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Articles

Book Reviews

Other

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2. In order for your manuscript or book review to be considered for publication with *PALARA* in the fall, then that manuscript or book review must be submitted by **July 1** of that same year.

3. Manuscripts must include an abstract of 100–200 words. The abstract should provide the major objectives, methods used, findings, and conclusions. The abstract should not include references or footnotes.

4. The minimum number of text pages for a manuscript is 18 and the maximum is 25. In addition, the manuscript should follow publication guidelines of the latest edition of the Modern Language Association (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/) or Chicago Manual of Style (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/01/)

5. Use endnotes and not footnotes.

6. Book reviews should be 1500 words and follow MLA or Chicago style.

Editor's Note

Dorothy Mosby • Mount Holyoke

Sonja Stephenson Watson • University of Texas at Arlington

It was a pleasure seeing many of you at the 12th biennial international/interdisciplinary research conference of the Afro-Latin/American Research Association (ALARA) hosted by the University of Houston where ALARA Treasurer Antonio D. Tillis serves as Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences. Although this was the first time that ALARA was held domestically, in her welcome address, ALARA President Sheridan Wigginton summarized perfectly why Houston was and continues to be an ideal place to host ALARA. She noted that Houston has "the third-largest population of undocumented immigrants in the country" and foreshadows what many cities in the United States will look like because of its racial, linguistic, and cultural diversity. Wigginton noted the following:

> If the foundational work of ALARA can be boiled down to anything, it's found in the essence…that is: How do the people living as "the other" in a society negotiate their lived experiences within a society whose historical default setting is to diminish, if not destroy, what makes those supposed "others" human? And equals. Our membership tends to investigate this very question through the various lenses of cultural production.

Indeed, ALARA and *PALARA* seek to interrogate the notion of the "Other" and bring new voices to the table. The fall 2018 issue of *PALARA* seeks to continue this dialogue and engage scholarship on the past, present, and future of peoples of African descent in the Americas.

We open this issue with Wigginton's tribute to Dr. Flore Zéphir (1958-2017), one of the founding members of ALARA. Dr. Zéphir contributed not only to the advancement of French/Haitian Creole linguistics and foreign language education, but she also had an impact on the professional development of graduate students and scholars in the field. A faithful attendee of ALARA conferences, her presence was notably absent and missed in Houston.

In the world of Afro-Panamanian writing, we lost another key literary figure. Sonja Stephenson Watson offers a tribute to Panamanian West Indian poet and essayist Dr. Carlos E. Russell (1934-2018). Russell's work did not garner the same level of critical attention as his contemporaries, Dr. Carlos "Cubena" Wilson (1941-2016) and Professor Gerardo Maloney (1945); however, his impact was equally significant because of his commitment to political activism and the development of Panamanian West Indian intellectual thought. Watson's tribute sheds light on Russell's black intellectualism, activism, and legacy.

As we look to more contemporary issues of race and national identity, this current volume of *PALARA* features several pieces on Puerto Rico and its diaspora. Violeta Lorenzo Feliciano's article, "Son asimilados": Mayra Montero vis-à-vis Tomás Blanco y el discurso racial en Puerto Rico," analyzes Montero's contemporary essay "El entierro de Chianita: un complot chino" through the lens of Blanco's seminal early twentieth-century text *El prejuicio racial en Puerto Rico* which perpetuated the image of Puerto Rico as a racial democracy and a country of *jíbaros* and non-blacks. Will Guzmán's review of *Silencing Race: Disentangling Blackness, Colonialism, and National Identities in Puerto Rico* by Ileana Rodríguez-Silva provides another analysis of Puerto Rico's issue with race, national identity, and whiteness. These issues of course are not isolated to Puerto Rico and represent those in other countries with significant African Diaspora populations. Casarae Gibson's review of *Diasporic Blackness: The Life and Times of Arturo Alfonso Schomburg* by Vanessa K. Valdés illustrates how the Puerto Rican-born Harlemnite "forg[ed] cross-cultural connections between African communities in the Americas" and sought to incorporate "Afro-latinidad as part of the fabric of U.S. politics and culture."

Yadira Nieves-Pizarro's "The Representation of Latin@s in the Media: A Negation of Blackness" provides another reading of Afro-Latin@ culture from a contemporary perspective through the lens of mainstream media and the portrayal or negation of black Latinos. Nieves-Pizarro reminds us that although there has been improvement in recent years, there is still a long way to go with respect to the representation of Afro-Latin@s in the media.

Just as representations of blackness circulate across borders, the same could be said of the transnational circulation of music. The global impact of US hip-hop is evident as

we read Jessie Denise Dixon-Montgomery's article on female underground hip-hop in Cuba and Sarah Ohmer's review of *Cuban Underground Hip Hop: Black Thoughts, Black Revolution, Black Modernity* by Tanya Saunders. In "Afro-Hispanic Aesthetics and Identity through the Cuban Underground Hip Hop of *Los Paisanos* and *Obsesión*," Dixon-Montgomery argues that female Cuban hip-hop artists "affirm their Afro-Hispanic identity through lyrics that examine the notion of beauty through an Afrocentric lens rather than one of the dominant Eurocentric culture, while examining critical issues of the day for Afro-Cubans." Meanwhile, Ohmer's review of Saunders' book, *Cuban Underground Hip Hop: Black Thoughts, Black Revolution, Black Modernity*, reads the work through the lens of Afro-feminist studies and critical poetic thought. Ohmer examines how Saunders' book "challenges the Eurocentric humanist Cuban culture, what and who counts as Cuban, and what and who counts as a 'worthy' contributor to U.S. Latin Americanist discourse." In turn, Saunders' monograph can be read as a companion piece to contextualize Dixon-Montgomery's article.

In another book review, Paulette A. Ramsay offers her reading of Marvin A. Lewis' *Nelson Estupiñán Bass: una introducción a sus escritos,* translated into Spanish by Grabiela Díaz Cortez and Valentina Goldraij, which brings to light the legacy of one the most important Afro-Ecuadorian authors. The founding editor of PALARA, Lewis provides the reader with a critical analysis of Estupiñán Bass' works that can be appreciated equally by academics, graduate students, and readers who are new to Afro-Hispanic literature.

We look forward to your submissions to the fall 2019 special issue, "Afro-Latin American and Afro-Latinx Cinema," edited by Dr. Vanessa K. Valdés (Associate Professor of Spanish and Portuguese at The City College of New York – CUNY). Valdés is the author of *Oshun's Daughters: The Search for Womanhood in the Americas* (SUNY Press 2014) and *Diasporic Blackness: The Life and Times of Arturo Alfonso Schomburg* (SUNY Press 2017), the latter which is reviewed in this issue. Most recently, she was named series editor of the Afro-Latinx Futures Series from SUNY Press. As Valdés suggests in the call for papers, the goal of this issue is to highlight Afro-Latinx films in less studied countries and "to serve as an evaluation of the representation of peoples of African descent as well their participation behind the camera."

Finally, we would like to thank Olyad "Oli" Chala Gemechu, a graphic design major in the College of Liberal Arts (University of Texas at Arlington) for designing the front cover. Without knowing the subject matter of this issue, Oli brought awareness to the issue's focus on black female performance artists, writers, and subjects in the Spanish-speaking Americas. We would also be remiss to not thank ALARA member Tyra Lewis for volunteering to copyedit many of the pages that color this issue.

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Remembering Dr. Flore Zéphir*

Sheridan Wigginton • California Lutheran University

Our ALARA family mourns the untimely loss of one its most stalwart members, Dr. Flore Zéphir, who died on December 15, 2017 from complications following heart surgery in Columbia, Missouri.

Professor Flore Zéphir, a native of Jérémie, Haiti, was born on January 11, 1958 and later came to the United States in 1975. She attended Hunter College of the City University of New York, where she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in French and Education in 1980. The following year she went to Indiana University-Bloomington, and earned two Master of Arts degrees in 1983, and a Ph.D. in French Linguistics in 1990.

Professor Zéphir had been teaching at the University of Missouri-Columbia (MU) since 1988 in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures. She was a professor of French and coordinator of the Master's program in foreign language teaching, and a faculty fellow in the Division of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity. She served as department chair in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures from fall 2008 to summer 2014, and director of the Afro-Romance Institute from August 2008 to December 2016; she also chaired the Linguistics area program from fall 2004 to summer 2007. She was the recipient of several awards at MU. In 1995, she received a Kemper award for excellence in teaching; in 2003, an award for excellence in advising; and in 2004, a Faculty-Alumni award.

Professor Zéphir taught French language classes at all levels, as well as courses in foreign language teaching methodologies, French linguistics, bilingualism and multiculturalism, and minority and Creole languages. Her research interests included foreign language education, bilingual education, Creole studies, sociolinguistics, and ethnic and immigrant studies with a focus on the Haitian diaspora in the United States. She was a regular presenter at various foreign language teaching conferences, as well as linguistics meetings. The many graduate students whom she advised during her career knew her to be generous with her time and unfailingly dedicated to their academic and personal success. Professor Zéphir often found herself providing guidance to students who were not her own, which she did happily. She knew that students from across the university sought out her good council and warm, but straight forward, demeanor when they needed reliable advice from a well-respected and trusted source. She knew she filled that role for many and she enjoyed it, despite the long hours and seemingly endless conversations that role asked of her.

Given her expertise in the areas of bilingual, multicultural, and foreign language education, as well as immigrant studies, Professor Zéphir was a well sought-after speaker, invited to conduct workshops and give presentations on these topics. For example, in the summer of 2001, she taught a segment on French creoles, as part of a National Endowment for the Humanities' Summer Institute on the African Diaspora held at MU. More recently, she was invited to the University of Florida-Gainesville (2011), Vanderbilt University (2012), Harvard University (2013), the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology (2014), and Northwestern University (2015). Professor Zéphir had been a familiar and beloved presence at ALARA conferences since our organization's inception more than 20 years ago. Many of us have fond memories of seeing her delight in fulfilling a wide range of roles at our biennial meetings—from paper presenter, to panel moderator, to enthusiastic beach coordinator.

Her numerous articles and review essays have appeared in the *French Review*, *Foreign Language Annals*, *Modern Language Journal*, *Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages*, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *Journal of Haitian Studies*, *Afro-Hispanic Review*, PALARA, and *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review*, among other professional journals. Her first book, *Haitian Immigrants in Black America: A Sociological and Sociolinguistic Portrait* was published in 1996 by Bergin and Garvey; her second, *Trends in Ethnic Identification Among Second-Generation Haitian Immigrants in New York City*, was released in summer 2001 also by Bergin and Garvey; and her third, *The Haitian Americans*, was published in August 2004 by Greenwood Press as part of its New Americans series. She served as book review editor for the *Journal of Haitian Studies* from August 2003 to May 2013. She also worked on projects dealing with the transformation of the Haitian diaspora as a result of the January 2010 earthquake.

In addition to receiving scholarly attention, Professor Zéphir's work on Haitian immigrants in the United States has generated a great deal of interest from the media. For example, in 2002, a reporter from the Washington Post

conducted a phone interview with her. Excerpts of that interview appeared in an article, "A Diverse—and Divided—Black Community," published in the Sunday, February 24, 2002 issue of that paper. Subsequently, she was quoted in an article titled "Black America Transformed: Immigration Reshapes a Once-Monolithic Community," published in the International Herald Tribune in Paris (Monday, February 25, 2002). She has also been featured in the diasporic newspaper, the *Haitian Times*, which published a review of her book on the second-generation Haitian immigrants (January 1-7, 2003 issue, p.2). Additionally, she appeared on a number of radio programs, including *Perspectives Haitiennes*, and the Caribbean segment of *Voice of America*. She also contributed a monthly column to the Boston Haitian Reporter from April 2004 through March 2005. Professor Zéphir was on research leave during academic year 2014-2015. At the time of her passing she was teaching full-time, developing new courses, advising graduate students in French linguistics, and serving on important University committees, including the MU Faculty Council on University Policy. She was fiercely devoted to her colleagues' individual success and to increasing the scholarly visibility of MU's Romance Languages & Literatures Department and of our own organization, ALARA. More importantly, rather than curry favor with those at the top, she routinely went to battle for the most vulnerable, and when the sorrow passes, if it ever does, it is this trait, her unshakeable decency and humanity, that will endure.

ENDNOTES

* https://romancelanguages.missouri.edu/people/z%C3%A9phir. It has been modified by Sheridan Wigginton.

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Tribute to the "Last Buffalo": Panamanian West Indian Writer Dr. Carlos E. Russell (1934-2018)

Sonja Stephenson Watson • University of Texas at Arlington

I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Carlos E. Russell in 2010 at the College Language Association Conference, held in New York, the author's home away from his native Panama. I organized a special panel on Russell's scholarship on West-Indian literature in Panama. During the visit, I also had the opportunity to interview Russell for a piece that would be published in I*stmo. Revista virtual de estudios literarios y culturales centroamericanos*. The interview was arranged and filmed by Panamanian scholar Luis Pulido Ritter who also served on the panel. The interview was transformational for my research on Panama and would shape the chapter that I included in my then forthcoming manuscript (*The Politics of Race in Panama: Afro-Hispanic and West Indian Literary Discourses of Contention* University Press of Florida, 2014, 2017). During our one-hour conversation, it became very clear that the generational shift amongst blacks in Panama and between *negros coloniales* and *negros antillanos* was indeed real and shaped by ideological differences toward language, culture, and identity.

Since that 2010 interview, Russell and I had the opportunity to form an intellectual bond based on our shared love of black Panama and the African Diaspora. I looked forward to receiving his sometimes weekly or monthly updates that included articles or essays that he had written about pertinent issues in Panama and the larger African Diaspora. My final visit with Russell was in 2017, when I had the opportunity to chat with him in Panama about politics, literature, and of course, black identity. The words that follow pay homage to him for his scholarship and contribution to Afro-Diasporic letters as a scholar, poet, and essayist.

Russell* was a poet and essayist who lived in the United States and represents many other Panamanian nationals who migrated there during the second half of the twentieth century for economic advancement. Russell dedicated his life to the preservation of Panamanian West Indian culture, language, and heritage through his literature and activism and wrote primarily in English to maintain the Anglophone Caribbean culture in Panama. His formation in the United States is just as important as his upbringing in Panama. Russell was educated at one of Panama's most prestigious schools, the National Institute, that has educated future dignitaries, military personnel, and the like. At the Institute, he was instructed on how to be Panamanian and not black West Indian. Stereotypes abounded in the Institute where a racist teacher acknowledged how surprised she was that a black West Indian could write so well in Spanish. This stifled his literary creation in Spanish because the teacher told him bluntly, "Tú no pudiste saber escrito este cuento… porque tú eres jamaiquino…" Watson "Entrevista con Russell"). The effects were devastating. Russell acknowledged the impact of the teacher's statements, "Yo nunca más podía escribir ningún artículo o cuento literario en español porque yo no puedo según ella…" (Watson "Entrevista con Russell"). Although Russell wrote equally in Spanish and English, most of his works are written in English to challenge the official discourse of anti-West Indian sentiment that this teacher and others espoused. Russell's fears as a young boy of racism, discrimination, and oppression were so profound that he acknowledged that he did not dare to ask a Panamanian girl out on a date because he was West Indian and black. His background in Panamanian schools contrasted with that at home where his stepfather exposed him to the literary works of Montesquieu and Rousseau. By contrast, it was the intellectual and political environment in New York where he became entrenched in the civil rights movement which gave rise to his "defense and promotion of Caribbean culture in Panama" (Pulido Ritter "Entrevista con Carlos Russell" 3). He became the editor of the New York newspaper the Liberator, a pan-africanist, socialist, and Diasporic pamphlet that promoted the Black Panther movement (Pulido Ritter "Entrevista con Carlos Russell" 2). Russell acknowledged the influence of the United States and these movements on his black intellectualism, consciousness, and formation in the following recollection. "Leaving Panama, maturing here. I define myself as an African whose relatives were born in the Caribbean but who became a man in the streets of Brooklyn and the streets of Chicago because in that environment I had the opportunity to exchange ideas to see to know how that phase of European though affects someone who is black"("Saliendo de Panamá madurándome acá. Yo me defino como africano cuyos parientes nacieron en el Caribe pero quien se hizo hombre en las calles de Brooklyn

y en las calles de Chicago porque en ese ambiente yo tuve la oportunidad de intercambiar ideas ver saber como esa fase del pensamiento europeo afecta a uno que es negro" Watson "Entrevista con Russell"). It is no surprise that Russell's poetry and prose deal with the question of identity and the reconciliation of the Panamanian West Indian's cultural, linguistic, and ethnic ties to Africa, the Caribbean, and Panama. His collection of poetry includes *Miss Anna's Son Remembers* (1976), *An Old Woman Remembers* (1995), and *Remembranzas y lágrimas* (*Memories and Tears* 2001). *Remembranzas y lágrimas* is a compilation of poems in Spanish and English, many of them reproduced from his 1976 collection *Miss Anna's Son Remembers*. Both *Miss Anna's Son Remembers* (1976) and *Remembranzas y lágrimas* (2001) are bilingual tributes to Panamanian West -Indian immigrants who paved the way for present generations to succeed. Russell's essays deal specifically with identity issues of the West Indian population in Panama and abroad and the problematic of the Caribbean Diaspora figure.

Of most interest to me as a scholar is Russell's 2003 book-length manuscript, T*he Last Buffalo: 'Are Panamanians of Caribbean Ancestry an Endangered Species?.' The Last Buffalo* yearns to maintain the Anglophone Caribbean in Panama. Russell represents many other Panamanian nationals who migrated to the United States during the second half of the 20th century for economic advancement. Although he lived in the United States, Russell spent the last years of his life in Panama and dedicated his work to the preservation of Panamanian West Indian culture, language, and heritage through his literature and political activism. His book-length essay (*The Last Buffalo*) informs us about the construction of identity and how various ethnic groups appropriate hybrid political identities that are often rooted in homogeneous discourses of whiteness.

In *The Last Buffalo*, Russell ponders the possibility of an eventual loss of Caribbean culture among the present generation of Panamanian West Indians and identifies his fear that the Panamanian of Anglophone Caribbean ancestry is in danger of extinction. Russell's angst responds to decades of West Indian exclusion from the Panamanian nation-state and the fear that the current generation of Panamanian West Indians will assimilate and no longer speak English, the language of their Anglophone Caribbean ancestors. *The Last Buffalo* expresses concern over the loss of Caribbean identity in the current generations of Panamanians of West Indian ancestry. Russell theorizes that the loss of English among Anglophone Caribbeans, the disconnect with their native homeland of Jamaica and/or Barbados, the exclusive use of Spanish, and the Caribbean's assimilation into Panamanian culture and society, all denote a decline in the efficacy of Panamanian West Indian culture. Russell's doubts about the preservation of Caribbean culture and heritage in Panama lead him to ponder the question: 'Where do we, as a Caribbean people, fit within the social and political configuration of the Republic of Panama?'(20). In effect, according to Russell, West Indians are analogous to the last buffalo that is in danger of extinction. As one of the last buffalos, Dr. Russell will be missed. Que en paz descanse.

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---. Entrevista con Carlos Russell." *Istmo: Revista virtual de estudios literarios y culturales centroamericanos* (2010).

ENDNOTES

* Russell is Professor Emeritus of the City University of New York-Brooklyn College, has taught classes on Latin-American/African culture and politics, and African-American literature, and has served as Dean of the School of Contemporary Studies of Brooklyn College, a program which he designed and established. Russell has also served as acting director of the Division of International and Urban Affairs at Medgar Evers College, the City University of New York, and has been associate editor at the Amsterdam News and the Liberator magazine.

