grupo político, César Borges (PFL/BA) e Rodolpho Tourinho (PFL/BA), somaram forças com o senador Paulo Paim (PT/RS) para aprovar o Estatuto da Igualdade Racial no Senado em 2005.

Para ser aprovado no Senado, o PLS 213/2003 tinha que passar por quatro Comissões, na seguinte ordem: 1) de Assuntos Econômicos (CAE); 2) de Educação (CE); 3) de Assuntos Sociais (CAS); e 4) de Constituição, Justiça e Cidadania (CCJ); cabendo à última, e a mais importante, a decisão terminativa. O caminho seria longo e tortuoso não fossem os apoios vindos principalmente do PFL baiano. Esse apoio já começara na Câmara dos Deputados, quando o deputado federal Reginaldo Germano do PFL do estado da Bahia relatou o projeto favoravelmente e trouxe à tona um Substitutivo aperfeiçoado que o parlamentar Paulo Paim (PT/RS) acolheu. O que Paulo Paim consegue, já senador, é acentuar essa simbiose com o PFL baiano para aprovar o Estatuto da Igualdade Racial.

Ao que tudo indica, montou-se um plano de aprovação que envolvia 3 pontos principais: 1) a assunção das relatorias nas comissões por senadores apoiadores; 2) a acelerarão ao máximo da passagem pelas comissões, evitando as táticas protelatórias de senadores avessos ao projeto; e 3) o aproveitamento do fato de o senador Antônio Carlos Magalhães (ACM) (PFL/BA) ser Presidente da comissão final e mais importante, a CCJ. Todos os pontos do plano foram alcançados, uma vez que as relatorias ficaram com os senadores César Borges (PFL/BA) (relator na CAE), Roseana Sarney (PFL/MA) (relatora na CE) e Rodolpho Tourinho (PFL/BA) (relator na CAS e na CCJ). Ademais, corrobora o sucesso do plano de aprovação o fato de que o PLS 213/2003 passou e foi aprovado por todas as comissões: pela CAE, onde recebeceu cinco emendas; pela CE, onde recebeceu duas emendas; pela CAS, onde recebeceu cinquenta e uma emendas; e pela CCJ, onde recebeceu um Substitutivo, em 9 de novembro de 2005. Enquanto relatores nas comissões, as atuações dos senadores não se limitaram a redigir os relatórios favoráveis, mas incluíram a função de articular – juntamente com o sempre presente Senador Paulo Paim (PT/RS) – os acordos de

bastidores e ajustes necessários para a aprovação célere, evitando máculas às propostas centrais do Estatuto, tais como as ações afirmativas concretamente estabelecidas em diversas áreas e a questão do direito às terras aos remanescentes de quilombos.

Os relatores buscaram aperfeiçoar o PLS 213/2003 à medida em que elaboravam os seus pareceres, propondo emendas aditivas, modificativas, substitutivas e/ou de redação aos artigos existentes, sem prejuízo dos seus conteúdos ou objetivos. Por exemplo, na CAS, o relator do PLS 213/2003, senador Rodolpho Tourinho (PFL/BA), apresentou cinquenta e uma emendas ao projeto. Contudo, o relator não tinha o objetivo de inviabilizá-lo. Ao contrário, buscou aperfeiçoá-lo, apoiando e melhorando as proposições do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial, reconhecendo o racismo e a discriminação racial contra os negros no Brasil, bem como utilizando argumentos contrários aos que o senador Demóstenes Torres utilizaria entre 2009 e 2010 na tentativa de inviabilizar as proposições de ações afirmativas para estudantes e trabalhadores(as) negros(as) contidas no Estatuto, assim como inviabilizar esse Estatuto como um todo, na sua fase final de aprovação.[8] Conforme o senador Rodolpho Tourinho (PFL/BA),

> Conquanto o racismo seja dissimulado e não assumido, os dados oficiais mostram com meridiana clareza que os negros encontram-se em evidente desvantagem em quase todos os indicadores sociais. A esse respeito, recorde-se que a desproporcional participação dos afro-brasileiros nos contigentes de pobres e indigentes do país levou pesquisadores a declararem que, no Brasil, a pobreza tem cor. A condição de pobre ou indigente e negro, ao mesmo tempo, tem contriubído para reforçar o tom dismulado da discriminação mediante o argumento de que no Brasil não há discriminação contra o negro, mas contra o pobres. As estatístiscas oficiais, por si sós, demonstram o caráter falacioso desse juízo. Outra forma de dissimulação é o argumento de que o racismo não existe porque a ciência já demonstrou não existirem raças puras. Esquecem os que se valem desse raciocínio do fato de que o racismo como prática social independe do substrato da raça para se impor como discriminação contra os afro-brasileiros. Nesse contexto, a maior de todas as virtudes da proposição em análise é exatamente postular a superação do racismo mediante a criação de mecanismos de dois tipos: os que buscam reverter a condição de desvantagem socioeconômica em que se encontram os negros e aqueles que visam fundar uma nova sociabilidade, baseada na igualdade de todos, por meio do reconhecimento da enorme importância da contribuição dos afro-brasileiros para a nacionalidade. (Parecer/CAS n.º 1952, 2005: 02 e 03 *apud* Senado Federal, 2010).

Após passar pela CAE, CE e CAS, o projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial foi para a CCJ, em caráter terminativo, cujo presidente era o senador Antônio Carlos Magalhães (PFL/BA). Nessa comissão, o relator do projeto, novamente o senador Rodolpho Tourinho (PFL/BA), buscou melhorar ainda mais a proposta do Estatuto. Nesse sentido, visando aprovar a ideia de um Estatuto antidiscriminação racial, propôs-lhe um Substitutivo que não tinha como finalidade mudar os seus objetivos, mas sim aperfeiçoar a sua redação e corrigir algumas inconstitucionalidades formais, que não foram corrigidas em outras comissões. O Substitutivo foi aceito e aprovado na CCJ, em caráter terminativo, em 9 de novembro de 2005.

Dessa forma, as mudanças feitas no texto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial ao longo da tramitação nas comissões do Senado Federal fez com ele passasse de 67 artigos, quando da sua protocolização inicial nesta Casa do Congresso Nacional, para 85 artigos, após a sua aprovação em 9 de novembro de 2005. Vale destacar que o projeto original iniciado na Câmara dos Deputados tinha 36 artigos.

Da maneira como foi descrito até agora, o processo de aprovação do projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial no Senado Federal em novembro de 2005, até parece que ele foi tranquilo e sem discordâncias e, mais ainda, que havia apoios às propostas de

ações afirmativas contidas nesse projeto. Porém, não foi bem assim. Havia parlamentares oposicionistas contrários ao Estatuto, como o senador Demóstenes Torres (PFL/GO), e alguns senadores da própria base do governo que eram críticos ao projeto, como o senador Almeida Lima (PMDB/SE). Contudo, eles, entre outros, não tiveram fôlego e até mesmo coragem para contrariar o senador Antônio Carlos Magalhães (PFL/BA), como se verá a seguir.

### 3. O Senador Antônio Carlos Magalhães e o seu PFL

No início da década de 2000, como até hoje, havia toda uma pressão contra uma das principais propostas de ação afirmativa contidas no Estatuto, qual seja, o sistema de cotas para estudantes negros ingressarem nas universidade públicas brasileiras. Portanto, surge aqui uma curiosidade. Como foi possível aprovar o projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial em 9 de novembro de 2005 no Senado Federal, numa conjuntura cultural e sócio-política adversa a ele? A questão fica mais intrigante ainda quando se leva em consideração que os relatores desse projeto, em todas as comissões por onde ele tramitou, pertenciam ao então Partido da Frente Liberal (PFL), atual Partido Democratas (DEM). Vale lembrar que esse partido político não somente apoiou a ditadura militar, como historicamente tem posições conservadoras no que diz respeito a avanços sócio-políticos no Brasil. Por exemplo, foi este partido que, em setembro de 2009[9], entrou com a Arguição de Descumprimento de Preceito Fundamental (ADPF) n.º 186 no STF, questionando o sistema de cotas para estudantes negros e indígenas no vestibular da Universidade de Brasília (UnB). E mais: o senador Demóstenes Torres (DEM-GO), um dos parlamentares que mais se opôs à aprovação do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial em sua fase final (entre 3 de novembro de 2009 e 16 de outubro de 2010), já era membro titular da CCJ naquele período.

A resposta à pergunta acima não é simples e não poderá ser respondida com profundidade e/ou análises precisas neste momento. Todavia, levantamos a hipótese de que o senador Antônio Carlos Magalhães (ACM) – parlamentar extremamente influente na época e, por conseguinte, com forte poder de influência nas decisões de seu partido, o PFL, e para além dele, apoiou de direito e de fato[10] o projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial, não sendo este projeto contestado contundentemente neste período em virtude do apoio deste senador.

Embora tenhamos encontrado poucos indícios que possam sustentar a nossa hipótese, eles são tão fortes em nosso entendimento que não podem ser descartados. Um deles, por exemplo, pode ser verificado por meio da própria posição do senador ACM expressada na reunião da CCJ que aprovou o Estatuto no Senado Federal em 2005. Segundo o senador ACM, no dia da votação desse estatuto na CCJ,

> Este é um estatuto que faço questão de votar e falar. Ninguém mais do que eu tem a intimidade com os afrodescendentes da Bahia. Não é sem razão que sou presidente de honra dos Filhos de Gandhi, daí porque fico muito feliz em votar essa proposição (...) [do] senador Paim, (...), que tem sido um batalhador incansável nessa luta pela igualdade racial (...). É uma vitória do Senado, e vou tomar os votos exclusivamente por uma questão, eu diria, de formalidade. Porque, na realidade, vou contar todos os presentes como votando "sim". (Palmas). (CCJ/Subsecretaria de Taquigrafia/Serviços de Comissões/Excerto de Notas Taquigráficas, 09/11/2005 *apud* Senado Federal, 2010).

Pode-se verificar na citação anterior que o senador Antônio Carlos Magalhães (PFL/BA) praticamente decide por todos os senadores presentes a aprovação do Estatuto na CCJ quando afirma que "...e vou tomar os votos exclusivamente por uma

questão, eu diria, de formalidade. Porque, na realidade, vou contar todos os presentes como votando 'sim'". Ou seja, o senador ACM não deu espaço para nenhum dos presentes poder votar "não"; e conforme a lista de votação nominal desse projeto na CCJ, nenhum dos senadores presentes votou contrário a ele.

Outro forte indício desse apoio imprescindível do senador Antônio Carlos Magalhães ao projeto supracitado pode ser observado em um discurso do senador Paulo Paim (PT/RS) no Plenário do Senado Federal, em 9 de dezembro de 2009, quando este senador afirmou que o Estatuto tinha sido aprovado no Senado Federal em novembro de 2005 com o apoio dos senadores ACM, César Borges, Rodolpho Tourinho e Roseana Sarney. Segundo o próprio senador Paulo Paim,

> Senador César Borges, Vossa Excelência foi um dos relatores do projeto que chegou lá na Câmara. Vossa Excelência, o senador Rodolpho Tourinho; o senador Antônio Carlos Magalhães nos ajudou muito na aprovação daquele projeto; a senadora Roseane Sarney. Todos trabalharam muito Senhor Presidente![11]

Nesta citação verifica-se que o senador Paulo Paim (PT/RS) lembra e cita somente parlamentares do antigo PFL, atual DEM. Não citou nenhum outro parlamentar que o tivesse apoiado, nem mesmo do seu próprio partido, o Partido dos Trabalhadores, ou qualquer outro da base aliada do governo Lula.

Por isso, sustentamos a hipótese de que, sem a influência do grupo político capitaneado pelo senador Antônio Carlos Magalhães (PFL/BA), o projeto do Estatuto provavelmente não teria sido aprovado na sua primeira passagem pelo Senado Federal com um texto abrangente e teoricamente avançado, conforme reconhecia e afirmou o senador Paulo Paim. Além disso, pensamos que com certeza havia senadores do então PFL, e mesmo alguns da base do governo, que eram contrários ao Estatuto, principalmente contras as suas proposições de sistema de cotas para estudantes negros(as), assim como para trabalhadores(as) negros(as) nos setores público e privado, especialmente nos meios de comunicação. Só que tais senadores foram inicialmente intimidados em suas críticas ao Estatuto devido à influência que o senador ACM tinha naquele período. Vale destacar que o senador Demóstenes Torres (DEM/GO) já era membro titular na CCJ nessa época. Contudo, esse não se manifestava explicitamente contra o projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial, mais ainda, ele não era intransigente contra o mesmo como o foi nos últimos dois anos de tramitação do Estatuto, ou seja, após a morte do senador ACM.

Por outro lado, deve-se notar outrossim que esse papel atuante de parte da oposição[12] pró-Estatuto colide com a postura tímida do próprio governo Lula no sentido de mobilizar a máquina política governista para aprovar um projeto que, além de ser de um senador respeitado e influente do PT, correspondia teoricamente aos propósitos políticos do governo tal como estabelecidos na criação da Secretaria Especial de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial (Seppir) ou mesmo no projeto de lei 3627/2004, do governo Lula, que previa cotas nas universidades públicas para estudantes de escolas públicas, com percentuais para negros e indígenas. Cotejadas a postura dos senadores pefelistas baianos com a dos senadores petistas, excetuado o próprio autor do projeto, o senador petista Paulo Paim, não é insensato dizer que os primeiros foram decisivos naquela época e os segundos, tímidos, trazendo um apoio em geral apenas protocolar de apoio às propostas de ações afirmativas contidas no Estatuto.

Porém, a aprovação da proposta do Estatuto no Senado Federal não se deve somente ao apoio que o senador Paulo Paim (PT/RS) recebeu do grupo político ligado ao senadro ACM. A conjuntura sócio-política durante a primeira e a segunda versão das propostas do Estatuto, apesar de não ser excelente, não era extremamente ruim, pois vários fatores ajudaram a inclusão da questão racial na agenda política brasileira,

propiciando um clima plausível para aprová-lo. Entre os quais podemos citar: a) a marcha Zumbi dos Palmares, realizada em 20 de novembro de 1995, que pressionou o governo brasileiro a se manifestar sobre a necessidade de políticas de ação afirmativa para a população negra; b) a realização da III conferência mundial das Nações Unidas contra o racismo, discriminação racial, xenofobia e intolerância correlata, ocorrida em Durban, África do Sul, de 31 de agosto a 07 de setembro de 2001, da qual o Brasil foi singnatário. O documento final dessa conferência propôs que os Estados signatários adotassem políticas de ação afirmativa para combater o racismo; c) a criação da Seppir em 21 de março de 2003, ante as pressões dos movimentos negros, o que forçou a inclusão da discussão racial na agenda política brasileira; d) o ano de 2005 foi decretado pelo governo federal como ano da igualdade racial; e) a realização da Primeira Conferência Nacional de Políticas de Promoção da Igualdade Racial (Conapir) em 2005; f) a realização pelos movimentos negros, em 2005, de duas marchas em Brasília contra o racismo, "Zumbi + 10"; e g) havia uma participação ativa dos movimentos negros na esfera pública brasileira.

### 4. A Terceira e a quarta versão do Estatuto

Com a aprovação na CCJ do Senado de Substitutivo ao projeto do Estatuto em 9 de novembro de 2005 e seu envio à Câmara dos Deputados para revisão em 25 de novembro de 2005, encerra-se, como se verá abaixo, a fase de avanços ou ganhos e apoios decisivos ao Estatuto e inicia-se o período de crescentes ataques ao projeto, havendo a partir daí perdas de técnicas de implementação de ações afirmativas, entre outras.

O projeto chega à Câmara dos Deputados num embalo positivo graças à aprovação no Senado Federal, mas já no fim do ano legislativo de 2005. Portanto, sem tempo hábil para a sua discussão e/ou aprovação direta, visto que era preciso criar naquela Casa um ambiente de alianças favoráveis ao projeto como o que permitiu a sua aprovação no Senado. Porém, o ambiente da Câmara dos Deputados para a discussão do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial era bem mais delicado do que o do Senado. Não havia figuras influentes da oposição dando apoio ao projeto na Câmara, como um parlamentar com a influência de um Antônio Carlos Magalhães (PFL/BA). Havia alguns poucos deputados negros que apoiavam o projeto do Estatuto, principalmente petistas, mas que não eram militantes orgânicos dos movimentos negros, salvo o deputado Luís Alberto (PT/BA), embora fossem seus aliados. Entre eles podemos citar os deputados federais Carlos Santana (PT/RJ), Janete Pietá (PT/SP), Vicentinho (PT/SP), Gilmar Machado (PT/MG), Evandro Milhomem (PC do B/AP) e já citado deputado Luís Alberto (PT/BA), que levantaram a bandeira em defesa do Estatuto nessa Casa do Congresso Nacional.

O PLS 213/2003 do Senado passa a ser chamado de PL 6.264/2005 na Câmara dos Deputados. Por razões regimentais, a aprovação do PL 3.198/2000 pela comissão especial incumbida de sua apreciação não foi aproveitada para o PL 6.264/2005. Fez-se necessário instaurar outra comissão especial para apreciar especificamente o PL 6.264/2005, visto que a Câmara dos Deputados deixou de ser a Casa iniciadora e passou a ser a Casa revisora do projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial.

Ao que tudo indica, é a partir da aprovação do Estatuto em novembro de 2005 e, consequentemente, a partir do ano de 2006, que as elites culturais, sócio-econômicas e político-educacionais terão sua atenção mais voltada para o andamento do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial e atuarão contínua e fortemente, por meio de matérias jornalísticas, especialmente na mídia televisiva, além de lobbies e pressões políticas junto aos nossos congressistas, para inviabilizar a aprovação do Estatuto ou derrubar temas deste que lhes desagradavam, como, por exemplo, a implementação de políticas de ação

afirmativa, por meio do sistema de cotas, para a população negra. É o caso da: 1) Associação Brasileira de Emissoras de Rádio e Televisão (Abert), sob influência e representando os interesses principalmente das grandes redes de televisão, que, preocupada com a proposta do Estatuto de instituir cotas para atores e técnicos negros nos meios de comunicação de massa, passou a se posicionar cada vez mais contra o projeto aprovado no Senado Federal; 2) da Confederação da Agricultura e Pecuária do Brasil (CNA) e da bancada ruralista no Congresso Nacional, preocupadas com a questão do direito à terra dos remanescentes de quilombos; e 3) de acadêmicos e/ou intelectuais avessos a mudanças nas relações raciais brasileiras e à introdução de políticas de ações afirmativas para a inclusão da populaçao negra nos espaços de prestígio, mando e poder, como, por exemplo, Peter Fry, Yvonne Maggie, entre outros. Esses grupos imprimirão, nas reuniões das comissões e nos bastidores políticos do Congresso Nacional, assim como em suas respectivas áreas de atuação, uma forte ofensiva contra o projeto do Estatuto. Não bastasse isso, eles também darão apoio constante ao Movimento Negro Socialista (MNS), por meio de sua divulgação e assessoramento, para atacarem o Estatuto. Vale acrescentar que esse movimento foi fundado em 13 de maio de 2006 para lutar contra o Estatuto da Igualdade Racial, assim como contra qualquer forma de ação afirmativa. Segundo um dos documentos desse movimento:

> Constituído em 13 de maio de 2006 em São Paulo, o comitê por um Movimento Negro Socialista (MNS) é fruto da discussão entre antigos militantes socialistas e negros preocupados com o rumo da discussão sobre o combate ao racismo, a relação com a luta de classes e a luta pela libertação de todo povo oprimido no Brasil e no mundo. (...). Dentre as campanhas deliberadas pela Reunião de 13 de maio, a luta contra o estatuto da igualdade racial ganhou enorme destaque na mídia e nas massas, a firme posição do MNS de combater as políticas de "ação afirmativa" e a política de cotas raciais e constituição de uma frente ampla com intelectuais, artistas, outros movimentos negros, sindicalistas etc.[13]

Pode-se observar que o Movimento Negro Socialista (MNS) foi fundado seis meses após a aprovação do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial no Senado. Este foi aprovado em novembro de 2005 e aquele foi fundado em maio de 2006. Quase que instantaneamente um dos seus membros, José Carlos Miranda, foi alçado a líder do movimento negro brasileiro, passando a ter espaço frequente na grande mídia televisiva para se manifestar contra o Estatuto da Igualdade Racial e o sistema de cotas para estudantes negros(as) como, por exemplo, na edição de 18 de novembro de 2007 do Jornal Nacional da Rede Globo de Televisão, quando ele, a professora Yvonne Maggie da Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), entre outros indivíduos, foram entregar ao Presidente da Câmara dos Deputados o livro *Divisões perigosas. Políticas racias no Brasil Contemporâneo*[14] (2007), organizado pelos intelectuais Peter Fry, Yvonne Maggie, Marcos Chor Maio, Simone Monteiro e Ricardo Ventura dos Santos.[15]

Deve-se fazer aqui uma pequena digressão. Nessa época o Presidente da Câmara dos Deputados era o deputado federal Arlindo Chinaglia (PT/SP), o qual recebeu em seu gabinete esse grupo de pessoas contrárias ao Estatuto da Igualdade Racial e posou ao lado de alguns desses manifestantes, entre os quais José Carlos Miranda, com o livro supracitado na mão e sorrindo para que jornalistas e/ou fotógrafos registrassem aquela cerimônia.[16]

Entretanto, em uma outra reportagem anterior do Jornal Nacional da Rede Globo de Televisão, de 27 de setembro de 2007, tinha ido ao ar uma matéria mostrando representantes de organizações dos movimentos negros que eram favoráveis ao Estatuto, no gabinete desse mesmo Presidente da Câmara. Entre eles estava Dojival

Vieira, jornalista responsável pela *Afropress – Agência de Informação Multiétnica* e Presidente da *ONG ABC Sem Racismo*. Eles tinham ido ao Congresso Nacional para pedir apoio à aprovação do projeto do senador Paulo Paim (PT/RS), mas a recepção destes não foi tão cordial. Ao contrário, foi ríspida. O então Presidente da Câmara dos Deputados, Arlindo Chinaglia (PT/SP), se irritou com os ativistas negros, porque esses fizeram um "grito de guerra" em apoio ao Estatuto em seu gabinete, que foi: "Estatuto da Igualdade Racial, já! Cotas nas universidades, já! Vamos à luta, já!". Indignado com essa ação dos movimentos negros em seu gabinete, Arlindo Chinaglia (PT/SP), em voz alta e irritada, ameaçou: "Isso nunca aconteceu! vocês têm aqui um aliado,[17] mas com essa atitude vocês estão atrapalhando! **Isso vai ser usado contra vocês na reunião do colégio dos líderes, que vai ser noticiado e é bom que seja noticiado o fato e a minha opinião"**. Um dos ativistas, buscando apaziguar os ânimos fala logo em seguida: "Deputado, creio que houve um equívoco". O Presidente Chinaglia retruca com veemência: "**Não! Não houve equívoco, não! Vocês erraram!**"[18]

Ante o que os fatos indicam, o Presidente da Câmara dos Deputados nessa época, Arlindo Chinaglia (PT/SP), eleito com o aval e o suporte do governo Lula, não tinha apreço pelo projeto do Estatuto. O governo Lula sabia disso, porque ficou visível quando o Presidente da Câmara não somente foi cordial com o grupo contrário ao projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial, como foi no mínimo indelicado com os representantes de organizações dos movimentos negros que apoiavam esse Estatuto quando ele tramitava na Câmara dos Deputados. Talvez o mais grave seja perceber que o Presidente da Câmara era do próprio partido do Presidente da República. Esse discursivamente afirmava que dava apoio ao projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial. Mas o apoio era, ao que tudo indica, somente protocolar, visto que, mesmo o governo Lula tendo na presidência da Câmara dos Deputados mais que um aliado político, que fora eleito com o suporte imprescindível da base de apoio à administração Lula nessa Casa do Congresso Nacional, esse governo ou mesmo diretamene o Presidente da República não utilizou o poder de influência do Presidente da Câmara dos Deputados, dentro das regras do jogo político ou do regimento dessa Casa, para aprovar a versão do projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial que continha políticas de ação afirmativa para a população negra. Estatuto esse cuja autoria era de um dos senadores do partido dos Presidentes da Câmara dos Deputados e da República, e que era, teoricamente, de interesse do governo ou no mínimo da Seppir.

Por meio de algumas ações de alguns importantes membros do Partido dos Trabalhadores que ocupavam cargos estratégicos para a governabilidade da administração Lula ou para a defesa dos interesses desse governo, assim como da conivência desse governo com tais ações, é plausível levantar a hipótese de que o apoio dessa administração ao projeto do Estatuto e às políticas de ação afirmativa era mais discursivo que prático ou concreto. Essa hipótese é ratificada e até mesmo empoderada ao se observar um episódio ocorrido no Senado Federal, quando, em 9 de dezembro de 2009, o senador Paulo Paim (PT/RS) fez um discurso no Plenário desta Casa, manifestando a sua indignação com a quebra do acordo entre o DEM e o PT para a aprovação do projeto do Estatuto no Senado.[19] Acordo esse quebrado pelo senador Demóstenes Torres (DEM/GO), então relator do projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial na CCJ do Senado Federal. O senador Paulo Paim falou e/ou discursou sozinho, não obtendo naquele momento o apoio ao Estatuto (ou a obrigação moral de apoio) do líder do governo no Senado Federal para que se cumprisse o acordo supracitado, menos ainda o apoio do líder do PT.

Retornando da nossa digressão, a entrega do documento supracitado ao Presidente da Câmara dos Deputados, Arlindo Chinaglia (PT/SP), pelos agentes sociais contrários ao Estatuto da Igualdade Racial era na realidade a continuação de uma estratégia que já

havia sido iniciada no ano de 2006. Nesse ano, aqueles ativistas entregaram ao Presidente da Câmara dos Deputados, que na época era o Deputado federal Aldo Rebelo (PC do B/SP), um manifesto contra o Estatuto e as cotas nas universidades, a carta pública ao Congresso Nacional, intitulada *Todos têm direitos iguais na República Democrática*, de 30/05/2006, assinada por 114 intelectuais, artistas e ativistas. Por meio desse manifesto, eles se posicionavam contra o sistema de cotas nas universidades públicas e o Estatuto da Igualdade Racial, o que representou um golpe forte na tramitação deste projeto na Câmara, mesmo havendo a resposta e a constestação àquele manifesto, por meio de outro, pró-ações afirmativas para estudandes negros e indígenas, assinado por 330 outros intelectuais e militantes antirracismo. Este último manifesto, cujo título é *Manifesto em Favor da Lei de Cotas e do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial*, também foi entregue ao Presidente da Câmara dos Deputados, Aldo Rebelo (PC do B/SP), em 3 de julho de 2006 (Santos, 2007).

O fato é que alguns grandes meios de comunicação, como os jornais "O Globo" e "Folha de S. Paulo", a TV Globo, entre outros jornais e redes de televisão, deram bastante repercussão ao gesto contrário ou, se se quiser, à retomada de ataques ao projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial, o que animou os parlamentares críticos ao Estatuto, até então relativamente tímidos, a se posicionarem de maneira mais explícita e mais contundente nesta segunda fase do processo de sua aprovação.

Assim, após a aprovação do projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial no Senado Federal, em 9 de novembro de 2005, os grupos contrários a esse projeto perceberam que o ataque às políticas de ações afirmativas para a população negra deveria ser feito principalmente no Congresso Nacional, com o apoio da mídia, especialmente a televisiva, que deveria destacar esses ataques. Não somente porque os parlamentares e os partidos políticos são sensíveis a determinados tipos de pressão, especialmente a da imprensa, como também porque percebiam que as políticas de ação afirmativa avançavam rapidamente nas universidades públicas. Em 2001 havia apenas duas universidades públicas que tinham aprovado o sistema de cotas para estudantes negros: a Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) e a Universidade Estadual do Norte Fluminense (UENF). Em 2002 foi a vez da Universidade do Estado da Bahia (UNEB) e em 2003 a Universidade de Brasília (UnB) também aprovou esse sistema. Esta última foi a primeira instituição federal de ensino superior a aprovar o sistema de cotas para estudantes negros e indígenas e acabou servindo de referência para que essa política de ação afirmativa começasse a se expandir entre as universidades federais. Segundo o então Secretário de Educação Superior do Ministério da Educação (MEC), treze universidades brasileiras tinham implementado o sistema de cotas raciais até a data 20 de novembro de 2004 (cf. Maculan, 2004). No ano seguinte, 2005, esse número aumentou. Segundo o pesquisador Valter Roberto Silvério (2005:148-149), sete universidades federais e nove universidades estaduais haviam implementado o sistema de reserva de vagas para negros e indígenas, até setembro de 2005. Além do mais, de setembro de 2005 a agosto de 2006, o número de universidades que aprovaram o sistema de cotas já havia aumentado significativamente. Segundo o caderno informativo do seminário "Experiências de Políticas Afirmativas para Inclusão Racial no Ensino Superior", realizado nos dias 21 e 22 de agosto de 2006, na Universidade de Brasília, até essa data, agosto de 2006, já havia 22 instituições públicas de ensino superior (estaduais e federais) com reserva de vagas socioeconômicas e étnico-raciais para alunos de escolas públicas, negros e indígenas (cf. Santos, 2007). Em dezembro de 2008, existiam 84 instituições de ensino público superior que haviam adotado algum tipo de ação afirmativa de ingresso, incluindo osistema de cotas (Santos et. al., 2008).

Quando os agentes contrários às políticas de ações afirmativas perceberam que não poderiam evitar a adesão a essas políticas pelas universidades públicas, ante a

autonomia universitária delas,[20] eles tentaram impedir a expansão dessas políticas fazendo pressão no Congresso Nacional para que este não aprovasse o Estatuto da Igualdade Racial. Isto é, se, sem uma lei que permitia ou obrigava formalmente a implementação do sistema de cotas para estudantes negros as unversidades já estavam adotando essa técnica de implementação de ação afirmativa, com uma lei que a pemitisse, conforme propunha o Estatuto da Igualdade Racial naquela época, teoricamente, essas adesões das instituições de ensino superior públicas às políticas de ação afirmativa para estudantes negros seriam mais aceleradas e contundentes. Portanto, aqueles ativistas anti-ações afirmativas direcionaram suas forças para o parlamento brasileiro visando impedir a aprovação do projeto do Estatuto.

Mas tais intelectuais envolvidos na organização do manifesto contra o Estatuto foram ao Congresso Nacional não apenas para apresentar seu documento e suas ideias. Também foram fazer lobby e assessorar alguns congressistas direta ou indiretamente com argumentos, estratégias e táticas para derrubar as propostas contidas no Estatuto da Igualdade Racial. Esse assessoramento fica visível ou explícito quando se observam as falas ou pronunciamentos dos parlamentares nas reuniões em que se discutiu amplamente o projeto do Estatuto. Se antes, ou seja, na época da tramitação desse projeto na Casa iniciadora, os parlamentares não usavam tão intensamente o termo racializar ou racialização, por exemplo, após 2005, na segunda fase do processo de aprovação do projeto do Estatuto, os parlamentares contrários começam a utilizar mais constantemente esses termos (e outros) cunhados pelos professores Peter Fry, Yvonne Maggie, Marcos Chor Maio, Ricardo Ventura Santos, entre outros (Fry et. al., 2007).

Assim, parlamentares contrários ao Estatuto passam a utilizar e/ou afirmar as teses desses intelectuais, entre as quais: a) raça não existe cientificamente e por isso não podemos ter políticas de ações afirmativas para a população negra; b) as ações afirmativas vão racializar o Brasil; c) vai haver conflitos raciais no futuro; d) o Estatuto da Igualdade Racial vai dividir o Brasil; e) somos uma nação mestiça; entre outras. Isso pode ser observado, por exemplo, em uma reportagem que foi ao ar no dia 13 de maio de 2009 no Jornal Nacional da Rede Globo de Televisão sobre a Comissão Especial da Câmara que havia se reunido neste dia para discutir o projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial. Nessa reunião, o Deputado Onyx Lonrenzoni (DEM/RS) fez a seguinte afirmação:

> O Estatuto que está sendo proposto por esse Substitutivo não vai estabelecer igualdade alguma Presidente! Ao contrário, vai se estabelecer um fosso numa sociedade aonde ele ainda não existe, mas que poderá existir. E nós não queremos ser parte da construção da racialização de um país que não é racializado.[21]

Essa reportagem do Jornal Nacional é finalizada com uma fala da antropóloga Yvonne Maggie, uma das mentoras do manifesto[22] supracitado e militante contra as ações afirmativas para a população negra e o Estatuto da Igualdade Racial. Comentando sobre a proposta do Estatuto, essa intelectual e ideóloga anti-ação afirmativa para a população negra afirma que: "O perigo é da gente tá, em vez de resolvendo uma questão da desigualdade e do racismo, está produzindo o ovo da serpente do ódio racial".[23] A fala da professora titular de antropologia da UFRJ aparece logo após a do Deputado federal Onyx Lorenzoni e finalizando a reportagem, entre outros motivos, para supostamente dar autoridade científica ao discurso daquele deputado naquela Comissão Especial. Ou seja, a edição da reportagem visava induzir os telespectadores a acreditarem que aqueles parlamentares avessos ao Estatuto da Igualdade Racial e às políticas de ação afirmativa para estudantes e trabalhadores(as) negros(as), o eram porque tinham fundamentos racionais e científicos que justificavam as suas posições.

Percebe-se, assim, a ação direta no parlmento contra o projeto do Estatuto, assim como a ação complementar da mídia televisiva de exibição predominante, embora não exclusiva, de imagens e discursos contra esse Estatuto.

Mas os ataques às ações afirmativas não ficaram restritos ao Congresso Nacional. Em 2008 a professora Yvonne Maggie, junto com outros intelectuais e ativistas, entregou ao Presidente do Supremo Tribunal Federal (STF), Ministro Gilmar Mendes, outro manifesto contrário ao sistema de cotas. O Jornal Nacional da Rede Globo de Televisão mostrou este evento na edição de 30 de abril 2008, data da entrega do manifesto no STF.[24] Além da função manifesta de questionar os vários sistemas de cotas que estavam sendo implementados pelas universidades públicas, esse novo manifesto também tinha uma função latente, qual seja, indicar ou literalmente ser um aviso para os parlamentares brasileiros que, se o projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial fosse aprovado no Congresso Nacional de acordo com o Substitutivo aprovado no Senado Federal em 9 de novembro de 2005, a sua constitucionalidade seria arguida no STF. Ou seja, embora o manifesto entregue no STF fosse explicitamente sobre e contra o sistema de cotas, havia nessa ação uma mensagem contra o projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial (pois este continha proposições de ações afirmativas para negros), a qual muitos parlamentares compreenderam. Novamente isso representou um golpe contra esse projeto, ante, entre outros fatores, o apoio da mídia explicitado na forma como a matéria foi divulgada na televisão.

A repórter que fez a cobertura do evento, Poliana Abritta, afirmou meias verdades ao induzir o telespectador a apoiar as ideias dos agentes sociais contrários ao sistema de cotas e ao projeto do Estatuto, mesmo havendo uma pesquisa de 2006, do instituto DataFolha, informando que 65% da população brasileira era a favor do sistema de cotas para os estudantes negros. Assim, a repórter asseverou que:

> A decisão de vir ao STF foi tomada porque aqui estão em julgamento duas ações contra a política de cotas. Uma delas atinge o Prouni, o programa de bolsas do governo federal que dá preferência aos negros graças às cotas. A outra contesta o mesmo critério usado nos vestibulares das universidades estaduais do Rio de Janeiro. O manifesto lembra que a própria Constituição proíbe os governos de criar distinções entre brasileiros.[25]

Da forma como a repórter Poliana Abritta informou os telespectadores, tem-se a impressão de que no Prouni há sistema de cotas somente para os estudantes negros, o que não é correto neste caso, visto que os seus beneficiados são estudantes de baixa renda, professores de escolas públicas, portadores de deficiência fisica, negros (pretos e pardos) e indígenas, conforme estabele a Lei n.º 11.096, de 13 de janeiro de 2005, que instituiu o Programa Universidade Para Todos. Segundo esta lei,

> Art. 1º Fica instituído, sob a gestão do Ministério da Educação, o Programa Universidade para Todos - PROUNI, destinado à concessão de bolsas de estudo integrais e bolsas de estudo parciais de 50% (cinqüenta por cento) ou de 25% (vinte e cinco por cento) para estudantes de cursos de graduação e seqüenciais de formação específica, em instituições privadas de ensino superior, com ou sem fins lucrativos.
>
> § 1º A bolsa de estudo integral será concedida a brasileiros não portadores de diploma de curso superior, cuja renda familiar mensal per capita não exceda o valor de até 1 (um) salário-mínimo e 1/2 (meio).
>
> (...)
>
> Art. 2º A bolsa será destinada:
>
> I - a estudante que tenha cursado o ensino médio completo em escola da rede pública ou em instituições privadas na condição de bolsista integral;
>
> II - a estudante portador de deficiência, nos termos da lei;

> III - a professor da rede pública de ensino, para os cursos de licenciatura, normal superior e pedagogia, destinados à formação do magistério da educação básica, independentemente da renda a que se referem os §§ 1º e 2º do art. 1º desta Lei.
>
> (...)
>
> Art. 7º As obrigações a serem cumpridas pela instituição de ensino superior serão previstas no termo de adesão ao Prouni, no qual deverão constar as seguintes cláusulas necessárias:
>
> I - proporção de bolsas de estudo oferecidas por curso, turno e unidade, respeitados os parâmetros estabelecidos no art. 5º desta Lei;
>
> II - percentual de bolsas de estudo destinado à implementação de políticas afirmativas de acesso ao ensino superior de portadores de deficiência ou de autodeclarados indígenas e negros.
>
> § 1º O percentual de que trata o inciso II do caput deste artigo deverá ser, no mínimo, igual ao percentual de cidadãos autodeclarados indígenas, pardos ou pretos, na respectiva unidade da Federação, segundo o último censo da Fundação Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística - IBGE.

Além disso, a repórter Poliana Abritta informa que é proibido fazer distinções entre os brasileiros de acordo com a Constituição brasileira, mas não informa que um dos ministros do STF, Marco Aurélio de Mello, não somente defende que as ações afirmativas são constitucionais, como demonstra onde elas estão abrigadas na Constituição Federal (cf. Santos, 2007). Ou seja, a repórter sai do seu papel de jornalista, com ou sem autorização da emissora que a emprega, e "incorpora" o papel ou o cargo de juíza, apresentando e julgando o tema que ela deveria relatar de forma imparcial. Assim, novamente essa rede de televisão faz o complemento da ação de ataque manifesto contra o sistema de cotas e, latentemente, contra o projeto do Estatuto, iniciada por intelectuais e ativistas contrários a eles.

Portanto, deve-se observar que estava havendo duras reações conservadoras contra as políticas de ação afirmativa que algumas universidades públicas federais estavam implementando para estudantes negros, assim como contra o projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial na Câmara dos Deputados, entre 2007 e 2009, e depois no Senado Federal, entre 2009 e 2010, por meio de várias táticas e estratégias. As reportagens da Rede Globo de Televisão que cobriam esse tema eram editadas para induzir os telespectadores a aceitarem o ponto de vista das Organizações Globo ou do jornais "Folha de S. Paulo" e Estado de São Paulo, qual seja, ser contra as políticas de ações afirmativas para a população negra. Aliás, algo que se fazia na mídia televisiva com habilidade e sutileza ou parcialidade explícita, dependendo da visão acrítica ou crítica do telespectador.

No geral, nas reportagens do Jornal Nacional que cobriam esse tema, a última pessoa que era entrevistada geralmente se posicionava contrariamente às políticas de ações afirmativas e/ou ao projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial. Mais ainda, havia a estatégia de se colocar cidadãos ou cidadãs negras falando contra tais políticas ou propostas políticas. Foi o caso de José Carlos Miranda, coordenador do Movimento Negro Socialista (MNS), que apareceu nas reportagens desse Jornal exibidas nas edições de 18 de novembro de 2007 e 30 de abril de 2008, fechando-as, e da estudante Esteffane Ferreira, do Diretório Central dos Estudantes da Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso (DCE/UFMT), que aparece no meio da reportagem sobre o manifesto contra o Estatuto, quando esse foi entregue ao Presidente do STF, afirmando que "o governo, ele (sic) deve investir nas escolas públicas desde já, desde o ensino básico, onde todas as crianças tenham ensino de qualidade independente da sua cor ou raça".[26]

Assim, a pressão foi impiedosa e constante contra o projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial (e, consequentemente, contra as propostas de políticas de ação afirmativa para a população negra) após a sua aprovação em 9 de novembro de 2005 no

Senado Federal. Esse cenário de pressão visto até agora se mantém até a aprovação final do projeto do Estatuto, em 16 de junho de 2010. Mas foi na Câmara dos Deputados, entre 2006 e 2009, e no Senado Federal, entre 2009 e 2010, sem parlamentares com o poder de influência de um Antônio Carlos Magalhães (PFL/BA) que compensassem a falta de apoio decisivo do Poder Executivo, (pois esse não determinou a sua base na Câmara, onde tinha maioria, que apoiasse a aprovação do Estatuto de acordo com o Substitutivo aprovado no Senado Federal em 9 de novembro de 2005 – e que continha proposições de ação afirmativa para a população negra), que conquistas obtidas no Senado, entre 2003 e 2005, foram perdidas.

Foi em virtude das "novas" pressões, táticas e estratégias dos agentes sociais contra o projeto do Estatuto, especialmente quando resolveram pressionar parlamentares por meio de manifestos, entre outras formas[27], que houve mudanças e perdas na versão final do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial, aprovada em 16 de junho de 2010.

## Conclusão

Ao longo dos dez anos de tramitação da proposta de Estatuto da Igualdade Racial no Senado Federal e na Câmara dos Deputados, houve muita discussão em torno de um tema: o racismo, suas consequências virulentas para a população negra brasileira e como combatê-los. Tema esse que, além de complexo, ainda é um tabu na e para a sociedade brasileira. Aliás, ao longo desse processo de discussão e aprovação do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial não encontramos nenhuma manifestação ou discurso direta ou explicitamente racista expressado pelos agentes sociais que eram e ainda são contra essa lei, dando a impressão de que de fato vivemos em um país racialmente democrático. Contudo, à parte do processo de aprovação desse Estatuto, encontramos alguns discursos de alguns desses agentes que demonstraram uma certa mentalidade escravista, como o do Senador Demóstenes Torres (DEM/GO), quando, em 3 de março de 2010, numa audiência pública no STF para debater a constitucionalidade do sistema de cotas para estudantes negros nas universidades públicas, posicionou-se contra esse sistema. Esse Senador, ao se referir ao nosso processo de miscigenação, e evocando aquele que é considerado o principal ideólogo do mito da democracia racial brasileira, o sociólogo Gilberto Freyre, afirmou que:

> Nós temos uma história tão bonita de miscigenação... [Fala-se que] as negras foram estupradas no Brasil. [Fala-se que] a miscigenação deu-se no Brasil pelo estupro. [Fala-se que] foi algo forçado. Gilberto Freyre, que é hoje renegado, mostra que isso se deu de forma muito mais consensual.[28]

Mas para descrevermos e analisarmos o decênio de maio de 2000 a junho de 2010, o dividimos, didaticamente, em dois períodos iguais, de cinco 5 anos cada, marcados por duas tendências opostas: a) o primeiro período – de junho de 2000 a novembro de 2005 – foi de construção e de avanços e/ou conquistas de direitos à população negra brasileira, assim como apoios decisivos para esses avanços, apesar de ataques à proposta do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial; e b) o segundo período – de dezembro de 2005 a junho de 2010 –, ao contrário, foi de aumento de ataques incisivos contra o projeto do Estatuto, com consequentes cortes nos avanços anteriores, especialmente cortes no que diz respeito às propostas de sistema de cotas para negros(as) ingressarem nas universidades públicas brasileiras, assim como para ingressarem nos espaços de prestígio, poder e mando do mercado de trabalho, especialmente nas empresas e/ou trabalhos da área de comunicação e mídia.

Nesse segundo período aumentou significativamente a reação contra o projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial, especialmente contra as suas proposições de ações afirmativas para a população negra. Não somente a mídia escrita e televisiva se posicionou explicitamente contra o Estatuto e, principalmente, o sistema de cotas, como dava relevância àquelas pessoas de posicionamento contrário às políticas de ações afirmativas, chegando, algumas vezes, a publicar matérias e reportagens sobre esse assunto apenas com essas pessoas, sem direito ao contraditório. Ou seja, sem dar voz àquelas pessoas com pensamentos e argumentos que apoiavam o Estatuto da Igualdade Racial.

Dessa forma, essa mídia alçou a líder dos movimentos negros um desconhecido desses movimentos, o cidadão José Carlos Miranda. Este criou, junto com outras pessoas, o Movimento Negro Socialista (MNS) explicitamente para lutar contra as políticas de ação afirmativa e, consequentemente, contra o Estatuto da Igualdade Racial. Dessa forma, passou a ter voz recorrente nas reportagens televisivas a respeito do Estatuto e/ou sobre o sistema de cotas para negros. Mais do que isso, não somente ele, mas a intelectual e professora da UFRJ, a antropóloga Yvonne Maggie, também tinha o seu lugar garantido na mídia para se posicionar contra o projeto do Estatuto. E não resta dúvidas de que esta e seus asseclas também assessoraram alguns parlamentares no processo de combate contra o Estatuto.

Nessa condição de algoz do Estatuto, essa intelectual-militante liderou um grupo de outros intelectuais, artistas, entre outros, elaborando dois manifestos contrários ao Estatuto da Igualdade Racial e ao sistema de cotas para estudantes negros ingressarem nas universidades públicas brasileiras. Tais manifestos foram entregues, respectivamente, aos Presidentes da Câmara e do Senado, em 30 de maio de 2006, e ao Presidente do Supremo Tribunal Federal (STF), em 30 de abril de 2008. Os movimentos sociais negros e os intelectuais que apoiavam o Estatuto e o sistema de cotas reagiram a esses manifestos, entregando outros a esses presidentes em resposta, onde sustentavam a necessidade do Estatuto e do sistema de cotas para que a população negra pudesse ser inserida na sociedade brasileira de forma igualitária (cf. Santos, 2007).

Mas os agentes sociais que lutavam pela aprovação do Estatuto, os movimentos negros e seus aliados, não tinham o apoio material e midiático que aqueles contrários tinham. Mais ainda, as organizações dos movimentos negros não tinham condições materiais de irem constantemente ao Congresso Nacional para fazer lobby ou mesmo pressionar os parlamentares brasileiros no sentido de aprovar o Substitutivo do Estatuto que havia sido aprovado em 9 de novembro de 2005 no Senado Federal, e que continha várias propostas de políticas de ação afirmativa para a população negra. Não bastasse isso, o governo Lula, apesar de fazer um discurso de apoio a esse projeto, na prática não operacionalizou esse apoio, visto que não determinou a sua base no Congresso Nacional para que apoiasse e votasse favoravelmente nesse Substitutivo. Some-se a isso o fato de que um dos principais apoiadores do Estatuto pertencente ao campo político-ideológico de direita, o Senador Antônio Carlos Magalhães (PFL/BA), veio a falecer em 2007, ascendendo politicamente o Senador Demóstenes Torres (DEM/GO). Este cresceu não somente como uma liderança no seu partido, mas também como uma das lideranças que mais se posicionou contra o projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial e as políticas de ação afirmativa. E na condição de um dos líderes do DEM, este último senador pôde ocupar o cargo de presidente da CCJ, avocando para si a relatoria do projeto do Estatuto, com o objetivo de inviabilizá-lo.

Assim, sem o apoio concreto da administração Lula, que não determinou a sua base no Congresso Nacional que apoiasse e aprovasse a versão do Estatuto que havia sido aprovada no Senado Federal em 2005, e contando com pouquíssimos deputados na

linha de frente para tal, principalmente os negros (que eram e ainda são raros no parlamento nacional), muitas políticas de promoção da igualdade racial propostas nos dispositivos do Estatutos foram cortadas, especialmente as de ação afirmativa.

Embora os cortes mais significativos na Lei n.º 12.288/2010, a do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial, tenham sidos introduzidos na Câmara dos Deputados, eles não pararam por aí. Quebrando um acordo entre o governo e a oposição, a relatoria da CCJ no Senado Federal mutilou mais ainda o Estatuto: cortou o pouco que restava de dispositivos que estabeleciam políticas de ações afirmativas para a população negra.

Mesmo com cortes profundos que, consequentemente, mutilaram o Estatuto, a reação a ele não parou após a sua aprovação no Congresso Nacional. Ao que tudo indica, os ataques às tentativas de implementação de políticas de promoção da igualdade racial no Brasil, especialmente ao sistema de cotas, não vão cessar. Ao contrário, vão continuar, como demonstra a postura da professora Yvonne Maggie, logo após a aprovação da Lei n.º 12.288/2010. Não satisfeita com essa lei, mesmo com cortes e perdas significativas para a população negra, essa intelectual escreveu um artigo intitulado "Uma lei para dividir a nação", que foi publicado no jornal "Folha de S. Paulo", no dia 8 de julho de 2010, onde pediu que o então Presidente Lula não a sancionasse. Segundo ela,

> Se o estatuto for sancionado pelo presidente Lula, será a primeira lei racial do nosso país, pois carrega no seu nome e em seus princípios "raça" ou "etnia" como critério de distribuição de justiça. Se o presidente Lula sancionar esse estatuto, gravará seu nome na história como aquele que dividiu o povo em raças e etnias. Não serão mais brasileiros ou trabalhadores lutando por direitos iguais, serão negros e brancos, afrodescendentes e eurodescendentes lutando entre si por direitos desiguais. É espantoso ver um Congresso fraco diante da pressão de grupos organizados que falam em nome do povo sem mandato algum (...). O presidente Lula não deve sancionar esta lei. Deve, sim, ouvir o coração da grande maioria dos brasileiros, que repudia a separação oficial em "raças" ou "etnias" e quer ficar unida na luta contra desigualdades, injustiças e racismo. (Maggie, 2010).

Essa pesquisadora afirma que a maioria da população brasileira é contra aquilo que ela denomina de "lei racial", ou seja, o Estatuto da Igualdade Racial e, é claro, outros tipos de ação afirmativa para a população negra. Mas ela não indica nenhuma pesquisa para comprovar a sua assertiva. Mais ainda, "esquece" da pesquisa do instituto DataFolha, publicada no jornal "Folha de S. Paulo" de 23 de julho de 2006, página C4, onde foi demonstrado que a maioria absoluta dos brasileiros, 65%, era a favor da adoção do sistema de cotas para estudantes negros nas universidades brasileiras. Ou seja, ela tenta universalizar um visão ou posição particular de um pequeno grupo conservador que objetiva manter o Brasil como ele é: injusto com a maioria da sua população, especialmente com os negros.

Além disso, ela constrói ideologia quando afirma que o Estatuto "será a primeira lei racial do nosso país", como se esse país nunca tivesse sido escravocrata, fundamentado em bases racistas, inclusive legais. Vale ressaltar que nem no período republicano este país ficou imune a leis racistas. Por exemplo, no início da República, o governo brasileiro publicou o Decreto n.º 528, de 28 de junho de 1890, que visava regularizar a introdução de imigrantes no país. Essa regularização contemplava, de fato e de direito, o desejo de importar apenas europeus brancos, uma vez que esse decreto se refere ao pagamento de passagens somente a estes (art. 7º) e também proíbe a entrada de negros e amarelos no país, como se vê nos artigos 1º, 2º e 3º:

> Art. 1º. É inteiramente livre a entrada, nos portos da República, dos indivíduos válidos e aptos para o trabalho, que não se acharem sujeitos à ação criminal do seu paiz,

> excetuados os indígenas da Asia, ou da Africa, que somente mediante autorização do Congresso Nacional poderão ser admitidos de acordo com as condições que forem então estipuladas.
> Art. 2°. Os agentes diplomáticos e consulares dos Estados Unidos do Brazil obstarão pelos meios a seu alcance a vinda dos imigrantes daqueles continentes, comunicando imediatamente ao Governo Federal pelo telegrafo, quando não o puderem evitar.
> Art. 3°. A polícia dos portos da República impedirá o desembarque de tais indivíduos, bem como dos mendigos e indigentes.

O espírito de tal norma, seletiva e racista, prevaleceu até a década de vinte do século XX (Lesser, 1994), materializando-se, por exemplo, na proibição brasileira de uma possível imigração de afro-estadunidenses que pretendiam criar uma colônia no estado do Mato Grosso (Lesser, 1994:84). Todavia, o impedimento da entrada de negros estadunidenses no Brasil, durante aquela década, não se limitou aos virtuais colonos. Ele também foi extensivo aos turistas estadunidenses de ascendência africana (Lesser, 1994:90-91), o que comprova não somente que o governo brasileiro estava disposto a impedir de fato a entrada de qualquer indivíduo de ascendência africana (ou negra) no Brasil, como comprova também a existência de leis racistas em nosso país.

O decreto supracitado, a sua materialização por meio do impedimento da entrada de afro-estadunidenses no Brasil, bem como a sua negação ou ocultação discursiva, demonstram o quanto de ideologia se usou e ainda se usa para manter as injustiças raciais no Brasil. Demonstra igualmente que um dos principais agentes sociais que militou e ainda milita ativamente contra as políticas de ação afirmativa, a professora Yvonne Maggie, usou e ainda usa e/ou constrói ideologias contra as políticas de promoção da igualdade racial.

Assim sendo, foi ao longo dos dez últimos anos e nesse cenário de lutas concretas, discursivas, simbólicas e ideológicas que se aprovou esse Estatuto. Mas foi também nesse cenário que houve cortes significativos no texto da Lei n.° 12.288/2010, implicando retrocesso em termos de direitos à população negra quando comparamos a versão do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial aprovada no Senado Federal em 9 de novembro de 2005 com a que foi aprovada em 16 de junho de 2010. Aquela previa técnicas explícitas de implementação de políticas de ação afirmativa, como o sistema de cotas. A versão aprovada deixou somente um dispositivo genérico e vago, sem estabelecer explicitamente quem são os beneficiários, qual seja o artigo 15 dessa lei, onde se diz que "o poder público adotará programas de ação afirmativa".

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## Notas

[1]Em março de 2004, aos 90 anos de idade, Abdias Nascimento foi reconhecido oficialmente pelo governo brasileiro, por meio de homenagem do então presidente Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, como "maior expoente brasileiro na luta intransigente pelos direitos dos negros no combate à discriminação, ao preconceito e ao racismo" (Semog e Nascimento, 2006: 115). Abdias Nascimento faleceu aos 97 anos de idade, em 24 de maio de 2011.

[2]O Partido da Frente Liberal (PFL), com ideologia de direita, foi fundado em 24 de janeiro de 1985. Em 28 de março de 2007 mudou de nome e passou a se chamar Democratas (DEM). Deve-se destacar que o PFL era uma dissidência do antigo Partido Democrático Social (PDS), que apoiava a ditadura militar (1964-1985). Este último partido foi sucessor da antiga Aliança Renovadora Nacional (ARENA).

[3]Lei que define os crimes resultantes de preconceito de raça ou cor no Brasil.

[4]Lei que proíbe a exigência de atestados de gravidez e esterilização, e outras práticas discriminatórias, para efeitos admissionais ou de permanência da relação jurídica de trabalho, e dá outras providências.

[5]Um dos argumentos do senador Paulo Paim para apresentar no Senado Federal o mesmo projeto que ele já havia apresentado na Câmara dos Deputados era de que, segundo ele, a pressão nas duas casas do Congresso Nacional poderia levar à aprovação do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial. Conforme afirmação do próprio senador Paulo Paim: "Quando eu vim para o Senado, eu reapresentei o projeto da Câmara. E foi com essa pressão nas duas Casas que nós conseguimos aprovar o Estatuto do idoso, que também foi de nossa autoria". Mais ainda: "(...) o Estatuto da Igualdade Racial está tramitando,..., nas duas Casas. Aprovado numa, ele vai para outra, e é apensado. Só agiliza, não atrasa". (cf. Notas Taquigráficas da Audiência Pública da Comissão de Assuntos Sociais do Senado Federal sobre o Estatuto da Igualdade Racial realizada em Salvador, 2005: 89 e 97 *apud* Senado Federal, 2010).