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"Son asimilados": Mayra Montero *vis-à-vis* Tomás Blanco y el discurso racial en Puerto Rico

Violeta Lorenzo Feliciano • University of Arkansas

Resumen

El propósito en este trabajo es analizar "El entierro de Chianita: un complot chino" de Mayra Montero *vis-à-vis* el ensayo *El prejuicio racial en Puerto Rico* de Tomás Blanco con el fin de subrayar cómo el discurso racial de la Generación del 30 en Puerto Rico pervive en la actualidad y, entre otros asuntos, escamotea proyectos antirracistas. La primera parte de este trabajo analizará los ejemplos de la ópera y del teatro bufo que Montero incluye en su ensayo para justificar la presencia en el Puerto Rico del siglo XXI de personajes negros interpretados por artistas blancos que se oscurecen el rostro de negro (i.e. "blackface"). Dicho análisis usará premisas de teorías postcoloniales como punto de partida. La segunda parte estudiará las conexiones entre el ensayo de Blanco y el de Montero y mencionará posibles estrategias que ayuden a combatir el racismo institucionalizado.

En el 2016, poco antes de las elecciones gubernamentales en Puerto Rico, la actriz Ángela Meyer intentó traer a la televisión puertorriqueña a Chianita, un personaje que ella popularizó en los años setenta. Este personaje tuvo etapas en las cuales sus reacciones exageradas, su mal gusto al vestir, su falta de educación, su mala pronunciación y uso pobre del lenguaje lo caracterizaban (Rivero 93). Eventualmente, el personaje fue reconstruido para representar a una jíbara inteligente que estaba al tanto de los problemas políticos y sociales a nivel local e internacional (Rivero 101). Su canción "Chianita gobernadora" gozó de gran popularidad puesto que criticaba el machismo y la inefectividad gubernamental. Asimismo, en sus apariciones televisivas Chianita discutía los temas de importancia actual, toda vez que se convirtió en portavoz de algunos ciudadanos: "if a neighborhood did not have electricity for months, and the governor did not respond to the citizens' complaints, they went to Chianita's television segment and both the character and the individuals demanded action" (Rivero 101). Así pues, no es extraño que en época de elecciones y ante un sinnúmero de problemas sociales, políticos y económicos que aquejan a los puertorriqueños Meyer intentara revivir al personaje en cuestión.[1]

Poco después de Meyer hacer pública su intención de revivir a Chianita, un grupo de activistas celebró un evento donde se enterró simbólicamente al personaje. La polémica principal en torno a Chianita estriba en que ésta es un personaje negro y Meyer es una actriz blanca que debe oscurecerse el rostro para interpretarlo. Los activistas del entierro forman parte de grupos antirracistas que denuncian—entre otros asuntos—la práctica por parte de artistas blancos de pintarse el rostro con el fin de interpretar personajes negros. Dicha práctica ha sido denigrante para los afrodescendientes debido a que los caricaturiza y presenta su color de piel como una anomalía que sirve para entretener. Además, el hecho de que en algunas representaciones Chianita no se exprese correctamente perpetúa estereotipos que asumen que las personas negras son tontas e incultas. Por último, darle lugar a un artista blanco para que represente a un personaje negro les cierra las puertas a artistas negros que suelen ser discriminados en el ámbito de las artes dramáticas (Rivero 10-12). Por estas razones los activistas que enterraron a Chianita entienden que es innecesario revivir a un personaje que dejó de salir en la televisión boricua a mediados de los ochenta y que realmente no tiene nada nuevo ni constructivo que aportar.

Las protestas en contra de Chianita no son nuevas. En su estudio *Tuning Out Blackness* Yeidy M. Rivero explica que entre 1973 y 1974 artistas como Sylvia del Villard y Carmen Belén Richardson criticaron a Chianita por su "blackface" o cara pintada de negro. En ese entonces Meyer defendió a su personaje aludiendo a la popularidad de éste entre el público

afrodescendiente y a la escasez de artistas negros que pudieran salir en programas televisivos (Rivero 96).[2] La controversia suscitó dimes y diretes ya que algunos apoyaban a Meyer y otros a del Villard (Rivero 99). Sin embargo, en aquella ocasión las críticas no tuvieron un gran impacto y Chianita mantuvo su presencia mediática.

Tal y como sucedió en la disputa entre Meyer y del Villard de 1973-1974, el entierro de 2016 recibió encomio de las personas que apoyan la lucha contra el racismo y reproches de las que no se percatan del racismo que hay detrás del "blackface". No obstante, la protesta de 2016 y los comentarios que recibió Meyer a través de las redes sociales surtieron efecto: Univisión decidió no incorporar al personaje en su programación y Meyer reticentemente aceptó que no valía la pena ofender a nadie.[3] Ahora bien, justo cuando parecía que la controversia había acabado, la escritora Mayra Montero reabrió el debate en un corto texto que publicó en la columna ensayística que tiene en el periódico *El Nuevo Día*. En el mismo, Montero regaña a los activistas y justifica—a través de ejemplos de otras representaciones artísticas—la existencia de personajes negros interpretados por actores blancos con el rostro oscurecido.

Propongo que analizar el ensayo de Montero es neesario al hablar de lo racial en Puerto Rico, especialmente porque de su texto se desprende que denunciar el racismo en ocasiones implica tener una mentalidad colonizada que importa paradigmas raciales de Estados Unidos. Este enfoque es problemático porque establece una comparación entre Estados Unidos y Puerto Rico que socava la crítica constructiva y la búsqueda de soluciones al discrimen racial, pero además, es problemático porque repite parte del discurso racial de la llamada Generación del 30 en la isla, discurso en el cual una élite descendiente de la clase criolla bajo la colonización española estableció las dinámicas raciales, culturales y de identidad en Puerto Rico para afianzar su poder ante la colonización estadounidense. Con esto en mente, mi propósito en este trabajo es analizar "El entierro de Chianita: un complot chino" de Montero *vis-à-vis* el ensayo *El prejuicio racial en Puerto Rico* de Tomás Blanco con el fin de subrayar cómo el discurso del 30 pervive en la actualidad y, entre otros asuntos, escamotea proyectos antirracistas.[4] La primera parte de este trabajo analizará los dos ejemplos que Montero incluye en su ensayo para justificar la presencia de personajes como Chianita.[5] La segunda parte estudiará las conexiones entre el ensayo de Blanco y el de Montero y mencionará posibles estrategias que ayuden a combatir el racismo institucionalizado.

Cabe hacer algunas salvedades antes de proseguir con este análisis. En primer lugar, queda fuera del alcance de este trabajo una crítica de las descripciones que Montero hace de los manifestantes y de su argumento sobre cómo éstos no enterraron a otros personajes de la televisión puertorriqueña que pueden ser un tanto ofensivos. No he reparado en estos asuntos gracias a que ya han sido discutidos por otras personas.[6] En segundo lugar, entiendo que parte de la propuesta principal de Montero tiene que ver con la censura, es decir, con cierta preocupación ante la posibilidad de que cualquier protesta impida la libre expresión artística. El problema estriba en que regañar y tildar de terroristas a los que protestan pacíficamente contribuye, de una forma u otra, a criminalizar el derecho a protestar. Por ende, la lógica que Montero emplea indirectamente sirve para restringir la libertad de expresión que ella busca defender. Como ella señala, Univisión no tenía que "ceder" ante las presiones de los activistas y si lo hizo, dudo que lo hiciera ante el temor de que se llevara a cabo un acto terrorista. De Univisión no haber cedido, los manifestantes hubieran buscado otras formas de protestar y difundir sus acertadas premisas en cuanto a lo ofensivo que resulta que un artista blanco se oscurezca el rostro para representar a un personaje negro.

Como colofón, ya que he mencionado la censura, deseo afirmar que no apoyo la eliminación de la columna de Montero ni boicots a sus libros como algunos han propuesto. Aunque me parece que en algunos casos la representación de personajes afrodescendientes es estereotípica, su obra literaria es sumamente valiosa y en un sinnúmero de sus columnas ensayísticas Montero ha analizado lúcidamente los males sociales y políticos que tanto aquejan a la isla.[7] Este estudio que hago va más allá de Montero. Lo que intento reiterar es que el que actualmente en textos como el de ella haya puntos en común con un texto de Blanco lo que demuestra es que las propuestas raciales de la Generación del 30—las cuales, como mencioné, tienen vínculos con las de la élite criolla durante la colonización española—se han incrustado de tal manera que resurgen constantemente y tienen consecuencias muy reales para los afrodescendientes que son discriminados y microagredidos.

Dos ejemplos: la ópera y el teatro bufo cubano

Uno de los aspectos que más críticas suscitó fue el que Montero tildara a los manifestantes de terroristas. Esto ha sido refutado por varios intelectuales y no repararé exhaustivamente en el asunto.[8] Sin embargo, sí deseo aludir al empleo de una retórica orientalista en el texto en cuestión. No hay un terrorismo "benigno" o "aceptable" y otro que no lo es, pero nótese que los ejemplos de Montero remiten a una religión y a una región en particular. Su incomodidad por la "otomanización" del país a causa de la proyección de telenovelas turcas así como la alusión a que los activistas antirracistas se asemejan al ejército de Mao y a los terroristas que atacaron a Charlie Hebdo en Francia fomentan la creencia de que los terroristas son musulmanes y/o asiáticos ya que no se alude a terroristas de otros contextos como, por ejemplo, el irlandés, el vasco y el griego. Esto es problemático porque forma parte de proposiciones que son "lax and characteristically Orientalist…—Muslims are enraged

at modernity, Islam never made the separation between church and state, and so on and so on—all of them pronounced with an extreme level of generalization and with scarcely a mention of the differences between individual Muslims, between Muslim societies, or between Muslims traditions and eras" (Said, *Orientalism* 341). Sutilmente esto contribuye al miedo que muchos tienen hacia "lo oriental" debido a que, supuestamente, dicho grupo pretende atacar a los demás: "The perfidious Chinese, half-naked Indians, and passive Muslims are described as vultures for 'our' largesse and are damned when 'we lose them' to…their unregenerate Oriental instincts: the difference is scarcely significant. These contemporary Orientalist attitudes flood the press and the popular mind. Arabs, for example, are thought of as…terroristic…lechers…" (Said, *Orientalist* 108). En suma, aunque Montero probablemente usó estas comparaciones de modo sarcástico e hiperbólico, lamentablemente éstas perpetúan la retórica orientalista que homogeniza a los chinos y musulmanes y los considera personas violentas.[9]

Ahora bien, para justificar la presencia de personajes como Chianita, Montero recurre a ejemplos de la ópera entre los cuales resalta el *Otello* de Verdi puesto que el tenor que interpreta este papel tradicionalmente se oscurece el rostro para acercarse al imaginario que predomina sobre cómo debe verse un moro. La autora enfatiza que algunos de los Otellos más "deslumbrantes" han sido los interpretados por Plácido Domingo. En tono sarcástico alude a que como los activistas están "puestos a enterrar, por favor, que esperen a la próxima temporada del Met, vayan a la representación de Otello—si es con el ruso Aleksandrs Antonenko, mejor—,y allí, de paso, junto con Otello y Antonenko, entierren a Plácido Domingo". Su sugerencia se presta para dos lecturas. Por un lado, parecería que los activistas deben enterrar a Otello, a Antonenko y a Domingo. Por otro lado, otra posible lectura implica que Otello y Antonenko se les unan a los activistas para enterrar a Domingo. La anfibología que permite la participación de Otello y Antonenko en el entierro de Domingo es sugerente porque desde el 2015 el Met ha descartado el uso de "blackface" para los tenores que hacen el papel de Otello. En otras palabras, el latvio Antonenko hace el papel de moro sin teñirse la cara mientras que por años Domingo sí se oscureció el rostro para actuar de Otello. Por lo tanto, una lectura implicaría que los activistas tal vez no objetarían a la nueva política del Met y por consiguiente solamente Domingo amerita ser enterrado. La otra lectura de este planteamiento señalaría que hay que enterrar al personaje de por sí y a todos los que han interpretado este papel sin importar si se han pintado el rostro o no.

Tras aludir al caso de Otello, Montero entonces cuestiona qué le depara a una soprano como la letona Kristine Opolais quien se maquilla para parecer japonesa e interpretar a Madame Butterfly. Por último, la autora apunta a que hay un tipo de terrorismo detrás de estos entierros simbólicos que ella compara al de los talibanes: "no dudaría que un comando talibán se presente en la Ópera de Milán, y entierre (de verdad, a bombazo limpio) a los actores y el público que aplaude Otello, ya que se burlan de un musulmán atormentado por los celos".

Hay par de aspectos de este ejemplo que hay que rebatir o al menos cuestionar. Por un lado, la decisión del Met de rechazar que los tenores blancos se pinten la cara de negro no ha sido mal vista. El *New York Times* entrevistó a Barlett Sher, el encargado de la producción de *Otello*, y a Francesca Zambello, la directora artística de la Opera Nacional de Washington. Ambos explicaron que el "blackface" es una tradición que hoy día es innecesaria y que poco a poco su aparición en la ópera está siendo superada en su totalidad. Zambello va más allá y arguye que de tener que contratar a un tenor para el papel de Otello trataría de encontrar a un tenor negro, pero, que de no hallarlo, contrataría a uno blanco sin proceder a oscurecerle el rostro. El periódico en cuestión también obtuvo declaraciones de Plácido Domingo quien explicó que en su momento personificó al personaje con la cara oscurecida con el propósito de aumentar la verosimilitud del mismo. Sin embargo, el tenor expresó que le encantaría ver la nueva producción con Antonenko interpretando a un Otello sin el rostro oscurecido (Domingo citado en Cooper). Cabe entonces preguntarse por qué Montero usa este ejemplo si, para empezar, a Domingo—el tenor que hizo las personificaciones de Otello más famosas de los ochenta y noventa—no parece molestarle el cambio llevado a cabo por el Met ni que Antonenko interprete el papel sin maquillaje oscuro.

Con todo, hay otro asunto que hay que analizar y es que muchas obras del canon operístico—así como de los cánones de otros tipos de arte—tienen vínculos con la ideología imperialista y, por lo tanto, la aparición de personajes no europeos debe estudiarse minuciosamente para ver qué dicen estos textos sobre las dinámicas raciales y étnicas en un contexto imperial. Me refiero a que—como señala Said en su estudio de *Aida* de Verdi—este arte

> can be enjoyed and interpreted as a kind of curatorial art, whose rigor and unbending frame recall, with relentlessly mortuary logic, a precise historical moment and a specifically dated aesthetic form, an imperial spectacle designated to alienate and impress an almost exclusively European audience. Of course, this is very far from *Aida*'s position in the cultural repertory today. And certainly it is true that many great aesthetic objects of empire are remembered and admired without the baggage of domination that they carried through the process from gestation to production. Yet the empire remains, in inflection and traces, to be read, seen, and heard. (*Culture and Imperialism* 130)[10]

Esto no implica que el tipo de arte que forma parte de estas dinámicas imperiales—en este caso la ópera—deba

prohibirse o dejarse de estudiar o que se deba dejar de tocar la "Marcha triunfal" de *Aida* en graduaciones como es costumbre en muchas instituciones escolares y universitarias. Tampoco implica que dicho arte sea de mala calidad. Concuerdo con Said cuando aclara que "by looking at culture and imperialism carefully we may discern various forms in the relationship and we shall see that we can profitably draw connections that enrich and sharpen our reading of major cultural texts. The paradoxical point, of course, is that European culture was no less complex, rich, or interesting for having supported most aspects of the imperial experience" (*Culture and Imperialism* 163).

A lo que me refiero es a que si algunas óperas están vinculadas a contextos imperiales, una lectura cuidadosa debe llevar a ver la problemática del uso de "blackface" para un público imperial. Así pues, el ejemplo de Montero subraya la resistencia a dejar a un lado tradiciones que surgen de situaciones coloniales donde se crea a un otro racializado para entretener e ignora lecturas críticas que no buscan restarle valor artístico a la ópera sino ver sus conexiones con ideologías imperialistas con el fin de desarrollar nuevas lecturas artísticas que saquen dichas representaciones del plano caricaturesco que el consumo pasivo y acrítico fomenta.[11]

El otro ejemplo que Montero usa para justificar la presencia de personajes como Chianita es el teatro bufo cubano: "En Cuba sería impensable que, al revivir una obra del teatro bufo —y se reviven a menudo: con el negrito, el gallego y la mulata— se presentaran unos 'manifestantes' a enterrarlos". En este tipo de obra teatral, lo común es que un actor blanco se pinte el rostro de negro para hacer el papel del negrito, toda vez que en ocasiones una actriz blanca se pinta la cara para representar a la mulata.

Montero no dialoga con la crítica que se le ha hecho a estas representaciones teatrales en Cuba. Por ejemplo, en su estudio "El negrito y la mulata en el vórtice de la nacionalidad" Inés Martiatu Terry ha demostrado lúcidamente cómo el origen del teatro bufo decimonónico tiene conexión con el teatro del Siglo de Oro en España. Su análisis evidencia cómo desde el siglo XVII en el teatro se viene construyendo al negro como un sujeto racializado y subalterno a partir del discurso hegemónico de la blancura (280). En resumidas cuentas, la práctica del "blackface" en el teatro bufo cubano surge del contexto colonial donde la esclavitud era aceptable. Luego, en el siglo XIX—en el contexto de las guerras de independencia—se representa al negro como ese otro que no debe ser incluido dentro del proyecto de nación (Martiatu Terry 297; Rivero 32). Por ende, Martiatu Terry enfatiza que

> la aceptación y persistencia de estos esquemas y de estas operaciones de distorsión y enmascaramiento demuestran cómo la falsedad de los modelos no impide que sean aceptados y que perseveren en el imaginario del pueblo hasta nuestros días. De ahí la importancia de deconstruirlos y de ofrecer una alternativa teórica que les restituya su identidad verdadera…[puesto que] estos personajes en el teatro bufo son un claro ejemplo de suplantación de la fea cara de la explotación esclavista y racista. (Martiatu Terry 292)

El estudio de Martiatu Terry es un claro ejemplo de cómo en Cuba se ha puesto en tela de juicio los aspectos supuestamente admirables del teatro bufo aun cuando Montero recalque que figuras como Alejo Carpentier han defendido este tipo de representación artística.

Si bien no puedo afirmar ni negar la premisa de Montero respecto a lo impensable que sería una protesta en Cuba a raíz de la puesta en escena de una obra de teatro bufo, sí cuestiono la implicación que se desprende de su ensayo acerca del supuesto consumo pasivo y acrítico de este tipo de obra teatral en suelo cubano.[12] Esto me lleva al asunto que realmente deseo reiterar: este tipo de crítica que se le ha hecho al teatro bufo no podría descartarse—así, sin más—por ser una importación de ideas estadounidenses. Aunque sí hubo influencia de los minstrels en el teatro bufo cubano (Martiatu Terry 282; Rivero 33-34), la crítica que se le ha hecho al teatro no se desprende de lo que haya ocurrido o no en Estados Unidos dado que la misma parte de la reprobación al legado colonial español y a los parámetros raciales que se usaron para implementar y justificar la esclavitud. En otras palabras, la crítica que en Cuba se le ha hecho al "blackface" demuestra que éste tiene vínculos con el colonialismo y ha afianzado actitudes racistas a través del arte dramático.