[6]PL n.º 3198/2000, publicado no Diário da Câmara dos Deputados de 16 de junho de 2000, página 32132. Vide também a justificativa do PLS 213/03, de 29 de maio de 2003.

[7]O senador José Sarney (PMDB/AP), antes da apresentação da primeira versão do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial pelo Deputado Paulo Paim em 2000, já havia apresentado PLS 650/1999, que "Institui ações afirmativas em prol da população brasileira afro-descendente". Ou seja, ao que parece, o senador José Sarney já era de posição favorável à temática das ações afirmativas para os "afro-brasileiros".

[8]Ou seja, depois que o PLS 213/2003 retornou da Câmara dos Deputados, que atuou como Casa revisora, para o Senado Federal, que atuou como Casa iniciadora.

[9]Deve-se lembrar que o ano de 2009 viveu um dos momentos de auge dos debates sobre o Estatuto da Igualdade Racial, assim como o mês de setembro foi o mês em que o Estatuto foi aprovado na Câmara dos Deputados.

[10]Não podemos esquecer que, ao voltar para o Senado Federal em 1º de fevereiro de 2003, o senador Antônio Carlos Magalhães (PFL/BA) suspendeu a suposta trégua política que havia dado ao governo Lula e passou a fazer uma oposição dura e até intransigente contra esse governo e seus apoiadores. Contudo, não o fez contra o projeto do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial, de autoria do senador Paulo Paim (PT/RS).

[11]Extraído de: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2nMOl6XRxg. Acessado em 6 de janeiro de 2011.

[12]Especilmente de uma parte do PFL, o grupo do senador Antônio Carlos Magalhães (PFL/BA).

[13]Extraído de: http://www.mns.org.br/index2.php?programa=movimento.php. Acessado em 3 de janeiro de 2011.

[14]Aliás, segundo o próprio livro, "os textos, curtos porém densos, foram publicados, em sua maioria, em jornais e revistas dirigidas para o grande público, e alguns deles foram especialmente preparados para este livro. Divulgados nos últimos quatro anos, quando colocados em conjunto ganham uma organicidade que ultrapassa os recortes específicos de reflexão que os caracterizam individualmente" (Fry et. al., 2007: 18, grifo nosso). Esta afirmação do próprio livro confirma que a grande mídia impressa divulgava naquela conjuntura (toda a década de 2000) maciçamente opiniões contra o Estatuto da Igualdade Racial e/ou o sistema de cotas para estudantes negros nas universidades públicas.

[15]Extraído de: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLCVfDn2K00&feature=related; acessado em: 3 de janeiro de 2011.

[16]Extraído de: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLCVfDn2K00&feature=related; acessado em: 3 de janeiro de 2011.

[17]O intrigante é que os líderes petistas, quando são aliados de algum grupo ou movimento social ou apoiam as suas demandas, geralmente "vestem a camisa" desse grupo, como, por exemplo, o Presidente Lula, que diversas vezes usou o boné e/ou vestiu literalmente a camisa do Movimento de Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST), entre outros.

[18]Extraído de: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WANyeEDWT5Q; acessado em: 31 de janeiro de 2011.

[19]Este acordo foi ratificado pelo Deputado Onyx Lonrezoni (DEM/RS) na ocasião da aprovação do Estatuto em 9 de setembro de 2009 na Comissão Especial da Câmara dos Deputados. Segundo o deputado federal Onyx Lonrenzoni (DEM/RS), "(...) Eu encerro dizendo

que os Democratas, guiados pelo trabalho que volto a enfatizar extraordinário do Deputado Antônio Roberto, inspirados pelo nosso Ministro Edson Santos, que soube construir o entendimento. Nós vamos votar sim aqui. Nós vamos votar sim lá no Senado. Nós não vamos apresentar recurso ao Plenário. Esta palavra foi dada ao Sr. Ministro e ela será honrada. E os Democratas a partir de hoje também apoiam e defendem o Estatuto que vamos aprovar numa homenagem à extraordinária importância no passado e no presente, e será ainda maior, da comunidade negra no Brasil".
(Extraído de:

http://imagem.camara.gov.br/internet/audio/exibeaudio.asp?codGravacao=00015266&hrInicio=2009,9,9,15,16,16&hrFim=2009,9,9,15,22,52&descEvento=Com.%20Esp.%20PL.%206264/05%20-%20Estatuto% 20da%20Igualdade%20Racial; acessado em: 06 de outubro de 2011). Vide também Santos, Santos e Bertúlio, 2011.

[20]Deve-se enfatizar que até 29 de agosto de 2012 nenhuma lei obrigava as instituições federais públicas de ensino superior a adotarem o sistema de sistema de cotas para estudantes negros e/ou indígena, assim como qualquer outro tipo de ação afirmativa de inclusão para estes grupos raciais nessas instituições. Ou seja, até essa data não havia uma imposição do governo brasileiro para que essas instituições adotassem tais políticas. Portanto, todas as instituições federais públicas de ensino superior brasileiras que adotoram o sistema de cotas até o dia 28 de agosto de 2012, o fizeram em função da sua autonomia universitária. Porém, a partir de 29 de agosto de 2012, foi sancionada pela presidenta da República, Dilma Rousseff, a Lei nº 12.711, que "Dispõe sobre o ingresso nas universidades federais e nas instituições federais de ensino técnico de nível médio e dá outras providências". Esta lei reserva de 50% das vagas ofertadas em instituições federais de educação superior para estudantes de escolas públicas. Desta cota de 50%, são reservadas para os estudantes autodeclarados pretos, pardos e indígenas, uma subcota "em proporção no mínimo igual à de pretos, pardos e indígenas na população da unidade da Federação onde está instalada a instituição, segundo o último censo do Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE)".

[21]Extraído de: http://jornalnacional.globo.com/Telejornais/JN/0,,MUL1125316-10406,00-DEPUTADOS+DEBATEM+ SOBRE+ ESTATUTO+DE+IGUALDADE+RACIAL.html. Acessado em: 14 de maio de 2009.

[22]Manifesto que havia sido entregue ao deputado federal Aldo Rebelo (PC do B/SP), então Presidente da Câmara dos Deputados, em 30 de maio de 2006.

[23]Extraído de:

http://jornalnacional.globo.com/Telejornais/JN/0,,MUL1125316-10406,00-DEPUTADOS+DEBATEM+SOBRE+ ESTATUTO+DE+ IGUALDADE+RACIAL.html; acessado em: 14 de maio de 2009.

[24]Como aconteceu com o manifesto entregue anteriormente ao Presidente da Câmara dos Deputados em 2006, este novo documento dos intelectuais contrários às políticas de ações afirmativas para negros foi novamente respondido e contestado por meio de outro manifesto pró-ações afirmativas, com 640 assinaturas, também entregue àquele Presidente do STF, em 13 de maio de 2008, dia da abolição da escravatura no Brasil, e cujo título era: *120 Anos de Luta pela Igualdade Racial no Brasil. Manifesto em Defesa da Justiça e Constitucionalidade das Cotas* (Santos, 2010: 52).

[25]Extraído de: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KbeQzceb828&feature=related. Acessado em 3 de janeiro de 2011.

[26]Extraído, respectivamente, de:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LLCVfDn2K00&feature=related e
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KbeQzceb828&feature=related; acessados em 3 de janeiro de 2011.

[27]Não se deve esquecer o fato de que o governo Lula, ao que tudo indica, não fez força para defender o Estatuto, embora em, termos práticos, a Seppir tenha sido mobilizada para tentar a aprovação do Estatuto da Igualdade Racial. Mas, segundo um(a) dos(as) deputados(as) federais negros(as) que entrevistamos em dezembro de 2010, os dirigentes da Seppir na época não tinham a dimensão histórica do que estava sendo negociado.

[28]Extraído de: http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/educacao/ult305u702198.shtml. Acessado em 10 de janeiro de 2011.

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**Unification through zombification:**
**Re-imagining Hispaniola's history from the 'periphery of the margins'**

**By Mariana Past**

> *La hora del zombí había llegado. Los cuatro puntos cardinales de Quisqueya estaban a la espera de que se diera la señal de avanzar por parte de los responsables de la misión unificadora. [...] Todo estaba previsto para comenzar el asalto anunciado, a la media noche, que por coincidencia del destino, había caído en el calendario, el martes 13, del año 2004. [...] Las provincias serían reorganizadas en departamentos para que se impusiera de nuevo la constitución universal del 1804.* (74-5)

In Joan Dayan's well-known essay "Vodoun: Or, the voice of the gods" (1991), she notes that Hispaniola, perhaps more than any other Caribbean island, has inspired "extreme invention" and "impressive paraphrase" ("Vodoun," par. 1). Haiti's popular religion is the source of this enduring allure, according to a Haitian intellectual Dayan cites: "'Vodoun is an all powerful trope. It appeals to everyone's imagination. It has been manipulated throughout history, used by all kinds of people. Everyone gets a piece of it'" (par. 7). Part and parcel of the vodou[1] belief system--which is embraced by the Haitian majority--is the zombie figure, understood as a human being rendered half-alive, half-dead by evil spirits who then abuse and exploit that person. For Haitians, zombies are a "powerful emblem of apathy, anonymity, and loss" (Dayan, "Vodoun," par. 45); in the Caribbean space, this interstitial life form often serves as a metaphor for postcolonial alienation. Conversely, since the early twentieth century the zombie has also been exploited in literary and cinematic representations depicting vodou as an exotic, occult, threatening and/or sinister force.

The concepts of zombification and utopia may not seem very compatible, at first glance. But in Félix Darío Mendoza's *La Hispaniola: el Reino del Zombí* (1999), the source of the quotation above, the island attains a state of liberation through its collective zombification, freeing-up traditional discursive frameworks and challenging class-based misunderstandings of Dominican history. Through a reappropriation of Haiti's revolutionary history, *El reino del zombí* radically imagines a unified island whose date of transcendent synthesis conveniently coincides with the bicentennial of the (1791-1804) Haitian Revolution, effectively remapping Hispaniola and its socio-political landscape. What carries out this transformation is a massive zombie army that has lain in wait for over two centuries, preparing for this moment. Both fascinating and problematic, Darío Mendoza's epic text spans the eve of the 1844 Domincan reannexation to Spain, the U.S. occupation of the island (Haiti, 1915-1934, and the Dominican Republic, 1916-1924), the (1930-1961) Trujillo dictatorship, and the anticipated arrival of 2004. This essay contends that Darío Mendoza, writing from what the prominent Dominican scholar Silvio Torres-Saillant describes as "the periphery of the margins"[2]—and participating in a new wave of diasporic writing—taps into the zombie's inherent capacity for transformation as a vehicle for responding to the violent social disconnections of colonialism that have long afflicted both sides of Hispaniola. In the pages that follow, I examine Darío Mendoza's unconventional construction of the zombie figure in the context of recent critical and historical work on Caribbean diasporic writing (including the application of trauma theory), with the goal of teasing out potentially productive new meanings of Dominicanness.

Today, well into the twenty-first century, zombies perform powerful work. The image of a zombie invasion remains a familiar trope in films and novels, particularly in the United States and Britain; swarming zombies can terrify viewers, entertain them, or both. But for Dominicans, who have historically linked their Haitian neighbors with vodou practices--evoking not only zombies but African cultural origins--the perceived threat of invasion has loomed especially large. Beginning with the Haitian Revolution, the Dominican national imaginary has harbored a race-based anxiety towards Haiti. Elzbieta Sklodowska explains in "Unforgotten Gods" that two decades (1822-1844) of Haitian occupation of the Spanish side of the island "magnified [the] threat of 'Africanization' and the contempt for the 'savage' neighbors"; these fears became entrenched in the process of Dominican nation-building (163). Sklodowska affirms that the cultural impact was enormous: "One look at the literature of the Dominican Republic reveals racial stereotypes ciphered onto a vast repertory of texts, mirroring the process of nationalist self-affirmation in terms that either excluded the presence of African cultures or relegated it to the [status of] undesirable" (163). Although the indigenous Taíno were essentially wiped out after the arrival of Columbus, an insistence on the "indio" as the foundation of national identity has long prevailed in both the popular imagination and official Dominican discourse[3], with blackness signifying the "other." Relatively few twentieth-century Dominican writers acknowledge the African roots of their culture; what have proliferated are fears of invasion/contamination and laments of a "paradise lost".[4] Given this history, what is at stake, then, when Darío Mendoza, a Dominican novelist in New York, deploys the highly charged zombie figure as a metaphor for all of the inhabitants of Hispaniola, proclaiming "la hora del zombí" in celebratory fashion on the eve of the bicentennial of Haitian independence?

Looking anew at the strident lines in the epigraph, we see that the "misión unificadora" pervades the island of "Quisqueya," which has special significance because Dominicans have traditionally claimed this title for the eastern side. Indeed, Dara Goldman, in *Out of Bounds: Islands and the Demarcation of Identity in the Hispanic Caribbean* (2008), argues that Hispaniola represents "the most salient and historically sustained dispute over insular territory in the Hispanic Caribbean [...] and each country has articulated a nationalistic vision that depends on the eradication of the other" (125).[5] Also worth noting in the quotation is that the heroic zombies, in their state of enlightened possession, are awaiting orders to begin the "asalto"; the question of how much agency they enjoy is arguable, and will be subsequently discussed in greater detail. But most importantly, the "constitución universal del 1804" refers to the original document that declared the independence not just of Haiti, but of the entire island, abolished slavery throughout Hispaniola, and guaranteed universal liberty to all citizens, who were to be defined as free, equal, and black.

To suggest that blackness and Dominicanness are not traditionally associated would be understatement. Torres-Saillant, with attentiveness to the fact that identities are continually being negotiated and shaped, discusses this paradox in his *Introduction to Dominican Blackness*:

> Dominican society is the cradle of blackness in the Americas. The island of Hispaniola or Santo Domingo [...] served as port of entry to the first African slaves who stepped on Spain's newly conquered territories following Christopher Columbus's eventful transatlantic voyage in 1492 [...] Blacks and mulattoes make up nearly 90% of the contemporary Dominican population. Yet no other country in the hemisphere exhibits greater indeterminacy regarding the population's sense of racial identity (1).

That the Dominican Republic is the only part of the Americas to ever be controlled by a black colonial power has neither been forgotten nor forgiven. Early Haitian efforts towards unification were viewed by many, but not all, Dominicans as unjust aggressions. In 1844, fearing continued colonization by their western neighbor, the Dominican elite faction negotiated annexation to Spain, who they felt had abandoned them; this group suppressed a pro-independence movement supported by Dominican peasants, who saw Spain as a white supremacist power (Torres-Saillant 15). A preliminary glimpse at several lines from Darío Mendoza's novel exposes a clear caricature of this nineteenth-century elite Dominican resistance to, and fear of, what was seen as an imminent Haitian invasion:

> ¡Apretaos los pantalones y no seáis cobardes, que se ha producido un levantamiento revolucionario contra la ocupación de los haitianos! ¡A combatir a los congoses! ¡Eliminemos a los zombís de Boyer! ¡La capital dominicana está encendía [sic]! ¡Viva la corona real de Su majestad, la Reina! ¡Que mueran los haitianos y los moros! (39) ¡A la lucha españoles! ¡Muerte a los invasores de Haití! [...] ¡No os olvidéis que los zombíes vienen del Africa! ¡Apreta'o los pantalones! ¡España ha dejado de ser la boba! (42)

This parody of official discourse shows Haitians equated with zombies, and zombies with Africa, the origin of blackness. Although this view ultimately *has* won out in official discourse and hegemonic contemporary culture, it does not within this text. *El reino del zombí* emphasizes that though the relationship between Hispaniola's neighboring nations is often tenuous, their histories have perpetually converged, largely due to the repeated atrocities and hardships suffered by so many on the island, which helped spawn large diasporas. Looking back to Hispaniola from abroad as a member of this diaspora, Darío Mendoza shapes an alternative vision of his island home, and, intriguingly, of the zombie he suggests can unite it.

**Theorizing zombification**

Recent literary criticism by scholars such as Lucía Suárez and Mónica Ayuso has applied trauma theory to discussions of Haitian and Dominican literature[6], in particular as writers of fiction have grappled with representing the horrors of what has been called *El Corte*, a macabre shorthand for the 1937 massacre of 15,000 Haitian laborers in the border region, which for decades went largely unmentioned in literary and historical works. Fictional texts by Edwidge Danticat, Julia Alvarez and Nelly Rosario exemplify the recent resurgence of interest in this historical atrocity; Junot Díaz and Viriato Sención also confront more general violence head-on. In his Introduction to Suárez's *The Tears of Hispaniola*, Kevin Yelvington notes that writers from the respective diasporas of Hispaniola concern themselves with challenging a politics of reception that often silences their imaginings revelatory of pain and trauma,

> at the same time as they confront invisibility and interpellate what they construe as salient aspects of 'their' past as part of a collective experience to which they are concerned to give voice. Their positionings reverberate as these writers construct a narrated diasporic life by setting, or trying to set, the terms of diasporic discourse with recourse to the past--oftentimes, a past inhabited by images of unspeakable violations that must somehow find a way to be spoken about (*Tears*, ix).

Living outside the island, in a transnational context, can facilitate the articulation of unspeakable experiences by diaspora writers. Suárez deems this group "pioneers in the

manner in which they address traumatic events in new ways that seek to transform them. [...] Diaspora writing offers a venue for rethinking the ways to remember and memorialize Caribbean transatlantic experience and history" (11). Darío Mendoza, mentioned in Torres-Saillant's *The Dominican Americans* (1998) on a list of the twenty-two most active and promising writers, participates in this emerging trend, wherein "a small but active population of Dominicans living outside their country, primarily in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan in New York City, are 'asserting a new version of Dominican national identity that embraces the common experience of blackness that Dominicans and Haitians share as new residents of the United States," as Sheridan Wigginton describes (59). This seems to confirm what Torres-Saillant predicted nearly twenty years ago (and which formerly appeared optimistic), regarding the evolution of Dominican attitudes towards blackness as a growing number of diaspora members, having experienced new forms of racism abroad, became more sensitized to the problems of race on the island.

A literary tradition of representing, or witnessing, violence on Hispaniola is now much better-established by diasporic writers--whether through first-hand testimony of the massacre, fictional accounts, or other narratives reflecting cultural and psychological processes of acting-out/working-through. Arguably, a next step in the process of recovery from trauma could be learning to transcend troubled memories by cohabiting with (if not forgetting or fully accepting) the past and its monsters or ghosts. Writers such as Darío Mendoza are finding ways to move beyond the act of mourning by playfully ridiculing/parodying former perpetrators of violence. Instead of grieving over tragedy and brokenness, or attempting to recover that which has been lost, what seems to be surfacing is a recognition that the respective pieces of the past, however problematic and/or terrifying, may not cohere, but are inescapable. An exaggerated, more postmodern approach renders increasingly feasible such productive play with the past. For Darío Mendoza, the zombie embodies this form of play.

Before considering specific questions within *El reino del zombí*, it is fitting to regard the "Zombie Manifesto" (2008) by Karen Embry and Sarah J. Lauro, which discusses the wider cultural implications of this originally Haitian-specific phenomenon.[7] This at times unsettling essay explores the zombie figure more generally as "the non-human condition in the era of advanced capitalism." Theoretically speaking, we are all heading towards zombification, a terrifying fate. According to the "Manifesto," zombies evoke "the primary fear of being devoured [...], a threat posed mainly to the physical body, and the secondary fear that one will, in losing one's consciousness, become a part of the monstrous horde. Both of these fears reflect recognition of one's own mortality and ultimately reveal the primal fear of losing the 'self;'" (89). In *El reino del zombí* Darío Mendoza harnesses the zombie figure to convey Dominican fears of becoming culturally "lost," correlating to the nation's anxiety over being absorbed into a "horde" of blackness next door. And in a different sense, the aftermath of the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti exposes Dominican governmental worries about having (originally freely-given) resources be devoured by a permanent invasion of black Haitian refugees.[8] In any case, the "Manifesto" authors distinguish between several modes of zombification: (1) the original "zombi" of what they refer to as Haitian "folklore,"[9] which is "a body raised from the dead to labor in the fields, but with a deep association of having played a role in the Haitian Revolution"; (2) the "zombie" of popular culture in the U.S. and beyond, which "has morphed into a convenient boogeyman representing various social concerns" and "can also be a metaphoric state claimed for oneself or imposed on someone else," among other things (such as "capitalist drone" in George Romero's *Dawn of the Dead*, or "Communist sympathizer" in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*") (87); and, finally, (3)

the "zombii", a post-humanist metaphor signifying nothing less than a collective, consciousless state at the conclusion of capitalism.

While it might be a stretch to apply the "zombii" definition to Darío Mendoza's novel, the genealogical descriptions of the figure in the "Manifesto" are relevant. For example, Embry and Lauro note the prevalence of zombies as monsters in late twentieth-century films, observing that the figure "infiltrated the American cultural imagination" during the U.S. occupation of Haiti (96). Importantly, they recognize,

> We cannot take up the figure of the zombie without acknowledging its appropriation from Haitian folklore. In *Culture and Imperialism,* Edward Said warns that what may appear "to be detached and apolitical cultural disciplines" actually often depend "upon a quite sordid history of imperialist ideology and colonialist practice" [(Said 41)]. Indeed, though the Haitian zombi has been "cannibalized" by Western film and horror mythology, and though the zombie can therefore be read as a racist denigration of a "savage" people, there is also so much said by the power implicit in this monster's history; the zombie narrative is, in some ways, a reprisal of the Haitian Revolution and a story of slave rebellion (96-7).

Pointing to the unfinished nature of the Haitian Revolution, the "Manifesto" maintains that the zombi/e reflects this disappointment, and thus does not merit celebration, because it remains forever trapped, mirroring the continued suffering of the Haitian population today. By moving from *zombi* to *zombie*, the figure which was originally "just a somnambulistic slave singly raised from the dead became evil, contagious, and plural" (88). The "Manifesto" proclaims that the zombie in general "reveals much about the crisis of human embodiment, the way power works, and the history of man's subjugation and oppression of its 'Others'" (87). As we will soon see, in *El reino del zombí* Darío Mendoza capitalizes upon the interstitial zombi/e figure—neither alive nor dead, neither absolute victim nor agent, and perpetually capable of embodiment—to critique hierarchies of power on Hispaniola, as well as to mock infamous moments of historical oppression not only of Haitians/Africans/blacks, but also non-elite Dominicans, on the island.

In a local context, the zombie's roots are hardly nefarious, for in Haiti the figure is viewed as a victim, "deserving of pity more than fear," as Kaiama Glover reminds us in *Haiti Unbound*, the first extensive study of the Haitian Spiralist movement[10] (59). She proposes that the concept of zombification "effectively places the Marxist theory of alienation—victimization at the hands of an exploitative external agent—in a specifically Haitian context" (58). For Spiralist writers—and Darío Mendoza, I contend—alienation often represents 'a primary motivation for action' (45). Instead of merely being the "polar opposite" of the Indigenist, romanticized hero, however, the zombie perpetually harbors a dormant hero within (58); this possibility of reawakening, however slim, represents substantial hope for the Spiralists, and is sweepingly embraced by Darío Mendoza. As an in-between figure, the zombie's doubled nature eschews simple binaries and embraces tension and irresolution, Glover notes (68-9); thus zombies provide useful tools for reflection in the post-colonial context. The figure became a popular literary trope during the unhopeful period of the Duvaliers' dictatorship (1957-1986), functioning literally and allegorically in novels as "an ideal character through which to communicate [the reality of a stagnant, un-marvelous condition]" (59). Refusing exile, Spiralist writers adopted the zombie to represent appalling realities in a way that has been described as the "underside of the real maravilloso" (174)[11]. Although *El reino del zombí* does not reflect the same degree of writing from within "the belly of the beast," Darío Mendoza and his family suffered

considerably due to contemporaneous political crises in the Dominican Republic, experiences which led him to pursue exile abroad.

Beyond an emphasis on zombification, Darío Mendoza's novel evidences other features typical of the Spiralist aesthetic: for example, in place of the narrative unfolding in a linear way, temporality appears as a maelstrom, the past irrupts forcefully into the present, characters are unevenly developed, and there are abundant characters with twins/pairs/foils. The setting switches continuously and abruptly, zigzagging through time and space, from 1843 to the twentieth century, to the Haitian Revolution, and then back to Trujillo's reign. Historical heroes Toussaint Louverture, Henri Christophe, and Dessalines are mentioned, but they are figureheads, "distinguished zombies" amongst the masses, also impatient for their day to come. That Darío Mendoza most likely never collaborated with the Haitian writer Frankétienne, or either of the other founders of Spiralism, suggests that these narrative techniques lend themselves particularly well to representing shared experiences of violence and suffering on the island of Hispaniola, with all their fragmentation, uprootedness, and "unhomeliness." One key difference is that while Spiralist texts tend to be non-progress-oriented, non-heroic, and un-cathartic, Darío Mendoza's text has clear heroes--the zombies, or people; in addition, the authorial viewpoint is omniscient (if often ambiguous), rather more like the perspective of zombie films, which inhabit the counterculture of cinema studies. As Tania Modleski argues in "The Terror of Pleasure," films such as "Dawn of the Dead," featuring images of zombie invasions, both mock and resist deep-seated fears such as encroaching consumerism. The idea that Darío Mendoza would be unaware of this cinematic phenomenon seems unlikely; in any case, through the vehicle of a swarm/army of zombies, his *Reino del zombí* assaults bourgeois assumptions about Dominicanness and protests conventional wisdom about Hispaniola's history.

**A closer look at the zombie kingdom**

Questions regarding Hispaniola's history and its future provide a springboard for the novel. These queries, such as "¿Qué pasará cuando aumente la presión anti-inmigratoria de los Estados Unidos de América y Canadá, que afecta a los haitianos? ¿Podrán los haitianos continuar viviendo en una tercera parte de la Isla aun cuando en realidad son más habitantes que los dominicanos?" expose potential anxiety over the Haitian presence on the island. But the narrative reveals the author's sense of solidarity with the western side of Hispaniola. For Darío Mendoza the condition of zombification undoubtedly characterizes the eastern part of the island as well; his enthusiastic literary claiming of the particularly Haitian metaphor suggests a shift in perspective away from official Dominican discourse. Arguably, the Dominican Republic is still under the influence of having its official history deformed by the thirty-year *trujillato* (but to be sure, in the past a few Dominican writers have promoted more favorable views of Haiti, such as Pedro Francisco Bonó and Juan Bosch[12]). As Pedro San Miguel writes in *The Imagined Island: History, Identity, and Utopia in Hispaniola*,

> [The relationship between historiography and power] climbed to frenzied heights in the Dominican Republic during the dictatorship of Rafael L. Trujillo. The tyrant, hyperbolized, was seen as the very embodiment of the nation. [...] Publications during the Trujillo Era were massive, majestic. In and of themselves, these features functioned as validators of a memory that presented itself as absolute. The voluminous anthologies of documents and the ponderous histories of the time appeared to encompass everything, say everything, exhaust all possible truths (3).

These partisan historiographies helped produce enduring meanings for specific events, and shaped stories that few people bother to interrogate, ideas that persisted in spite of Trujillo's fall, and subsequent political transitions. San Miguel notes that "Notions of identity have proved particularly resistant to change. Those in power have made the delimitation of identity, codified as 'moments' in the essence of the nation and the State, a precondition in constituting *their* utopias." (4-5) Within the Dominican Republic, divisions between social classes have historically run deep, with the elites' perspective being the most anti-Haitian. So when Darío Mendoza brings attention to the fact that he hails from a non-elite, rural background, that experience is significant for reasons of racial acceptance.