"Importaciones" y "sesgos colonizados": Mayra Montero vis-à-vis *Tomás Blanco*

Mi análisis de los ejemplos de Montero demuestra que éstos no sólo tienen vínculos con el pasado colonial sino que actualmente tanto en la ópera como en Cuba la práctica de pintarse la cara de negro o está cayendo en desuso o ha sido criticada. No obstante, una de las particularidades del ensayo de Montero es que la crítica hacia Chianita es interpretada como algo foráneo que no tiene lugar o lógica alguna en Puerto Rico. Quiero indagar en este aspecto del ensayo de Montero, no sin antes repasar las propuestas de Tomás Blanco acerca de lo racial.[13]

Recordemos que Blanco fue parte de la llamada Generación del 30 en Puerto Rico, un grupo que ante la convocatoria que lanzó la *Revista Índice* en 1929 escribió una serie de ensayos para explicar cómo son los puertorriqueños y qué le depara a la isla a unos treinta años de la invasión estadounidense de 1898. Si bien el ensayo más conocido de Blanco es *Prontuario histórico de Puerto Rico* (1935), es *El prejuicio racial en Puerto Rico* (1937) el que repercute en el ensayo de Montero.

Blanco y otros intelectuales de la década del treinta procuraban establecer una identidad nacional distinta a la estadounidense. A simple vista, esta forma de pensar parece positiva puesto que pretende desligarse de lo estadounidense en aras de afianzar proyectos autóctonos. Con todo, al analizar los postulados de Blanco vemos que algunos son problemáticos y racistas.

La premisa de Blanco en *El prejuicio* se puede resumir de la siguiente manera: en Puerto Rico no hay prejuicio racial porque a lo largo de su historia las relaciones entre blancos y negros—desde la época de la esclavitud hasta el presente—han sido "benignas" (Blanco 12,14, 23-24, 43), toda vez que en la isla nunca hubo muchos esclavos (Blanco 18-20). La esclavitud en Puerto Rico fue "light" (Blanco 23-24, 28-29) y permitió no sólo la mezcla racial (Blanco 26, 35-36, 48) sino la civilización de los negros al éstos aceptar las costumbres hispanas. Consiguientemente, la cantidad de negros "puros" en el país no es muy alta debido a la mezcla: "Nuestro pueblo tiene abundante sangre negra, aunque, en general, casi no existen negros puros, y aunque nuestra población de color está completamente hispanizada culturalmente y son muy escasas las aportaciones africanas a nuestro ambiente, salvo en el folklore musical" (Blanco 51). Así pues, las relaciones entre blancos y negros supuestamente se caracterizan por la convivencia.

La idea de una esclavitud benigna es insostenible y obvia las sublevaciones que los esclavos llevaron a cabo.[14] Como bien resume Díaz Quiñones, Blanco "congela en una figura inmóvil los procesos históricos. Suprime la historia de los impugnadores del régimen esclavista y colonial, y el discurso de los rebeldes. Suprime también…la complejidad y la opresión del mundo esclavista, y el rencor que generó el racismo que hizo posible la esclavitud" (19).

Por otro lado, la mezcla racial que presenta Blanco así como la civilización hispánica de los afrodescendientes a la que alude lleva a un blanqueamiento cultural y fenotípico que—en el contexto de la Generación del 30—ataca la racialización que el discurso estadounidense utilizó para justificar la colonización de Puerto Rico. Me refiero a que el discurso imperial estadounidense vio a los puertorriqueños como bárbaros, atrasados, infantilizados y negros que necesitaban un protector civilizado, paternalista y blanco que los salvara y los dirigiera (Alamo-Pastrana 6). Con todo, las premisas de Blanco no dejan de tener una ideología racista que escamotea lo afrodescendiente y en el fondo favorece lo hispano y lo percibido como blanco.[15]

Ahora bien, las afirmaciones de Blanco con respecto a la esclavitud, las relaciones entre blancos y negros y la alegada ausencia de prejuicio racial en la isla parten de la comparación que él hace entre Puerto Rico y Estados Unidos: "Comparado con las más intensas explosiones de virulencia, nuestro prejuicio es un inocente juego de niños" (Blanco 4). Por eso el autor que nos ocupa reitera que en la isla nunca hubo leyes como las "Jim Crow" ni linchamientos (Blanco 31, 35). De esta forma Blanco pretende demostrar que Puerto Rico es un país civilizado que carece de los conflictos raciales que hay en Estados Unidos. Según este argumento, Puerto Rico—al menos desde un punto de vista moral—es superior a Estados Unidos (Díaz Quiñones 40; Godreau 26).

La comparación que Blanco hace entre Puerto Rico y Estados Unidos lo lleva a concluir que en la isla no hay prejuicio racial. Por lo tanto, cuando alguien se queja de prejuicio racial es a fuerza de: 1-casos discriminatorios llevados a cabo por individuos racistas o 2-discursos raciales estadounidenses impuestos al contexto puertorriqueño. Los casos discriminatorios son aislados y no son motivo de preocupación puesto que—según Blanco—los paisanos no racistas se encargan de darles una reprimenda a los que sí lo son (Blanco 36-40). Los problemas surgen cuando se "importan" e imponen discursos raciales foráneos:

> …el cretinismo espiritual de ciertos criollos tiende a exagerar la existencia, el grado y la calidad o esencia de nuestro prejuicio…[M]ás que nada contribuye a ello *la presencia importada*, con algunos ciudadanos continentales, del rigor del prejuicio norteamericano, que siempre se adivina aunque no se manifieste muchas veces. Se produce entonces en algunos isleños una imitación poco convincente de los ajenos vicios…En el fondo no es más que un tácito sometimiento intelectual a los juicios extraños, una pueril e ineficaz reacción defensiva de *colonialismo mental*. (Blanco 60-61, énfasis mío)

Comparar a Puerto Rico con Estados Unidos lo que ha hecho es obviar que ya en la isla había prejuicio racial que surge del legado colonial y esclavista español (Alamo-Pastrana 8). Mediante esta comparación, Blanco ignora la ideología racista que viene de la colonización previa de Puerto Rico por parte de España y se circunscribe a las dinámicas de la colonialidad del poder que han marcado la pauta de las interacciones sociales y económicas desde la conquista hasta el presente (Quijano 183).

Este somero análisis de *El prejuicio racial en Puerto Rico* es necesario debido a las similitudes entre algunas de sus propuestas y las de "El entierro de Chianita: un complot chino." Obviamente el ensayo de Blanco—de unas ochenta páginas—abarca más temas que el ensayo de Montero que se circunscribe a su columna periodística. Además, Montero, a diferencia de Blanco, no estipula a rajatabla que en Puerto Rico no hay racismo. No obstante, el punto que tienen en común es la manera en la que ambos arguyen que esos que protestan o se quejan de alguna forma a causa de prácticas racistas, han importado o copiado ideas estadounidenses que no tienen relevancia en la isla. Por ende, Montero les reitera a los lectores de su ensayo lo siguiente acerca de los que enterraron a Chianita: "Nótese que son *actitudes importadas* de los Estados Unidos, hasta lo dijeron en inglés, "blackface", vean el *sesgo del colonizado*" (énfasis mío). Remito a estas aseveraciones de Blanco porque es en ellas donde se ve la conexión con el ensayo de Montero:

"contribuye [a exagerar de la existencia, el grado y la calidad o esencia del prejuicio racial] *la presencia importada*, con algunos ciudadanos continentales, del rigor del prejuicio norteamericano…En el fondo no es más que un tácito sometimiento intelectual a los juicios extraños, una pueril e ineficaz reacción defensiva de *colonialismo mental*" (Blanco 60-61, énfasis mío).

Por un lado, asumir que los casos de prejuicio racial que hay en la isla son creados, imaginados o exagerados a partir de la importación de parámetros raciales de Estados Unidos impide que se pueda tener una discusión seria acerca de los problemas raciales ya que se alude a que estos no son reales dado que son foráneos. Por otro lado, el vínculo entre Montero y Blanco apunta a que entre algunos intelectuales los debates en torno a lo racial no han cambiado mucho en ochenta años, toda vez que los discursos de la llamada Generación del 30 siguen vigentes en el país. En otras palabras, la conexión que describo entre el texto de Blanco y el de Montero es un ejemplo de cómo el discurso racial del treinta se institucionalizó en la isla. Esto ha contribuido a un silenciamiento en torno a lo racial que afianza "the pervasive myths of racial democracy and social and intelectual mores [that] demand that Afro-Puerto Ricans not speak from a position of discontent even in the face of racist assaults" (Roy-Féquière 258).

Derroteros y conclusiones

He analizado el modo problemático en que se usan ejemplos de la ópera y del teatro bufo cubano para justificar la existencia de personajes como Chianita en el Puerto Rico del siglo XXI. Asimismo, he subrayado la manera en que desde la década del treinta en ciertos núcleos boricuas se critica a los que señalan las prácticas racistas que hay en la isla. Esto se debe—entre otros factores—a que se establece una comparación entre las dinámicas raciales estadounidenses y las puertorriqueñas en la cual las puertorriqueñas son "benignas." En todo caso, los incidentes de discrimen son aislados y los que insisten en que hay racismo en la isla lo hacen porque han importado creencias estadounidenses. Esa importación los convierte—según las premisas de Blanco y, hasta cierto punto, las de Montero—en colonizados cuyas propuestas a fin de cuentas lo que hacen es dividir al país o impedir que la gente trabaje (Montero). Sostengo que estos planteamientos no hacen más que impedir que se lleven a cabo conversaciones serias que aludan al racismo y a la búsqueda de formas para erradicarlo hasta donde sea posible. A modo de conclusión, deseo aludir a algunos derroteros para continuar tan importante diálogo.

Primeramente, es necesario retomar el estudio del ensayo de interpretación cultural no solo en el plano de la literatura puertorriqueña sino en el plano de la literatura latinoamericana. Concuerdo con Joy Landeira cuando explica que "a diferencia de mediados de siglo XX, cuando se enseñaba el ensayo como uno de los cuatro géneros reconocidos, al lado de la narrativa, la poesía y el teatro, hoy en día numerosos críticos no lo admiten, y hay muchos programas universitarios que sólo lo enseñan en sus clases de composición básica…y no como manera de…observar las transformaciones culturales" (559). No deseo implicar que esta práctica se ha extendido a todas las instituciones de enseñanza secundaria y universitaria. Sin embargo, los planteamientos que enfatizan que los cursos del ensayo latinoamericano no son necesarios porque el contenido puede ir "a caballo" en los cursos de literatura decimonónica y contemporánea que se enfocan en la narrativa ignoran que ha sido en la ensayística latinoamericana donde se han planteado proyectos relacionados a lo racial, proyectos que en algunos casos han tenido consecuencias muy reales sobre las dinámicas raciales en sus respectivos contextos culturales. Basta con mencionar *Casa grande e senzala* de Gilbeto Freyre y *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* de Fernando Ortiz y cómo se han usado para asumir—erróneamente—que en Brasil y en Cuba hay democracias raciales. Otros ejemplos fundamentales son *La isla al revés* de Joaquín Balaguer y *La política de Trujillo* de Manuel Arturo Peña Batlle, ensayos que en el contexto dominicano han servido para afianzar un discurso nacional afrófobo y antihaitiano. En suma, el estudio del ensayo es crucial para las discusiones en torno a lo racial puesto que permite analizar cómo lo planteado en algunos de estos textos repercute hoy día.

En segundo lugar, hay que buscar enfoques que rebasen la comparación tradicional que se ha hecho entre Estados Unidos y Puerto Rico a la hora de hablar de lo racial. Como mencioné previamente, dicho modelo comparativo—entre otros asuntos—escamotea el racismo que ya existía en la isla por culpa de la colonización española dado que, la comparación de las dinámicas raciales estadounidenses y las puertorriqueñas, permite que algunos concluyan que en Puerto Rico no hay discrimen racial. Un punto de partida para salir de este *impasse* es el de imbricación racial que propone Carlos Alamo-Pastrana en su estudio *Seams of Empire*: "As a methodological concept, racial imbrication directs scholars to the unexpected yet organized points of overlap among seemingly diverse points of difference" (12). Esto permite superar "the failed method of comparison in the study of race" debido a que "[it] opens up the possibilities for thinking about diaspora and race outside a conservative and minority nationalisms that erase the work, ideas, and contributions of marginalized groups" (149-150). Asimismo, pensar el Caribe en términos culturales en vez de geográficos ayudaría a ver aspectos comunes que tienen los lugares donde imperó la cultura de la plantación (i.e. desde el sur de los Estados Unidos hasta Brasil).[16]

El estudio del ensayo de identidad nacional y/o cultural así como la necesidad de rebasar los modelos comparativos para estudiar las dinámicas raciales son algunos derroteros para acercarse de manera constructiva a los problemas raciales en Puerto Rico. Deseo añadir algo más: la necesidad de dejar a un lado proyectos que anclen las identidades puertorriqueñas en un imperativo geográfico y—por ende—silencien a los puertorriqueños que residen o han residido en Estados Unidos. Si para Blanco en los treinta y para Montero en la actualidad hay importaciones de ideas estadounidenses, entonces habría que tomar en cuenta no solo la "importación" de éstas por parte de los que siempre han vivido en Puerto Rico sino las que llegan a través de los que residen o han residido en Estados Unidos. Ponerse a buscar los nombres de cada uno de los participantes de la protesta en contra de Chianita para determinar si han residido en los Estados Unidos es fútil. Lo que quiero apuntar es que las premisas de que las protestas hacia personajes como Chianita o las críticas hacia el racismo en la isla parten de importaciones por personas cuyas mentes son colonizadas indirectamente atacan a la diáspora puertorriqueña y a sus remesas culturales que contribuyen a que se cuestionen y se derrumben jerarquías raciales, sexuales, étnicas y de género.[17] La diáspora ha influido en el panorama cultural y político puertorriqueño (Flores 47, 144). Insinuar que estas remesas culturales no tienen cabida en suelo boricua demuestra un sesgo o "punto ciego" entre los que defienden un proyecto nacional que, al intentar dar al traste con lo estadounidense, no admite las influencias de la diáspora.

En resumen, el ensayo de Montero publicado a raíz de la protesta en contra de Chianita apunta a cómo el discurso racial de la generación del treinta así como sus estrategias discursivas para atacar a los que protestan ante el discrimen racial en la isla sigue vigente. Este aspecto me ha llevado a ver las conexiones entre su ensayo y *El prejuicio racial en Puerto Rico* de Tomás Blanco y a problematizar algunos de los ejemplos que Montero presenta (i.e. ópera, teatro bufo) para justificar su regaño hacia los manifestantes.

Mi trabajo aboga por más estudios del ensayo, modelos que superen el *impasse* de las comparaciones de las dinámicas raciales entre EEUU y Puerto Rico y la apertura hacia las remesas culturales. Estos enfoques no son excluyentes ni exhaustivos. Sin embargo, éstos son útiles para revisar proyectos culturales y políticos con el fin de propiciar lecturas que aprecien la diversidad y combatan el racismo en el Puerto Rico contemporáneo.

NOTAS

1 Puerto Rico se encuentra en quiebra tras un período de recesión que empezó a finales de 2005. Actualmente hay una junta de control fiscal –impuesta por Estados Unidos—que decide cómo se manejan las finanzas locales. La junta privilegia el pago de la deuda y lo que se les debe a los bonistas y ha implementado medidas austeras que afectan negativamente a la clase trabajadora. Las tasas de desempleo y criminalidad son altas. Este era el panorama antes del azote del huracán María en septiembre de 2017. Dicho azote ha exacerbado la crisis en la cual Puerto Rico ya se encontraba.

2 El comentario de Meyer resulta contradictorio puesto que del Villard y Richardson eran—precisamente—actrices negras.

3 El comentario que Meyer escribió el 2 de noviembre de 2016 en su cuenta de Facebook fue el siguiente: "Me acaba de llamar Primera Hora para que opine sobre la marcha en contra de Chianita! Bendito, la hicieron famosa otra vez y hace ya días que se decidió que no iba esa pequeña participación. No vale la pena herir o molestar a nadie por cantar Chianita Gobernadora. Le han deseado a mi amada Chana la muerte y realmente es en lo único que no los puedo complacer, porque cómo sacas a Chianita del corazón del pueblo?"

4 Para indagar en cómo el discurso racial de la Generación del 30 sigue vigente en Puerto Rico, ver *Scripts of Blackness: Race, Cultural Nationalism, and U.S. Colonialism in Puerto Rico* de Isar Godreau y "Absorber, engullir y diluir: blanqueamiento y mestizaje problemático en la ensayística de Emilio S. Belaval" de Violeta Lorenzo.

5 Esta fuera del alcance de este trabajo analizar las particularidades del uso de "blackface" en la televisión puertorriqueña y los pormenores de la disputa entre Meyer y del Villard en los setenta ya que esto ha sido estudiado por Rivero en su libro *Tuning Out Blackness*.

6 Para más información ver la respuesta que Santos-Febres publicó el 6 de noviembre de 2016 por Facebook. Ver también las respuestas de Hilda Lloréns, Harry Franqui-Rivera, William García, Bárbara Abadía Rexach e Isar Godreau así como los comentarios del activista Weldo Romero Joseph en el artículo de Brenda Peña López que fue publicado el 2 de noviembre de 2016 en el periódico *El Nuevo Día*.

7 En *La última noche que pasé contigo* el personaje Celia desea ser negra porque entiende que las mujeres negras están sexualmente satisfechas. En esa misma novela se alude al cliché del tamaño enorme de los genitales de los negros y a su sexualidad irrefrenable. Ejemplo de esto es el botero con quien Celia tiene un amorío y

que es descrito como un monstruo marino con un gran miembro viril (Montero, *La última noche* 151-154). Si bien en esta novela erótica se presenta la exploración sexual como fuente de conocimiento, en ésta se repiten ciertos mitos sobre la sexualidad de los negros. Para información preliminar sobre el mito de la sexualidad negra ver, de Santos-Febres, "El color de la seducción".

8 Franqui-Rivera aclara que aunque el semanario Charlie Hebdo sí ha tenido posturas racistas, la comunidad internacional denunció el ataque violento que sufrió. Es decir, protestar en contra del racismo no equivale a justificar la violencia y el terrorismo, aspecto que en ningún momento los activistas en Puerto Rico hicieron. Asimismo, Santos-Febres explica que las comparaciones de Montero son exageradas y desacertadas y carecen de contextualización histórica.

9 Por otro lado, en otros contextos Montero ha escrito positivamente sobre la influencia china en el Caribe. Ver su ensayo "Here Comes the Chinaman: Another Song of Cuban Identity" y su novela *Como un mensajero tuyo*.

10 La cantidad de estudios críticos de corte postcolonial sobre el *Otello* de Shakespeare, el de Verdi y otras composiciones musicales y teatrales es vasta. Las particularidades de los mismos están fuera del alcance de este trabajo. Sin embargo, estos textos pueden servir como punto de partida para acercarse al tema: *Post-Colonial Shakespears* (Loomba y Orkin, eds.), *Blackness in Opera* (Andre, Bryan, Saylor, eds.) y *Orientalism and Representations of Music in the Nineteenth-Century British Popular Arts* (Mabilat).

11 Said comenta algo similar a lo que planteó en el capítulo "The Empire at Work: Verdi's *Aida*" de su libro *Culture and Imperialism*.

12 Montero no explica las razones por las cuales este tipo de protesta sería impensable en Cuba. ¿Es impensable porque realmente son muy pocos los que critican este tipo de teatro y no hay cuórum para una protesta? ¿O será porque el sistema político de Cuba restringe el derecho a protestar?

13 Para más información sobre la influencia de Tomás Blanco en los discursos raciales puertorriqueños ver "Tomás Blanco: racismo, historia, esclavitud" de Arcadio Díaz Quiñones y *Scripts of Blackness: Race, Cultural Nationalism, and U.S. Colonialism in Puerto Rico* de Isar Godreau.

14 Varios investigadores han demostrado que, por un lado, hubo sublevaciones de esclavos en Puerto Rico y, por otro lado, no todos los afrodescendientes fueron esclavos. Ver *Esclavos rebeldes* de Guillermo Baralt para más información.

15 Ver los libros de Isar Godreau y Magali Roy-Féquière citados en este trabajo para más información sobre el blanqueamiento detrás de las premisas de Blanco. El estudio de Díaz Quiñones también tiene información al respecto.

16 Para más información sobre las distintas maneras de definir el Caribe, ver "La invención del Caribe desde 1898 (Las definiciones del Caribe como problema histórico, geopolítico y metodológico)." En este artículo, Gaztambide aboga por una definición cultural que permita ver los aspectos comunes que tienen lugares como el sur de los Estados Unidos y el Caribe.

17 Por remesas culturales me refiero a "cultural customs and practices, ideological orientations, forms of artistic expression, and ideas of group identity acquired in diaspora settings [that] are remitted to homeland societies" (Flores 44).

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Afro-Hispanic Aesthetics and Identity through the Cuban Underground Hip Hop of *Los Paisanos* and *Obsesión*

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"We are going to emancipate ourselves from mental slavery,
because whilst others might free the body,
none but ourselves can free our mind."

—Marcus Garvey 1937

Reconceptualizing Identity and Culture through Hip Hop

The notion of aesthetics is a key aspect in shaping culture and determining one's identity and place within a culture. In all facets of the media, from popular ads to television and film, in literature and beyond, beauty plays a central role. In the new millennium, aesthetics become an increasingly more significant theme in underground hip hop as artists proudly promote an Afrocentric aesthetic. The songs, commonly known as *temas*, of Cuban underground hip-hop artists such as Los Paisanos and Obsesión[1] affirm their Afro-Hispanic identity through lyrics that examine the notion of beauty through an Afrocentric lens rather than one of the dominant Eurocentric culture, while examining critical issues of the day for Afro-Cubans. As Perry (2016) explains the significance of the term for rappers: "Given the centrality of social commentary and critique, raperos referred to their lyric-driven compositions as *temas sociales* or simply *temas* (social themes or themes) rather than the more prosaic *canciones* (songs)" (79). Through the underground hip-hop movement, they are able to effectuate self-affirmation, as posited by psychologist Claude Steele (1988), by focusing on positive aspects of their identity to maintain their self-integrity in the face of the marginalization and discrimination that threaten their collective identity and self-worth as African-descended Cubans. Steele explains that, "The goal of self-affirmation, as we have defined it, is to maintain an overall perception of self-adequacy. Thus, to restore this perception after it has been threatened, the adequacy that is affirmed must be able to offset, in importance to overall adequacy, the adequacy that has been threatened" (291)

Cuban underground or conscious hip-hop artists use rap as a means to advance black affirmation and social justice. They were inspired by the hip-hop movement that originated in poor New York neighborhoods populated by African-Americans and Puerto Ricans during the 70s. The musical genre reached its zenith from the mid 80s through the early 90s. Being revolutionary in nature, and like its predecessors in music and the visual arts, hip hop is more than a musical genre. It is a cultural movement that is made manifest through its multi-faceted cultural productions that include DJ's Breaks in the rhythms, breakdance, rapping MCs and graffiti (Hall 20). Indeed, in examining the pedagogical role of hip hop, Marcella Hall (2011) underlines that the vision of this movement is in line with the cultural productions. She points out the historical mission of pioneers such as KRS-One—commonly known as "The Teacher"—who affirm the transnational nature of hip hop:

> Hiphop (Hip´Hop) is a term that describes our independent collective consciousness. Ever growing, it is commonly expressed through such elements as Breakin, Emceein, Graffiti Art, Deejayin, Beatboxin, Street Fashion, Street Language, Street Knowledge and Street Entrepreneurialism. Wherever and whenever these and future elements and expressions of Hiphop Kulture manifest; this Hiphop Declaration of Peace shall advise the use and interpretation of such elements, expressions and lifestyle. (Parker, 2003, p.8. cited by Hall 27)

These artists affirm and embrace their blackness, by focusing on their Black African hair, other black features and Afrocentric styles. In so doing, they bring to light the long history of socio-cultural ideologies that have stigmatized and erased blackness in Latin American culture. As Los Paisanos and Obsesión focus on black aesthetics in their underground hip hop, they compel their audiences to address the question of race, racism, and culture. Through their

El negro cubano quiere ser igual que el blanco	The black Cuban wants to be equal to the white
porque cree que lo oscuro es atraso	because he believes that darkness is backwards
y lo claro adelanto	and lightness advances
tanto así que siempre está riéndose	So much so that he's always laughing
de él mismo a carcajadas	loudly at himself
cuando escucha algún chiste de racismo	when he hears any racist joke
...	...
El negro cubano se autodestruye a sí mimo	The black Cuban self-destructs
no se ayuda, se anula, se estrangula	he doesn't help, he nullifies, he strangles
en su egoísmo	himself \ in his selfishness
...	
es un tanto subdesarrollado	He is a bit underdeveloped
critica los drelocks	he criticizes the dreadlocks
reverencia al pelo estirado	he reveres straightened hair
...	
Negro, entiende asere	Black man, understand homey
que el mundo es también tuyo	that the world is yours too
tu color y tu pasa son parte de tu raza	your nappy hair is part of your race
y tu raza y tu pasa tienen que ser tu orgullo	your race and your naps have to be your pride
negro, tienen que ser tu orgullo	black man, they have to be your pride

(Del Río. "El Negro Cubano"4)

Figure 1

consciousness-raising lyrics, they exalt their "Afridentity" by identifying with and esteeming their African roots. In two of their most compelling songs, "Lo negro" and "Los pelos" ("Blackness" and "Hair"), the messages of these rap duos converge as they shift from an emphasis on skin color to hair texture to celebrate their African heritage. This analysis, however, proposes that "Lo negro" and "Los pelos" are consciousness-raising songs that go beyond affirming that black hair is beautiful. They insist that natural black hair texture and hairstyles are integral aspects of their aesthetics and identity as African-descended people. I argue that in doing so, they posit a rejection of the Eurocentric socio-political ideologies in Latin America that have deprecated blackness since slavery. Following the example of Black Americans in the United States who proudly affirmed their blackness during the late 1960s and the 1970s, they present a discursive revolution that focuses on black hair texture as a way to dismantle the Eurocentric aesthetic that has played a key role in the perpetuation of racism, marginalization, and the oppression of African heritage people, and their Cuban compatriots in particular. The analysis and understanding of these songs empower their fellow African descendants to appropriately fight the mental and physical bondage that persists despite the legal end of slavery over a century ago.

Underground hip hop in Cuba facilitates the public forum for contemporary discussions of "Afridentity" among the young black and the population at large through highlighting the importance of hair texture in shaping the views of blackness and paralleling perceptions and treatment of blacks. Saunders (2015) asserts that through "Los Pelos" Obsesión challenges socio-cultural imposition as they point out the absurdity of having to alter one's natural hair texture to look more beautiful according to other standards of beauty (213). Hairstyling is a key aspect of enhancing one's beauty but the notion that a black woman can only be beautiful when her hair is altered to look European, or straight, is extremely unreasonable. Saunders notes that "[m]agia and Alexey link this standard of beauty to 400 years of "sleep" (colonialism). Obsesión argues that the culturally accepted aesthetic is also a colonial product. Through the song, Magia and Alexey speak to the corporal reality of blackness and the ways in which it is managed, dismissed, and devalued by those embracing racialized notions of beauty" (213). These artists' assertion of blackness is not limited to hair; it is multifaceted. However, placing hair at the forefront is a bold cultural and political statement after centuries of shaving, hiding, and altering hair to fit a Eurocentric aesthetic. Los Paisanos laud not only natural African hair but also skin color and other aspects of Afrocentricity. They proudly self-identify as black and they praise black artists and activists who fought on behalf of blacks for social justice. Perry (2016) notes the importance of Los Paisanos member Randy Acosta's affirmation of his black identity despite the cultural tendency to identify him as jabao (very light skinned with some European features): "Randy's comments suggest a shifting sense of racial identity in which hip hop is viewed as instrumental at both political and ontological levels of play"

Sé que tengo mis facciones
un poquito extravagantes
muchos se ríen
porque se ven algo grandes
Pero, así nací
así soy y así me moriré
Con mi pasa dura te convenceré
Este es rap cubano
No lo confundas con benbé
Anda ven
Cógelo suave
Cógelo suave pa' que te dé
Negra
Negra con mi bemba
No hay quien me sostenga.
Negra con mi ñata y mi grande pata,
Así soy yo, negra

(Oye Habana. "Negra")

I know that I have features
a little bit extravagant
many laugh
because they look somewhat big
But, I was born like this
This is how I am and this how I'll die
With my hard, kinky hair I'll convince you
This is Cuban rap
Don't confuse it with benbé [dance music]
Come on
Take it easy
Take it easy so I can give it to you.
Black woman
Black woman with my thick lips
There's no one who maintains me.
Black woman with my nose and my big leg,
This is how I am, black woman.

Figure 2

(Perry 61). Perry states that this mindset of black-affirmation led to their tema "Lo Negro," in which they examine "racialized stigmas that in their view inhibit black self-affirmation among Cubans of African descent" (61). Other rap groups such as Hermanos de Causa and the female trio Oye Habana also produced songs that highlight the natural, tightly coiled African hair as an essential feature in affirming blackness and celebrating the body, facial features, and color of African descendants.

In "Negro Cubano," by Soandry del Río, Hermanos de Causa address the tendency of some Afro-Cubans to despise and deny blackness as a result of cultural conditioning and ideologies that purported a national identity that transcends race in theory but privileges whiteness in practice. Soandry del Río points out that African ancestry, particularly evident in black skin color, hair texture, and Afrocentric hairstyles should be a source of pride rather than of shame and self-hatred. He asserts that Black Cubans foment their own erasure by perpetuating racist attitudes and practices inculcated by the dominant white culture. (see figure 1).

Soandry del Río posits that the Black Cuban has come to believe he is indeed inferior to the White Cuban and as a result seeks to disassociate himself from his race because in his society black is a signifier of backwardness, powerlessness, and ugliness. The focus on phenotypic markers such as color and hair are crucial in that they are tangible, highly visible traits seen in everyday life and have long been the target of racists assaults. As Saunders (2015) rightly puts it, "Soandry also addresses a key aspect of Black corporality: hair as a primary marker for blackness and the presence of stigmatized Africanness. He argues that the Black Cuban should embrace his body, embraces his race, embrace his hair" (130).

Similarly, the group Oye Habana, comprised of the artists Yordanska, Noiris, and Elizabeth, promote African aesthetics from the female point of view. In "Negra," they challenge Eurocentric standards of beauty that have regarded black women as unattractive and unworthy. They focus on physical features with pride and affirm their strength and the beauty and of their African, tightly-coiled hair, full lips, full nose and big legs. No longer will they accept the stigma of ugly assigned to them (see Figure 2).

Fernandes (2006) notes the importance of their stance in the context of a nation, supposedly free of racism, where blackness continues to be disdained, diminished and stigmatized:

> Negative and racist descriptions of black-identified features are fairly common in Cuba; it is not unusual to hear complaints about pelo malo (bad hair) and mejorando la raza (improving the race) by having children with lighter-skinned people. The rappers of Oye Habana reject these stereotypes; they assert the beauty of African features and the power and presence of black women. (116)

In their music video, Oye Habana portrays a diverse group of females asserting and appreciating their black features. Notably, the cute little black girls walking, playing, and dancing joyfully are signifiers of the theme of black beauty. Their dark brown skin, their natural hair styled in Afro-puffs and ponytails puts them at the forefront as subjects that have the power to define themselves and their own aesthetics at an early age and set the standard for generations to come. The attire of the women

rappers—dressed in black and military fatigues, with two of them wearing hats—are further signifiers of beauty of their strength. They project a revolutionary stance of proclaiming in Cuba through strong, dark-skinned women. Fernandes asserts that, "Cuban women rappers also use style to project a political message, and assert their individuality, presence, and identity as black women. Magia and the rappers of Las Krudas usually wear head wraps, African clothing or baggy shirts and pants, and natural hairstyles" (116). Oye Habana defies the national image projected by the Federation of Cuban Women (Federación de Mujeres Cubanas) of the Cuban woman as a light-skinned, straight haired woman, dressed in fatigues while carrying a baby and a gun (Saunders 200). Black women of all ages, sizes with hues and natural hair celebrate their black features as these rappers' sing tribute to the Black woman.

The focus on black self-identification and African aesthetics in underground hip hop is essential in addressing the dominant Eurocentric culture in Cuba. The role of the rappers is two-fold; they are artists and activists. These "artivists" seek to awaken the consciousness of Cubans with regard to race and to combat the real, lived experiences of racism and social injustice (Saunders 9). Thus, underground hip hop is more than a musical genre; it is a movement:

> [W]hat you do with your body and what cultural traditions you publicly embrace indicates your social racial classification and your racial self-definition. Aesthetics are political in such a way that "form" functions as a political discourse. The racialization of culture and the imposition of Eurocentric aesthetics as the cultural and corporal ideal are central to cultural practices in Latin America and the Caribbean; they are also central to identity formation throughout the hemisphere. While race is largely defined by blood in the United States, it is primarily defined by phenotype in Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean. (Saunders 46)

Through their lyrics and their style, these artivists compel their audience to reexamine blackness as they revisit and reevaluate the notions of Cuban identity that have been posited over the centuries. During the late 19th century, Cuban liberator José Martí (1893) promoted the unity of all Cubans in his speech "Mi Raza" (My Race): "Todo lo que divide a los hombres, todo lo que los especifica, aparta, acorrala, es un pecado contra la humanidad (Everything that divides man, everything that specifies, separates, or traps them is a sin against humanity." He went on to say that, "En Cuba no hay temor alguno a la guerra de razas. Hombre es más que blanco, más que mulato, más que negro. Cuba es más que blanco, más que mulato, más que negro." (In Cuba, there is no fear of a race war. Man is more than white, more than mulatto, more than black. Cuba is more than white, more than mulatto, more than black) (Lazo 52). Considering that the emancipation of blacks took place in 1888, after nearly four centuries of slavery on the island, the fight for Cuban independence, and the slaughter of thousands of blacks and the Independent Party of Color (Partido Independiente de Color or PIC) in the Massacre of 1912, it stands to reason that the perception of blacks as inferior still persisted in the developing Cuban nation at that time. Nearly five decades later, in his major work *Cuban Counterpoint of Tobacco and Sugar* (1940), renowned Cuban anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Fernando Ortiz echoed the sentiment that Cubans are not merely black or white. He posited that Cubans are a complex mixture of cultures that have blended and transformed over time to become what is now Cuban culture. He coined the term, transculturación, "to express the highly varied phenomena that have come about in Cuba as a result of the extremely complex transmutations of culture that have taken place [on the island]" (Ortiz 98). Ortiz affirmed that the intersections and transmutations of the various cultures in Cuba have resulted in the creation of a new culture that incorporates and appreciates all of its roots—Indigenous, Spanish, African, and later Asian. To further elucidate this idea, Ortiz used the metaphor of the ajiaco—the national stew prepared with multi-heritage ingredients—to describe Cubanidad or cubanía, that is, the essence of what it means to be Cuban. Nonetheless, the racial tensions and inequality that prevailed throughout the Revolution of 1959 and the new millennium, evince that while all cultural ingredients may be appreciated in the ajiaco, not all are valued equally by the Cuban people. Perry asserts that Ortiz's concept of Cubans as a transcultured people is more aptly put as racially neutralized (82). Cuba promotes a national identity that celebrates the mestizo but sacrifices African descendants in so doing. As in other countries whose populations include African descendants, the binaries of white/black and superior/inferior do persist, resulting in a caste system of pigmentocracy in which black people, dark-skinned mulattoes and mestizos are disenfranchised and marginalized. Through "Lo negro" and "Los pelos," we are urged to reexamine the notion of transculturation in Cuba through the contemporary lense of hip hop rappers. The rappers promote their blackness and in so doing demystify the propaganda of a multi-heritage Cuba that embraces equally all of its cultural roots.

Affirmation of Blackness in "Lo negro"

As mentioned earlier, Cuban rappers like Los Paisanos and Obsesión, have used hip hop to address the socio-cultural and racial situation in Cuba while affirming blackness. This is also true for a number of their contemporaries such as Anónimo Consejo, Ticuna and Las Krudas. Fernandes (2003), in her analysis of Cuban underground hip hop, discusses the focus of Cuban rappers as follows: "Attracted by the Black nationalistic practices of certain African American rappers

Mi misión no es criticar
Ni hablar mal de las personas
Sólo ver cómo razonan
Sólo ver cómo funcionan mis palabras
Liberarte del dolor
Como el doctor Álvarez Cambras

(Los Paisanos. "Lo negro")

My mission is not to criticize
nor speak badly of people
Just see how they reason
Just see how my words work
Free you of pain
like Dr. Alvarez Cambras

Figure 3

who have coined the term "underground" or "conscious" rap, Cuban rappers offer criticism of neoliberal globalization as they propose the notion of Cuba as a Black nation struggling for justice in an inegalitarian world order" (57).

In their album *Paisanología* (2003), Los Paisanos, formed by the duo Randy Acosta and Mr. Huevo (Jessel Saladriga), promote black identity and reflect upon the daily struggles of the Cuban black masses through their underground hip hop, which they see as a means of consciousness-raising and resistance in a nation where white skin privilege still exists in spite of the official policy and the initial advancements of the Revolution of 1959. The song "Lo negro" seeks to awaken the people as it motivates them to take an introspective look at blackness within the Cuban context. Perry notes that initially their connection with African Americans inspired their ideas and action to assert positive perceptions of blackness: "In the case of early raperos, plays upon black-identified U.S. music and style forms may also be seen as efforts to negotiate new grammars of Afro-Cuban-ness as a means of marking racial difference while expanding the terms of Cuban blackness itself" (Perry 77). Through focusing on the natural hair of African descendants, they seek to inculcate pride in one aspect of the collective black identity and break the chains of a cultural aesthetic that threatens black people's self-image. In so doing, they affirm their blackness and empower themselves psychologically for resistance against the racist ideologies that perpetuate the oppression and stigmatization of African-descended Cubans (see Figure 3).