What is less commonly understood is that the majority of Dominicans were not historically anti-Haitian, as Sara Johnson La-O argues in her study called "The Integration of Hispaniola: A Reappraisal of Haitian-Dominican Relations in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries":

> Dominicans who favored political and cultural alliances between the island's populations in the past were marginalized and silenced by governments that had a stake in fostering antagonism amongst the majority black populations on both sides of the border, so that a small, white elite could maintain their power. Dominican nationalism is deeply mired in anti-Haitianism and during the colonial period the specter of a black republic was anathema to the ruling class. However, abolition predates the formation of the Dominican nation and it served as a rallying cry for those who envisioned a new social order predicated on individual freedom. (5)

This attitude of *antihaitianismo* has been imposed upon, and ingrained within, the population by certain historians and elite rulers since colonial times, with some of the most strident texts appearing in the twentieth century, published by powerful ideologues such as Manuel Peña Batlle and Joaquín Balaguer, who was elected president of the Dominican Republic seven times. Johnson points out that while many Dominicans indeed welcomed the Haitian presence, these narratives are extremely rare, and the transnational cultural exchange that took place between the two countries at that time has been downplayed. Thus, the most visible Dominican representations of Haitians portray them as a perpetual scapegoat, or "the antithesis of a presumed Dominican national identity" (15). Richard Turits, in "A World Destroyed. A Nation Imposed: The 1937 Haitian Massacre in the Dominican Republic," also nuances traditional understandings of Dominican racism, describing the blended, peaceful mixed communities that existed along the border until the government chose to forcibly define the nation's boundaries. Turits contends that the massacre brought about such racist attitudes, instead of being caused by them; his work also renders Trujillo as more ideologically complex than most have imagined.

In a similar vein, Darío Mendoza strips away the problematic layers of Trujillo's legacy, effectively unpacking a heritage of hate. *El reino del zombí* features a fictional Dominican dictator who masks his private sympathies for the *vodou* religion (if not Haitians themselves) by seeking greater control of the formerly harmonious borderlands: "Trujillo quería el emblanquecimiento de la frontera. 'Para limpiar la sangre' de la raza africana, trajo a la zona a familias españolas, húngaras y judíos-alemanes para que se establecieran a lo largo de la frontera que divide a las dos naciones caribeñas. El gobernante sobornó a los inmigrantes europeos con privilegios de conquistadores" (58). Although Trujillo is portayed as sinister, he is also comically twinned with the evil François Duvalier; the bosom-buddy friendship of these dictators (whose reigns in reality only overlapped by four years) reflects the universal condition of suffering on the island, and their status as puppets of the United States government

brings an added layer of fiction to the play of horror. Suárez explains the significance of the notion of twins, or *marassa*, central to Haitian *vodou*: "*Marassa* is defined as spirit twins, or child spirits. They are inseparable, conflicted, and in solidarity. Could we not interpret the two nations of Hispaniola as a *marassa*? Could solidarity not be developing in the diaspora as stories and migration link the two countries' experiences, memories, and incessant returns?" (6)

For Darío Mendoza, this newfound solidarity is reflected through the evil dictator twins colluding about oppressive techniques, parading around pompously, and fretting together by phone about their reputations abroad. The novelistic Trujillo declaims the pressure to respect human rights: "Aquí no cabe eso de que hay que aplicar, por asunto de los derechos humanos, las lecciones de la Revolución Francesa" (69). That he makes this absolutist statement while stuck, naked, in a bathroom, demanding toilet paper from an aide, is entertaining. But Darío Mendoza's construction of Trujillo is more complex: unquestionably a totalitarian demagogue, complicit with Duvalier, he nonetheless has a soft spot for "brujería y vudú", and was even baptized into *vodou* in Jacmel by no less than Duvalier (87). It is a well-known fact that the "Generalísimo dominicano" had direct connections to Haiti: "[L]levaba la sangre africana en sus venas. Estaba jugando a las dos cabezas. Su abuela era domínico-haitiana o rayana, fruto de la invasión y la ocupación de Boyer que unificó la Isla de la Hispaniola por veintidós años" (57). This common bloodline between the Dominican dictator and his Haitian neighbors brings to mind the Glissantian concept of "subterranean convergence" produced by the "diverse histories in the Caribbean" (Glissant 66). As the Martinican famously muses in *Caribbean Discourse*, "The depths are not only the abyss of neurosis but primarily the site of multiple converging paths" (66). For Glissant, this "submarine unity" (borrowing Brathwaite's term) "can only evoke all those Africans weighed down with ball and chain and thrown overboard whenever a slave ship was pursued by enemy vessels and felt too weak to put up a fight" (66-67). The experience of having collectively suffered the Middle Passage underlies life on the Caribbean islands, in decidedly non-hierarchical form, with what Glissant calls "submarine roots": "that is floating free, not fixed in one position in some primordial spot, but extending in all directions in our world through its network of branches" (67). In a sense, the condition of zombification is fundamental to the Caribbean: as Dayan writes, "The zombi tells the story of colonization: the reduction of human into thing for the ends of capital. For the Haitian no fate is to be more feared. In a contemporary Caribbean of development American style, the zombi phenomenon obviously goes beyond the machinations of the local *boco*" (par. 53). In *El reino del zombí*, the bloodline linking the heroic zombies represents such a submarine root joining long-incompatible nations. Writing firmly against the grain, Darío Mendoza makes zombification both universal and desirable.

**Utopian apocalypse?**

Close readings of several passages from *El reino del zombí* convey the creative vision of Darío Mendoza, whose anticipation of the Haitian bicentennial moment seems all the more poignant in light of the internationally-supported ouster of Aristide in early 2004, and more recent destruction brought about by hurricanes and an earthquake. In any case, the optimism reflected in the novel appears immeasurable: a symbolic *vodou* ceremony at the very beginning morphs into an island-wide movement, with Haiti on the verge of being re-born into the world: "Todo estaba listo para la celebración de la entrada de un nuevo siglo, mancomunado con un nuevo milenio. El mundo entero esperaba. Haití formaba parte del mundo" (73). Aristide's fictional stand-in, a liberal

Catholic priest named Jean Bertrand Buitre, requests a final chance to realize revolutionary goals: "'Compatriotas, les ruego que me den un período más y les prometo que el cumplimiento de la independencia de Haití no habrá sido en vano'" (73). Indeed, the apocalyptic transformation has been mandated by the gods: "Todos los brujos, hechiceros, santeros y curanderos de origen haitiano, donde quiera que estuvieran, habían recibido la orden de los santos superiores de coordinar la reconquista nacional de La Hispaniola, en esa Semana Santa, para convertirla en una sola nación caribeña" (125). What emerges amidst the suspense is the idea that no more suffering can be tolerated: "La hora está cerca. El dominio de los zombíes tiene que ocurrir ya mismo. Haití no puede aguantar más. Esta es una consigna nacional e internacional. Desde los años de la liberación en el 1804 venimos siendo la misma podredumbre" (130). From here on, a sense of joyous foreboding prevails.

Readers subsequently witness the birth of an entire zombie army, embodied both literally and figuratively through the labor pains of a woman named Marie Rose (who originally was due to have twins). Her grueling yet ultimately promising delivery, assisted by the celebrated *partera* Doña Tingó Florence, is a central narrative thread. Florence's vocation reveals the difficulties of life on the borderlands: "Así iba ella por la frontera domínico-haitiana: Trayendo más gente al mundo, trayendo más esclavos a servir, más negros a sufrir. Sin proponérselo, quizás, iba la partera doña Tingó creando un ejército de zombíes" (164). Instead of two babies, Marie Rose gives birth to hordes of new zombies, flowing endlessly forward, ready to fight. These zombies, along with workers of old who were previously stooped and oppressed, now stand energetic, straight, and strong, belying their experience of enslavement: "Por primera vez en sus caras no se notaban las arrugas ni el sufrimiento de su encadenamiento a una esclavitud eterna. [...] Sus cuerpos galvanizados permanecían erguidos como soldados de un grupo élite, como una guardia imperial" (187). The zombie army is led by the queenlike *mulata* Joséphine Lafontaine, herself an amalgam of Haiti's colonial past, and includes putative "advisors" such as Bill Clinton, Jimmy Carter, Desmond Tutu, Charles de Gaulle, Mitterrand, Pompidou, Henri Christophe, Toussaint, Trujillo and Papa Doc (188). We also find references to members of the Diaspora, Puerto Rico, Mexico, Macandal, and to cell phones.

The apocalypse consists of a humorous accumulation of images. Hispaniola's neighboring nations fuse into one at 1:00 p.m. on Feb. 2, 2004: the Republic of Haiti, which is also referred to as the Isla de Quisqueya, Isla de La Hispaniola, and is directed by an institution vaguely called the "Superior Gobierno." Radical priest-Archbishop Jean Bertrand Buitre takes the helm as President, resembling a "diminuto Napoleón caribeño," a phrase which by extension likens him to the legendary Toussaint, himself equated with the infamous French emperor. This figure is now comandante of the zombies, but all the while, "en su interior él seguía siendo un zombí" (156). With the name of "vulture," evoking the predatory bird that swoops in to devour the flesh of formerly-living creatures, Jean-Bertrand Buitre thus harvests the horrors of the past, picking the bones clean, and leads his country into the future. His fellow zombies have reawakened to reclaim a new, liberated space spanning the entire island, in particular the problematic borderlands where the 1937 massacre occurred. Perhaps most significantly, one of President Buitre's first actions is to order the zombies to retake areas formerly off-limits to Haitians:

> Váyanse todos por esos caminos y andad con libertad. Cruzad la frontera y adueñaos de todo lo que encuentren porque La Hispaniola es una sola Isla. Y no se puede dividir. ¡La frontera no existe! Unanse todos con las columnas de zombíes de Jacmel, Dame Marie [...] ¡No temáis a nadie! ¡Los zombíes no pueden morir! [...] Os repito hermanos míos, que debéis marcha'os ahora hacia el este. Cruzad las alambradas

> por Jimaní, Dajabón, Elías Piña y Mal Paso. No os detengáis ante nada porque los zombíes no perecerán" (159-60).

Trujillo, still caricatured as Hitler-like, is anointed with rum and a series of local products designed to protect him from sickness and evil spirits, which also symbolically anchor him anew to the land and to popular traditions. If what happens to the historically controversial figure of Christophe is emblematic, villains from the past seem to have been purified through *vodou* transformations. The self-declared Emperor of Haiti has been rehabilitated to the status of "zombí destacado" (132), and is now in the clear: "Se purificó en el purgatorio de este mundo" (141). But contradictions persist: during the victory parade of liberated zombies, Christophe and Trujillo laugh together because they secretly co-signed a pact to build another monument to the 500th anniversary of the Discovery (184-5). Not necessarily repentant or contrite, they nevertheless march forward with the zombie army, apparently with the same goal, removing obstacles in their path (as Toussaint's last name, "Louverture," implies). A different example of a constructive transformation is the case of Jacobe, former secret police for Duvalier-cum-decent zombie; this character apparently represents the good/bad binary being transcended, in not-quite-Spiralist fashion. In general, Darío Mendoza seems to suggest that people can be rehabilitated, and troubling history transcended.

At this point everyone wants to become a zombie: "¡Quiero ser zombí! [...] ¡L'Hispaniole es une sole paix! ¡La Republique Dominicaine se rindió! ¡Vivre la República de Haití!" [sic] (188). The zombies, who have paid their heavy dues and cannot suffer anymore, are joyous, hardly traumatized:

> La multitud de Port-au-Prince gritaba emborrachada por la algarabía y la emoción. Los ricos y los pobres convergían en interminables columnas procedentes de Cité Soleil. La Mulate, San Soucis, Juana Méndez, Gonaive, La Tortuga, Gásima, La Romana, Catarey, Macorís, Guachupita, Lavapié, Bellair y Petion Ville. Todos querían unirse al júbilo de los zombíes. En Santo Domingo y Puerto Príncipe ocurrían las mismas ceremonias y los mismos hechos (182).

However unlikely this scenario might appear, the mere possibility of joining the two halves of Hispaniola through zombification is a novel and worthwhile proposition. By depicting the island as unified, Darío Mendoza challenges established elite Dominican discourse that has prevailed for decades. *El reino del zombí* reflects a shift in the diasporic Dominican imagination, signaling the possibility of change and the evolution of a more harmonious relationship between Dominicans and Haitians--if not in linear, progressive fashion. Violence is part of Hispaniola's history, and both sides of the island need to somehow heal. What seems certain is that the idea of making peace, and transcending twentieth-century evils, is an attractive one for a new generation of Dominican writers, writing out from under the enduring hegemony of the Dominican national discourse. Reversing the negative image of the zombie, Darío Mendoza reads the island reparatively, as one geographic body, simultaneously breaking down the binaries erected by Hollywood films. Instead of making the zombie guilty of "internalization of slavery and passivity" (Dayan, "Vodoun," par. 53), the diasporic Dominican writer creates a new category of enlightened zombie, a self-possessed zombie with (some) agency, proudly reclaiming the past, hungry for future justice. The ideal future of Hispaniola may well be as interstitial as the zombie itself, with living and dead--or present and past fragments and complexities--embodied in one.

But clearly, synchronized celebrations of Haitian conquest throughout the island are fictional ideals; the most improbable aspect of this apocalyptic utopia involves the

president of the Dominican Republic contacting the new Haitian leader at the dawn of the new day to surrender the "banda presidencial" and the keys to the Dominican national palace. A much larger problem is the novel's treatment of women, beyond Josephine Lafontaine, who is the female incarnation of racial unity on the island, and whose legitimacy as figurehead stems mainly from her corporeal perfection. There remains much to be said about the patronizing treatment of women in the novel: black women such as Josephine and Florinda may be powerful, but mainly through their sexuality (as objects of desire/creatures of wiles and seduction) or (such as Petronila) through being possessed by *vodou lwa*, unable to act independently. In this utopian vision of reconciliation on the island, unification comes racially and politically, while issues of gender remain at bay, with women yet to occupy a fully-formed position of citizenship and agency.

Another problem is potentially raised by the novel's concluding line: the possibility that Darío Mendoza's depiction of a zombie invasion reflects underlying fears more than hopes: "la penumbra, con su manto descomunal, venía apresurada a juntarse con los predestinados: hombres y mujeres de ébano, de caña y de melaza. La irremediable recapitulación llegó. La Hispaniola había *cedido* al reino del Zombí" (189; emphasis mine). The term "cedido"/"yielded" could be read negatively, as a foregone conclusion that the Haitians are going to take over. However, the emphasis placed throughout the novel on the positive transformation of individuals through the *vodou* religion seems to counter this reading. Darío Mendoza's underlying suggestion appears to be that an island historically divided should be, and will inevitably be reunited—at least symbolically—given that the imaginary of individuals who comprise nations do not remain static, and currently problematic relationships are a result of traumatic events in the recent past, but not historically determined. If at times a bit clumsily, this book both affirms and validates the strength of popular beliefs within Hispaniola and the Caribbean at large, with an eye to elevating the black presence throughout the Americas. Darío Mendoza implies that escaping a conventional (negative) state of zombification by embracing a new, more proactive zombification, allowing the full potential of the Haitian Revolution to be realized, is a collective responsibility. As his heroine Joséphine laments to her lover and fellow zombie leader, Jacobe, there is much to overcome: "Fuimos la primera nación negra en el Mundo. Aún así seguimos siendo los mismos esclavos" (143). And denial of the underlying black African roots on the island (and beyond) is the biggest travesty: "Lo que más duele, Jacobe, es que todos los caribeños llevamos la sangre negra detrás de la oreja y lo queremos negar. Por eso, la revolución haitiana fracasó" (145).

Many more questions come to mind. If *El reino del zombí* seems to imply that the entire island--all the cardinal points on Quisqueya--is trying to escape its collective condition of postcolonial zombification (through the celebration of said condition), then what is meant when the novel shifts far away from Dominican realities (as discussed in the "España boba" quotation), to emphasize more exclusively the Haitian perspective? Does this vision of a new, improved Hispaniola merely represent another, alternative, colonial beginning? A provisional answer could be that through the literary recolonizing of the island, we establish a new center of the Caribbean, impossible to miss on a map (as when the geographical insignificance of the fictional Trujillo was mocked by Hitler). The author's firm conviction seems to be that the Haitian Revolution was not allowed to flourish as it should have, people have inevitably and tragically suffered for hundreds of years, and the time has come to stand up again, looking towards 2004, and not to Spain—or ideals of whiteness—for solutions. Hence he rewrites the geography of the island, with phrases such as: "En esta fecha se celebra en El Alcajé, La Tortuga, Gonaive, Juana Méndez y Cap Hatien [sic], un gran evento.

Por su magnitud, el hecho cambiará el curso de la historia. Hoy se fusionarán, por los siglos de los siglos, las dos culturas, los dos mundos que habitan la Isla de la Hispaniola." (15) But why do Haitians apparently have no agency, except as a zombie army, breathlessly awaiting the call for a mass movement towards liberation? Does Darío Mendoza fall into the trap of hero-worship? It is difficult to imagine a satisfying answer, but what is important to bear in mind is the image of Haiti and the Dominican Republic being metaphorical twins--or at least entwined--like Trujillo and Duvalier, with the past inextricable from the present, and both sides of the island coming to terms with fragmented, misunderstood, and traumatic experiences. The question of race, long employed to distinguish the inhabitants of the respective halves of Hispaniola, is potentially solved by the collective zombification of all. Does Darío Mendoza's utopian apocalypse, then, point to a post-racial reality? This seems to be the case.

**Conclusion**

Darío Mendoza creates a fascinating vision of apocalyptic utopia revolving around the Haitian bicentennial, although he does not offer answers to the questions he sets out to address (besides those previously mentioned, he asks why such a rich island harbors the poorest nation in the world). In spite of its shortcomings, *El reino del zombí* exemplifies a significant new trend in diasporic literary production. The issues raised in the novel, and the transnational approach the author espouses, point in some necessary, fresh directions: emphasizing the enduring power of popular beliefs, rather than devaluing them; blurring the cultural boundaries between *lo dominicano y lo haitiano*; and representing the Caribbean space more regionally, rather than according to national boundaries. The "reino del zombí," then, embraces the duality of past and present in historical memory: being with, not completely transcending, the past, but going beyond the notion of recurring historical trauma. It remains unclear whether Darío Mendoza's exultant zombie army is guilty of what Glover describes as "utopian visions of postcolonial hybridization" (97), which gloss over lingering equalities. But the novel successfully contests capitalist exploitation of the Caribbean by re-appropriating an image that the U.S. procured from Haiti. That the ending is not fleshed out corresponds in some sense to the "zombii" concept whose future possibility is proclaimed by the authors of the "Manifesto": a "consciousless being that is a swarm organism, and the only imaginable specter that could really be posthuman" (88). "The zombii's dystopic promise is that it can only assure the destruction of a corrupt system without imagining a replacement—for the zombii can offer no resolution" (96). Darío Mendoza does not strike me as being post-humanist, but his vision of Hispaniola provides an agreeably imaginable specter[13]. As with works of Spiralist fiction, his novel's dénouement seems open-ended and impossible to pin down—spiraling towards a more hopeful future, it seems fair to say. Today, with post-earthquake good will toward Haitians fading on the Dominican side, unification of the island is not easy to envision. Yet in a context where the state has repeatedly triumphed against nation, as Glover suggests, "the very act of speaking can de-zombify the individual and mobilize the collective" (195). For Darío Mendoza, "de-zombify" becomes, instead, "productively zombi-fy." The realm of literature provides ways in which compelling alternative scenarios can at least be imagined, bringing rehabilitation and renewal to zombified societies that continue to evolve.

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## Notes

[1]The present study refers to the religion as "vodou," employing a widely-accepted spelling of the term. Dayan observes, "The orthography of the term 'vodou' is still somewhat vexed and variable. French authors fluctuate between Vaudoux, voudoo, and vodou, while many English writers use vodoun to distinguish it from the voodoo so evocative of black magic. [But] for most readers the French spelling is still more familiar, since it has been used by ethnographers as well as Haitian novelists" ("Vodoun," par. 60).

[2]In *The Dominican Americans* (1998) Torres-Saillant writes: "Despite the notable gains summarized here, Dominican literature in the United States continues to be a marginal cultural expression. The majority of Dominican authors write predominantly in Spanish for the virtually exclusive consumption of small literary circles in Dominican neighborhoods. These literary artists have very few publication opportunities. Normally, they have to finance, supervise production, and distribute their own books. They have hardly any chance of becoming included in mainstream literary markets or at least of attaining a level of prestige outside of their immigrant enclaves. In other words, Dominican writing remains generally relegated to what has been called 'the periphery of the margins' (Torres-Saillant 1991). Yet, one cannot help but have faith in the persistence, tenacity, and indomitability of Dominican writers as they continue to publish against all odds. A mere listing of the authors who in the last decade have committed their poems, novels, and short fiction to print illustrates their dynamism [...]. Whether or not their works prove enduring, the community will owe them appreciation for assuming the task of bearing witness to the inexorably traumatic immigrant experience of their people" (120).

[3]Dominican cultural production has historically emphasized the notion of *mestizaje*, which served to distance Dominicanness from blackness. According to Dawn Stinchcomb's *The Development of Literary Blackness in the Dominican Republic* (2004), "The national rhetoric that proclaimed the Dominican Republic devoid of an African past, promoted in the nineteenth century and reinforced during the *trujillato* in the first half of the twentieth century, inhibited the affirmation of African roots and the publication of texts on black themes by black writers" (86). Beginning in the 1960's, in the wake of the dictatorship, Afro-Dominican writers openly interrogate their invisibility and resist prevailing depictions of Dominicanness (87).

[4]A classic example of this rhetoric is found in Joaquín Balaguer's *La isla al revés: Haití y el destino dominicano*, first published in 1983. The book systematically demonizes and denounces Haiti as a barbarous threat, reflecting the official discourse on the eastern side of the island. Carlos A. Jáuregui comments on an illustrative quotation from the eleventh edition of Balaguer's text, in "El 'Negro Comegente': Terror, colonialismo y etno-política'":

> La nación [dominicana] es a un mismo tiempo amenazada y constituida por la otredad haitiana y su 'pavorosa ola de color.' Dicha enunciación devela no solo la configuración paranoica sino la genealogía colonial del ego nacional, así como sus conexiones históricas y simbólicas con la Revolución haitiana. Imágenes como la disgregación o absorción del cuerpo nacional que menciona Balaguer están imbricadas en más de doscientos años de Haití como una amenazadora dystopia salvaje y como una de las fracturas más importantes de la modernidad colonial" (46).

[5]Goldman suggests that in general, "insular geography acutely dramatizes the human experience of space" (8); she convincingly argues that within the Hispanic Antilles "islands act as a discourse machine that persistently produces authoritative identity" (210).

[6]Until recently, studies of Dominican literature have distinguished "Dominican" literature from "Latino/a-Dominican literature" (Suárez 11). Now writers from both the island and the diaspora are included in the category of "Dominican", underscoring "the intertextual, interhistorical, and intergeographic nature of [this literature]" (11).

[7]A dedicated scholar of the zombie phenomenon, Lauro also co-edited (with Deborah Christie) the collection *Better Off Dead: The Evolution of the Zombie as Post-Human* (New York: Fordham UP, 2011).

[8]For a detailed discussion of this issue, see Randal C. Archibold's article "As Refugees From Haiti Linger, Dominicans' Good Will Fades" in the Aug. 30, 2011 *New York Times* (online).

[9]Though the term "folklore" might appear reductive in the "Manifesto," that is not likely to be the authors' intent; what seems more problematic is the lack of nuance in their spelling of the term "voodoo."

[10]Spiralism was founded in Haiti during the 1960's by Frankétienne, René Philoctète, and Jean-Claude Fignolé.

[11]In general, Spiralist characters are "unreliable, unheroic, and underdeveloped, with the very concept of a protagonist repeatedly undermined. Traumatized, mutilated and fragmented subjects wander aimlessly through horrific landscapes, literally decomposing and recomposing themselves. Crying out, arguing, or babbling incomprehensibly, they apprehend the devastated countryside, the foreboding urban terrain, or more abstract spaces that are stifling, confusing or constricted. Some are zombies, others schizophrenics, others oddly cloned [...], doubled and re-doubled over the centuries [...]; all search endlessly for an identity and forms of escape" (Past, *IJFS* 15.1).

[12]Pedro San Miguel notes that the nineteenth-century historian Bonó reveals a highly nuanced view of Dominican history. Specifically, Bonó understands the opportunity on the part of Haitian president Jean-Pierre Boyer to have united the two sides of the island "on a more equitable and advantageous basis[:]...confederation" (48). This opportunity was lost, but Bonó still argues for "mulattoism" in the Dominican Republic, and more understanding towards Haitians—a project echoed in the twentieth century by Bosch, a former president of the Dominican Republic. Going against the grain of official Dominican historiography once again, Bosch ascribes the responsibility for the second, and more prolonged, Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic to the social and political weakness of the Dominican nation. Bosch suggests that the actions of Boyer were most likely grounded in the urgent need to allocate land titles to Haitian soldiers and officials from the late Christophe's military, as well as his own. Although Bosch seems to think that Dominicans were somewhat justified in feeling betrayed by Boyer, whom they had welcomed enthusiastically at first, he reminds readers that the Trujillo regime committed much worse atrocities without even pretending to follow established laws (232).

[13]Worthy of attention in a separate study are the parallels between Darío Mendoza's prose and Alejo Carpentier's (1949) *El reino de este mundo*, concerning the caricature of Pauline Bonaparte. *El reino del zombí* re-enacts the well-known Carpentierian episode involving Paulina and slave companion Solimán, but with the added dimension of a voyeuristic, jealous, adulterous young French priest who surprises the beautiful, headstrong, seductive, and capricious Anne LeBlanche being massaged, naked, by a muscled black man; the priest is ultimately ridiculed and ostracized, before being sent back to Europe (170). The title of Darío Mendoza's novel also recalls "La tremenda / hora del zombí y la rana," lines in the poem "Canción festiva para ser llorada" by Puerto Rican writer Luis Palés Matos, invoking "the Haitian Revolution's political and historical importance in the Caribbean" (Figueroa 63).

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**Ritual and Reason:**
**Negotiating Freedom in the Literature of Juan Francisco Manzano**

**by Matthew Pettway**

> desde el momento en q$^{e}$. perdí la alhagueña ilusion de mi esperanza ya no era un esclavo fiel me combertí de manso cordero en la criatura mas despresia
>
> Juan Francisco Manzano

African descendant poet Juan Francisco Manzano wrote a series of private letters to Domingo Delmonte, the director of Cuba's foremost literary gathering in 1834 and 1835. Conveyed by a secret network of Havana's cultural elite, the letters often touched upon private matters: marital discord, unsuccessful attempts to make contact with Delmonte and the desire to bring unpublished work to press. However, the most salient theme in the seven letters that remain is Manzano's desire to be free. The letters dating from 1835, reveal that Delmonte had entered into an unspoken pact with the poet: Manzano's freedom would be purchased in exchange for writing an intimate account of his life as a *slave*.[1] At Delmonte's behest, Juan Francisco Manzano – one of Cuba's most prominent nineteenth century African descendant poets – embarked upon writing what he termed *la verdadera istoria de mi vida*, that is, *the true story of my life* (Manzano, Luis ed. 304).

The representation of freedom in Manzano's letters and slave narrative bears witness to his struggle for both legal and corporeal freedom. In this article, I read Manzano's *Autobiografía* and the letters he wrote to Domingo del Monte, as freedom narratives that articulate the subjectivity of an enslaved poet whose personhood might have otherwise been disregarded.[2] The letters to Domingo Delmonte allude to the French Revolution's *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens*, where Manzano insists that *el esclavo* is also endowed with a natural right to redemption. In these rather unguarded writings, Manzano seeks assurances that his emancipation will be imminent. In contrast, the slave narrative is a far longer, but no less disjointed account, wherein Manzano credits the saints for having made his flight from the plantation possible. In fact, frequent appeals to the saints are the hallmark of Manzano's religious experience demonstrating a sustained belief in ritual performance. By summoning the divine power of Africa-based spirituality through ritual, the poet draws upon the transculturated figure of *San Antonio-Elegguá* to escape the Matanzas sugar plantation, thus empowering a new sense of self born of spiritual redemption.