Although its songs are provocative, underground hip hop does not intend to undermine the Revolution or overthrow the government but rather to cast light on the current problems that neither of these has been able to eradicate. Moreover, it represents the voice of the underdog, those who suffer marginalization and disparagement due to persistent racism that the political discourse from the end of the 19th century to the present does not acknowledge. Although Martí claimed that "[e]n Cuba no habrá nunca guerra de razas (in Cuba there will never be a race war) because "La afinidad de los caracteres es más poderosa entre los hombres que la afinidad de color" (the affinity of characteristics is more powerful among men than the affinity of color), not only do racism and racial inequality still exist, but they resurged boldly after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the resulting Cuban economic crisis during the Special Period (Lazo 53). Roberto Zurbano (2015) affirms that after the Revolution of 1959 conditions improved for the majority of blacks and mestizos, who had been marginalized in terms of poverty, health, education, and racism, however, he notes how progress reverted towards the end of the twentieth century: "El rechazo a cualquier tipo de discriminación se incorpora como parte del ejercicio revolucionario cotidiano. Era impensable, pues, que la discriminación racial, definida y combatida como un rezago burgués, pudiera regresar con la fuerza e impunidad con que se reinstala en la isla durante los años noventa del siglo XX" (Zurbano 16). Faced with a resurgence of racism and poverty, young Cuban rappers saw hip hop as a way of making a political statement about their blackness and the lack of equality in Cuba (Fernandes 89). Los Paisanos assert that raising people's consciousness through their verses is crucial, since keeping quiet and ignoring reality has harmed the people and the government's ability to work for the good of all of its citizens (see Figure 4).

It is fair to say that the concerns and outcry of the duo and of the masses have not been ignored by the government

Sólo soy un misionero del público
Un servidor
Enamorado de su raza, aunque para muchos
Soy un maldito
Que te quiere comunicar
Que ser negro no es un delito

(Los Paisanos. "Lo negro")

I'm just a missionary of the public
a servant
In love with his race although for many
I'm a cursed one
who wants to communicate with you
That being black is not a crime

Figure 4

De medio palo conozco raperos
O medio pelo
Eso depende del cabello
Si eres negro, tu pelo es malo
Si eres blanco, tu pelo es bueno
Según ellos
Pero para mí lo natural es lo más bello
Y en el mundo actual reina la controversia
Negras quieren pelo lacio
Blancas quieren tener trenzas
¿Hay quién las entienda?
y no se dan cuenta
que ser uno mismo es una valiosa prenda

(Paisanos. "Lo negro")

I know half-baked rappers
or second-rate
That depends on the hair
If you're black, your hair is bad
If you're white, your hair is good
According to them
But for me natural is the most beautiful
And in the current world the controversy reigns
Black women want straight hair
White women want to get braids
Is there anyone who understands them?
And they don't realize
that being oneself is a valuable garment.

Figure 5

in recent years. In 2013, in a report on racial problems in Cuba, the Parliament decided to take this issue seriously when it publicly admitted that racism still exists, and that it supported sincere efforts to combat racism.[2] As previously stated, although much was accomplished during the first years of the Revolution with regard to institutional racism and poverty, inequality and racism still exist. De la Fuente (2008) notes the recent discussions of artists and scholars on the silence regarding the issues of race and racism in Cuba. Moreover, he rightly points out that they still persist despite the efforts of the Revolution of 1959 that has sparked more "contradictory explanations" (De la Fuente 697-98). Proclaiming an end to racism with the change of government was simply idealistic in a society whereby the institution of slavery had established and fomented inequality and prejudice based on race for centuries. Moreover, not addressing the resulting mindset of such ideologies contributed to the sustained existence of racism. Zurbano asserts that the behavior of Cuba's socialist policies were counterproductive to combating racism: "su propia ceguera ideológica ante la supervivencia y renovación del racismo, después provocando un largo silencio sobre el tema y, finalmente, no asumiendo, explícita o implícitamente, alguna política racial o estrategias, directas o indirectas, con qué enfrentar la presencia del racismo en la isla" (Zurbano 17). Los Paisanos break the silence and seek to uncover the racial issues that continue to affect people in various aspects of their lives.

In "Lo negro," Los Paisanos speak boldly about one important aspect of identity that resonates in the psyche of black people, the question of aesthetics, that is to say, the notion of beauty and its impact on the mindset of black women and men. Since the colonial era in the Americas, we have seen a tendency to favor not only white skin, but also European facial features and hair as the epitome of beauty. During slavery, nomenclature about the physical aspects of black people emerged in Cuba, as in other Hispano-Caribbean countries. Derogatory terms such as, *"la pasa," "el hocico" and "la bemba"* (nappy hair, snout and bubble-lips) are commonly used to denote natural, tightly coiled hair, wide nose and thick lips of African heritage people. Women, and to a lesser extent, men, continue to be criticized for their kinky hair. Throughout childhood and into adulthood the black woman often experiences insults and mistreatment as her hair is combed or the texture is altered. Her "crown of beauty" becomes a crown of thorns. Jorge analyzes this hair dilemma in her study on the Afro-Puerto Rican woman. As a small child, a girl with curly hair, specifically the coiled hair associated with people of African descent, tends to hear comments that inculcate that notion of ugliness equated with her natural hair: *"Maldito sea este pelo," "Péinate la pasa," "Pelo caracolillo," "pelo malo"* ("Damn this hair," "Comb those naps," "Nappy hair," "bad hair") (184). United States filmmaker Spike Lee presented the same theme in his film *School Dayz* (1988) in the musical scene "Nappy Hair," in which the girls with natural kinky hair debate with those who have straighter hair—whether it's naturally so or chemically altered. Without a doubt, it is a reality that affects many women of African heritage, especially those whose phenotype is clearly black. The images that surround her in the beauty advertisements and in the media present straight, long, and typically blond hair as the ideal beauty. Los Paisanos denounce the ubiquitous nature of this problem in Cuba as follows: "Tanto en la calle como en la casa. La pena, vivir esta farsa" (Paisanos. "Lo negro"). This is why it should come as no surprise that for decades black women, more than others, have taken great pains to style their hair and make it look more European. Los Paisanos comment on this racial dichotomy at the very beginning of their song (see figure 5).

Drenched in language and imagery that reflect an underlying negative linkage between racial identity and hair texture, along with the contrast between natural hair styles

Con sí mismo se comenta que el racismo
empieza con nosotros mismos
Te dicen que eres negro
Tú dices que eres mestizo
Enfatizo los típicos desertores de la raza
Se casan con un blanco
Pues no quieren peinar pasa ¡TRAGEDIA!
Tanto en la calle como en la casa
La pena, vivir esta farsa

(Paisanos. "Lo negro")

With oneself one comments that racism
begins with us
They tell you that you're black
You say that you are mixed
I'm emphasizing the typical deserters of the race
They marry a white man
'Cause they don't want to comb naps. TRAGEDY!
In the streets just like at home
The sorrow, living this farce

Figure 6

and the fleeting affinity for fashion, their verses show the dilemma of black men and women as they experience alterity in a post-revolutionary, supposedly post-racial society. The language used in describing physical traits of black people is a reflection of the Eurocentric ideologies that have played an injurious role in creating complexes and self-esteem issues among black people. Indeed, the connotations associated with hair reveal the manifestation of prejudice against black people—*de medio palo* (incomplete, half-baked) and *de medio pelo* (second-rate), and they suggest the tendency of some rappers to not be "conscientious"[3] in their artistic production. Likewise, this suggests the problems that they share with their fans, who for the most part are young blacks who endure the negative images associated with blacks. Black African, tightly-coiled hair is another hair type. It is merely different from other hair textures. However, it has been assigned an aesthetic value—a negative one that goes beyond the surface. That is, it infers that not only is the hair bad, but is also a signifier that the individual who has that hair type is bad. In his psychoanalytic study of blackness in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967), Martinican psychiatrist Frantz Fanon affirms that this phenomenon is the origin of Negrophobia in the Antilles. "In the collective unconscious, black = ugliness, sin, darkness, immorality. In other words, whoever is black is immoral" (Fanon 192). Los Paisanos highlight the problem of living in a society where the affinity for European features results in a low esteem of oneself and in the negation of the natural beauty of blacks. They also suggest that, ironically, when white women wear hairdos that are "traditionally worn by blacks," that simply reflects a fashion trend, not a deprecation or rejection of themselves. Thus, while for white women, the decision to wear these hairstyles is not associated with natural hair stigma, such is not the case with black women. What is projected externally by mainstream Eurocentric culture and unfortunately assimilated by blacks has been ingrained in the psyche of black people for ages.

Underground hip hop works to counteract the Eurocentric mindset. It goes without saying that the impact of hip hop on fashion is evident worldwide. The fans, irrespective of their skin color, wear baggy pants and flashy jewelry (bling-bling); men as well as women, whether black, white, or brown, wear braids and dreadlocks. Saunders (2015) notes the cultural significance of rappers wearing dreadlocks in Cuba: "The dreadlocks are important in the context of a country that encourages people with tightly curled hair to straighten or shave their hair. People who not only refuse to do so but also grow dreadlocks are rejecting the hegemony of European aesthetics in Cuban culture and embracing their blackness" (29). Cuban women rappers also wear natural hair and Afrocentric hairstyles and African clothing or baggy clothes to reflect their conscious "Afridentity" (Fernandes 116). Nonetheless, the vast majority of images of feminine beauty in Cuba still portray a European aesthetic. This is what positions hair to be at the forefront of the struggle to liberate oneself from mental bondage, as the legendary Jamaican Pan-Africanist Marcus Garvey (1937) urged nearly a century ago.

As I have pointed out, "Lo negro" begins with the hair as the focal point but with each verse and stanza the rappers delve deeper into their discussion of the racism that keeps people mentally enslaved. They direct their discourse to the blacks and mulattoes who seek to diminish or deny their black heritage and endorse the ideology of whitening commonly promoted in Latin America and the Caribbean. That is, they opt to "advance the race" by marrying whites so that their children will be whiter and thus have more opportunity to improve their status in society (see figure 6).

It is important to note that the discourse of whitening dates back to 1776 with the royal decree from King Carlos IV of Spain, *el Gracias al Sacar* (Thanks for the Exclusion). This law permitted mulattoes to change their race, or caste, legally to the white race so that they could improve their socioeconomic status. Piedra (1987) examines whitening in the context of literary whiteness after the Age of Enlightenment as part of the Imperial Spain's efforts to foment a common, homogeneous language as key to establishing a unified empire. He notes several cases in which an individual's race was changed legally in order to facilitate access to opportunities that were limited to whites. Piedra highlights the most notable case of Pedro Antoni

NEGRO Es mi pensamiento	BLACK is my thought
NEGRO Son mis movimientos	BLACK are my movements
NEGRO Es como me siento	BLACK is how I feel
NEGRO Por fuera y por dentro	BLACK inside and outside
NEGRO Fue Jesús Menéndez	BLACK was Jesús Menéndez
NEGRO Bob Marley con su prende	BLACK Bob Marley with his take
NEGRO Color que no se vende	BLACK color that is not sold
NEGRO ¡Puño arriba si me entiendes!	BLACK Fist up if you understand me

(Paisanos. "Lo negro")

Figure 7

de Ayarza, a *pardo* captain from Colombia, who petitioned for a change in racial status for his son so that he could earn a law degree in 1797. He was granted whiteness through the *Gracias al Sacar,* through which "[t]he King's written permit circumvents racial differences in favor of an act of rhetorical blindness, whereby the "character of mulatto [a less desireable term than *pardo*] being held extinguished in him, he be admitted, without its serving as a precedent to the degrees he may seek in the university ...."" (Piedra 321). Likewise, Watson (2010) notes that whitening has been embraced throughout Latin America, where notions of race and nationality have been intentionally coalesced and "have excluded people of color by reinforcing national discourses of homogeneity" (171). Watson asserts that despite the nationalist rhetoric, Panamanian nationalist poet Federico Escobar (1861-1912), goes against the grain and "utilizes the opposition between lightness and darkness to elevate blackness and deviates from the cult of whiteness" (177).

The masterfully-crafted lyrics of Los Paisanos reveal that centuries after the abolition of slavery in Cuba in 1886, and even decades after the 1959 Revolution, those notions of white superiority and the associated privileges in contrast with the presumed inferiority of blacks still persist. Los Paisanos embrace blackness as they challenge other blacks to reject the discourse and practice of whitening. In pointing out the role of black people in accepting these notions and perpetuating them, Los Paisanos assure us that not only do people of African descent have the power to change these racists beliefs, but they also have an obligation to do so. Their verses are reminiscent of the same sentiments expressed in "Redemption Song" by Bob Marley in the 1980s as he exhorted black people to, "Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery. None but ourselves can free our minds" (Marley "Redemption Song"). Marley's statement echoes that of Marcus Garvey's speech in the first decades of the twentieth century. Marcus Garvey asserted in his 1937 speech:

> We are going to emancipate ourselves from mental slavery because whilst others might free the body, none but ourselves can free the mind. Mind is your only ruler, sovereign. The man who is not able to develop and use his mind is bound to be the slave of the other man who uses his mind, ... (Garvey 791)

In his song, Marley re-affirms what Marcus Garvey posited in his speech—that we alone have the power to liberate our mind. Los Paisanos question those who continue to perpetuate racist ideologies while proclaiming at the same time their blackness, their negritude: "I was born black as I am / And what I am does not embarrass me." Furthermore, they affirm that the true "beauty of people is right here in their heart" (Paisanos. "Lo negro"). This is not a cliché. It is undoubtedly at the core of their affirmation of blackness. The focus on one visible trait, the hair, and recognizing its beauty is a self-affirmation that has the power of penetrating one's psyche and manifesting itself externally. Valuing oneself is the advice that Los Paisanos give to their compatriots in order to fight against racism wherever it might be lurking so as to achieve the collective liberation of the Cuban people.

Through their conscious hip hop, they bring to light the persisting attitudes and behaviors that privilege white Cubans while marginalizing the black ones. They exhort all Cubans to be active participants in the revolution against racism, which not only oppresses blacks but also threatens the liberty and prosperity of all Cubans. In "Lo negro," Los Paisanos sing of blackness with pride and insist on the importance of being faithful to oneself. They laud African-descended natural hair through an Afrocentric aesthetic to self-affirm the collective identity of black people (see Figure 7).

From Self-affirmation to Reconceptualization of Black Beauty in "Los pelos"

Continuing the discourse on the intersection between aesthetics and racism, Magia López and Alexey Rodríguez,

Pelo suelto carretera
No hay derriz
Me di cuenta que pa' qué
si yo no nací así
El hombre que me quiera
Me acepta como soy
AFRICANA
Adondequiera que voy

Loose windblown hair
There's no relaxer
I realized for what
if I wasn't born like that
The man who loves me
Accepts me as I am
AFRICANA
Wherever I go.

(My translation with the help of Sergio Daquin)

Figure 8

of the duo Obsesión, recognize the importance of self-affirmation through emphasis on Afrocentric aesthetics that Los Paisanos posit in their music. They advance the discourse on black aesthetics and esteem by dedicating a theme to the hair, the beauty of natural, African-heritage hair. Saunders asserts the crucial role of Magia as "the first woman MC to emerge with an explicitly Afrocentric discourse and identification within the Cuban Underground Hip Hop Movement" (Saunders 205). As her eyes were opened to black consciousness, she embraced her black identity and became empowered. Through hip hop, Magia and Alexey sought to share that awareness with other Afro-Cubans. They form part of the transnational conversations that promote Afrocentricity and speak out against racism. In his analysis of the Afro-Cuban culture movement, de la Fuente insists that racism has not been eliminated, and that after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the youth of the hip-hop generation saw an erosion of the egalitarian state and a "resurgence of racism and discrimination in Cuban society" (699). I would like to examine at this juncture the effects of racial prejudice in the context of aesthetics and the millennial re-conceptualization of beauty in the underground hip hop of the duo Obesión. As stated earlier, one of their most notable songs highlights the outstanding phenotypical trait that has been altered, despised and rejected over the centuries: natural, coiled hair. In Latin America, where phenotype is the major indicator of racial identification, hair is often the indicator of African ancestry when light or white skin and European features would otherwise result in classification as white. In a social context where the Eurocentric aesthetic and culture are dominant, natural African hair is a signifier of unattractiveness and powerlessness. Given the societal norms that impose and promote a Eurocentric standard of beauty, awakening black consciousness and embracing an Afrocentric standard is crucial for the collective self-affirmation of black people. Evocative of the African-American slogan of the 1960s "Black is Beautiful!" and of the pride in Blackness evinced in the artistic production of the African Diaspora, "Los pelos" (Hair) brings to the forefront the struggle to have African heritage recognized and valued as much as Hispanic heritage while also celebrating their *cubanía*.

Through this hip hop ode to hair, it becomes even clearer that hair, just like skin color, is an essential part of black identity and self-esteem. All of the aspects of the phenotype that determine physical appearance—color, facial features and hair texture—are linked to the identity and alterity of an individual. These aspects of the phenotype are considered to identify, value and compare individuals with members of their racial or ethnic group, and to contrast them with those other groups. In societies where there is cultural diversity or specifically racial diversity intricately woven with a long history of domination and oppression, valuing one phenotype over others has left a long-lasting impression of internalized racism on the psyche of the people and has resulted in the marginalization of those who do not belong to the privileged phenotype. Thus, the significance of hair in the context of black communities within Eurocentric dominant cultures goes much deeper. Hair is not simply a grooming issue that all women deal with equally. Hair represents beauty but it is linked to a racial identity that is judged acceptable or not and thus, is either awarded or denied privilege. Banks (2000) notes in her study *Hair Matters* that "within a broader context, they [non-black women] do not have to deal with cultural and political constructions of hair that intersect with race and gender in relationship to mainstream notions of beauty, putting a great number of black women outside of what is considered beautiful in U.S society. For black women, hair embodies one's identity, beauty, power, and consciousness (38). In Cuba, as in other nations of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean and the Americas, black women face the same dilemma given the longstanding tradition of promoting the white, European phenotype as the ideal of beauty. Confronted with those ideologies, Obsesión responds boldly through "Los pelos" to affirm black beauty and blackness, to reeducate and to encourage black people to boost their self-esteem. In so doing, they are empowered to dismantle the European aesthetic of beauty that is linked

Mi naturaleza rompe patrón de belleza
No me vengan con que pa' lucirme fina...
Hay que plancharse la cabeza
para verse más femenina
¡Óyeme no nananina!
Mis códigos determinan
Yéndose por encima de todos esos esquemas
se encaracola mi pelo
y es postura ante la vida

(Obsesión. "Los Pelos")

My nature breaks the model of beauty
Don't come at me with that in order to look fine...
You have to press your hair
to look more feminine
Hey don't gimme that (nananina)!
My codes determine
Going on top of all those schemes
my hair coils
and is a stance facing life.

Figure 9

to the perpetuation of racism in Cuba. As Saunders asserts, this theme "speaks directly to Black identity politics" (213). Indeed, challenging societal norms by embracing natural African hair is self-affirming and liberating.

The video of "Los pelos" (2011) presents the image of beauty from the introspective viewpoint of a black female rapper, Magia López, and her husband Alexey Rodriguez—who sings in the background supporting and appreciating her in all of her splendor. Together they demonstrate and profess the beauty of tightly coiled African hair in its natural state. Magia, who is the centerpiece of the song, is the author and subject of her own text on identity and the aesthetic value of an Afro-Cuban woman. Through her rap, she defies the images of beauty that have exalted the white woman and *mulata* but excluded her. She boldly confronts the ideologies of a society that privileges Whiteness—white skin, facial features, and hair that are characteristic of European ancestry. Their lyrics contest the images and the ideologies that scorn African features while idealizing Caucasian traits, and by extension the whitened features of *mulatas* (see figure 8).