My task is to compare and contrast disparate ways of perceiving and pursuing freedom and to examine the socio-cultural implications of both narratives in an early nineteenth century Cuban milieu. The letters and slave narrative analyzed in this article were roughly written around the same time. The letters date from 1834-1835 and the slave narrative – which secured Manzano's freedom – was delivered to the Delmonte group in 1836.[3] The letters constitute a sophisticated appeal meant to be both unobjectionable and persuasive, since Manzano sought to remain in Delmonte's good graces even while compelling him to follow through on his pledges. Conversely, Manzano's nocturnal flight from the plantation – an incident occurring some twenty-three years prior – can be read as a deeply personal religious narrative of defiance, signifying an appeal to Afro-Cuban ritual as a means to define and achieve freedom.

Although each narrative constituted a discursive site that was diametrically opposed to the other, both writings envisaged a prospective means for the enslaved writer to be free. For some members of the white Cuban elite, philosophy was the

embodiment of logical reasoning and order enshrined in the written word, whereas Africa-based ritual was closely associated with passion, superstition, and savagery (Ortiz 118-119; Luis, *Literary Bondage* 32-33). Comparing a story about freedom that relies on philosophical reason with another that appeals to Africa-based spirituality requires me to probe texts from disparate vantage points. To achieve a counter-hegemonic analysis of ecclesiastical discourse, my reading contemplates the cultural capital of Hispano-Catholic readers and that of the African descendant interlocutor.

There are a couple of questions that inform my analysis: How did Manzano negotiate different perceptions of liberty in the dialogue between the incompatible freedom narratives portrayed in his writing? In what manner do these stories of freedom invest the enslaved body with subjectivity? Mary Louise Pratt's notion of "intercultural texts" and Ángel Rama's "literary transculturation" are my points of departure. Pratt's "contact perspective", theorizes that colonial subjects are constituted through the reciprocal and habitual nature of their unequal relations to one another. The colonized (and enslaved) as well as the colonizer are studied in terms of co-presence, intercultural communication, intertwined understandings and sometimes-shared practices. The "colonial frontier" is not an account of unfettered European expansion but a place where dialogue, exchange and overlap create new possibilities for cultural expression. Indeed, as Pratt theorizes the colonial contact zone creates the conditions for transculturation (6-7).

In this article I posit "transculturated colonial literature" as a theoretical proposition meant to trace the contradictions, re-significations, silences and shifts in the aesthetic and ideological function of Manzano's texts.[4] Unlike Pratt and Rama, my analysis proposes that subversive religious representations destabilize the artistic and ideological rationale of nineteenth century Cuban literature. Manzano's slave narrative is read as a self-dissembling text existing within an intervening space, situated on the periphery yet palatable to a metropolitan readership. The negotiations within the text coupled with reader response enable transculturation, inviting disparate but equally plausible interpretations as to play a game of hide and seek with the reader. I argue that although Manzano's allusion to the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens* is a rhetorical device designed to inscribe him within colonial society, his greatest sense of subjectivity is constructed through Africa-based ritual where personhood is achieved by way of divine communion with *San Antonio-Elegguá*.

### 1.2 *La libertad* as Leitmotiv: Negotiating the Promised Freedom

Manzano's 1834-1835 letters to Domingo Delmonte constitute a meaningful, although fragmentary record of secretive communications.[5] Of the twelve letters Manzano wrote, Delmonte received only seven since the poet decided not to send off five of them. According to critic Abdeslam Azougarh, nothing is known of Delmonte's letters to Manzano (53). The missing link constitutes a resounding silence that must be accounted for. The reader is left to infer what Delmonte might have said and, in this way, Manzano becomes the enunciative subject so that his letters fill the void created by a silent white male voice. Manzano's remaining letters to Delmonte tell a story of social distance, stealth networks of communication and a relationship of convenience between the Afro-Cuban poet and his white benefactor. As the procurer of Manzano's freedom, Delmonte is both present and absent in the texts emerging as an editor, a literary tutor, a publisher, and most of all, a protector.

In the seven letters addressed to Domingo Delmonte, the words *la libertad*, *mi libertad*, and *la prometida libertad* (liberty, my freedom, and the promised freedom) appear four times and Manzano twice refers to *rescate*, my rescue. Manzano's letters

often attest to the tribulations that beleaguered him with calamitous suffering.[6] The poet justifies himself to his reader explaining his longing to be free in the letter dated December 11, 1834.

> Si me hubiera franqueado alguna vez con persona alguna que no fuera su merced en estos términos talvez no juzgaran algunos con tanta ligereza de mí, a cerca de mi amor a mi libertad. Prescindiendo de aquella propensión que por principio natural tiene todo hombre esclavo a su rescate, cuando echo una ojeada sobre el grande cúmulo de vicisitudes que marcado con golpes terribles los más preciosos días de mi juventud, tiemblo no por lo pasado sino por lo que misteriosamente aun queda en la urna del destino. Un ingenio un foetazo, esto tiene para mí cierto grado tan imponente que su idea sólo me estremece (sic) (Manzano, Luis ed. 123).[7]

The text is both an *apologia* and a condemnation of slavery. It is a carefully crafted defense of the author's pursuit of freedom that also denounces the inherently violent character of plantation slavery. The private nature of Manzano's correspondence with Delmonte creates space for less guarded statements seldom found in his poetry, which was subjected to the scrutiny of colonial censors and the gaze of a white readership. Any mention of the word freedom must be read as a subversive statement since legally Manzano was a *slave* living in a colonial environment where government censors objected to the mere use of the word *freedom*.[8]

Manzano's proposition is that every *slave* has an inherent predisposition for his rescue. The letter is forceful yet selective, replacing 'natural right' with the term *natural principle*. This may have been a way to avoid offending Delmonte's sensibilities regarding entrenched notions of white racial superiority since, in theory; 'natural rights' were reserved for white male persons. Headed by Captain General Miguel Tacón, the Spanish military government prohibited the exercise of intellectual freedom, closing the *Academia Cubana de Literatura*, the *Revista Bimestre Cubana* as well as censoring any literature that did manage to be published (Luis, *Literary Bondage* 34). Moreover, Africans and their descendants were subjected to plantation slavery; as such, they lacked bona fide legal protections given that the ameliorative measures of the 1789 *código negro español* were never implemented on the island (Knight 125).

The *slave* – codified as property by the Black Code – is empowered with the individual rights generally imagined for white persons. The paradoxical juxtaposition of "[the] man slave" destabilizes *slave* as a legal construct since it insists on the humanity of African descendant persons held in bondage. The implication of this resignification is subtle but profound: slavery is negated as the natural state of Africans instead being represented as a circumstance induced by multiple acts of racialized violence.[9] Manzano's words are comparable to Rousseau's argument in The *Social Contract*, "they are born men; they are born free; their liberty belongs to them; no one but they themselves has the right to dispose of it" (54). For Rousseau, slavery is fundamentally irrational because it obliges the individual to relinquish liberty in order that he might unconditionally serve another. Consequently, to be enslaved is to renounce one's own humanity (54-55).

Manzano conceives of the *slave* as an individual endowed with the same *right* to liberty as free persons. Thus, the poet avails himself of philosophical discourse in order to claim a right to societal belonging, i.e. a right to citizenship. The notion that the man slave has a natural inclination for freedom contradicts Marilyn Miller's claim that Manzano was exclusively concerned with his own emancipation because he considered himself superior to other blacks (422). Manzano writes enslaved persons into *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of Citizens*, promulgated by the French

Constituent Assembly, which states, "men are born and remain free and equal in rights" (Luis, *Literary Bondage* 55). By so doing, the Afro-Cuban poet speaks within a tradition to which he does not belong using borrowed language as a rhetorical arsenal. Manzano became knowledgeable of rhetorical devices when he taught himself to read and write making use of Don Nicolás' books of rhetoric (Manzano, Luis ed. 326). The implication is that colonial slave statues violate natural law since blacks are enslaved at birth, hence being forced to live in an unnatural condition.

Rousseau's discourse imagines slavery as the unjustifiable consequence of warfare between states. Conversely, Manzano's treatise is born of lived experience since his is a racialized body, subjected to slavery as a result of the captivity of his African ancestors. According to Miller, Manzano's enunciative power enables him to escape the legal and bodily constraints of slavery. By way of writing, Manzano is transformed into a veritable menace that would be 'mas malo que Rusó y Vortel' (worse than Rousseau and Voltaire).[10] For devout Catholics, both philosophers were regarded as loathsome defenders of liberty and equality (426, 433).

In all respects, Manzano's letter is well tailored for a liberal readership given that it demonstrates an admiration for the Enlightenment. In the letter dating from December 1834, Manzano enthusiastically endorsed Delmonte's idea of publishing his *meager rhymes* in Europe so that they might be made public "in the emporium of the European Enlightenment" (Manzano, Luis ed. 122). The Enlightenment is situated in Europe occupying a distant, almost unattainable space where Manzano does not belong. The Afro-Cuban poet was not written into the discourse of enlightened men; but he managed to conveniently appropriate its language and precepts to achieve his own emancipation.

For Domingo Delmonte – and other white Cuban thinkers – England and France exemplified civilized societies founded on philosophical principles (Luis, *Literary Bondage* 41). Delmonte espoused the reinstatement of the Constitution of Cádiz – known in Cuba, as *la Constitución de 1812* – a liberal constitutional framework that advocated individual liberty, freedom of speech, rejected absolute monarchy, and proposed democratic governance.[11] Delmonte's proto-nationalist vision, however, excluded the black and mulatto population as part of the national fabric. In a series of interviews with Richard Robert Madden of the Mixed Court of Justice, Delmonte promoted the end of the slave trade simply as a means to restore the numeric predominance of whites on the island, hence ensuring Cuba's salvation and future prosperity.[12]

Although members of Delmonte's literary group produced what was essentially anti-slavery fiction, one should not infer that support for such literature, in any way, embodied an egalitarian racial project.[13] In Delmonte's *social contract* Cuba would be a white Hispano-Catholic space, virtually cleansed of a black presence. Such a project of social whitening did not represent the sense of liberty and personhood envisioned by Juan Francisco Manzano. Indeed, Manzano does not long for nonexistence but a restoration of his embodied experience that even the implementation of the most liberal legal code could not achieve. As Manzano wrote to his white supremacist benefactor, "the excessive rigor" of his former mistress had forced his "risky escape" from the sugar plantation as a way of alleviating his "miserable body from the endless mortifications that he could no longer endure" (Manzano, Luis ed. 125).[14] For Manzano, freedom meant a need to redeem his wounded body and beleaguered soul by drawing upon the inherent healing powers of Africa-based ritual.

### 1.3 Ritualizing Escape in *The true story of my life*

Manzano repudiated the racial violence of the Cuban plantation system and sought to preserve his own life by running away.[15] A distressing sequence of events persuaded him to flee *El Molino* plantation: the impulsive and senseless beatings of the overseers, the maltreatment of his mother – followed by her sudden death – and the wanton refusal of his mistress to pay the debts she owed his family. Manzano's mother, María de Pilar, equipped her son to procure his own freedom and to bequeath the remaining money to his siblings. However, Prado de Ameno's recalcitrance denied Manzano his inheritance and his lawful right to *coartación* or self-initiated purchase (Manzano, Luis ed. 322, 332).[16]

Such a culmination of incidents proved to be unbearable for Manzano, who no longer trusted that as a faithful *slave* he would be duly rewarded (Manzano, Luis ed. 333). Manzano describes having his hands tied and being lead like a lamb to the slaughter in a passage where he identifies with the Christ figure. The author is portrayed as a wounded persona, an object of scorn and abuse who was so severely beaten that he bleed to the point of loosing consciousness (Manzano, Luis ed. 321). The inversion of religious categories is not ambiguous since Manzano rendered himself morally superior to his white mistress, who unjustifiably inflicted violence upon him.

Prior to the escape, the narrative signals a transformation in how Manzano saw himself, so that Jesus – the Lamb of God – is no longer the preferred metaphor for his affliction. Recalling how his mother tried to spare him yet another whipping at the hands of the overseers, Manzano also reveals a great deal about remarkable changes in the way he saw himself.

> S$^{or}$. Silbestre q$^{e}$. era el nombre del joben malloral este condusiendome p$^{a}$. el sepo se encontró con mi madre q$^{e}$. siguiendo los impulsos de su corazon vino a acabar de colmar mis infortunios ella al berme quiso preguntarme q$^{e}$. abia hecho cuando el malloral imponiendole silensio se lo quiso estorbar [...] lebanto la mano y dió a mi madre con el manatí este golpe lo sentí mi corazon dar un grito y convertirme de manso cordero en un leon todo fue una cosa [...] y me le tiré en sima con dientes y manos cuantas patadas manatiazos y de mas golpes q$^{e}$. llebé se puede considerar y mi madre y yo fuimos condusidos y puesto en un mismo lugar... (sic) (Manzano, Luis ed. 311-312).[17]

In this particularly disturbing passage, Manzano's mother – María de Pilar – struggles to save him from being detained in the stocks but is violently rebuked by the overseer for having interfered. This is an especially appalling scene, since María de Pilar – a much-respected domestic servant – had never been beaten before the death of her husband. *La historia de mi vida* reads as a coming of age story, where a shift in gender roles explains the intensity and immediacy of Manzano's passionate response. The young male persona perceives a need to protect his widowed mother in that way acting as a surrogate for his deceased father.[18]

Critics have frequently described Juan Francisco Manzano as the archetypical slave, a mulatto poet whose learning to read and write was characteristic of an affinity for Hispano-Catholic cultural values. Miriam DeCosta-Willis casts Manzano as a "tragic mulatto", a severely injured personality whose racial and cultural *in-betweenness* made him a social misfit in nineteenth century Cuban slave society (9, 11). In her view, Manzano was the quintessential victim of the colonial slave system, a deculturated and miscegenated house servant, whose espousal of Hispano-Catholic values rendered him a doubly Othered outsider. For DeCosta-Willis, Manzano's

publication of Hispanic literature was little more than a futile act of social whitening (9-10).

For William Luis, however, Manzano's slave narrative is patterned on African oral traditions that functioned as his original cultural background ("Oralidad y escritura" 34, 40). Even still, Luis believes that by embracing Western literacy and the conventions of Hispanic literature; Manzano abandoned his African heritage as a necessary concession to the dominant cultural aesthetic (*Literary Bondage* 65). On the other hand, Jerome Branch claims that Manzano's literature did not represent a negation of an African cultural heritage since the poet never had such a frame of reference to begin with (82).[19] Unfortunately, scholarship, which denies the portrayal of an African descendant cultural identity in Manzano, has dedicated little attention to the way religion is represented in his work. Although it is not my intention to tackle the question of Manzano's religious identity, I do believe that a rereading of Catholic motifs – especially representations of the saints – demonstrates that the text is not an unproblematic endorsement of Catholicism. The poet's representation of the spirit world addresses both Catholic and Africa-derived religio-cultural paradigms, thus inviting opposing yet equally plausible interpretations of religious discourse. Textual silences and liturgical ambiguities allow the reader to resignify what otherwise might be regarded as a Catholic emphasis on ritual. Manzano's mother is a case in point, since her ritual performance neglects both the Holy Trinity and the saints, instead demonstrating a recurrent reverence for the dead.

María de Pilar's reliance on ritual to assist her son is frequently disregarded as an illustration of African descendant spiritual awareness embedded in the text. On three separate occasions she beseeches her then deceased husband to bring an end to the rampant abuse.

> ...me llamaba «Juan» y yo le contestaba gimiendo y ella desia de fuera «hay hijo» entonses era el llamar desde la sepultura a su marido pues cuando esto ya mi padre ya abia muerto tres ocasiones en menos de dos meses me acuerdo aber visto [illegible word] repetirse esta Exena [there is a tilde on the uppercase *e*] (sic). [20]

The calling from the grave is a grief stricken cry meant to resolve matters left unsettled in the world of the living.[21] Contextually, Manzano' use of the word *entonces* can be rendered "for that reason" since it suggests a logical relationship between María de Pilar's *call from the grave* and the need to assure the physical and emotional wellbeing of her son. John Mbiti says that in traditional African religious thought and practice spirits of the deceased commonly serve as intermediaries between living persons and God. In effect, they constitute the largest group of intercessors in African religious life, conveying human requests, needs, prayers and sacrifices to God (69-71). I interpret María de Pilar's invocation of the dead at a time of personal family crisis as a determined effort to take hold of what Jualynne Dodson calls "collaborative power", thus transforming her from object into subject (53-54). This transculturated account illustrates the belief that devotees can summon the enhanced power of spirit beings to effect change in the material world. The reliance on ritual once again comes into view when Manzano prays to the saints of his devotion before fleeing *El Molino*.

Fionnghuala Sweeney asserts that Manzano's personal narrative emerges from within a Catholic religio-moral context:

> the existence of hierarchies in Catholicism [...] the tendency of these same hierarchies not only to mask the presence of other belief systems but also frequently to encourage their absorption and continuity beneath a common religious umbrella; [...]

and a tendency towards mysticism and/or the non-rational, with an emphasis on ritual (404).

As an example of what she calls masking (but could be more accurately described as transculturation) Sweeney cites the adoration of African divine spirits through the worship of Catholic saints because; "African religious belief systems are encoded in ostensibly Catholic practices" (404). For African descendants, then, Catholic religious hierarchy and ritual provided space for the reworking of Church orthodoxy. With regard to Manzano's portrayal of spirit sightings, Sweeney says that his text is "doubly othered" since his descriptions of spirit apparitions bring to mind "creolised African religious beliefs, or at best Catholic superstition" that was vehemently rejected by Protestant Anglo-Americans and used in pro-slavery propaganda (409).

Not only does Manzano repudiate his loyalty to la Marquesa de Prado Ameno, but also he envisions escape from slavery through the divine power of the saints. In this way, Manzano's narrative re-signifies the oppressive function of an ostensibly Catholic ritual – whose stated purpose was the deculturation of blacks – so that it becomes a means to attaining freedom for the Afro-Cuban persona.[22] Historian Gwendolyn Midlo Hall says that in large part, "fundamental religious beliefs" determine how people see the world so that conversion to Christianity was "the ultimate device of social control" intended to alter the worldview of enslaved persons (32-34).

*La historia de mi vida* illustrates Manzano's religious commitment in terms of his intense devotion to the saints. Although Jesus Christ and God the Father are occasionally referenced in the text, the emphasis is placed on the author's passionate and sustained fidelity to saintly personages. On multiple occasions, the poet appealed to spiritual intermediaries and displayed extraordinary devotion when he felt powerless before the relentless abuse of his mistress.

> pues llegaba hasta tal punto mi confianza q$^{e}$. pidiendo al cielo suabiase mis trabajos me pasaba casi todo el tiempo de la prima noche resando sierto numero de padrenuestros y ave marias a todos los santos de la corte celestial p$^{a}$. que. el dia siguiente no me fuese tan nosibo como el q$^{e}$. pasaba si me acontesia algunos de mis comunes y dolorosos apremios lo atribuia solamente a mi falta de debosion o a enojo de algun santo q$^{e}$. abia hechado en olvido p$^{a}$. el dia siguiente ... (sic)[23]

Manzano's devotion was such that he prayed the Lord's Prayer and said Hail Marys calling on the Virgin and all the saints to intercede on his behalf, in hope that they might ameliorate his day-to-day his circumstances.

The saints perform many functions in *la historia de mi vida*: they bear witness to Manzano's religious commitment, they intervene on his behalf, and they afford him an occasion to escape bondage. The poet's belief that the saints are well disposed towards him is evidenced in the section below that picks up where the other left off.

> todavia creo que ellos me depararon la ocasión y me custodiaron [the word *el dia* is scratched out] la noche de mi fuga de matanzas p$^{a}$. La Habana como beremos pues tomando el almanaque y todos los santos de aquel mes eran resados p$^{r}$. mi diariamente (sic). [24]

According to Manzano, the saints granted him the occasion to run away even as they also secured his passage from Matanzas to Havana. Running away is portrayed as an act made possible by divine power, but it must be noted that said power is ascribed to the saints not The Holy Trinity. More than any other scared practice, Manzano's

resolute commitment to the saints invites divergent readings about the slave narrative's representation of religion and spirituality.

Manzano's account of fleeing the plantation evinces a considerable familiarity with printed religious materials as well as his fondness for one saint in particular.

> tenia yo desde bien chico la costumbre de leer cuanto era leible en mi idioma y cuando iva p$^{r}$. la calle siempre andaba recojiendo pedasitos de papel impreso y si estaba en verso hasta no aprenderlo todo de memoria no resaba así sabia la vida de todos los santos mas milagrosos y los versos de sus resos los de las nobena de Sn. Antonio los del trisagio en fin todos los santos (Manzano, Luis ed. 335-336).[25]

Hagiographies were narratives recounting the piety, evangelical zeal, and the miracles performed by saintly personages and were intended as instructive material for those who had received baptism.[26] Manzano implies that the *trisagium* is not a prayer to the Holy Trinity but yet another appeal to the saints. Once again, his liturgical emphasis is placed, "en fin [con] todos los santos" (at last, [with] all the saints) so that God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are subsumed under the overarching category of the saints. It is unlikely that this passage represents ignorance of Church doctrine, given that Manzano was taught catechism at a young age (Manzano, Luis ed. 301). Instead, it is my argument that such liturgical ambiguity represents a deliberate conflation of Church doctrine with an Africa-derived conception of the spirit world.

For apparently political motives, Manzano's representation of God the Father is accentuated in his correspondence with Delmonte. The letters are silent in relation to the character and spiritual function of the saints who do not appear at all, much less as agents of divine intervention (Manzano, Luis ed. 121-129). Bearing in mind that in communities of color the saints also referred to African divine spirits (Sandoval 53), one can imagine why Manzano – wishing to be regarded as a good Catholic – failed to acknowledge their role in his letters to Delmonte. Manzano interprets the horrors of the *slave* experience through the lens of a Christian worldview in order to mitigate the prospect of black liberation as a perceived threat to the white Cuban elite. The enslaved persona's consolation is that God the Father has dealt him these humiliations. Thus, the letter rejoices in the endurance of a Christian soul, which is an unmistakable adaptation of one of the central themes of the New Testament. If Manzano is to be perceived as righteous then his mistress must be immoral, effectively inverting the black/white dichotomy within Hispano-Christian normativity. William Luis points out that the moral inversion of black and white would become one of the main techniques of the Cuban anti-slavery narrative produced by white liberals who borrowed themes from Manzano's work (*Literary Bondage* 3).[27] Manzano's portrait of the divine patriarch does not portray God the Father as a just Liberator but as a giver of tribulations that test the mettle of the Christian soul (Manzano, Luis ed. 121).

Richard Robert Madden's 1840 English translation omits Manzano's frequent reference to the saints thus effacing their indispensable role as purveyors of freedom.

> ...that I employed always part of the night praying to God to lighten my sufferings, and to preserve me from mischief on the following day, and if I did anything wrong I attributed it to my lukewarmness in prayers, or that I might have forgotten to pray; and I firmly believe that my prayers were heard, and to this I attribute the preservation of my life once, on occasion of my running away from Matanzas to Havana, as I will relate hereafter (Manzano, Madden ed. 95).

In *Suite para Juan Francisco Manzano*, Roberto Friol says that Madden's translation is replete with inaccuracies, poor equivalents and an apparent

misunderstanding of Hispano-Catholic cultural references (36).[28] However, since Madden himself was Irish Catholic, it is more likely that he replaced the saints with God the Father in order to preclude potentially problematic interpretations of unorthodox religious practice, Catholic or otherwise. Madden's rewriting of *la verdadera istoria de mi vida*, effaces the original religious inscription since his version faults Manzano for the misery he suffered. As Fionnghuala Sweeney makes clear, Madden's translation of Manzano's narrative is subjected to ideological conditioning removing language that might have been fodder for proslavery arguments about the irrational nature of Catholicism's emphasis on ritual (7).

Manzano's predilection for revering the saints colored the way in which he comprehended the divine. Though Manzano prayed to the most miraculous of saints, there is a particular saint his escape narrative mentions by name: San Antonio (Saint Anthony).[29] St. Anthony of Padua was a thirteenth century Portuguese Franciscan friar much celebrated for his evangelical zeal, frequent miracles, disposition for suffering and his eagerness to achieve martyrdom for the Catholic faith in North Africa (Guerreiro 9-10, 15). Born Fernando de Bulhões in Lisbon, Portugal towards the end of the twelfth century, he became a preacher, teacher and expert in Christian theology upon joining the Franciscan Order in 1220 (Guerreiro 8-9).[30] The Catholic Church reveres San Antonio for his wisdom, evangelistic zeal and virtue solidified by a Christian sense of moral clarity (Purcell 250). Persons devoted to St. Anthony of Padua consider him among the gentlest of saints. Devotees pray the novena, a nine-day series of prayers, beseeching him for protection against ill health and other problems while also asking for forgiveness.[31] In nineteenth century colonial Cuba, however, Catholic images commonly served as a façade for Afro-Cuban religious practitioners whose understanding of the saints far exceeded the meanings aligned with Church dogma. The saints took on the transculturated, yet Africa-based identity of divine spirits (Díaz Fabelo 11).

There are three primary reasons why I read Manzano's portrayal of St. Anthony as an allegory for *Elegguá*.[32] First, ethnographers have established that enslaved Africans and their Cuban descendants transculturated Catholic saints with African divine spirits. Manzano spent much of his early life on a sugar plantation; thus, he would have come into contact with African born enslaved workers who were the super majority on sugar estates.[33] Secondly, the poet's concern with placating this particular saint and his many efforts not to offend him implies a belief in the paradoxical nature of divine entities, something incompatible with Church doctrine.[34] Manzano relates to the San Antonio figure in a way that is inconsistent with St. Anthony himself, but characteristic of qualities ascribed to *Elegguá*. Furthermore, there is a clear correlation between the San Antonio figure and Manzano's pursuit of freedom within the narrative.

In the late eighteenth century colonial authorities forbade African confraternities to present images of their divine entities in religious processions. As a result, *cabildo* (African brotherhoods) members appropriated the likeness of Catholic saints – whom they had already closely associated with African divine spirits – in order to provide a socially amenable public display. In this way, Christian saints became a well-suited veneer for Africa-based religious practices in the colonial era. Throughout this period, associations made with the Catholic pantheon became so intertwined that the meanings assigned to them were transformed and Christian iconography came to personify the orishas themselves (Sandoval 53). Anthropologist Paul Johnson has termed this process "religious transculturation", which addresses "how ideas, objects, and people produced in one place take on new meaning when displaced, circulated and rerooted in new soil in new ground".

The rigidity of colonial censorship and the aesthetic aspirations of Domingo

Delmonte's nascent white literati would have precluded the slave narrative from saying that San Antonio symbolized *Elegguá* in explicit terms. However, any representation of the saints in *la historia de mi vida* and their connection to Manzano's escape creates discursive space within the text that enables disparate readings of the San Antonio figure.

Natalia Bolívar Aróstegui says that *Elegguá* has been transculturated with a number of Catholic personages including the Holy Child of Atocha, Anima Sola and San Antonio de Padua in Africa-based religious practices in Cuba (144).[35] On occasion, San Antonio is depicted holding the Christ child in his arms or ministering to the destitute. Bolívar says that this may explain why the saint has been celebrated as *Elegguá*, a prominent orisha in Yoruba-based religions, who is sometimes represented as a child (144). Daniel Walker writes that wooden artifacts representing *Elegguá*, dating from the mid to late nineteenth century, have been located. Such sacred relics point to the influence of this divine spirit in Afro-Cuban sacred practice during colonial times. The *Elegguá* figure bears witness to a certain degree of transatlantic continuity between West Africa and Cuba. *Elegguá* is the envoy to Creator and the orishas (Sandoval 216) who in Cuba serves as the messenger between the living and those that inhabit the spiritual realm even as he did in Africa (Walker 52-53). In terms of Manzano's narrative, however, San Antonio's transculturation with *Elegguá* may be explained by the fact that both divine personages are skilled travelers, capable of wielding extraordinary powers and alleviating personal woes.[36]

*Elegguá* is a decisive factor in Manzano's successful escape, given that he stands at the crossroads and is capable of either sanctioning or ruining an individual's plans in life (Sandoval 217-218). In Cuba, this orisha is known as *Elegguá-Echú*, a paradoxical manifestation of the same spirit who interferes in all matters human or divine. As the proprietor of the passageway, *Elegguá* is the indispensable *oricha* so that nothing is possible without his involvement (Bolívar 36). *Elegguá* must be pleased since he may either provide a safe route or subject individuals to some act of mischief (Sandoval 218-219). Bolívar explains that African divine spirits do not embody the absolute concepts of good and evil. Rather, they personify the uneasy relationship between positive and negative forces since there cannot be peace without strife and there is no safety without danger (36, 40).

Fleeing on foot from Matanzas to Havana exposed Manzano to serious risks: possible disorientation from hunger or thirst or even being taken into custody by slave-hunting parties.[37] The details of Manzano's escape are unknown since the second part of his slave narrative was either lost or destroyed while in the custody of Ramón de Palma (Azougarh 31). Whatever the particulars of his escape may have been, running away meant the very real possibility of death and *Elegguá* is the spirit who possesses the key to the cemetery (Sandoval 216). Manzano understood his life to be in divine hands.

The appearance of *Elegguá* in Manzano's narrative is important for other reasons. As Daniel Walker notes, "in traditional Yoruba religion *Eshu/Elegba* is seen as 'a divine messenger, facilitator, transformer and provocateur'" (52).[38] In the text, *Elegguá* represents Manzano's hopes to be free as well as the very real possibility that he may fall into the hands of the authorities. Just as *Elegguá's* ritual objects often have faces looking in opposite directions, the orisha may look upon Manzano with mercy and transmit his prayers to Creator. However, an alternative scenario could emerge in which *Elegguá* disregarded devout prayers, provided no assistance and left Manzano to fend for himself. For this very reason, the poet endeavored not to offend the saints, attributing his agony to "My lack of devotion [] or the anger of some saint that I had forgotten for the next day." (Manzano, Luis ed. 318). While the Catholic San Antonio is

renowned for his chastity and patience, *Elegguá* is a provocateur that may or may not gratify the desires of his devotees.

Since *Elegguá* makes all things possible, he is given priority in festival worship. The first drumbeats are dedicated to *Elegguá* and offerings are made to him before any other orisha (Sandoval 218). Manzano's ritual space gave priority to the spirit of the crossroads in order to propitiate his fate so it would not be adverse. Resistance through the appropriation of what was presumed to be Catholic ritual empowered Manzano to resignify the proselytizing tool of the oppressor, hence granting new meaning to Catholic prayer verses. Sandoval has observed that Afro-Cuban religious practice incorporates Catholic liturgical devices such as the novena (79). Cuban scholar Guillermo Sierra Torres also notes that the sign of the Cross and the Lord's Prayer are an integral part of the ritual worship of certain African divine entities (302). As such, the introduction of Catholic rites in Manzano's ritual space does not rule out the possibility of an African cultural frame of reference. [39] For a Hispano-Catholic readership, the novena and the Lord's Prayer signify Christian devotion but they may have also spoken to the redemptive power of transculturated Africa-based ritual for black interlocutors.

Transculturated rituals derived from ancestral practices involve the rearrangement of physical space and the assiduous reiteration and repetition of sacred knowledge that reinforces a non-Christian comprehension of the divine (Dodson 56). By re-ordering space to evoke spirit interaction, Manzano brings sacred order to the chaos of racial slavery and defines liberty as the union between the human and the divine. The delineation of ritual space creates an opening within Cuban slave society for the emancipation of dark bodies. As Dodson explains, sacred encounters with the divine have a curative effect and make healing possible (57).

Even as *Elegguá* looks both ways so does *la verdadera istoria de mi vida*, the true story of Manzano's life. The personal narrative relates how Manzano is transformed from passive object of maltreatment and exploitation to an active religio-cultural subject. In other words, the appropriation of Catholic narratives and symbolism enables a double reading of the text so that San Antonio as *Elegguá* opens safe passage for Manzano to go from slavery to freedom while San Antonio as Catholic saint conceals the narrative's Africa-based subtext. The representation of San Antonio as *Elegguá* is subversive since it undermines the deculturative function of proselytization and resignifies the Catholic saint as divine liberator of the enslaved. Manzano's narrative defines freedom as a cathartic act of Afro-Cuban spiritual autonomy.

In conclusion, the function of ritual differentiates Manzano's story of escape from the letters he addressed to Domingo Delmonte. Juan Francisco Manzano negotiated with Domingo Delmonte in the letters, even as he pleaded with *Elegguá* to open the crossroads enabling him to get away from the plantation. Although Manzano did not ultimately achieve manumission by fleeing the sugar plantation, his escape did amount to a repudiation of the Cuban slave regime. In both instances, Manzano negotiated with power: the socio-economic power of white Creole society epitomized by Domingo Delmonte and the divine power of *Elegguá*, a spirit capable of either granting or perverting justice. Africa-based ritual mends Manzano's wounded body empowering him to invent a new sense of the African descendant self so that his *rescate* is not simply physical rescue, but spiritual redemption.

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## Notes

[1]In this article, I generally use "enslaved person" to emphasize that the legal status of captive Africans and their descendants did not speak to the fullness of their collective or individual identities. The term "enslaved person" draws attention to the multiple acts of violence committed against the individual and the collective dark body that were physical, psychological and juridical in nature. In this instance, I use "esclavo " or "slave" in reference to colonial jurisprudence.

[2]Although Richard Robert Madden's English translation appeared in 1840, Manzano's slave narrative was not published in Spanish during the nineteenth century. It first saw the light of day in 1937 in an edition by Cuban historian José Luciano Franco (Luis, Introduction. *Juan Francisco Manzano: Autobiografía del esclavo poeta y otros escritos* 18-19). In *Poetas de color* (1887), Francisco Calcagno notes that the Cuban public was unaware of Manzano's narrative but that his literary circle was intimately familiar with the text simply calling it, "la autobiografía" (64).

[3]According to William Luis, Juan Francisco Manzano completed *la historia de mi vida* in 1836 as part of a quid pro quo with Domingo Delmonte (Manzano, Luis ed. 17). A letter from Delmonte to José Luis Alfonso dated July 23, 1836 confirms that upon taking possession of the slave narrative, Delmonte and Pepe de la Luz purchased Manzano's freedom from Doña María de Zayas (Azougarh 11).

[4]For Angel Rama, transculturation in the Latin American narrative is an enduring and ongoing process beginning with the initial contact between Spain and indigenous peoples. These processes take on new dimensions in the twentieth century. Unlike Mary Louise Pratt, Rama argues that transculturation is not limited to the specific historical conditions of the colonial context (38-42).

[5]Juan Francisco Manzano dispatched letters to Domingo Delmonte through indirect channels of communications. The October 16, 1834 letter explains that the enslaved poet paid a visit to Don Manuel Manzano at the home of Ignacio Valdés Machuca so that his letter would be delivered through the most secure channels. Manuel de Cárdenas Manzano was the Secretary of the *Comisión de Literatura* (Manzano, Luis ed. 120-121).

[6]Manzano makes special mention of Don Tello Mantilla and his baptismal godmother Doña María de la Luz de Zayas as the two masters who treated him without severity (Manzano 123). In the first paragraph of this same letter Manzano says it is like a dream that his *pobres rimas* (poor rhymes) will be published and known in "el emporio de la ilustración europea, donde tantos vates con razón disputan la primacía" (the emporium of the European Enlightenment, where so many reasonable bards debate preeminence) (Manzano, Luis ed. 122).

[7]Had I confided in someone other than Your Grace on these terms perhaps they would not have judged me so flippantly, with regards to love of my liberty. Neglecting the propensity that by natural principle every man slave has for his rescue, when I take a look at the vast heap of calamities that marked the precious days of my youth, I tremble not for what has happened but for that which mysteriously lies in destiny's urn. A sugar plantation, a whipping, for me this has a certain measure of terror that the idea alone causes me to shudder (Manzano, Luis ed. 123). All translations are mine.

Esteban Pichardo's *Diccionario provincial de vozes cubanas* published in 1836 defines *fuetazo* as a beating given with a leather whip. The context of Manzano's statement demonstrates that "foetazo" is an idiosyncratic rendering of *fuetazo* (Pichardo 108).

[8]In *Plácido el poeta: biografía*, Sebastián Alfredo de Morales explains that a rigid regime of colonial censorship made it a crime merely to utter the word *libertad* (freedom). This biography is found in the José Augusto Escoto Collection at Houghton Library on the campus of Harvard University.

[9]The *código negro español* was decreed in 1789 nearly a decade before Manzano's birth in 1797 (Knight 124).

[10]It was once said of Manzano that he would be worse than Jean Jacques Rousseau and Voltaire, French philosophers who were anathema to the Catholic Church. Ironically, the statement reveals a sense of anxiety among white persons with to regard Manzano's intellectual abilities. It is unclear how much the poet knew about the two figures or if he ever gained first hand knowledge of their writings (Manzano, Luis ed. 318).

[11]The liberal constitution of 1812 was based on *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens* and on Jean Jacques Rousseau's *Social Contract*. It abolished the Spanish Inquisition, reformed the Spanish prison system, outlawed torture and established a national education system creating new schools and universities. The state became responsible for the education of its citizens. Universal suffrage was established and the freedom of speech and the press became the guaranteed rights of citizens. However, the constitution did not abolish slavery in Spain's overseas colonies (Barrientos 271-273).

[12]The Anglo-Spanish Treaty of 1817 set up the Mixed Court of Justice to prosecute slave trading once it had been outlawed by Great Britain (Luis, *Literary Bondage* 35).

[13]For more on the Cuban anti-slavery narrative, see William Luis' *Literary Bondage*.

[14]I am citing the letter dating from June 25, 1835 where Manzano speaks of his *arriesgada fuga* (risky escape) from the Matanzas sugar plantation to the city of Havana (Manzano, Luis ed. 125).

[15]Roberto Friol explains that the precise date of Manzano's escape is unknown since archival work has not yielded the *expediente de cimarrón*, the legal document describing the fugitive's appearance, tendencies, self-identification and his master's name. Manzano says he escaped from the Matanzas sugar plantation sometime during Spain's first liberal constitution, which was promulgated in 1812. Friol points out that because Manzano uses the word *acabada*, meaning immediately following a previous event, we cannot be certain if the word refers to the year 1812 when the constitution was initially approved or to its first abrogation on May 4, 1814. It is also possible that this refers to the date when the liberal Constitution of Cádiz was reinstated in 1820 or the second and final time it was repealed on October 10, 1823. As a result Friol is unable to date Manzano's escape, suggesting instead that it may have taken place some time after1814 (156-157). William Luis dates Manzano's escape in the year 1817 (Manzano, Luis ed. 75).

[16]The Spanish slave code of 1789 (*código negro español*) and the code of 1842 established procedures by which a definite price of self-purchase could be set for a *slave*, so that neither market value nor a master's whims could raise that price at any time in the future (Knight 130).

[17]Mr. Silvestre, which was the name of the young overseer that was carrying me off to the stocks [when] I encountered my mother who following the impulses of her heart, came to put an end to my misfortune. Seeing me, she wanted to ask what I had done when the overseer imposing silence, wanted to hinder her [...] He raised his hand and struck my mother with the whip. That whipping I felt in my heart crying out and being transformed from meek lamb to a lion...I leaped on top of him with my teeth and fists and kicking and more hitting than you can imagine. And my mother and I were both carried off and put in the same place.

[18]Manzano expresses a clear sense of responsibility for the defense of his widowed mother and his younger brothers *Florensio* and Fernando (Manzano 314). I have chosen not to standardize Manzano's spelling of his brother's name *Florensio*. By preserving his spelling my intention is to provide space for the writer to speak for himself, his family and his cultural community.

[19]Abdeslam Azougarh whose Spanish edition was published in the year 2000, shares a similar point of view. For Azougarh, learning to read and write meant the negation of what he terms a black cultural frame of reference in order to learn the language of white people (30).

[20]She used to call me «Juan» and I would answer her weeping and she would say «oh son» for that reason that was the call from the grave to her husband when this [took place] my father had already died. On three occasions in two months I recall having witnessed this scene repeat itself. (The above-cited is my transcription of the autograph manuscript found in la Biblioteca Nacional José Martí in Havana, Cuba.)

[21]In *African Religions and Philosophy*, John Mbiti says that in traditional African religious thought and practice spirits of the deceased commonly serve as intermediaries between living persons and God. In effect, they constitute the largest group of intercessors in African religious life, conveying human requests, needs, prayers and sacrifices to God. In this way, "the approach to God" is considered a collective act involving the living and the departed (69-71).

[22]Historian Gwendolyn Midlo Hall says that the proselytization of the enslaved population was not born of a Christian evangelical mandate; on the contrary, it was a kind of deculturation and indoctrination meant to make *slaves* more compliant (32-34).

[23]My confidence reached such a point that beseeching the heavens to lighten my load; I spent nearly the entire early evening praying a certain number of Hail Marys and the Lord's Prayer to all the saints in the heavenly hosts so that the next day would not be as adverse as the last. If some common and painful pressures befell me, I attributed it to my lack of devotion or to the anger of some saint whom I had forgotten for the next day. (The above-cited is my transcription of the autograph manuscript found in la Biblioteca Nacional José Martí in Havana, Cuba.)

[24]I still believe they [the saints] provided me the occasion and watched over me the day of my escape from Matanzas to Havana, as we will see. Taking up the almanac, all the saints of that month were prayed daily by me. (The above-cited is my transcription of the autograph manuscript found in la Biblioteca Nacional José Martí in Havana, Cuba.)

[25]Ever since I was a boy I had the habit of reading everything that was legible in my language and when I went down the street I always went around picking up scraps of printed-paper. And if it was in verse, I did not pray it until I had learned it by heart. In that way, I knew the lives of all the most miraculous saints and the prayer verses of the novena of San Antonio, those of the trisagium, at last, all the saints.

[26]Manzano's baptismal godmother, Trinidad de Zayas, is mentioned the first time religion comes up in the slave narrative. Manzano spent part of his childhood with her. With regard to his baptism he says, "y yo sabia muy bien qe. estaba bautisado en la Habana" (I knew very well that I was baptized in Havana). This excerpt confirms that as required by law, Manzano was baptized like all other *criollitos*, babies born to enslaved women (Manzano, Luis ed. 300-301). He was taught catechism at a young age because as a house servant's child his family had a favorable relationship with their mistress, the Marchioness Jústiz de Santa Ana.

[27]The Cuban anti-slavery narrative was written to create an inversion of signs and moral categories; enslaved characters were depicted as innocent, pitiable, and undeserving of abuse while white slave masters were cruel and corrupted. Subsequently, the story of Cuban slavery is narrated not from the master's point of view but that of the enslaved with whom the reader is encouraged to sympathize. Black as color and race is no longer symbolically negative while white is divested of its innocence and positivity (Luis, *Literary Bondage* 3).

[28]In July of 1836, the British government named Dr. Richard Robert Madden Judge of the Mixed Court of Justice in Havana. Although Manzano was emancipated in either June or July of the same year, Madden was not introduced to him until two years later (Friol 31-32). The Anglo Spanish Treaty of 1817 established the Mixed Court of Justice to prosecute slave trading once it had been outlawed by Great Britain (Luis, *Literary Bondage* 35).

[29]On another occasion, Manzano explains that his mistress gave him three pesos to pay for a San Gregorio Mass in honor of María de Pilar, his recently deceased mother (Manzano, Luis ed. 331). I refer to this particular saint by his Spanish and English names, San Antonio and Saint Anthony, respectively.

[30]Traditionally, 1195 has been given as the year of Hernando de Bullones' birth but the earliest historical documents concerning the matter are not so clear. Some Anthonian scholars place his birth closer to the year 1190. The Catholic Church canonized Fernando de Bulhões in 1232 during the papacy of Pope Gregory (Purcell 10-11).

[31]The novena is a nine-day act of devotion that includes prayers, religious readings and litanies consecrated to God, the Virgin Mary and the saints.

[32]I am using allegory to simply mean symbolic representation, not to refer to fictional figures that express general truths about human existence.

[33]Manuel Moreno Fraginals' article, "Africa in Cuba: A Quantitative Analysis of the African Population of Cuba" describes the Cuban plantation system as "sugar-producing jails" that depended almost entirely on the sustained importation of new African labor in order maintain productivity levels and to be profitable. This translated into a predominantly African born population on the sugar and coffee estates in rural areas. On average, there were 96 African workers on sugar plantations to every four Cuban born laborers. During the twenty-two year period from 1790-1822, Cuba underwent a tremendous coffee and sugar boom and with it, the legalized trade brought in 240,000 captives (192-193).

[34]Sandoval describes *Elegguá* as a divine spiritual entity who is morally ambivalent but not evil. She muses that his moral ambivalence makes his association with Catholic saints difficult

since saints are not amoral (221.) In fact, Catholic saints epitomize the chastity and moral authority professed by Christianity.

[35]Rómulo Lachatañeré says that Elegguá has, at times, been identified with San Antonio perhaps because of his indifference to sexual passion (104).

[36]As Sandoval says the associations between Catholic saints and orishas (the Yoruba name for African divine spirits) were based on shared symbolic colors, objects, other symbols or similar character and attributes (78-79).

[37]A number of *palenques* in the mountainous forested areas of Matanzas were particularly strong and well-organized communities that effectively resisted white slave hunting parties made up of *rancheadores* (Franco 114, 116).

[38]Daniel Walker takes this quotation from Drewal, Pemberton, Abiodun's book *Yoruba* (35).

[39]In *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt defines "autoethnographic expression" in terms of colonial writings that involve at least partial collaboration with the colonizer and use the discursive tools of the dominant group to authoritatively self-represent. These writings were addressed to both metropolitan audiences and literate members of the writers' own group, and undeniably, they were received and comprehended in different ways by each readership (7).

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**Melina Pappademos, *Black Political Activism and the Cuban Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011). 336 pp. $39.95 (cloth).**

**Reviewed by Devyn Spence Benson**

The Limits of Racial Solidarity: Strategic Blackness in Cuba

Melina Pappademos has added a new and provocative chapter to the history of race in Cuba with *Black Political Activism and the Cuban Republic*. Using rich archival research from Havana as well as provincial collections across the island, Pappademos offers a vital look at how blacks negotiated national and local politics at the turn of the 20th century. She describes how "elite black activists," both gained and parceled out resources to their clients, although as she aptly notes the characters in her story are elite and active because of their connections to influential patronage networks rather than due to high income levels or a commitment to lofty goals of racial uplift. Above all, Pappademos illustrates the heterogeneity of blackness in Cuba through an examination of the ways location, social class, and political party divided imagined racial communities. The reader leaves the narrative with a new appreciation for the diversity of black identities and an awareness of the limits of racial solidarity.

Pappademos begins by making a theoretical intervention into race studies. Challenging conventional terms, she asks readers to re-think using the label "Afro-Cuban" to describe people of African descent. The author shies away from the term because she argues that it was used rarely in historical documents, except in "pejorative" ways to devalue black cultural practices, and because the word too easily collapses the experiences of Cubans of color with those of "African Americans," "Afro-Mexicans," and "Afro-Latins" (15). For her, "Afro-Cuban" implicitly ties black experiences to the nation and fails to account for the diversity of black personalities and local affiliations as they shifted historically. The blacks in Pappademos's account struggled among themselves for resources, demanded arms to fight against other black members of the Partido Independiente de Color in the Race War of 1912, and made strategic alliances with white leaders (58). Pappademos also sets herself apart from previous authors through a refreshing attention to people of color outside of Havana—nearly half of her examples are from Santiago and Cienfuegos. She does not make assumptions about racial solidarity. Rather, she proves that elite black Cubans were just as likely as other Cubans to claim publicly that they were advocates for their entire race and/or nation, while at the same time actively maintaining a social order that preserved individual privileges.

At the beginning of the twentieth century after Cuba gained independence from Spain, elite black Cubans, approximately 3 percent of the population, participated in the political mechanisms of the new republic. Pappademos identifies these professionals, politicians, and social club leaders as "black brokers" who collected votes for local political parties in exchange for resources and favors from national politicians. Contesting previous claims that the 1912 Race War decimated activism by Cubans of African descent, Pappademos illustrates how blacks were involved in regional politics at every point in the period of her study (65). One of her most poignant examples recounts how *mulato* Liberal party delegate, José Vantour, used his connections with Havana-based Liberal leader Juan Gualberto Gómez to request assistance halting police raids against the Luz de Oriente society. Vantour's letter to the capital cautioned that if Gómez failed to find a way to end the abuses, Luz de Oriente members would not cast their ballots in favor of the party in upcoming elections. In doing so, Vantour acted as a

"broker," shortening the gap between a specific local organization and the Liberal party (52). Black participation in national parties allowed them to exchange votes for resources. But, as Pappademos rightly notes, just as the vertical patronage system worked to bring resources into communities, it was not without its shortcomings. Such was the case when another black club in Santiago withdrew support from Gómez and the Liberal party because the Havana leader did not send a promised car for their fundraiser (82).

Pappademos continues to show the fractures within imagined ideas of racial solidarity in the second part of the book by examining alternatives to black elite patronage networks. Exploring how some groups organized around African based traditions and identities, Pappademos concludes that communities claiming a Congo, Lucumí, or other African heritage were at odds with the raceless nation envisioned by José Martí and practiced by privileged blacks like Juan Gualberto Gómez (113). Social clubs promoting an Africanist identity also divided among themselves, with some only admitting members who had a particular lineage, such as the Society of Our Lady of Carmen, which was composed solely of Africans from the Carabalí nation (119). But even when African-based clubs espoused a joint Cuban and ethnic identity, privileged blacks distanced themselves from the overwhelming working-class, African groups. Pappademos highlights essays by Rafael Serra and Gómez to show how black elites waged "war on [the] cultural backwardness" they affiliated with ties to Africa (129). With their certainty that racial uplift could only be attained through appropriate social behaviors—namely acting "civilized"—privileged blacks frequently perpetuated white racialist ideologies that equated Africa with savageness.

*Black Activism and the Cuban Republic* makes an essential contribution to understanding how elite black Cubans negotiated the period after independence. And while Pappademos leaves space for future investigations into how non-elite blacks and women related to the mostly privileged men in her narrative, the author successfully demonstrates the contradictions within black elite claims to work on behalf of the entire race of color. Moreover, Pappademos lays the groundwork for similar research in the post-1959 period. Her discussion of the very public link between black social clubs and President Fulgencio Batista's dictatorship—after 1952 Batista used lottery money (*sorteos*) to fund black societies—clarifies why revolutionary leader Fidel Castro initially distrusted and later disbanded recreational clubs in the 1960s (198). Furthermore, her arguments that black activists "sought resources rather than rights" parallels bargains that some Cubans of color later struck with revolutionary leaders where they received tangible resources (affordable housing, lower utilities, and better public educational services) in exchange for supporting the new government (62).

Ultimately, Pappademos's work is useful for advanced undergraduates, graduate students, and scholars interested in understanding how black elites in Cuba strategically mobilized local and national networks for their individual interests. But, the book is even more useful as a caution to scholars of race in the Americas that programs built on imagined notions of racial solidarity are often limited by the pursuit of personal privilege.

*Williams College*

***Daughters of the Stone*** **by Dahlma Llanos Figueroa**
**Thomas Dunne Books (St. Martin' s Press), 2009.**

**Reviewed by Lesley Feracho**

The stories of mother-daughter relationships, their struggles and triumphs, is a universal theme that cuts across race, ethnicity, class and nationality. From women's literature of African-American, Asian-American, Latino and other ethnic groups in the U.S. to women's writing across the Americas (Latin America, the Caribbean) to Africa and beyond, the experiences of being a mother and of being a daughter, as Elizabeth Brown-Guillory notes in her collection *Women of Color: Mother-Daughter Relationships in 20th Century Literature* are at times ones of love and hate where the mother' s council on how to survive is rejected by the daughter as "... invalid in changing social times." (2) However, what most stands out about this relationship is the negotiation of this "friction" "...which challenges both mothers and daughters to create a space in which the experiences of both members of the dyad can be valorized." (2) It is such a negotiation that is one of the central themes of Dahlma-Llanos Figueroa' s debut novel, *Daughters of the Stone* published in 2009 by Thomas Dunne Books and a finalist for the PEN/Robert Bingham Fellowship for Writers.

As a novel chronicling five generations of Puerto Rican women of African descent over a span of approximately 100 years, Llanos-Figueroa's novel stands at the intersection of Latino, Caribbean, Latin American literature and literature of the African Diaspora overall. By using the mother-daughter dyad *Daughters of the Stone* presents these relationships as the larger motif through which the author can also explore themes of gender politics, cultural memory, tradition, modernization, migration and marginalization, beginning with the still under-explored experience of women under slavery in the Caribbean, and specifically in Puerto Rico. As a novel written by and focusing on Afro-Puerto Ricans, Llanos-Figueroa's text can be placed alongside writers such as Arturo Schomburg, Piri Thomas and Mayra Santos Febres whose works both non-fiction and fiction, challenge homogenous constructions of *la gran familia puertorriqueña* (the great Puerto Rican family) that marginalized the histories of peoples of African descent under the idea of an equal society where race did not matter (Quiñones-Rivera, 166). However, her construction of a historical novel about Afro-Puerto Rican women that begins on the plantations in Puerto Rico in the mid 1800s and ends with the journey of exploration of the great-great granddaughter in the present day, is a unique, under-represented overview of Afro-Puerto Rican life. Through this span of time, Llanos-Figueroa creates a story that explores these relationships and the legacies and strategies of survival each mother passes on, within the historical and socio-cultural context of Puerto Rico and the United States from the 19th century to the present day.

*Daughters of the Stone* is divided into five "books" which tell the story of five women in one family: Fela, Mati, Concha, Elena and Carisa, incorporating their points of view. From the arrival of Fela to the plantation of Don Tomás in 19th century Puerto Rico in Book One to Carisa's journey to Puerto Rico in Book Five, Llanos-Figueroa highlights the role of gender in understanding family and also serving as a prism for exploring the experiences of migration and the challenges of upholding and continuing tradition in the face of modernization. The novel takes its title from the symbolic representation of the transferral of cultural values through the journey of a 'magical' stone. As this object is passed on from Fela to her daughter Mati, and ultimately to Carisa, it links the physical and emotional journeys of each daughter with that of their traditions, represented through the stone, the stories connected to each owner, and the

other traditions—such as *curanderismo* (folk holistic spiritual healing practice) that form a part of the larger matrilineal ancestry Llanos-Figueroa highlights.