Listening to the lyrics evokes two impactful yet contrasting images in the collective memory of African Diaspora people: "*straight*, windblown or 'highway hair'" and natural *coiled* hair without a relaxer. As mentioned earlier, for years, the portrayal of feminine sensuality through loose, flowing hair has been projected in all of the cultural productions of Western society—in art, literature, popular magazines, television, and theatre. These images are not of tightly coiled or kinky African hair, but of straight, long European hair that is gently caressed and disheveled by the wind. For women of African heritage, this image can provoke a manifold of sentiments. On one hand, it inspires the desire to look sensual and attractive like the women represented, but on the other hand it inculcates self-deprecation for those with non-European hair. The latter group consequently yearns for straight hair and even becomes obsessed with altering their hair to look fine and straight, that is, more European. Rooks (1996) notes this hair dilemma through nineteenth-century advertising in the U.S. that promoted products aimed at altering black women's hair to mimic a European model of beauty:

> [T]he merchandising, by white-owned companies, of hair-care products specifically designed to straighten hair have appeared in African American periodicals, However, just as the products could only promise a caricature of white standards of beauty, so too the pictures that accompanied the ads were caricatures of a standard of beauty that was difficult, if not impossible, for African American women to meet. (13)

Kutzinski (1993) notes the tendency to degrade blackness while privileging whiteness in Cuban cigar and cigarette advertisements from the nineteenth century in which caricatures of black women are often defeminized and asexualized in juxtaposition with the *mulata*, who is sexually objectified (64). Despite this long-standing mindset of idealizing whiteness and deprecating blackness, López boldly sings her song and displays her natural, coiled hair and other African features in her accompanying video. López extols her hair as she parades through the Cuban streets with her reddish-brown unrelaxed hair let down, proudly showing her beauty that is inextricably linked to her African heritage. For the woman with natural coiled African hair, this is an act of resistance and self-affirmation that defies the national discourse that acclaims the light-skinned *mulata* as the face of Cuba and the symbol of transculturation. Again, by wearing her natural hair "*suelto carretera*," López defies the national image of beauty and the notion that natural African hair is not beautiful or sensual, and that women of African descent are inferior. Her natural hair reflects how natural hairstyles in the new millennium have taken on the role of the Afro of the 1960s, which became fashionable but more importantly "was understood to denote black pride, which became synonymous with activism and political consciousness" (Rooks 6).

This conscious decision to not conform to the norms that dictate a European aesthetic of beauty—a legacy of slavery in

Una doctrina que consolida
Esta imagen que te vengo dando
Conmigo duermen más de 400 años
Soñando con el, ¿Hasta cuándo?
El procedimiento te estira el pelo.
Lo hace mentiroso
Opacando lo que naturalmente es hermoso.

(Obsesión. "Los Pelos")

A doctrine that consolidates
This image that I'm coming to you with
More than 400 years sleep with me.
Dreaming about, Till when?
The process straightens your hair.
It makes it a liar.
Overshadowing what is naturally beautiful.

Figure 10

the Americas—presents a dilemma for the black woman. For centuries, Western society has imbibed the culture with the notion that "good hair" is straight and long, or long and wavy. But coiled or kinky natural African hair has not been lauded as "good hair". As previously noted, these ideals of beauty have been disseminated orally, in written texts and through images projected in all forms of media and advertisement. Thus, the women and men who do not conform or adapt to this Eurocentric standard of beauty tend to endure marginalization and ostracism from whites, mestizos, mulattoes and others who conform to the white aesthetic. Faced with these oppressive ideologies, López experiences an awakening. She reveals that she *realized*—she has truly realized—that she wasn't born with straight hair. Her natural African hair is now a signifier of beauty and power as she defines what Black identity means. Her bold Afrocentric stance and style had a powerful impact on Afro-Cuban women who saw her performing hip hop (Saunders 215).

Her appreciation for her natural hair liberates her from an aesthetic that is not appropriate for her and frees her from the perpetual struggle to alter her hair by straightening and relaxing it so that it looks more European. As stated earlier, this is an act of physical and mental resistance. Through the radical act of wearing her hair without relaxing it, she becomes empowered to esteem herself according to an Afrocentric standard of beauty, which is perfectly in line with her hair and her other physical features. She realizes that if others were able to create and impose their standard of beauty, she also has the power to reject it and create her own (see Figure 9).

It is essential that she define her beauty in order to be an active agent of determining her self-esteem and worth in society. In doing so, she is able to reclaim the beauty of generations of women who have been ridiculed because of their kinky, coiled hair, not to mention their objectification as the 'Mammy' or 'bad Black woman' (Collins 70). Obesión's ode-manifesto to the hair functions as a way to disseminate a re-conceptualization of the image of the black woman that goes beyond the surface. Her appreciation for her external beauty is a reflection of the underlying sentiments in her psyche. Not only does she accept her hair, she also esteems it. Thus, by extension she is able to reclaim her integrity and love herself just as she is, and wholly so. Her pride in herself uplifts and reassures other women who share her African roots.

Obviously, not only women share this *"idiosincrasia capilar"* (hair idiosyncrasy). Black men also endure it but given the importance it has taken in our society with regard to feminine beauty, it is necessary to focus more on women. The affirmation from her husband is an important indication that he understands her plight. He knows how significant his support is concerning her self-esteem. Their mutual appreciation of the aesthetic value of their natural African hair reinforces in both of them the confidence and their belief that black is beautiful. They therefore have the legitimate right to proudly wear it *"au naturel"* (see Figure 10).

Yo te enseñooooooooo
¡Pa' arriba los pelos
y qué crezcan los grelos!
Yo te enseñooooooooo
Al que le guste bien
Y al que no también

(Obsesión. "Los Pelos")

I'll shooooooooow you.
Up with the hair
and let the dreadlocks grow.
I'll shooooooooow you.
To him who likes it, good
and to him who doesn't too.

Figure 11

Identidad siempre dispuesta
Orgullo sale a la palestra
¡Mira! Obsesión dice y demuestra
Convicción en talla extra
Dime entonces si tú sales o entras
O lo escondes o lo muestras
O te pierdes o te encuentras
Tú piénsalo que yo mientras
Voy a seguir en la pelea de
A partir de lo que somos
Entonces lo que sea.

(Obsesión. "Los Pelos")

Identity always ready
Pride goes out to the arena
Look! Obsesión says and shows
Conviction in extra-large
Tell me then if you're leaving or coming
Either you hide it or you show it.
Either you lose yourself or you find yourself.
You think about it and meanwhile I
I am going to continue the fight for
Starting with what we are
Then whatever.

Figure 12

Through "Los Pelos", Obsesión reasserts conscious hip hop as an act of resistance that confronts centuries of cultural impositions that have psychologically enslaved black people. In praising black hair, this rap duo defies the ideology of "*mejorar la raza*" (improve the race) that characterized Latin-American identity politics. This ideology perpetuates the rejection and the intentional eradication of part of the heritage of the Latin America and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, the black heritage (Whitten and Torres 75). This unwritten yet understood ideology purports to "advance" and improve the race by marriage and procreation with whites in order to have children that are progressively less black, and consequently whiter and with straighter hair in subsequent generations. In a society that privileges whiteness, this whitening is a socio-economic strategy that attempts to enable offspring to have opportunities to advance their status in society. However, this mindset of "adelantar la raza" perpetuates the dichotomy between white and black, which unfortunately is likened to the dichotomy between good and bad. Obsesión rejects those ideologies as they posit black self-affirmation (see figure 11).

Through the refrain that stands out boldly, they proclaim their '*Afri*dentity" by uplifting black people who wear their natural hair and embrace blackness. It is not simply an inversion of the status quo of the white aesthetic. It is a reconceptualization of the beauty and, by extension, the worthiness of blacks. As Frantz Fanon rightly asserted decades ago, one has to transcend the ideologies that harm the psyche and create one's own norm. From that point on, one can be proud:

> In order to terminate this neurotic situation, in which I am compelled to choose an unhealthy, conflictual solution, fed on fantasies, hostile, inhuman in short, I have only one solution: to rise above this absurd drama that others have staged round me, to reject the two terms that are equally unacceptable, and through one human being, to reach out for the universal. (Fanon 197)

Indeed, Obsesión rejects the cultural practices that inculcate a notion that black is inferior and re-conceptualizes beauty and self-esteem on their own terms. They uphold blackness wholeheartedly for themselves and encourage their compatriots to do the same. Following Fanon's advice, they refute the dominant culture's ideologies that purport the inferiority of and disdain for blackness. Instead, they assert and define themselves and their beauty through an Afrocentric aesthetic (see figure 12).

This analysis of "Lo negro" and "Los pelos" demonstrates how Los Paisanos and Obsesión reconceptualize Afro-Hispanic aesthetics and identity through underground hip hop. With hair as the focal point, they are able to promote and protect the integrity of a collective black identity by extoling the beauty of natural Black African hair. I argue that this self-affirmation, by extension, advances the discourse and empowers African-descended people "to emancipate ourselves from mental slavery" of ideologies that deprecate blackness and to define and embrace blackness through an Afrocentric frame of reference (Garvey 791).

Embracing their blackness and *cubanía*, Los Paisanos conscientize Cubans with their lyrics, and serve as an inspiration to the revolution of the twenty-first century, the one that achieves and sustains appreciation of blackness and the collective integrity of African descendants. Likewise, Obsesión confronts the obsession with European hair and offers a re-conceptualization of Afro-Hispanic beauty. They call into question over four hundred years of indoctrination that disparages black heritage in Cuba—as in much of the African Diaspora—and compel their audience to debunk it.

This analysis of Cuban underground hip hop revives the discourse on the re-conceptualization of aesthetics as an essential part of the affirmation of Afro-Hispanic identity

and the valorization of blackness as an integral part of the multi-cultural heritage of Cubans and of *cubanía*. In praising hair, Los Paisanos and Obsesión present songs of redemption and resistance and promotes blackness *pari passu* with their *cubanidad*, and they empower their compatriots and fellow African descendants to dismantle Eurocentric cultural domination and truly "advance the race," the human race.

ENDNOTES

1 Los Paisanos is a duo of underground hip hop rappers composed of Randy Acosta and Jessel "Mr Huevo" Saladriga ("Mr. Egg"). They formed in 1999 and performed under the direction of the Asociación Hermanos Saez. In 2003, they independently produced their first CD *Paisanología*. Obsesión is an underground hip hop husband and wife duo Magia López and Alexey Rodriguez. Originally, Obsesión was composed of about fifteen members in 1995. When the group disbanded, Rodríguez asked López to become part of the duo under the same name. They were foundational members of the Cuban Underground Hip Hip Movement (CUHHM) (Saunders 2015). López was the first female head of the Cuban Agency of Rap. Though the couple separated in 2010, they continue to work together (Perry 2016).

2 *Cubaheadlines.com* www.cubaheadlines.com/2013/01/01/36861/cuba%E2%80%99s_parliament_and_the_issue_of_race.html.

3 Los Paisanos are underground rappers who remain committed to the Cuban Underground Hip Hop Movement. In "Lo Negro," they question fellow rappers who switch to commercial rap, where social issues are not prominent themes, and lose focus on the power of conscious hip hop in liberating the mind. (Perry 2016).

4 The song was written by Soandry del Río and performed by the group Hermanos de Causa. (Saunders 2015). The lyrics of this song were published in the online journal *Encuentro de la cultura cubana* at *http://www.cubaencuentro.com/revista/revista-encuentro/archivo/53-54-verano-otono-2009/poesia-rap-250584*

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The Representation of Latin@s in Media: A Negation of Blackness

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Abstract

The denial of African ancestry in the articulation of Latin@ identity is evident in Latin@ media in the United States. Furthermore, there is limited representation of Afro-Latin@s in current programming even though they claim to appeal to all Latin@s in the US and in Latin America. This trend has its roots in Latin American discourse of *mestizaje* and reproduces itself in Latin American media content that is exported to the diaspora in the United States. This article reviews the sociological reasons for the invisibility of Afro descendants in Latin America and the Hispanic Caribbean. Finally, this manuscript will account for how this population has been represented in Latin American, Latin@, and US mainstream media.

Keywords: Latin@ identity, Latin American television, Latin@ television, Latin@/Afro-Latin@ representation in media

The concept Latin@[1] has served as a political tool to advance recognition of Latin American immigrant groups in the United States. Nevertheless, United States notions of Latin@ rely on stereotypical shared characteristics such as cultural symbols and language. Moreover, Latin@s of African descent are invisible from the construction of the concept, as Black and Latin@ are separate and mutually exclusive categories that challenge the romantic notion of *mestizaje*. Likewise, blackness is habitually regarded as problematic to Latin@ identity creation (Hernández 2003; Newby & Dowling 2007).

The negation of the African element in the Latin@ identity is perceived in Latin@ media in the United States. Television news, talk shows, and *telenovelas* have limited representation of Afro-Latin@s. Television networks such as Telemundo and Univision market an ideal Latin@ identity that transcends nationalities and appeals to Latin@s in the US and in Latin America (Sommers 1991). This image perpetuates the invisibility of Afro-Latin@s and the visibility of Latin@ whiteness. In this article, I discuss the elements of *latinidad* and the challenges with identity that Afro-Latin@s face. Furthermore, I briefly consider the representations of Blacks in Brazilian, Colombian, Peruvian, Puerto Rican, Latin@, and United States television.

Latin@ Identity in the United States

The development of panethnic identities in the United States is a product of US ethnic and racial classification. Immigrants from Latin America and the Hispanic Caribbean have been commonly branded as Latin@s. This category alludes to individuals from different countries and comprises immigrants and several generations of people born in the US, individuals of distinct socio-economic backgrounds and those who became part of the nation through territorial extension such as Puerto Ricans and part of the Mexican American population. For instance, Chicanos developed in isolation from the Mexican government and were subsequently cut off from the motherland as a result of the Mexican-American War in 1848.

In that same vein, Puerto Rico did not become a part of the US until 1898. The US took over the archipelago as a result of the Spanish-American War and has governed it as a colony since then. Through the Jones Act, Congress granted Puerto Ricans US citizenship in 1917. The ties between the United States and Puerto Rico, as well as economic problems, have promoted migratory waves towards the mainland after World War II and in the present decade. In general, Puerto Ricans settled in New York City, Chicago, and recently in

Florida (Collazo, Ryan, and Bauman 2010; Motel and Patten 2012; Calderon 1992). Puerto Ricans have more freedom of mobility between the mainland and their homeland, which contributes to a strong Puerto Rican ethnic identity (Rodriguez-Cortez 1990; Cohn, Patten, and Lopez 2014; Calderon 1992).

Regardless of their place of origin, age group or financial status, in the United States, Latin@s embrace this space to build their individual and group identities, and for practical and emotional purposes (Itzigsohn 2004). Moreover, researchers conceive Latin@ identity formation as a process. In general, common cultural characteristics; recognition as Latin@, rather than national-origin-based ethnicity; common political concerns; and increasing contact with Latin@ populations of different ancestries form the foundation of a Latin@ identity. Nevertheless, the embracing or rejection of this identity will depend on the individual's class, race, nation, religion, gender, sexuality, immigrant status, and generation. Each element assigns different and often contradictory meanings to what it is to be a Latin@ (Lavriega Monforti 2014; Itzigsohn 2004). Black identity is often made invisible in Caribbean and Latin American society, which influences Afro-Latin@s' self-identification.

Some scholars who study Latin@ identity underscore the panethnic aspect of this concept. Panethnic groups are a conglomerate of individuals who represent separate nations but are bound together by supraethnic attributes, such as language and culture (Sommers 1991). Latino identity is also referred to as *latinidad* or *latinismo* (Lavriega Monforti 2014; Sommers 1991). Thus, the use of the Spanish language, ethnic-racial mixture, political socialization, and immigration are among the core cultural characteristics of Latin@ identity (Lavriega Monforti 2014). Nonetheless, Latin@ groups vary in historical experience, socioeconomic status, and identity (Calderon 1992). Upon considering Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans, the two largest Latin@ groups in the United States, one has to conclude that their history and place of settlement in the United States makes them two distinct groups (Collazo, Ryan, and Bauman 2010; Motel and Patten 2012.

This article focuses on the racial aspect of *latinidad*. Throughout the history of the Hispanic Caribbean and Latin America, there has been a continuous intermingling of lineages producing hybrid populations of Indigenous, Spanish, African, Asian, and European descendants (Blanco 1985; Lavriega Monforti 2014). In recognition of this intermixing, the US Census Bureau classifies Latin@s in both racial and ethnic terms, leading to the popularity of the term Hispanic. In an effort to distinguish Latin@s from the US dichotomized understanding of race, *latinidad* offers a potential unifying factor for Latin@s in the United States (Lavriega Monforti 2014).

Conversely, Latin@ identity may coexist with affiliations of Latin-American identity. Although Latin@s primarily identify with their country of origin, the overlapping of *latinidad* and national origin will vary depending on the context and social interactions (Diaz Mcconnell and Delgado-Romero 2004). For example, if a Latin@ is in a mainstream professional setting, he or she may identify as Latin@, whereas in the company of other Latin@s he or she will stress his/her national origin of identity, e.g. Venezuelan, Mexican, etc. Indeed, Latin@s will adhere to their own particular identities before embracing Latin@ panethnicity (Calderon 1992; Jones-Correa and Leal 1996). In short, Latin@s may assume one label or the other depending on the social environment (Diaz Mcconnell and Delgado-Romero 2004; Sommers 1991). For example, in the political arena, Puerto Rican and Chicano activist groups in Chicago unite around collective action coining the term Latin@ although they have distinct national identities. A common language and an awareness of being different from other social groups enabled political mobilization in response to common structural conditions in education, housing, and economics. Consequently, panethnic unity among Latin@s is situational specific (Calderon 1992).

Thus, *latinismo* in the United States is an "imagined community"[2] that commands deep emotional legitimacy (Anderson 2006; Sommers 1991). Jones-Correa (1996) posits that Latin@ panethnicity is a complex phenomenon as individuals merge multiple identities in different ways. Latin@ groups in the United States are fairly distinct even internally. Panethnic unity is possible for collective action, but the development of a Latin@ identity in practice is yet to be seen (Calderon 1992). Nevertheless, there is a trend of implicit homogenization that denies the national, linguistic, social, cultural, gendered, racial, religious and political experiences of Latin Americans (Jones-Correa and Leal 1996). As I will discuss later, both Latin@ and mainstream media in the United States portray Latin@ panethnicity as a reality, blending distinct identities into one.

Blacks in Latin America, the Hispanic Caribbean, and the Ideal of Mestizaje

As previously stated, *latinidad* manifests for instrumental reasons such as activist action. Political outcomes and media marketing strategies that unite Hispanics under the flag of Latin@ identity engulf the differences among groups. However, the invisibility of certain group characteristics, such as race, is rooted in a history of colonialism.

A majority of Hispanic Caribbean and Latin Americans possess a mixture of Indigenous, European, and African heritage. After centuries of miscegenation, there are numerous racial variants in each nation. Latin American countries have been classified as mestizo nations with indigenous and Hispanic heritage. Countries with visible Afro-Latin American heritage include Brazil and the Spanish-speaking

Caribbean, which displays a black and white racial range and has a history of plantation-based slavery (Sue and Golash-Boza 2009; Ribando 2007). However, it is important to note that Africa permeates throughout Latin America and the Hispanic Caribbean.

Mestizaje is the dominant racial ideology in Latin American countries (Hartigan 2013). For example in Mexico, individuals were labeled *mestizo* if they were the offspring of a Spanish (or of Spanish descent born in the Americas) and an indigenous individual (M. E. Martinez 2008; Hartigan 2013). Nonetheless, the term mestizo is ambiguous as it can also be applied to people with African ancestry which is the case in Panama (Watson 2014). Likewise depending on their position within the color spectrum, individuals are labeled "indio" in the Dominican Republic (Sidanius, Pena, and Sawyer 2001). The reference and further glorification of the Amerindian lineage in the national discourse serves to conceal blackness. Consequently, *mestizaje* promotes a combined biological and cultural European and indigenous heritage (Hartigan 2013). Even though this notion contrasts the bipolar racial understanding in the United States, where whiteness is a normative identity, it too outlines forms of racial exclusion (Hartigan 2013; Ong 2003) as it ignores the marginalization of indigenous peoples and draws a distinction between these groups, Blacks (Whitten and Torres 1992; Hartigan 2013) or their mixed offspring.

Accordingly, national discourses in Latin America and the Caribbean exclude Afro descendants and emphasize a *mestizaje* discourse, thus blurring racial identities into a homogenization project (Watson 2014). Furthermore, the *mestizaje* ideology places blackness at the margins of the nation (Godreau 2002). Take the examples of Panama and Puerto Rico which were intervened by the United States as a result of expansionist projects of the 19th and early 20th centuries. To reaffirm its Hispanic identity to Latin America and the world, Panamanian nationalists reinforced the notion of a mestizo, Catholic, and Spanish-speaking nation (Watson 2014). Although Puerto Rico is a colony of the United States with limited political power, most Puerto Ricans consider themselves part of a distinct national group (Dávila 1997; Morris 1995; Godreau 2002). Thus, an ideology of racial mixture was articulated to distinguish between a deeply segregated United States "other" and a racially democratic Puerto Rico (Godreau 2002).

Because of this perceived hybridity, Latin@s habitually reject a binary (Black / White) understanding of race (Itzigsohn 2004). Scholars have found low levels of Black consciousness and a denial of a Black identity in Brazil, Venezuela, Colombia, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic (Sue and Golash-Boza 2009). When identifying as Hispanic or Latin@ in the United States, most Caribbean and Latin Americans distance themselves from a Black racial identity (Rodríguez 2000). Consequently, the racialization of ethnicity allows Latin@s to escape their labeling as Black and affords them with a language to articulate their experiences as a racial other within the black-white paradigm (Itzigsohn 2004; Lavriega Monforti 2014).

The contributions of Blacks in the construction of Hispanic Caribbean and Latin American nations and culture are undeniable. Independence efforts during the 19th and 20th centuries included the core participation and support of Afro-Latin@ Americans. Furthermore, African-informed music and dance that were once rejected by the governing elites are embraced as national symbols today. The State recognizes African practices and customs and relocates them from their original contexts through a process called *folklorization* in performances (festivals or folkloric dances), promoting national culture as the cohesive product of different socio-racial heritages (Urban and Sherzer 1991; I. Martinez 2002; Lewis 2000; Dávila 1997; Godreau 2002). Consequently, in the Caribbean and Latin America, Afro identity fades into the national identity discourse (Hernandez 2003; Sue and Golash-Boza 2009). This national rhetoric celebrates racial synthesis and European White aesthetics while negating Black heritage (Dixon 2006; Cruz-Janzen 2003; Denton and Massey 1989). National ideologies operate as a vehicle to strengthen Eurocentrism hindering the participation of Blacks in politics, law, media, education, and other fields (Quiñones Rivera 2006).

Even more, race is conceptualized on a color continuum, which enables individuals of African descent to distance themselves from blackness (Sue and Golash-Boza 2009). Lighter skinned Blacks may identify as White, while some darker skinned Blacks may identify as mulattoes or mestizos (Ribando 2007). Some Latin@s claim that they are a more racially congruous people as a consequence of their mixed-race inheritance. For example, Mexicans subscribe to the notion that Blacks were assimilated and spent little time as a recognizable community (Hernandez 2003). Dominicans see themselves as *Indio* or Indian, while classifying Haitians as Black (Sue and Golash-Boza 2009; Newby and Dowling 2007; Ribando 2007). In Panama, West Indians that arrived to work in the construction of the Canal at the beginning of the 20th century are *negros* while Panamanians of African descent are ambiguously cataloged as *mulatos*, *mestizos* or *morenos* depending on their skin color and phenotype (Watson 2014)[3].

Incidentally, these classifications are often influenced by social status (Ribando 2007). For example in Brazil, race is related to socioeconomic status and discursive practices that hinder Blacks from advancing in professional and social circles (Dixon 2006). Likewise, many Caribbean and Latin American countries preach an artificial homogeneity but historically, Black individuals have faced various forms of racial discrimination. Racism pervades the daily discourse. In Puerto Rico, expressions like *mejorar la raza* or "improve" the race by marrying whiter or referring to African hair as *pelo malo* or bad hair undermine Afro descendants. In Mexico, phrases such as "working like a black"[4], "getting black"[5] or "a

supper of blacks"[6] (Hernández 2004) are racially offensive, yet are common and accepted.

Afro-Latin@s comprise a majority of the population in Cuba and the Dominican Republic, and a significant minority in Colombia, Panama, Venezuela, Ecuador and Nicaragua. Furthermore, "[b] razil has the largest Afro-descendant population outside of Africa" (Ribando 2007). When Black Latin@s come to the United States, the reception is lukewarm. Many experience a lack of acceptance from the Hispanic community who question their presence and sense of belonging. For example, Quiñones (2006), an Afro-Puerto Rican in the United States, claims she has to negotiate her identity among Latin@s who habitually express, "You don't look Latina" (174). Likewise, a study about Afro Cubans in the South West revealed they disliked being regarded as Hispanic because they sensed they lacked common experiences with Mexicans. On the other hand, Afro Cubans feel that African Americans deny their blackness because of a lack of shared history and common experiences (Roth 2009). By contrast, Puerto Ricans in New York City and Chicanos in the West Coast identified with the African-American community developing transethnic connections through hip-hop music (Rivera 2001).

Latin American media portrayal of Blacks

Media characterizations of ethnic and cultural minorities are generalizations that rely on overly broad categorizations (Trimble 1991; Diaz Mcconnell and Delgado-Romero 2004), or stereotypes. A stereotype is a cognitive and affective assessment following the categorization of a person into a social, cultural, or racial group (Drakulich 2012; Hilton and Von Hippel 1996; Macrae and Bodenhausen 2000). Stereotypes are automatically activated with the mere presence of certain attributes of the referenced group (Bargh, Chen, and Burrows 1996; Herz and Diamantopoulos 2013). Under those circumstances, racial frames function on an unconscious level, making beliefs about other individuals appear less like prejudice and more normative (Haney López in Hernández, 2004). Media dictates much of what society understands about ethnic minorities. Because stereotypes are so ubiquitous in the media, the label for that group is primed and automatically triggered and impacts how we process judgments of the person. In this way, media may contribute to the shaping of ethnic stereotypes (Gorham 1999; Devine 1989; Patton 2001; Tan, Fujioka, and Lucht 1997).

Although a number of Hispanic Caribbean and Latin American countries struggle with their racial identities, I will briefly discuss the portrayal of blackness in Brazilian, Colombian, Peruvian and Puerto Rican media. Even though there are prominent black politicians, musicians, singers, and sports figures, there are few embodiments of mediated blackness. To reiterate, the general cultural rhetoric in the 20th century aimed to contrast with United States binary notions of race by upholding racial democracy (Rivero 2005; Blanco 1985). Consequently, blackness is erased or misrepresented in the media. However, the images of Black people that do appear on the airwaves are customarily presented as stereotypical.

Brazil. Notwithstanding there is a majority of Black or mixed race population, Brazilian media is overpoweringly dominated by Whites (Douglas 2015). Afro-Brazilians have not featured prominently on any of Brazil's three major networks, *Rede Globo*, *Sistema Brasileira de Televisão* and *Rede Manchete* (Lindsey 2007). Historically, seventy-five percent of the roles for black actors in the influential Brazilian soap opera industry were as domestic servants, poor or criminal (Araújo 2000). In addition, blackface characters are cast as domestic servants, poor, or as criminals. The television show *Zorra Total* featured comedian Rodrigo Sant'Anna as Adelaide, a dark-skinned, toothless, ugly female beggar who typifies Black stereotypes like laziness and ignorance (Willis 2016; Mastro and Greenberg 2000; Mastro and Stern 2003). However, since the 2000s Blacks have created their own media and increasingly played non stereotypical roles (Lindsey 2007). In 2007, *TV da Gente* or the People's TV premiered offering programming primarily geared toward Afro-Brazilians (Lindsey 2007). In 2015 *Globo*, Brazil's main television network, broadcasted *Mister Brau*, a musical sitcom featuring a wealthy black couple in a lead role (Douglas 2015); a feat deemed as unprecedented. Also, television news are incorporating Black presenters, like the evening newscast *Jornal Nacional* that features Maria Julia Coutinho, a black weather reporter (Douglas 2015).

Colombia. Historically, Colombian television has discriminated against Afro-Colombians (Karabalí 2015). For example, in the 1980s the telenovela *La Pezuña del Diablo* featured actor Ronald Ayaso in blackface playing a black character (Karabalí 2015). Furthermore, Afro-Colombian actors are usually portrayed as poor, maids, janitors, or criminals, and not in lead roles as in *Sin tetas no hay paraíso*, a telenovela based on the novel by Gustavo Bolívar, and *Las detectives y el Víctor* (Karabalí 2015). When RCN Television bought the Spanish-language rights to *Grey's Anatomy*, it did not cast any Black actors despite the fact that the original show featured African Americans in leading roles (Latino Rebels 2015; Karabalí 2015).

Recently, a blackface character incited the Afro-Colombian community's outrage. *Soldado Micolta* was a soldier character played by comedian Roberto Lozano on Caracol's *Sábados Felices* (Betancourt 2015). Like many Black characters, *Micolta* spoke with an accent and mispronounced Spanish words (Segura 2018; Nieves-Pizarro and Mundel 2017; Karabalí 2015). *Micolta* possesses stereotypical characteristics often assigned to Black characters such as intellectual deficiency, boastfulness, clumsiness and laziness (Mastro and Greenberg 2000; Mastro and Stern 2003; Karabalí

2015). The character inflamed protests against the television network that broadcasted the sketch show and in the *Ministerio de Tecnologías de la Información y las Comunicaciones* that regulates media (Karabalí 2015). Caracol TV eventually eliminated the sketch from *Sábados Felices* after intense public pressure (Vargas 2015; Segura 2018).

Perú. Peruvian media reinforces racial stereotypes on a daily basis (Collyns 2010). For instance, tabloid newspapers use sexual innuendo to describe a black congresswoman or liken a black soccer player to a gorilla when he loses his temper (Collyns 2010). Moreover, a blackface character called *El Negro Mama* showcased in Frecuencia Latina's *El Especial del Humor* sparked outrage among Afro-Peruvian activists. *El Negro Mamá*, played by Jorge Benavides, is a caricature of a black man that exaggerates African features by using prosthetic nose and lips and a blackened face (Tegel 2013). Popular demand kept the blackface character on air in spite of being fined and receiving criticism from civil rights organizations (Collyns 2010). Benavides also plays a redface character called *La Paisana Jacinta* on *Frecuencia Latina* that mocks indigenous persons (Garcia 2015). On the other hand, Afro-Peruvian soccer players are often the objects of ridicule though blackface. In 2015 Jefferson Farfán and André Carrillo were mocked by Jorge and Alfredo Benavides on a popular show on *Frecuencia Latina* after they made headlines for attending a high-profile celebrity wedding (Betancourt 2015). Farfán was ridiculed again in 2018 by comedian Miguel Moreno when he was depicted as a dimwit blackface fool who flirted with a beauty queen on Peru's FOX Sports[7] (Reuters 2018).

Puerto Rico. Media representations of racialized women traditionally deployed a folkloric image of African heritage such as *Mamá Inés*, a mammie-like figure that a popular coffee brand uses as a spokesperson in television ads. Another embodiment of blackness in Puerto Rico features blackface characters. Aired by *Telemundo* in the 1950s, *Diplo*, short for *Diplomacia* (or Diplomacy), was first a black voice in the radio and later a blackface character. *Diplo* mirrored Cuban *bufo* characters that were imported through radio and cinema due to the close relationship between both nations before the triumph of the Revolution. *Diplo* the character was an anti-hero, illiterate, lazy, street wise and deceitful, all stereotypical characteristics of Black characters (Mastro and Greenberg 2000; Mastro and Stern 2003). Rivero on the other hand, was an all-around media professional: an actor, producer, scriptwriter and songwriter as well as director for theatre, film, radio and television; a pro-independence advocate, and a philanthropist. The audience revered him and his blackface depiction in *Diplo* (Rivero 2005).

Another blackface character *Chianita la Negra*, played by actress Ángela Meyer, appeared in media during elections to promote her nomination as Governor (Garcia 2016). *Chianita* is portrayed as a street smart, yet uneducated Black woman who does not speak Spanish well as she mispronounces her slogan as "voten por yo", instead of "voten por mí" (Garcia 2016). In 2016, Meyer asked her social media followers if they wanted her to revive the character for the elections taking place that year. While many supported the character, anti-racism activists and human rights organizations opposed the idea and even celebrated a "burial" to symbolically put to rest the practice of blackface (Abadía-Rexach 2016; Peña López 2016; Garcia 2016).

Pirulo el Colorao is another blackface character that appeared in *Qué Vacilón*, (WAPA Television) a sketch comedy show led by comedian Raymond Arrieta during the 1990s. *Pirulo* appeared dancing and singing *bomba* music (an Afro-Puerto Rican dance genre). Rivero (2005) explains that *Pirulo* reminded Puerto Ricans that everyone has Black ancestry when he made the live audience say "¿Y tu abuela dónde está?" or "Where is your grandmother," a verse from Fortunato Vizcarondo's poem of the same name that questions why Black relatives were hidden. Likewise, *Pedro Fosas Nasales*, *Peyo el Prieto*, *Cuco Pasurín*, and *Willie el Merenguero* (Abadía-Rexach 2016; Garcia 2016) are other blackface characters that entertained Puerto Rican audiences by mocking blackness.

Finally, in the 1990s, *Telemundo* aired the situation comedy *Mi Familia*, the first featuring a Black family. Inspired by US Black-oriented sitcoms like *The Jeffersons* and *The Cosby Show*, *Mi Familia* followed the life of the Black lower-middle class Meléndez family (Rivero 2002; 2005). Nonetheless, the leading actress Judith Pizarro posited that the program was about "a Puerto Rican family which happened to be Black", furthering the national discourse of a mestizo Puerto Rican family (Rivero 2002; 2005). The show was absent of racial and social topics and intended to present blackness in a positive light (Rivero 2002; 2005). This has been the only show to date that has presented a Black family in Puerto Rico's 64-year commercial television history (Rivero 2002; 2005).

United States Latin@ Media depictions of Afro-Latin@s

Thanks to advances in communication technologies and media, many Latin@s stay in contact with the diaspora in the United States and vice versa. Roth (2009) questions the elasticity of panethnic boundaries and their application to transnational migration. Transnationalism often enables dual identities to ethnic groups in a host nation as they develop links to distant societies. In turn, these symbolic identifications with other Latin@ groups create panethnic consciousness within the United States and Latin America. Consequently, the media promotes a transnational panethicity (Roth 2009).

In Latin@ electronic and print media the use of Spanish connects markets in the United States and Latin

America, strengthening a million-dollar international Spanish-speaking public that transcends borders and nationalities. The constant migration and the geographic proximity of the sending countries sustain cultural bonds with Latin America. However, the closeness of Latin America keeps national identities alive (Sommers 1991). Rodríguez (1997) envisioned that Hispanic media should rely on racial differences to distinguish itself from the mainstream. Nonetheless, media representations have contributed to the invisibility of Afro-Latin@s, as black characters are rarely seen in Spanish-language television or film. This invisibility is deeply rooted in the subtle interplay between gross economic disparities and historic racism (Lindsey 2007).

The embodiment of Spanish-speaking people of African descent in the media has been limited to figures such as salsa singer Celia Cruz (Roth 2009). In October 2015 *Telemundo* aired the musical *telenovela Celia* based on the life of the Afro-Cuban entertainer (Jacobson 2015). Although *Celia* is a welcomed effort to showcase Afro-Latin@ contribution to Latin@ culture, there is still much work to be done. Still Afro-Latinos are ridiculed in Latin American media and their voices are muted in the United States Latin@ and mainstream media (Garcia 2015).

Since productions similar to *Celia* are scarce in Latin@ US media, most programs promote a homogenized concept of Latin@ identity. These cultural products are also broadcasted in Puerto Rico and other Latin American countries. For Latin@s in the United States, ethnic media continually refreshes and reinforces Spanish language. Audience researchers and marketers use language as a proxy for lower socioeconomic class Hispanics. English language use is a sign of acculturation and higher socioeconomic status (Rodríguez 1997; Alba and Nee 2003; Sommers 1991).

The success of Hispanic media will be determined by the level of Latin American immigration and the socioeconomic development of U.S. Latin@ communities (Rodríguez 1997). Specifically, U.S.-born millennial Latinos are increasingly consuming Spanish Language media because of streaming services such as Netflix, Amazon, and Hulu. Young Latin@s are rediscovering content from traditional media giants such as Univision and Telemundo (Carrasco 2017). However, this is problematic because the representation of *latinidad* as seen in Latin@ media remains decidedly European (Davila 2001; Roth 2009). Few programs challenge stereotypical roles of black and indigenous Latin@s (e.g. Biographical series Celia, 2015). Latin@ content producers such as *Mitu*[8] and *Remezcla*[9] are driving a phenomenon called "digital reculturation" or the process of rediscovering one's culture of origin / identification through digital representations of culture through online platforms (Carrasco 2017). Online media features a diverse Latin@ cast and often addresses issues of race and intra Latin@ stereotypes.

Representation of Latin@s in US Media

Throughout the history of US television and film, Latin@s have been portrayed in a derogatory way. During the silent film era, Mexican characters were depicted as a menace to American land ownership, challenging the southwestern history of Mexican land dispossession. In addition, Mexican Americans were portrayed as volatile, untrustworthy, violent, animal-like, and as thieves. This was the case of the Cisco Kid[10] (Behnken and Smithers 2015).

Latin@ men and women were depicted as highly sexualized. For instance, Zorro was a Robin Hood-like *bandido* and a Latin lover. White actresses in brownface spoke in overly accented ways, dressed stereotypically, and were portrayed as highly sexualized objects or Latina lovers. Often, Mexican and Cuban fireball films shared a plot pattern: "a recent immigrant arrives in America, finds wealth, fame or fortune, encounters a bad guy and is rescued by a white benefactor" (Behnken and Smithers 2015).

One classic depiction of Latin@s as delinquent and highly sexual was the musical *West Side Story* in 1961. In the United States, Puerto Ricans are racialized as different from, but sharing with African Americans a collective subservience to Whites. Therefore, they were deemed as dangerous others who participate alongside African American social spaces, conditions and dispositions (Rivera 2001). *West Side Story* depicted Puerto Ricans as delinquent, urban *bandidos*. Although labeled a modern *Romeo and Juliet*, *West Side Story* addressed the tragedy of interethnic sexual relations instead of issues of family and social status (Behnken and Smithers 2015).

In television, few shows in the US mainstream media have featured (Afro)Latin@ as lead characters. In the 1950s, *I Love Lucy* featured Cuban Desiderio 'Desi' Arnaz alongside Lucille Ball. Later, during 1970s *Chico and the Man*, *Friends and Lovers*, *Fantasy Island* and *9 to 5* had Latin@ leads. In the 1980s, *Chips* was added to the list; and in the 1990s *NYPD Blue*, *Union Square* and *Malcom in the Middle* featured Latin@ actors. During the 21st century, *Desperate Housewives* and *Modern Family* featured a sexualized portrayal of Latinas (Negron-Muntaner et al. 2014)[11].