One of the main elements of the exploration of these ancestral legacies is the role of oral traditions. As a novelist, memoirist and teacher of creative writing, language and literature born in Puerto Rico, and raised and educated in New York City (receiving her degrees from SUNY- Buffalo and Queens College), Llanos-Figueroa's travels back to the island to live with her grandparents as a child exposed her not only to rural life but also to the importance of storytelling, particularly among the women of the community. This was an exposure that would be the inspiration for much of her later writing, which is at the heart of *Daughters of the Stone*. As the narrator in the "Prologue" notes: "These are the stories. My stories, their stories-just as they were told to my mother and her mother and hers. They were given to me for safekeeping and now I give them to you". Alongside the author's dedication, these words establish the centrality of the transmission of knowledge through stories in the novel and the incorporation of the reader into a world that explores the tensions and links of orality and the written word. It is this valorization of storytelling as cultural preservation, community, survival and connection (to mothers as well as ancestors) that Llanos-Figueroa highlights in each woman's trials, traumas and recoveries. By placing women's oral practices at the heart of each woman's journey Llanos-Figueroa creates a historical, and at times magical, novel that not only posits the importance of the stories we tell, but also challenges the stories that are told as part of our official histories of national identity. The recounting of the lives of five generations of Afro-Puerto Rican women, through a narrator that also interacts with multiple viewpoints, serves as a counter to the more traditional masculine histories of the Puerto Rican nation (and the national discourse of the *gran familia puertorriqueña*) and of nations throughout the Americas that relegate the voices of women and blacks (among others) to the margins of historical discourse. In so doing, she creates a historical fiction that provides a space and mirror in which to be seen. As she noted in her personal statement: "I write because I couldn't find my world on the pages of the books I was given. So I started writing my own.....I write first and foremost because the stories I grew up reading in school bore no resemblance to the world of my family and my community." (llanosfigueroa.com)

As a novel at the intersection of diverse literary traditions, the story of Fela, a slave taken from African to the Caribbean, ultimately ending up on a plantation in Puerto Rico, presents a very unique story of slavery from a female perspective that is lesser represented in Latin American and Hispanophone Caribbean literature. While readers in the United States and Anglophone Caribbean can point to the experiences of Harriet Tubman, and the stories of Harriet Ann Jacobs ("Linda Brent") and Mary Prince, Latin American and Caribbean accounts of slavery in Spanish have mostly focused on Cuban male subjects such as Juan Francisco Manzano (whose *Autobiography of a Slave* is the only known slave narrative to date) and Esteban Montejo (who told his story to the Cuban writer Miguel Barnet in 1968 in *La biografía de un cimarrón/The Biography of a Runaway Slave*). In 1996 the voice of Maria del Castillo Bueno was added to this list, as that of a black Cuban woman whose accounts of her life in Cuba in the twentieth century as told to her daughter Daisy Rubiera Castillo in *Reyita, sencillamente* (later translated in English in as *Reyita: The Life of a Black Cuban Women in the Twentieth Century*) included stories of her grandmother's experiences in slavery and abolition. While one of the first to incorporate women's experiences of slavery in the Hispanophone Americas in non-fiction, increasingly Latin American women writers such as Ecuadoran writer Luz Argentina Chiriboga (*Jonatás y Manuela*) and Cuban writer Marta Rojas (*Santa lujuria o papeles de blanco/Holy Lust or White Papers)* have found the positing of women's experiences under slavery and beyond as a powerful

challenge to official histories and as a point of connection with larger strategies of agency.

As part of this developing exploration of women's experiences under slavery and the cultural practices that arose as survival and resistance, Llanos-Figueroa creates in Fela a character whose negotiation of slave society highlight the strategies black Puerto Rican women used to navigate politics of power, colonialism, gender and race as well as provide the starting point for the theme of cultural memory that will continue throughout the novel. Having been forcefully migrated away from her life in Africa and her plans for a family with her lover Imo, Fela's belief in the destiny of motherhood as well as in her need to atone for her sins to Mother Oshún (the figure who corresponds to the Virgen of Charity of El Cobre and is the orisha of the rivers and lakes, representing both female sexuality and motherhood, and assisting in births) lead her to navigate slave society as subject not victim. This is most clearly represented through her constant guarding of a magical stone originally used in Africa in her attempt to conceive. Her belief in the powers of the stone, now challenged by her separation from her homeland and loved ones, is part of Llanos-Figueroa's representation of the importance of cultural practices for Africans, particularly African based syncretic religious practices such as Santería, in the survival and transmission of cultural values in the New World. At the same time, at the moment of Mati's birth when her mother Fela states: "At least this time she would have as much to do with what was about to happen as he did...This time it would be her choice" (46-7), her refusal to cede to the hierarchies of the slave plantation, choosing instead to exercise control of her body through her relationship with the slave owner Don Tomás also demonstrates the use of the body and maternity as a site of cultural preservation and resistance that dialogues with the complex navigations historically undertaken by female slaves in the Americas.

Throughout *Daughters of the Stone* there is a constant emphasis on the complexity of tradition in a modern world. With each generation Fela's descendants find themselves navigating the legacy of their gifts and the responsibilities of cultural preservation with the modernization of the island and later, the U.S. mainland. One of the strengths of *Daughters of the Stone* lies in its representation of the complexities of these negotiations, where individual struggles for agency at times tensely exist alongside the survival and development of the community within national structures that prioritize progress over tradition. In Book Two, this complexity is demonstrated through Fela's daughter Mati, who represents not only the transition from enslavement to freedom but also the challenges of developing certain traditions and cultural beliefs and the power and responsibilities it brings within a still oppressive colonial system. While also in possession of the stone, her cultural legacy is represented through a special gift she possesses enabling her to not only heal but also bring physical harm to others. It is such a power that she uses in her struggle to establish and preserve a community for the newly freed slaves in light of the continued oppression of the former plantation owners while also struggling with the recognition of her parentage. Through the representation of Mati's complex response to oppression (racial, gendered and economic) and the role of cultural legacies Llanos-Figueroa explores the impact of these discourses of oppression on the individual and collective and the complex strategies of resistance and agency women use to combat them.

Like Fela and Mati, each woman struggles with oppression, conflict, trauma and agency in a changing familial and national context. As the novel progresses from colonial Puerto Rico, post-abolition, to an island in the midst of modernization, this cultural memory, and the particular cultural practices and symbols of tradition, are placed in jeopardy in light of the discourses of modernization and progress that assign tradition and African cultural legacies to the role of primitive and backward. This is

emphasized more strongly beginning with "Book Four: Elena", where the experiences of Fela's great grandaughter Elena are placed within the context of the policies of modernization in Puerto Rico (especially as represented in the 1950s and 1960s programs of "Operation Bootstrap"/ "Manos a la Obra" initiated after WWII in order to industrialize the island) which lead to massive migration both from rural areas to San Juan and then from San Juan to the U.S., marking the growth of the Puerto Rican community in urban areas such as New York. (Skidmore 309-310). This tension is particularly highlighted in the experiences of Carisa –the last of the matrilineage.

In a similar fashion, in "Book Four" Elena's experiences in New York represent the difficulties of maintaining a belief in the power of tradition and cultural memory in the face of economic struggles that occur alongside pressures of acculturation and the impact of class, race and gender on the migrant experience. Following the tragic death of a family member and its strain on her marriage, her healing and catharsis in part occurs through writing, connecting with her ancestors through stories told and recalled and is symbolized by her retrieval and valorization of the stone passed on by her mother before Elena' s journey to New York.

The importance of writing as a means of continuing the stories passed on through generations and as a chronicle of the forgotten voices is most represented in the last section, "Book Five: Carisa". Through her journey back to Puerto Rico, following the denigration of her talent and cultural legacies at the University, she begins a journey of reconnection and awakening that ultimately links her to each previous woman in her family. In this section Llanos-Figueroa brings the importance of storytelling as part of a valued cultural knowledge full circle through Carisa's engagement with the women of her childhood. Her writing of the stories of suffering and survival continues the theme of links to the collective: "...I took their stories and nurtured them, blended them with my own and let them simmer." (286).

Nonetheless, *Daughters of the Stone* is not only about the power of mother-daughter relationships as part of the transmission of cultural knowledge, but also of other communities of women that can be equally important. From the elderly women of Carisa's childhood, to the women in her hometown in Puerto Rico, her psychological and social awakening is continued through the work and friendship with photographer Maria Luisa who introduces her to the marginalized of Puerto Rico, the people who open her up to the realities of social injustice on the island and of the limiting visions of the Puerto Rican nation that marginalize racial and class difference. Ultimately, Llanos-Figueroa closes the journeys of survival, liberation and awakening when Carisa decides to go beyond the borders of her Puerto Rican and North American identities, travelling to West Africa as a continuation of her search for reconnection.

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***Literary Passion, Ideological Commitment: Toward a Legacy of Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian Women Writers.* By Dawn Duke.**
**Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 277 pages.**

**Reviewed by Rhonda Collier**

The extremely well titled *Literary Passion, Ideological Commitment: Toward a Legacy of Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian Women Writers (2008)* is the first book-length study that converges two dynamic national contexts, Brazil and Cuba, and the place of black women writers within them. In bridging the gap of scholars such as Carol Boyce Davis, Carolyn Durham, Miriam Alves and Miriam DeCosta-Willis, Duke provides the call and response to Miriam Alves and Carolyn Durham's 1993 seminal bi-lingual collaborative work *Enfim Nós/Finally Us!* She reiterates the calls in Spanish, *Sí, Finalmente Nosotras!*; in Portuguese, *Sim, Enfim Nós*; and in English, *Yes, Finally Us*. *Literary Passion* is a welcome addition to a booming field of Afro-Latina scholarship. Moreover, *Literary Passion* provides what Professor Duke refers to as a "woman-centered discourse" refusing to fall into the North American trap of labeling Latina writers as either feminists or womanists. Duke's careful wording indicates her thoughtful consideration of the multiple issues that Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Cuban writer have faced as they have subscribed themselves as producers not products of culture. Duke's well-structured text brings forth for both new and seasoned readers of Afro-Latina scholarship many instructive issues.

In five very solid chapters, *Literary Passions* provides readers with a historical context for both Afro- Brazilian and Afro-Cuban female writing. It comes as no surprise that this context is formed within the white male Euro-Caribbean hierarchy which as many scholars also note serves as the starting point from which black women must revision themselves. In chapter one, Duke uses canonical Brazilian and Cuban texts to give readers an annotated review from which to consider gendered and racialized depictions of black women rendered by Brazilian and Cuban male writers. Chapter one will serve well in Latin American literature courses or women's studies courses, particularly where the target audience is English speaking or beginning Spanish or Portuguese learners. Chapter one could be accompanied by a film such as the Cuban *Cecilia Valdés* (London, Viva Cuba Collection 2007) with English subtitles or the reading of the Brazilian novel *A Escrava Isaura* (1875). Duke's focus in chapter one is the complexities of racialized depictions including the familiar tragic mulatto woman, sensual *mulata* and the old black mammy. The chapter posits the famed tragic *mulatas* from canonical Brazilian and Cuban literature and finds them hauntingly similar. An interesting absence is that while Duke mentions Harriet Beecher Stowe's main character Uncle Tom, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), as a benevolent slave figure; she does not recall the historical character of Sally Hemming, the mistress of President Thomas Jefferson who most likely fathered six of Hemming's enslaved children. This American female "Dusky Sally" parallels far more with the idea of the faithful yet sensual female slave and might help novices understand the complexities of the socially constructed *mulata.* Herein lies the beauty of Dawn Duke's text, which will appeal not only to Latin American scholars, but also to many African American literature scholars who are delving into to what this writer likes to call "Black Inter-American studies" or what is commonly referred to as Comparative Black Literature Studies (Christel Temple, *Literary Spaces: Introduction to Comparative Black Literature*, Carolina Academic Press, 2007).

Duke's subsequent chapters two and three focus on the foundation of black women's writing in Cuba and Brazil. Like any excavation, finding the origins of women's writing in Brazil and Cuba can be multifaceted as it is in *Literary Passion, Ideological Commitment: Toward a Legacy of Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian Women Writers*. According to Duke's study, the Afro-Brazilian woman writer emerges nearly a century ahead of the Afro-Cuban woman writer (57). Looking at the Afro-Brazilian Maria Firmina dos Reis' *Úrsula* (1859) and the Afro-Cuban María Dámas Jova *Selected Works* (1925), Duke does not fully problematize the position of the Afro-Brazilian novel in the nineteenth-century and the Afro-Cuban poem in the twentieth-century. If readers accept Virginia Woolf's thesis in *A Room of One's Own (1928)* that a woman needs money and a room of her own to create great literature, then Afro-Cuban women writers begin and remain at great disadvantage in the world of literary production. Duke touches on this disadvantage for Afro-Cuban women writers in the nineteenth century noting: "The three voices that do appear are all male-Juan Francisco Manzano (1797?-1854?), Plácido (Gabriel de la Concepción Valdes, 1809-44), and Esteban Montejo (1860?-1973)—making it seem as if the woman of African descent never developed the activities of reading, writing, and publishing"(75). Moving from the nineteenth century forward, Duke asserts that both Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian women writers use literary production in unique ways to reconstruct a national identity. It would seem as if neither group is limited by Woolf's thesis. *Literary Passions* painstakingly highlights the connection to Africa that the women share, the abolitionist efforts asserted by their works, and the ideas on motherhood they share with all their stated and unstated implications. Duke claims "the role of women writers situates them at an intersection of race, gender, and art resulting in a dynamic relationship with political and literary establishments" (57). In this new space, women have broken the bonds of silence and have begun to mobilize into political and literary action.

In "Making Her Presence Felt: The Politics of Poets," Duke's third chapter, she emphasizes the nation building process that in one sense transformed the Afro-Cuban female voice and in another sense formed the Afro-Cuban women's voice. Duke clarifies that during the Cuban Revolution and beyond, Cuban writers are subject to indoctrination and under a state-controlled publishing infrastructure (102). Clearly, chapters two and three introduce readers to a host of contemporary Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian poets along with excellent explications and English translations. Furthermore, Duke offers critical readers food for thought as they are challenged to consider "the politics of poets." This writer's thought is reminiscent of those of Virginia Woolf's, who yearns for Shakespeare's imaginary sister--*Judith*, or rather for Maria Firmina dos Reis daughter--Úrsula to be birthed into existence in both Cuba and Brazil. Thus, Duke's fine work on poetry invites a further archeological dig for those lost and emerging novelists in Cuba and Brazil.

In the fourth chapter, Duke focuses on ideology rather than archeology. "Women-Centered Poetic Revisioning: Female Strength and Sexuality" is a more in-depth theoretical approach where Duke works out the ideology of the term "women-centered," which throughout her study has embraced African cosmology, bell hooks' ideology of "talking back", negritude feminism and feminist postcolonial theory. It almost seems as if this chapter should have appeared earlier in the work, but it is instructional as it provides a definition of a "women-centered" discourse with examples. As in previous chapters, Duke uses poetry to reflect the nature of black women's ability to subvert a system that historically defined her as a sexual and/or maternal being. One stand out author who writes in poetry and prose is the Afro-Cuban poet Excilia Saldaña. For newer scholars, it is worth mentioning that there is an amazing bilingual edition of Saldaña's work translated by Flora M. Gonzalez-Mandri

and Rosamond Rosenmeier: *In the Vortex of the Cyclone Selected Poems (1999) by Excilia Saldaña* translated shortly before Saldaña died. This canonical book accompanied with *Literary Passions* would be an amazing resource for beginning students and professors. Ideologically, Duke's work creates a *puente* that is not built on "the backs of women" borrowing from Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa's *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color (1981)*– but a *puente* that "rests on the ability to uncover the trajectory of the writer and provide confirmation of her creative commitment to producing a literature that creates storms, that unravel supposedly sacred systems, that provide alternative perceptions" (Duke 219). Duke's ideological approach encompasses our dear *hermana* Excilia Saldaña's idea of the vortex of the cyclone in which women are heard through powerful gusts of winds.

*Literary Passion, Ideological Commitment: Toward a Legacy of Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian Women Writers(2008)* is the most complete English-language comparative work on the subject of Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilians women's writing today. At present, 265 university libraries in the United States hold the book and it is also available on eBooks. *Literary Passion* would make an excellent course text accompanied with film, short stories, excerpts from *Cadernos Negros*, and other selected poems. Furthermore, Duke's chapters may be taught as units and adopted for women's studies, Latin American Literature or language courses. While these works are not analyzed in *Literary Passions*, Duke's footnotes and small references invite readers to explore Afro-Brazilian writers like Carolina Maria De Jesus and Marilene Barbosa de Lima Felinto. Most recently, the poet Conceição Evaristo, whose poetic works are examined in *Literary Passions*, has emerged as a Brazilian novelist with two works translated in English.

Yet, Duke's critical silence raises the question "Where are the Afro-Cuban women novelists?" Most experienced scholars are familiar with the prose work of Afro-Cuban autobiographer Daisy Rubiera Castillo as well the critically acclaimed poet and playwright Georgina Herrera. But Inter-American scholars will be searching for a Brazilian or Cuban counterpart to Alice Walker, who is a literary true sister to the Afro-Cuban poet and essayist Nancy Morejón. As Miriam DeCosta-Willis', *Daughters of the Diaspora: Afra-Hispanic Writers (2003)* seems to imply, if readers can find the works of both present, past or future Afro-Brazilian and Afro-Cuban women writers, these black women writers can remain viable in this global era that Duke mentions in her final chapter. Duke continues a chain of "call-and-response" as she reminds readers that for Afro-Latina writers the gaze outward must create a sense of consciousness in which black women in the Americas have a political paradigm in which they operate.

The treasure of Dr. Dawn Duke's *Literary Passion, Ideological Commitment: Toward a Legacy of Afro-Cuban and Afro-Brazilian Women Writers(2008)* is that it has opened a new critical field for those scholars who have never had access to poems or authors in Spanish or Portuguese. Furthermore, Duke has provided experienced educators with a wonderful new tool in our tri-lingual arsenal as we prepare new scholars in the area of what this writer calls "Black Inter-American Studies."

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**Dixon, Kwame and John Burdick, eds. *Comparative Perspectives on Afro-Latin America.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2012. xvi, 365 pp.**

**Reviewed by Reena N. Goldthree**

In 1991, in response to broad-based popular movements, the Constituent Assembly of Colombia adopted a landmark multicultural constitution that recognized Afro-Colombians as one of the nation's ethnic groups. Two years later, President César Gaviria Trujillo approved Ley 70, La Ley de las Comunidades Negras (Law 70, The Law of Black Communities), which affirmed the cultural identity of Afro-Colombians, granted collective land rights to black communities, and promoted black social and economic development. In the decades following the constitutional reforms in Colombia, other Latin American states ratified new constitutions that affirmed the multicultural, pluriethnic, or intercultural character of the nation and conferred unprecedented collective rights to Afro-descendants and indigenous communities. In Brazil, the government also implemented sweeping policies to combat racial discrimination, including the recent Law of Social Quotas, which mandated a quota-based affirmative action program for all public universities.

These groundbreaking legal victories signaled the emergence of new "multicultural citizenship regimes" in Latin America and highlight the increasing visibility and power of Afro-descendant organizations (Hooker 2009). *Comparative Perspectives on Afro-Latin America* seeks to enrich our understanding of this period of heightened mobilization by examining how "Afro-descendants are reconfiguring notions of citizenship, territory, race, gender, belonging, and nation" (1). Mapping the contours of "hemispheric blackness" from the Greater Antilles to the Andes, the volume offers detailed case studies from Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, and Venezuela as well as lesser-studied locales like Ecuador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, and the Dominican Republic. Multidisciplinary in scope, it includes essays by scholars in the fields of anthropology, ethnomusicology, art history, ethnic studies, political science, and sociology. The result is a timely and richly textured portrait of contemporary Afro-Latin American activism that reveals both the promise and perils of multicultural citizenship.

In the illuminating introduction, editors Kwame Dixon and John Burdick offer a broad framework for understanding black identities in Latin America. Defining blackness as a "form of consciousness among black people, a deliberate project to produce such a consciousness, and ideas about blacks held by nonblacks," Dixon and Burdick emphasize the ways in which blackness functions simultaneously as an identity and as an unfinished political project (2).

Black identities, the editors contend, have historically clustered around a series of ideas about shared African heritage, racial slavery, and ongoing social and economic marginalization. While Afro-descendants throughout the Americas endured the two-fold traumas of slavery and racial discrimination, Dixon and Burdick argue that Afro-descendants in Spanish and Portuguese America developed forms of racial consciousness that departed significantly from blacks in the British and French American colonies. Explaining this departure, Dixon and Burdick point to four distinctive features of colonial Latin American society: the influence of Spanish and Portuguese anti-liberal political thought; the continuation of the slave trade in the nineteenth century; the enduring ethnic identities among enslaved Africans (particularly in Brazil and Cuba); and the existence of powerful black and mulatto confraternities. As a result, they suggest that theories of blackness anchored in the experiences of Afro-descendants in Anglophone territories, including W. E. B. Du Bois's notion of "double

consciousness" and Paul Gilroy's more recent invocation of a "Black Atlantic," fail to capture the distinctive features of black identities in Latin America. Rather, Dixon and Burdick argue that "Latin American blackness" is best understood as a "distinctively hybrid set of consciousnesses," which are a product of the region's specific social and political landscape (3).

The fifteen essays that follow are divided into three thematic sections. Part I, "Blackness and Cultural Difference," explores the social construction of black identities in Latin America from the late nineteenth century to the present. In her nuanced analysis of Bantu identities in contemporary Brazil, Patricia de Santana Pinho reveals how the Cultural Association for the Preservation of Bantu Heritage (ACBANTU), a national umbrella organization of over 3,800 cultural groups, has heightened awareness of Bantu language, religion, and customs by pursuing strategic partnerships with the state. Partnering with the Brazilian government's Zero Hunger campaign, ACBANTU mobilized hundreds of community volunteers to distribute foodstuffs through Candomblé *terreiros*, funneling state aid through traditional sites of Bantu culture, organization, and resistance (27). The association's "expedient use of culture," Pinho argues, reveals the dynamic process through which black identities are constructed, rearticulated, and mobilized in the struggle for liberation (29).

Investigating constructions of blackness in Afro-Latin American performance, Heidi Feldman, Sujatha Fernandes, and Angela Castañeda each consider how black performers have engaged in a diasporic dialogue with African American and Afro-Caribbean cultural forms. Beginning in the 1950s, Heidi Feldman traces Afro-Peruvian performers' efforts to challenge the national ideology of *criollo* unity through African-inspired music, dance, and community festivals. In an important theoretical intervention, Feldman situates Afro-Peruvian musical traditions within the context of the "black Pacific," a region characterized by small "socially invisible" Afro-descended populations, a "loss of cultural heritage" due to isolation and geographic marginalization, and "ambiguous relationships with local *criollo* and indigenous culture and with the black Atlantic itself" (45). In this context, Afro-Peruvian performers elected to privilege the body as a site for ancestral memory, using music and dance as tools to heighten racial consciousness. Whereas music served as a catalyst for Afro-Peruvian social movements, Sujatha Fernandes contends that hip-hop artists in urban Venezuela have largely eschewed forms of collective resistance based on race, class, or gender. Instead Venezuelan rappers, inspired by urban street culture and the gritty sounds of African American gangsta rap, valorize the *malandro* as an "embodiment of everyday violence" in the barrio (77). The trope of the *malandro* as "urban guerilla," Fernandes argues, offers an alternative model of black resistance for impoverished barrio youth who question the utility of organized social movements and traditional forms of social protest. In her examination of performance cultures in Veracruz, Mexico, Angela Castañeda discusses how black identities are mediated by concurrent discourses of *mestizaje*, blackness, and Cubanness. Building on the work of Bobby Vaughn, she exposes how local discourses of blackness in Veracruz—a state populated by waves of free and enslaved black migrants since the sixteenth century—differ sharply from national narratives on race, which seek to ignore the African presence in Mexico. Contemporary debates about the construction and representation of blackness in Mexico, Castañeda argues, have led to "romanticized and overly exotic" depictions of black culture at Veracruz's annual Afro-Caribbean Festival, as state officials seek to market the region's black heritage for international tourists (106-107).

In the final essay in Part I, Elizabeth Moran examines the paintings of Víctor Patricio de Landaluze as a window into the racial and gendered anxieties of white elites in nineteenth-century Cuba. Confronted with a large enslaved population and a pro-

independence insurgency, loyalist whites embraced artistic works that presented a romanticized vision of Cuba. Analyzing the paintings that Landaluze produced during the 1880s, Moran argues that his works highlight the "complex and shifting attitudes" towards blacks on the island as well as the "varied ways in which whites saw or refused to see" Afro-descendants during the tumultuous campaigns for independence (131). Whereas Landaluze's portrayals of Afro-Cuban laborers invoked stereotypes of blacks as vain and childlike, his depictions of *cabildo* processions in Havana carefully documented Afro-Cuban performance traditions. Moran suggests that Landaluze made his *cabildo* paintings more palatable to the elite by excluding white male figures from the processions; however, she does not explain why Landaluze chose to depart from the caricatures of black life found in his illustrations and *costumbrismo* paintings.

The second section of the volume, "Afro Social Movements and Mobilization," assesses the groundswell of black activism in Latin America through case studies from Colombia, Ecuador, and Brazil. Each of the five essays in this section engage with the literature on "new social movements" in Latin America while also drawing upon diasporic frameworks to situate Afro-Latin American protests with a hemispheric tradition of black resistance. Peter Wade offers a useful overview of Afro-Columbian social movements before and after the landmark reforms of the 1990s. Wade acknowledges key victories in the areas of land rights, education, visibility, and economic development, yet he concludes that the violence on Colombia's Pacific Coast continues to jeopardize the fragile gains of the past two decades. Bettina Ng'weno's essay on race and citizenship in contemporary Colombia complements Wade's diachronic analysis of Afro-Colombian activism. Building on James Holton's notion of "differentiated citizenship," Ng'weno asserts that Afro-Colombians' formal membership in the nation has not yielded equal access to rights, resources, or representation, even after the multicultural reforms of the 1990s. Afro-Colombians' status as "fragile citizens," she contends, is the result of government policies that privilege ethnic difference over race-based claims and dominant historical narratives that position Afro-Colombians as diasporic subjects rather than Colombian nationals (165).

In Ecuador, the National Constituent Assembly also adopted a new constitution in the 1990s that granted collective rights to marginalized ethnic groups. Analyzing Ecuador's "multicultural turn," Ollie Johnson and Jean Muteba Rahier each evaluate Afro-Ecuadorians' struggle for full citizenship and emphasize the challenges that continue to hinder black organizations. Chronicling thirty years of black activism from 1979-2009, Johnson argues that Afro-Ecuadorian leaders have failed to create a robust national movement or to match the political power of indigenous groups. Johnson suggests that widespread poverty, "regionalism, personalism, and instability" have limited the scale and life cycle of Afro-Ecuadorian organizations, but he does not fully explore how the post-1998 multicultural reforms have altered the political terrain for Afro-Ecuadorian activists (192). In his revealing essay, Jean Rahier addresses this lacuna through a close reading of the 1998 and 2008 Ecuadorian constitutions. The series of constitutional reforms, Rahier suggests, privileged indigenous peoples' claims to collective rights while providing significantly less support for Afro-Ecuadorian claims-making. Because Afro-Ecuadorians did not possess the "holy trinity of multicultural peoplehood"—a separate language, culture, and geographic homeland within the nation—state agencies and non-governmental organizations questioned their demands for collective rights (201). Moreover, in the wake of the constitutional reforms, the government diffused grassroots social movements by incorporating Afro-Ecuadorian activists in state-sponsored multicultural institutions.

Keisha-Khan Perry's essay on urban struggles for housing and land rights in Brazil offers a feminist analysis of contemporary black social movements. Drawing on

ethnographic research and interviews with residents in urban Salvador, Bahia, Perry chronicles how local activists have challenged state-sponsored urban development initiatives in order to defend their homes, land, and livelihoods. Foregrounding the work of grassroots neighborhood associations organized and led by black women, Perry innovates on two fronts. First, she demonstrates the gendered nature of Afro-Brazilian social movements, revealing that black women's participation as "foot soldiers," community organizers, and political leaders has been crucial in grassroots protests. Her fruitful use of black feminist theory and engagement with recent works on women's activism provide a model for future scholarship on Afro-mobilizations in the region. Second, Perry makes the case that urban land struggles should be seen as a constitutive part of Afro-Brazilian social movements. In doing so, she broadens our conception of Brazil's black movement beyond formal organizations like the Movimento Negro Unificado (MNU) to include local associations led by poor and working-class Afro-descendants.

The third and final section of the volume, "State Responses," analyzes how Latin American states have mobilized in response to demands for equal citizenship and racial justice. The essays document the continued salience of whitening ideologies even as governments throughout the region have established new institutions and legal codes to promote the rights of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples. Judith Morrison's sweeping analysis of regional and national activist networks situates recent social movements in the context of four centuries of Afro-Latin American activism. Charting black activism over the longue durée, Morrison points to four distinct stages of mobilization: the period of enslavement and marronage (1600-1900); the wave of social, political, and labor struggles in the early and mid twentieth century (1900-1960); anti-discrimination campaigns during the global era of civil rights and anti-colonial movements (1960-1995); and contemporary efforts to realize full equality following re-democratization and multicultural legal reforms (1995-present). The essays by Juliet Hooker, Shane Greene, Antônio Guimarães, and Ernesto Sagas each consider how official discourses on race and ethnicity impact Afro-descendants' collective identities and organizing strategies. In her compelling account of racial politics on the Caribbean coast of Nicaragua, Juliet Hooker maintains that Nicaraguan Creoles have increasingly articulated a black racial identity in response to the failures of the state's multicultural reforms. Since the 1990s, Creole activists have strategically emphasized their status as Afro-descendants in a transnational black diaspora in order to protest ongoing racial discrimination, economic inequality, and political marginalization in Nicaragua. Rather than viewing Creoles' racial discourse as insincere, Hooker argues that Creoles' self-making practices highlight the "dialectical relationship between rights and identities" and the dynamism of black politics in Latin America (264). In his essay on Peru, Shane Greene demonstrates how state officials and intellectuals have used the figure of "the Inca" to whiten the nation's past and exclude Afro-descendants, native Amazonians, and other groups who cannot lay claim to Inca heritage. He suggests that Peru's embrace of multicultural policies has been "largely superficial" given the Inca-centric construction of Peruvian citizenship (290). Antônio Guimarães' essay traces Brazilian sociological thought on race and racial inequality from the origins of the field in the nineteenth century to contemporary debates over racial quotas in public universities. Seeking to move beyond studies of Brazil's mythical racial democracy, he calls on scholars to investigate why Brazilians continue to identify with specific color or racial groups despite "centuries of cultural and biological *mestiçagem*" (312). Writing about the Dominican Republic, Ernesto Sagas proposes that the unique history of slavery, Spanish colonialism, foreign intervention, and dictatorship fueled a nationalist discourse that was explicitly anti-black and anti-Haitian. As a result, Dominicans of

African descent self-identify using terms that invoke their national identity, such as Dominican or *indio*, rather than racialized terms. Sagas argues that the state's anti-black and anti-Haitian rhetoric not only marginalizes Haitian residents but has also served as an effective "divide and conquer strategy" to prevent Afro-Dominican social movements (341).

The fifteen essays in *Comparative Perspectives on Afro-Latin America* advance the current literature on the African diaspora in Latin America and contribute to the wave of recent scholarship on black social movements in the region (Andrews 2004; Asher 2009; Mullings and Marable 2009; Rahier 2012; Reiter 2012). The volume demonstrates how two decades of multicultural reforms in Latin America have provided significant opportunities for Afro-descendants to claim full citizenship rights, while also acknowledging the limitations of multiculturalist policies that do not confront racism, gender discrimination, and economic inequality. *Comparative Perspectives on Afro-Latin America* is suitable for advanced undergraduate and graduate students and will serve as an important reference for scholars in the fields of African Diaspora studies and Latin American and Caribbean studies.

*Dartmouth College*

## 'Una enfermera negra en la España republicana': Salaria Kea y la Guerra Civil Española

**Traducido por Mauricio Almonte y Carmen Cañete Quesada**

Quienes han estudiado la Brigada Abraham Lincoln han oído al menos mencionar en memorias, testimonios o cartas de algún o alguna brigadista el caso de Salaria Kea (o Kee), una joven afroamericana que embarcó rumbo a España para unirse a nuestras trincheras. Su nombre, como el de otros tantos extranjeros que sacrificaron sus vidas en España, no figura en las páginas de la historiografía oficial, y ni mucho menos en los libros de texto españoles que se leen en las escuelas. El presente trabajo ofrece una edición anotada y traducida al español del folleto "A Negro Nurse in Republican Spain" ["Una enfermera Negra en la España republicana"], como muestra de reconocimiento a la única mujer negra de la Brigada Abraham Lincoln que tomó conciencia sobre la importancia de frenar actitudes fascistas tanto en Europa como en su entorno natal.

El folleto (que abajo ofrecemos) describe los episodios más destacados de la infancia y juventud de Salaria Kea, y en particular el tiempo que ella pasó en España durante el período de la guerra civil en España. En este relato en tercera persona, se encuentran intercaladas citas extraídas de sus memorias inéditas, "While Passing Through", archivadas en la Lincoln Brigade Archive de la Tamiment Library (New York University).[1] El panfleto nos informa sobre su nacimiento, un 13 de julio de 1913 en Milledgeville, Georgia. A través de él, también, conocemos que su padre perdió la vida en el hospital de enfermos mentales donde trabajaba tras ser víctima de un trágico accidente laboral. Al trabajo y salario desfavorables, se unieron la falta de compensación de la familia y el abandono del hogar con destino a Akron, una pequeña localidad situada al noreste de Ohio. Allí Salaria se crió con sus tres hermanos y pudo recibir una educación medianamente aceptable pese a los inconvenientes de vivir en una sociedad segregada.[2] Al brigadista afroamericano oriundo de Misisipi, James Yates (1906-33), le llamó la atención el hecho de que tantos voluntarios afroamericanos provinieran de Ohio (126-27). Pero al escuchar las razones que daba su compatriota Admiral Kilpatrik, pudo comprender la razón por la que aquellos negros del Norte se unieron a la lucha tan efusivamente. El desempleo, la pobreza y el trato vejatorio al que estaban expuestos les dio el valor suficiente para viajar a España y luchar por la causa antifascista. Walter Cobb, Claude Pringle, Bernard Rucker, Edward Johnson, Leroy Collins, Abraham Lewis, Walter Dicks y el mismo Kilpatrick fueron algunos de los que se cruzaron con Yates en las trincheras (Yates 127). El nombre de Salaria figura en la lista de arriba; informante también de uno de los estados más segregados al Norte de la línea Mason-Dixon (127).

Según datos que hemos podido conocer por Kathleen L. Endres, profesora de la universidad de Akron, Salaria tuvo que enfrentarse a la discriminación diaria desde joven. Para aprender a nadar había que desplazarse a Lorain, ya que los afroamericanos de Akron no estaban autorizados a usar las piscinas públicas de su localidad. La misma Kea recuerda que gracias a la ayuda de sus dos hermanos, Andrew y Arthur, pudo ser transferida a otra escuela para participar en el equipo de baloncesto. Su color de piel supuso un impedimento para completar estudios superiores cerca de casa, y tras ser rechazada en tres escuelas de enfermería cercanas a Akron, decidió mudarse a Nueva York para asistir a Harlem Hospital Training School (Reef 174). En el comedor del hospital se vio involucrada en un caso de discriminación y actuó en consecuencia consiguiendo logros sorprendentes en su lucha contra el racismo. Recién graduada en el año 1934 trabajó en el área de tuberculosos de Harlem Hospital, donde mostró una gran valentía denunciando casos de negligencia y desigualdad en las condiciones de trabajo

del personal negro. Aquel cúmulo de experiencias que coincidía con la más reciente invasión de los italianos en Etiopía la llevaron a alistarse en la Brigada Abraham Lincoln junto a otros trabajadores afiliados al partido comunista mayormente afectados desde la Gran Depresión.

El 27 de marzo de 1937 Kea parte desde Nueva York con el resto de la Segunda Unidad Médica de brigadistas (12 enfermeras y un equipo de médicos dirigido por el cirujano Edward K. Barsky), desembarcando el 3 de abril en las aguas mediterráneas de Port Bou, Gerona. La unidad se desplazó al abandonado Palacio de Villa Paz localizado a las afueras de Madrid, y allí instalaron el llamado "Hospital Americano Nº 1". Ocho meses después, el 2 de octubre, Kea contrae nupcias con el brigadista irlandés John O'Reilly, quien había sido atendido en el hospital. El escritor afroamericano Langston Hughes, que para entonces se encontraba en España como corresponsal del periódico *Baltimore Afro-American*, escribió una refrescante nota sobre las buenas nuevas en medio de tanta tragedia. Pero el texto que aquí ofrecemos cumplía con fines mediáticos más urgentes, y el matrimonio entre ambos quedó excluido del anecdotario bélico.

¿Cuál era el propósito de este folleto de apenas catorce páginas que circuló por las calles de Nueva York poco después del regreso de Kea? Varias organizaciones humanitarias, el llamado el Comité Negro de Ayuda a España (Negro Committee to Aid Spain) y la Oficina Médica y el Comité Norteamericana para Ayudar a la Democracia Española (Medical Bureau and North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy), se encargaron de divulgar la noticia ante la urgencia de enviar a España suministros médicos, comida y otros productos de primera necesidad. Y de qué mejor manera que con el relato de aquella voluntaria ejemplar que había sido testigo de muertes, hambruna y carencias de todo tipo en los hospitales de campaña. Existía la urgencia de concienciar a los ciudadanos del error del embargo y de la ineficacia de las políticas no intervencionistas.

El escenario de la guerra que Salaria describe debió trastornar a la opinión pública; al menos esta parecía su intención: soldados masacrados con armamento sofisticado, voluntarios decapitados por el impacto de las bombas, campamentos infantiles bombardeados, madres que lloran la muerte de sus hijos despedazados. La crudeza de aquellas escenas narradas bajo la voz de una brigadista superviviente contribuiría sin duda a recaudar dinero y provisiones para los combatientes leales. Nuestra heroína podía haber añadido un mayor grado de dramatismo a su testimonio y sin embargo prefirió ocultar otros episodios que no hizo públicos hasta años después. Tratando de huir a Zaragoza tras el bombardeo de su unidad, Kea fue apresada por soldados alemanes. Confiesa que era la primera vez que veía la insignia de la esvástica. Por su color de piel pensaron que era marroquí, algo que otros excombatientes afroamericanos habían experimentado en el campo de batalla. Se desconoce el nombre de aquel pueblo donde fue capturada, aprisionada e interrogada por los nazis, pero recuerda que la obligaron varias veces a despertarse de madrugada para presenciar los fusilamientos. Salaria Kea vivió aquel cuadro dantesco por seis semanas hasta que las Brigadas Internacionales retomaron el pueblo y los alemanes se dispersaron (Kea and John O'Reilly, "Volunteers Who").

Como tantos otros extranjeros involucrados en la guerra civil, la solidaridad y el compromiso moral antes de su partida pasaron a convertirse tras llegar al frente en un acto de completa entrega para con el pueblo español. Sobre todo con el contacto diario de campesinos que malvivían en chabolas inhabitables cerca del antiguo palacio de Alfonso XIII. Y aunque no de forma tan inmediata, escritores y pensadores de otras partes de América también experimentaron aquella sensación de pertenencia cuando en el verano de 1937 se reunían en Valencia para participar en el Segundo Congreso Internacional de Escritores en defensa de la República. Pablo Neruda, César Vallejo,

Octavio Paz, Juan Marinello y Nicolás Guillén, entre otros muchos, veían reflejado en el triunfo de la República española una esperanza para poner fin en sus países a la explotación de campesinos y obreros, a la discriminación del indígena y del negro, al abuso de gobiernos fascistas y a la intervención de fuerzas imperialistas. A todos ellos les unía una revolución de naturaleza similar.

De regreso a Akron en los años setenta, Kea explica la revelación que supuso en aquellos años la guerra en España. La entrevistada cuenta la primera vez que fue testigo de un caso de discriminación no racial al salir de su país. Fue entonces cuando se dio cuenta de que el negro en Estados Unidos y en otras partes del mundo no era el único grupo oprimido:

> When I got to Spain, I saw the poor people, the shacks they lived in, [...] and I had never seen anything like it in all my life. They couldn't read and they couldn't write and the way they lived was to me unbelievable. My whole concept changed. I had had the feeling that in America only the Negroes suffered and that in other countries where there are no Negroes everything was lovely. (Kea and O'Reilly, "Salaria Kea and")[3]

A la edad de 24 años descubrió que otros motivos no raciales arrastraban a cerca de 40.000 hombres y mujeres brigadistas de todo el mundo en la lucha contra regímenes totalitarios.

Éste y otros documentos y entrevistas de Salaria Kea han pasado prácticamente desapercibidos. Las memorias de esta ilustre mujer tituladas "While Passing Through" se encuentran inéditas, y muchas de las entrevistas y noticias relacionadas con su participación en la guerra están dispersas en periódicos y revistas de Europa y América. Sirva esta traducción de "A Negro Nurse in Republican Spain" como un pequeño homenaje a la solidaridad del cerca de centenar de afroamericanos voluntarios que arriesgaron o sacrificaron sus vidas en España. Otras memorias de excombatientes y periodistas negros de la guerra civil están siendo motivo de reciente interés. La colección BAAM (Biblioteca Afro Americana Madrid) lanzada por La Oficina de Arte y Ediciones editó en el 2011 sus dos primeras piezas: *Escritos sobre España* de Langston Hughes, y el relato memorable de James Yates, *De Misisipi a Madrid: Memorias de un afroamericano de la Brigada Abraham Lincoln*. Hay que desenterrar la memoria histórica de esta gente y evitar que permanezcan en el olvido. Esperamos que este ejercicio de traducción sea un punto de arranque para divulgar dentro y fuera de los Estados Unidos la causa altruista de estos héroes y heroínas de una guerra civil absurda y cruenta.

**"Una enfermera Negra en la España republicana". Nueva York: The Negro Committee to Aid Spain/Medical Bureau and North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, 1938. [Autor no especificado]**

¿Qué tienen los Negros[4] que ver con España? ¿Qué nos ofrece España a nosotros? ¿Y Etiopía[5]? ¿Por qué deberían los hombres Negros luchar en España? ¿Qué esperan a cambio? Éstas son las preguntas que los Negros se hacen constantemente. Es una reacción inmediata a cualquier llamamiento a favor de España. Sin necesidad de entrar en cuestiones generales de humanitarismo las respuestas son así de simples.

La Italia fascista invadió y se impuso en Etiopía. Esto supuso un duro golpe para todos los Negros del mundo. Etiopía representaba el último bastión de la autoridad del Negro, de un autogobierno Negro. Cientos de Negros de este país intentaron unirse a las fuerzas etíopes. Pero Etiopía en aquel tiempo era un país tan remoto que sólo unos pocos lo consiguieron. Y digo "en aquel tiempo" con conocimiento de causa. Desde

entonces el paso acelerado de eventos históricos ha acercado mucho más a Europa y a Oriente los pensamientos y conocimientos locales.

Incluso en aquel tiempo se recaudaron miles de dólares de gente de todos los países del mundo amantes de la libertad. Suecia y Dinamarca enviaron ambulancias y provisiones médicas. Los Negros de Nueva York enviaron un hospital de campaña de 75 camillas y dos toneladas de suministros médicos. Enviaron dos delegaciones al emperador Haile Selassie.[6] Trajeron dos delegaciones etíopes a este país para ganar partidarios de Etiopía. Un joven médico blanco de Evanston, Illinois, fue la primera víctima extranjera. Lo mató el asalto aéreo de un avión italo-fascista en los hospitales de campaña etíopes. Resulta llamativo el hecho de que tanto Alemania como Italia y Japón no enviaran nada –excepto gases tóxicos con los que masacrar a los etíopes.

Italia siguió avanzando desde la invasión de Etiopía. Llevó sus tropas a España. Era ésta una segunda nación pequeña, feudal y subdesarrollada. Todavía quedaba el dolor por el resentimiento amargo contra Italia. Los cientos de muchachos Negros a quienes se les había prevenido ir a Etiopía entendían más claramente el problema. Para ellos España era ahora el campo de batalla donde se debía derrotar a la Italia fascista. Y quizás la Italia derrotada en España se vería entonces forzada a retirarse de Etiopía. Para Etiopía la única esperanza de poder recuperarse está en la derrota de Italia. El lugar para la derrota de Italia en estos momentos radica en España.

El linchamiento de Negros en Estados Unidos, la discriminación en la educación y en el trabajo, la falta de facilidades hospitalarias para los Negros en la mayoría de las ciudades y en condiciones muy pobres en otras, todo esto era concebido como parte de la imagen del fascismo: un grupo dominante que empobrece y degrada a un grupo menos poderoso. Evidencia de esto son las declaraciones abiertas de Alemania e Italia contra quienes no pertenecen a la raza aria. Con todo esto en mente, cientos de hombres Negros fueron a España. Aquí, en las Brigadas Internacionales de Voluntarios, encontraron a otros Negros. Desde Djibouti, el mecánico principal del emperador Haile Selassie vino para "salir en defensa por una Etiopía libre". Desde Sudáfrica, desde Cuba, desde el Senegal francés, desde Haití, desde los Camerunes, los Negros vinieron, se quedaron y lucharon.

Vinieron médicos Negros para encargarse de los hospitales y servir a los heridos. Hubo también conductores Negros de ambulancia y camilleros. Y una joven enfermera Negra.

Ésta es la historia de las experiencias que forjaron el pensamiento de esta enfermera, y que la trajo finalmente a las trincheras de la España Republicana, a los hospitales de campaña en el frente, y a hospitales base detrás de las líneas de combate. Aquí conoció y atendió a españoles, ingleses y checos, y a irlandeses y escoceses, y a pobres blancos de Georgia, y a etíopes de Jjibouti y Negros de Haití y África y América. Finalmente, tras sufrir el estallido de una explosión de bomba en la trinchera, regresó a casa para recuperarse y seguir trabajando para obtener ayuda médica a las mujeres y los niños de España.

**Infancia**

La vida de Salaria Kee empezó como la de millones de niñas Negras en este país. Su padre era un simple empleado. Recibía un salario mínimo por su trabajo como celador en el Hospital Estatal para Dementes. Su familia no paraba de crecer. Solían ocurrir en ella los episodios ordinarios de tragedia y frustración. Se veían a unos hijos mayores sacrificándose para que uno de los menores pudiera recibir una educación que hubiera sido prácticamente imposible con las dificultades económicas y las provisiones

inadecuadas del gobierno. Ocurrían en ella los mismos conflictos de prejuicios raciales y las limitaciones impuestas a cada niño Negro de este país.

Cuando Salaria tenía seis meses su padre fue apuñalado a muerte por un paciente del Hospital Estatal de Enfermos Mentales. El hospital tenía escasez de personal. Los pacientes difíciles podían dominar con facilidad a un único asistente. Con aquellos ingresos tan bajos el ahorro era algo impensable. La compensación que recibieron era insignificante. Su viuda llevó a sus cuatro niños pequeños a Akron, Ohio. Los niños se quedaron con sus amigos en Akron, Ohio. Allí vivieron con amigos de juventud de la señora Kee. Dos años después la señora Kee regresó a Georgia. Aquí se casó con un granjero. Lo había conocido de niña allí en Millageville. Los hijos permanecieron con amigos en Akron, Ohio.

La señora Jackson se los llevó a su casa. El marido de la señora Jackson era botones del Country Club de Akron. Así que tan sólo contaba con las propinas que a veces recibía. Y además ambos tenían cinco hijos. El suministro público para el cuidado de niños negros dependientes, incluso en el Norte, siempre ha estado muy por debajo del que se le provee a los niños blancos. Y el suministro para niños blancos, excepto en casos aislados, está muy por debajo de la media aceptable que un país avanzado como el nuestro debería mantener. Hace veintiséis años las condiciones eran peores.

Las "propinas" del señor Jackson no alcanzaban para mantener a una familia de once. Cuando el hermano de Salaria, Andrew, contaba con nueve años de edad abandonó la escuela. Un trabajo como repartidor de la compra fue lo único que pudo encontrar. El salario era $1,50 a la semana. Poco después George y Arthur abandonaron la escuela y se pusieron a trabajar.

Los hermanos se aseguraron de mantener a Salaria en la escuela. Ella era lista en sus estudios y una atleta activa. En la Escuela Secundaria Central de Akron no le dejaron jugar al baloncesto porque "ningún Negro había sido antes admitido en el equipo". Sobre esto Salaria cuenta: "Me sentía derrotada, como era de esperar. Pero mis hermanos me dijeron que continuara, que esto no me detuviera".

Entonces los hermanos llevaron el caso al consejo escolar y finalmente le aseguraron la transferencia a West High School. Allí estaba claramente especificado el derecho a participar en actividades atléticas sin ningún tipo de restricciones. Fue entonces cuando Salaria se dio cuenta por primera vez de que uno no debe aceptar ni someterse a prácticas injustas. Hay que resistir y luchar.

### Prácticas y trabajo en Harlem Hospital

Durante las vacaciones de verano Salaria trabajaba en la oficina del Dr. Bedford Riddle, un reconocido médico Negro de Akron, Ohio. Ella se había graduado de la escuela secundaria cuando el Dr. Riddle la convenció para que comenzara la profesión de enfermera. Siguiendo su consejo entró en Harlem Hospital Training School.

En el personal del Hospital Harlem había una mezcla de Negros y blancos en la mayoría de sus departamentos. Aún así dentro de la institución se practicaba la discriminación racial de forma severa. Esto se veía claramente en el comedor. Algunas mesas quedaban reservadas para los trabajadores blancos. Los miembros del personal blanco de un grado superior comían en comedores privados mientras que los Negros del mismo rango comían en el comedor común. Las enfermeras Negras de más edad advertían que aquello siempre había sido así y que nada se podía hacer al respecto. Un día Salaria entró al comedor con su grupo de compañeros de estudio. Encontraron sólo una mesa libre así que se sentaron allí. La camarera se negó a servirles diciéndoles que aquella mesa estaba reservada para trabajadores sociales blancos. El dietista confirmó

que era cierto. Entonces los cinco estudiantes se levantaron, juntaron los extremos del mantel y volcaron la mesa.

El ambiente en Harlem Hospital "olía mal" desde hacía tiempo. Cuando se divulgó la noticia de esta historia el alcalde envió a un comité para que investigara la situación. Para entonces los estudiantes se habían organizado y estaban preparados para exigir ciertas peticiones básicas. Éstas eran:

1. Suspender la discriminación racial en el comedor.
2. Nombrar a un dietista Negro en el personal que hasta el momento contaba con cinco blancos.
3. Otorgar mayor autoridad a las enfermeras supervisoras, que en la actualidad hacen de jefas de decoro y simples capataces.

Todas estas exigencias se cumplieron de inmediato.

Ésta fue la primera experiencia de Salaria en un movimiento de acción colectivo para la resistencia organizada y programada en la lucha contra la injusticia. Sus hermanos la habían ayudado antes en cada situación. Normalmente ella era la única Negra involucrada. Cuando no era admitida en un lugar ellos la cambiaban a otro. Ahora estaba aprendiendo a resistir, a organizarse y a cambiar las condiciones. Se despertó en ella un gran sentimiento de identidad colectiva. Era el año 1933.

En 1934 Salaria se graduó de Harlem Hospital Training School. Tras un breve trabajo en Sea View Hospital regresó como miembro regular del personal de Harlem Hospital. Se le asignó trabajar en la división de obstetricia. Desde hacía algún tiempo resonaban las condiciones desesperantes de Harlem Hospital. Atendiendo a sus responsabilidades como enfermera, Salaria empezó entonces a sentir la fuerza y el sentido de estas cosas. La sala estaba abarrotada y el personal era escaso. Una enfermera se encontraba a cargo de la sala de maternidad y al cuidado de cincuenta bebés. Cincuenta bebés a quienes había que alimentar y limpiar tres veces cada noche – ciento cincuenta comidas y ciento cincuenta cambios de pañales, y una sola enfermera para hacerlo. También estaba la sala para anormales. Ésta contaba normalmente con doce bebés y el mismo número de madres infectadas o anormales, muchas de ellas con enfermedades contagiosas. Todos ellos, claro está, debían haber estado aislados y bajo el cuidado exclusivo de una enfermera. A veces estas madres enfermas se perdían por entre la sala de los bebés sanos. Una vez Salaria encontró a una de estas mujeres alimentando a un bebé sano con la leche que le había sobrado de su propio bebé enfermo.

Elaboró un informe dando a conocer estas condiciones. Inmediatamente se le transfirió a la habitación de partos y se le aconsejó que "se ocupara de hacer su propio trabajo". Por lo general dos enfermeras suelen asistir a cada médico durante un parto. Aquí Salaria se ha encontrado sola con tres partos en tres habitaciones distintas y, como es normal en estos casos, tres doctores diferentes.

Aquel verano una diarrea infantil se propagó por el hospital. A diario morían entre tres y cinco bebés. La gente de la calle empezaba a quejarse y a referirse al hospital como la "Casa de la Muerte". El hospital continuó admitiendo nuevos pacientes. No hubo medidas especiales para frenar la epidemia. Finalmente el descontento cristalizó en protestas organizadas. Se creó un piquete alrededor del hospital exigiendo una investigación sobre la muerte de tantos bebés, y el cierre de la sala de maternidad mientras se investigaba el caso. Las peticiones fueron atendidas. Se compararon los análisis de los informes mensuales de los médicos exponiendo las causas de la muerte de los pacientes con el informe final enviado cada mes al departamento de hospitales. Parecía ser que al departamento de hospitales no se le había informado con precisión del asunto. A esto le siguió una investigación pública, se revelaron condiciones graves

y Salaria comprendió que la seguridad del individuo depende por completo de la de su grupo.

**La España Republicana**

Las actividades de Salaria giraban en torno a las enfermeras más progresistas. Juntas asistían a conferencias y discusiones sobre asuntos cívicos, locales, nacionales e internacionales. Estas discusiones le ayudaron a comprender lo que estaba ocurriendo en Harlem y su relación con eventos de Europa y África. El fascismo alemán y su ataque contra las Razas, el asalto de Italia a Etiopía. Ahora España. Cuando Italia invadió Etiopía ella ya estaba lista. Con un grupo de enfermeros y médicos de Harlem ayudó a reunir las primeras dos toneladas de provisiones médicas y ropas a Etiopía. Ella se movilizó en la campaña que iniciaron médicos de Harlem y que permitió que un hospital de campaña de 75 camillas fuera enviado a Etiopía.

Cuando Mussolini avanzó desde Etiopía hacia España con sus tropas italianas, ella comprendió que se trataba de una misma lucha. Había madurado lo suficiente para entenderlo. El 27 de marzo de 1937 embarcó desde Nueva York con la segunda Unidad Médica Americana hacia la España republicana. Eran un grupo de doce enfermeras y médicos. Salaria era la única Negra del grupo. La habían precedido cientos de muchachos Negros. Habían ido como soldados, médicos, conductores de ambulancias. Ella era la primera mujer Negra en ir.

Fue el 3 de abril cuando el grupo llegó a Port Bou, España. Una delegación enorme de hombres, mujeres y niños españoles les dieron la bienvenida. Un niño pequeño salió de entre la multitud y se acercó a Salaria. Cogiéndola de la mano se quejaba dulcemente:

> "¿Por qué no vinisteis ayer?"
> "Por qué ayer?" Preguntó Salaria.
> "Porque ayer los fascistas vinieron con sus aviones y lanzaron bombas. Mi madre y mi padre han muerto, y también mis hermanos menores. No teníamos médicos ni enfermeras que pudieran atenderlos tras estallar las bombas. Quedaos aquí. Si los fascistas regresan con bombas puede que nos maten a todos si no os quedáis".

Instrucciones oficiales ordenaron que crearan su hospital en Villa Paz[7] cerca de Madrid. Villa Paz había sido la residencia de verano del rey Alfonso XIII, abandonada desde su abdicación en 1931. Era un bonito palacio plano y de color blanco situado en un precioso jardín. Por entre los altos cipreses se ocultaba una piscina de azulejos brillantes. El palacio estaba ahora lleno de vacas y cabras. Los campesinos todavía vivían en casuchas estrechas y húmedas. Los suelos estaban sucios. Para calentarse quemaban estiércol seco de vaca con un hornillo de loza instalado en la esquina. Los campesinos estaban tan acostumbrados a la pobreza y a las penurias que incluso ahora no se atrevían a mudarse al palacio deshabitado del Rey. En lugar de ocuparlo preferían meter allí al ganado.

Aquel fue el primer ejemplo concreto de discriminación desprovisto de tintes raciales que Salaria experimentó. En este caso se trataba del campesinado versus la nobleza. Los campesinos habían aceptado previamente la creencia de que nada se podía hacer al respecto de la misma manera que las enfermeras de Harlem se habían resignado a la discriminación racial en el comedor. Como las enfermeras de Harlem, los campesinos se estaban ahora dando cuenta de que algo se podía hacer. Uno podía resistir, se podía luchar, la libertad podía convertirse en algo real. No había nada inviolable en los viejos prejuicios. Era posible cambiarlos y establecer la justicia.