Today, Latin@s only represent 5.8 percent of speaking roles in mainstream media (Betancourt 2018; Scannel 2017). Despite this, Latin@ representation in U.S. media is increasing. Mexican-American comedian George López[12] starred in his own sitcom and late night TV show between 2002-2007. In addition, *Cristela*[13], *Jane the Virgin*[14], and *One Day at a Time*[15] are three situation comedies that do not portray Latina leads as sexualized, but as middle-class second generation Latin@s in the United States who navigate between their Latin@ and American identities. Moreover, mainstream media is addressing diversity in an effort to appeal to an upcoming multiethnic millennial generation. The ABC Family cable network has implemented this strategy and includes representation

of Latin@ characters in series such as *The Secret Life of the American Teenager*, *Pretty Little Liars, Switched at Birth*, and *The Fosters* (Hochhalter 2013).

Similarly, the visibility of Afro-Latin@s has increased in recent years in U.S media. Afro-Puerto Rican actress Rosario Dawson and Afro- Dominican actress Zoé Saldaña are becoming more prominent in film and television by playing mainstream non-racialized characters. Still, Afro-Latin@ actors are not featured prominently in US television or film (Negron-Muntaner et al. 2014).

Conclusion

The idea of a Latin@ identity is promoted by structural forces in the United States and reinforced by the media. Yet, the heterogeneity of Latin@ groups in terms of nation and race make it difficult to articulate a global Hispanic culture. Latin@s are first loyal to their home countries, and second to the idea of being Hispanic. Thus, *latinidad* is still an instrumental means to obtain rights and recognition in the United States; yet a weak tool to unite Latin@s under the same cultural umbrella.

Media are one of the main producers of culture. Latin@ and mainstream television feature panethnic notions of *latinidad,* although new programing and actors are challenging stereotypical roles. Nevertheless, the representation of *latinidad* as seen in Spanish-language and U.S. media remains decidedly not black (Davila 2001; Roth 2009). The portrayal of Latin@s in general is still lacking in media. Black individuals in Latin America are invisible in local media as nationalist discourses tend to Hispanicize or whiten power and culture. Afro-Latin Americans struggle to make themselves visible in their lands. Perhaps their portrayal in U.S. Latin@ and mainstream media will force Caribbean and Latin American countries to come to grips with the idea that our nations were also built on African blood and eventually redefine the assumptions about Black participation in society (Lindsey 2007).

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ENDNOTES

1 The term Latin@ is used as a gender encompassing term to denote equality.

2 According to Anderson (2006) an imagined community is characterized by kinship and citizenship. Although communities have fiscal boundaries, imagined communities may stretch out to other nations as a sovereign entity. Finally, a profound comradeship and fraternity bonds its members.

3 In this paper the term Afro-Latin@ includes Blacks and Mulattos.

4 In Mexico, the phrase "trabajar como negro" (in English working like a black), is employed in allusion to someone

who is working too hard or too much such as blacks who were subject to slavery.

5 In Mexico, the phrase "ponerse negro" (In English getting black) depicts someone who becomes angry (Hernández 2004).

6 In Mexico the expression "una cena de negros" (In English a supper of blacks) is used to reference a disorderly crowd (Hernández 2004).

7 Although it is unclear, this parody may have made reference to an encounter between US rapper 50 cent and Fox Sports Reporter Erin Andrews in 2015, when the former kissed her. The kiss was not well received by Andrews.

8 Mitu is a Latino digital media company that produces news and entertainment content for English-speaking Latinos who want to remain connected to their heritage (Dave 2016).

9 Remezcla is an alternative media targeted to Latin@ millennials that showcases Latin@ music, culture, and events.

10 The Cisco Kid is a Mexican bandido who appeared in film, radio, and television during the first half of the 20th century. In his first incarnation he was depicted as a murdering criminal. In the 1950s, he was rebranded as a role model and represented as a noble gentleman in a television series (Trimble 2015).

11 Freddie Prinze (*Chico and the Man*) is of Puerto Rican and Hungarian descent; Paul Sands (*Friends and Lovers*) is of Mexican and Russian descent; Ricardo Montalbán (*Fantasy Island*) is of Mexican descent; Rita Moreno (*9 to 5*) is of Puerto Rican descent; Eric Estrada (*Chips*) is of Puerto Rican descent; Jimmy Smits (*NYPD Blue*) is of Puerto Rican descent; Daphne Rubin-Vega in *Union Square* is of Panamanian descent; Franke Muñiz (*Malcom in the Middle*) is of Puerto Rican and Italian descent. Eva Longoria (*Desperate Housewives*) is of Mexican descent; Sofia Vergara (*Modern Family*) is of Colombian descent.

12 George Lopez's sitcom deals with the life of a Latino comedian who balances work and family.

13 *Cristela* depicts a recent Latina law school graduate in search of the American Dream while juggling her work, family, and love life.

14 *Jane the Virgin* showcases a young Latina woman who becomes pregnant after being accidentally artificially inseminated.

15 *One Day at a Time* is a remake from a 1970s show with the same name that features a divorced military veteran mother who tackles family issues from a Latin@ perspective (Bradley 2018).

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Book Review

Silencing Race: Disentangling Blackness, Colonialism, and National Identities in Puerto Rico by Ileana M. Rodríguez-Silva

Will Guzmán • New Jersey City University

New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012. 320 pages. $105, cloth. ISBN: 978-1-137-26321-6.

> "Blacks are the worst pests you could ever find… Blacks never get old and live long…I don't want to have anything to do with blacks or deal with them, because they are the lowest, because blacks are always blacks wherever they stand and whites, like us, are always white and better than them" (218-219).

The above are not the words from a United States (US) troglodyte of the antebellum or Jim and Jane Crow eras. Instead, they are the racist rants of a Puerto Rican *jíbaro* (highland peasant) who in the 1930s expressed these sentiments to sociologists José Colombán Rosario and Justina Carrión. These revealing *jíbaro* attitudes run counter to what author Ileana Rodríguez-Silva asserts in *Silencing Race*: that Puerto Ricans rather not talk about race and racism. Throughout six chapters within two sections, she uses the "analytics of silence" as a tool to explore the complicated racial history of Puerto Rico. Rodríguez-Silva—Latin American and Caribbean History associate professor at the University of Washington—examines the social, political, and economic structures on the colonized island from particular moments within its racial history between the 1870s and 1910s. In so doing, she successfully addresses her thesis, "to track both the fraught processes through which silences are constantly reconstituted and the overall effect of a plurality of silences, intended and unintended, which have prevented open discussions about racialized domination" (4).

For centuries many Puerto Ricans viewed the island as "a unified nation…whose people originated from a mélange of three cultural roots: the indigenous *Tainos*, Africans, and Spaniards" (3). This gallant idea had the disastrous effect of privileging the European (and to a lesser extent the *Taino*) heritage at the expense and suppression of African culture (190). The myth of "Puerto Rico's racial democracy (the notion that racial hierarchies are nonexistent and manifestations of racisms are minimal, nonsystematic, and therefore irrelevant)" would perceivably increase its global economic and political standing (2). Whether this was successful is debatable; However, Black Puerto Ricans paid dearly in the form of an "emancipation that emerged out of their struggles" that would not "fundamentally alter the racial hierarchy forged throughout the previous four centuries under European colonialism" (28). Furthermore, racist attitudes abound nearly unabated about Afro-Puerto Rican women's "hypersexuality and eroticism" and the "musicality, rhythm, and festive attitudes" of all Black Puerto Ricans that ultimately "evoked images of the noble savage, emphasizing their primitive and uncivilized state" (221).

A strength of *Silencing Race* is Rodríguez-Silva's ease in explaining the potentially perplexing philosophies of the political left, right, as well as moderates within Puerto Rico. She uncovers the racism of politicians, along with bureaucrats, medical and public health officials, intellectuals, and labor leaders. Rodríguez-Silva exposes the consistent coyness in communicating the language of race and racism by these disparate groups. The historian reminds readers that white supremacy was not imported to Puerto Rico by the US colonial project in 1898, but as a continuum of the efforts started by the Spanish conquistador invaders after 1493 when she declares "US Army racial practices did not instill racism among Puerto Ricans. Instead it provided new means for its manifestation" (217). The myriad of primary sources Rodríguez-Silva delves into is noteworthy, particularly since finding them in Puerto Rican archives to document this specific story was difficult. Similarly to be extolled from the book are the voices of Black Boricuas who attempted to preserve or disrupt the racial status-quo including activists Sylvia del Villar[d], Juan Boria, Tomás Carrión Maduro, Louis Felipe Dessús, Eleuterio Derkes, Alonso Gual, and prominent physician and political leader Dr. José Celso Barbosa Alcala.

This is an intellectual history of Puerto Rican racism with all its subtleties, while not too laced with theory as to discourage the reader. Thus, scholars, and students alike, of

Afro-Puerto Rican studies and labor, medical, cultural and political history will find this useful text address several issues such as "immigration, US colonialism, national identities, constructions of whiteness/blackness/racial mixture, and gender." There is no doubt that other countries throughout the western hemispheric African Diaspora have been 'silenced'—albeit with variances predicated on time, place, and space. Unfortunately, many Puerto Ricans of all hues, both on the island and dispersed throughout the world, are too quick to dismiss "the historical and contemporary realities of racialized marginalization" by deeming "race, racialization, and racism as foreign matters, specifically a US phenomena" and "to question one's commitment and love to the Puerto Rican nation" (1). This, as Rodríguez-Silva has proven in her first monograph, is a disservice to our African ancestors who built the country and bore the brunt of racial repression with respect to the constructs of *raza iberoamericana*, *mestizaje*, and *blanqueamiento* during the last 524 years.

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Book Review

Diasporic Blackness: The Life and Times of Arturo Alfonso Schomburg by Vanessa K. Valdés

Casarae L. Gibson • Syracuse University

New York: SUNY Press, 2017. 202 pages.$20.95, Cloth. ISBN: 978-1-4384-6514-2

Diasporic Blackness: The Life and Times of Arturo Alfonso Schomburg by Vanessa K. Valdés is an updated hisd toriography of the known bibliophile's life placing special emphasis on Afro-latinx heritage in the Americas and global-sphere. A revered leader in black archivist studies, Schomburg's personal library collection of works by those of African descent, became the premise for what we now come to know as the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Valdés centers Schomburg's identity within a curator framework but moves beyond that to place his Afro-Latino lineage at the fore. The book deals with the transnational experiences of Schomburg, his formative years in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands and his ascension to adult life in the United States, primarily New York City. What distinguishes Valdés' book from previous literature written about Schomburg, most notably Elinor Des Verney Sinnette's *Arthur Alfonso Schomburg: Black Bibliophile and Collector* published in 1989, is that Schomburg's legacy is the blueprint for cementing black excellence not only within the confines of U.S. native Black historiography, but to accentuate Afro-latinidad as part of the fabric of U.S. politics and culture. Schomburg was an elusive figure, often evading questions about his identity through body language in order to assimilate into U.S. black culture and across race and class lines. Valdés pays attention to Schomburg's ambiguous nature maintaining he and others "did not, then leave their Spanish-Caribbean communities behind; rather, they found acceptance and ease of living in already existing African diasporic spaces" (9). Such a statement ends the claim that Schomburg forgot about his Hispanic and island roots, rather it solidifies his accomplishment of forging cross-cultural connections between African communities in the Americas; staking claim in recovering artifacts and creating longstanding institutions that recognizes the contributions of a marginalized people.

Chapter 1: "'Patria y Libertad': Schomburg and Puerto Rico" examines his "intellectual genealogy" in addition to men and women such as Ramón Emeterio Betances, Eugenio María de Hostos, Lola Rodríguez de Tió, José Martí and Salvador Brau among others who influenced his recognizable attributes as a scholar and curator. Embedded in the chapter are overviews of each scholar and revolutionary mentioned above and how each shaped Schomburg's career and the advancement of Spanish-Caribbean liberation for people of African descent. The inclusion of luminaries continues the significance Valdés engages with her readers to make prevalent Afro-Latinx history and Schomburg's life as an entry point to learning such stories affirming all lives of African descent. Puerto Rico, the birthplace of Schomburg, serves as the backdrop to linking the geographical intersections of Puerto Rican and U.S. history, specifically "the struggle for equality with the colonizer that Liberals had begun under Spain would continue for decades with the new Mother Country [United States]" (52). These politics informed Schomburg's personal and professional life as the next chapter divulges into examining his life as leader and family man.

Chapter 2: "The Diasporic Race Man as Institution Builder" analyzes Schomburg's migration throughout the United States from the South to the North taking up the trade of race man and global humanitarian. Schomburg was a member of prestigious institutions for African Americans including the Prince Hall Masons, The Negro Society for Historical Research, The American Negro Academy, The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and the National Urban League. Such organizations placed Schomburg in the upper middle-class of the black elite. Valdés reveals Schomburg's commitment to service and leadership as a method for uplifting the black race and utilizing education as a process by which liberation "for peoples of African descent" could be achieved (55). The chapter also details Schomburg's marriages to Elizabeth Morrow Taylor and Elizabeth Green until their deaths

fathering five children who bear Spanish-speaking names. The naming of his children is significant because though they did not learn their father's native tongue, Schomburg's intentional designation of Spanish identity into his children's origins as Valdés points out, is his effort to bring attention to his Afro-Latinx heritage.

Chapter 3: "Afro-Latinx Chronicles: Schomburg's Writings" delves into his scholarship. Over the course of Schomburg's life, his speeches at historical black institutions and writings in prominent magazines such as the NAACP's *The Crisis*, added to his resume a foremost thinker in Africana life and studies. Valdés situates representations of Afro-Latinx culture and politics within a discussion about Schomburg's efforts to give claim to "narratives of the African diaspora" (71). In doing so, Valdés examines Schomburg's essays as crónicas, known as "short historical accounts that blend reporting with editoral content" which were "written in Spanish and Portuguese throughout the hemisphere" (72). Schomburg wrote short histories of Gabriel de la Concepción Valdés (known as Plácido) and General Evaristo Estenoz illustrating the sacrifice and contributions of Afro-Cuban artists and revolutionaries. The author concludes the chapter showcasing Schomburg's involvement in academic institutions and freemansory and contributing essays for such organizations as the Negro Society for Historical Research, the American Negro Academy, and the Prince Hall Masons. Similarly, Valdés includes the rise of the Harlem Renaissance-New Negro Movement in the U.S. and Schomburg's influence writing his well-known "The Negro Digs Up His Past" as a point in anchoring Afro-Latinx and African Americans' history that devours any reference to white supremacist sentiments that have historically written off our heritage.

Chapter 4: "'Witness for the Future': Schomburg and His Archives" spotlights the man who labored for decades building an archive that today is recognized as the primary site for research of the African diaspora. Valdés' epigraph taken from "The Negro Digs Up His Past" where Schomburg makes plain the collection of African artifacts and literature at the New York Public Library in Harlem (now the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture) as proof of black excellence testifies to a history of African ancestry devoid of stereotypes and caricatures. Schomburg bears witness to the preservation of African archives; he became the first curator of the Division of Negro Literature, History, and Prints at the 135th Street Branch Library in Harlem and the Negro Collection at the Library of Fisk University. The importance of this chapter is Valdés astute focus on HBCUs (Historically Black Colleges and Universities) as an interlocutor to disseminating Africana history. This information is integral because it locates Schomburg in the heart of the Jim Crow South and closely connects his identity to HBCUs mission of racial uplift and education. The chapter concludes with Schomburg's curation as an implicit framework for future generations to dive into the archives he once collected in his Brooklyn home. Moreover, as the final chapter uncovers, Schomburg himself was a living archive, breathing Africana history and forging new paths in understanding the diaspora.

Chapter 5: "'Furtive as he Looks': The Visual Representation of Schomburg" discloses his successful attempts to elude his racial identity when he saw fit. Valdés includes portraits and photographs of Schomburg from age four to about fifty-two noting that his uninviting and performative detraction from the camera reveals an "uncomfortable" man that "often looks above the lens" (112). The author goes on to discuss the early formation of photography and locates Schomburg's stiff posture to avoid questions that the viewer's gaze might attempt to ask. One such asking is a portrait taken with his sister Lola who is of lighter skin and can pass for white. Another is Schomburg's immigration photo where he is directly looking into the camera with discomfort. In the portrait with Lola, Schomburg also looks at the camera, but his stare challenges viewers on the receiving end to say something about his and his sister's racialized identity. In both cases, and throughout the chapter, Valdés makes the case to examine Schomburg's photographs as readings to understand his masculinity, race, gender, and class.

Vanessa K. Valdés' *Diasporic Blackness* is a vital study of the life Schomburg lived, a testament to the contributions of Afro-Latinx people that influenced him to become a bibliophile. The book centers Schomburg's Afro-Latinx identity, heritage, and lineage. Such a work builds on the established field of Latin-American Studies and uniquely foregrounds Afro-Latin American history that is distinct and contributes to the larger Africana Studies lexicon.

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Book Review

Cuban Underground Hip Hop: Black Thoughts, Black Revolution, Black Modernity by Tanya Saunders

Sarah Ohmer • City University of New York, Lehman College

University of Texas Press: Austin, TX, 2015. 368 pages. $29.95, cloth. ISBN: 978-1-4773-0770-0

> "A Queer of Color, Black Feminist Crucial Threat to Latinx Studies, Latin American Studies, Sociology and Hip Hop Studies"

In *Cuban Underground Hip Hop: Black Thoughts, Black Revolution, Black Modernity*, Tanya Saunders presents the Cuban Underground Hip Hop Movement (CUHHM) as "artivists" who create a nascent civil society in a totalitarian state. Thinking of subjectivity or identity formation with hip hop, sexuality, race, and *latinidades*, Saunders focuses on contemporary underground Cuban hip hop (separate from original Cuban Hip Hop). Theory-packed quotes are the product of participant observation from 1996 to 2006 during which Saunders attended concerts and interviewed artists and audience members. The artists and audience reveal a younger Cuban generation coming of age during the Special Period in Spanish interviews translated into English. The exodus of artists of CUHHM impacts hip hop in Havana and how other cities and provinces establish their own local hip-hop movements.

The manuscript opens with a quote by a Cuban hip-hop producer: "Why am I a divisive person when I claim what my ancestors did? … This [the musical, black Cuban musical] Cuban identity and contribution is often dismissed, hidden, and manipulated in this country [U.S.]," and the whole book confronts readers with what happens at the crux of Black and Cuban (and from Cuba!) (5). *Cuban Underground Hip Hop* effectively calls attention to processes that have erased part of what it means to be Cuban: the cultural process that recognizes African cultural legacies; and works towards enriching "Latino Studies" that whitewash Cuban identities and Cuban music.

Several claims in this book broaden the scope of Afro-Latin American and Afro-Diaspora Studies. The introduction presents the impact of eurocentrism in Cuban nation-making and in Latinx Studies. Chapters 1 through 3 (Chapter 1: "Introduction," Chapter 2: "Historicizing Race, Cultural Politics, and Critical Music Cultures in Cuba" and Chapter 3: "La Revolución Dentro de la Revolución: Hip Hop, Cuba and Afro-Descendant Challenges to Coloniality") trace carefully how to rethink current notions of Western modernity while tracing and acknowledging Africans *and their descendants* in the formation of Cuban society and the West (and, I would add, in American Feminism). Throughout the book, one sees how and why the racism that continues today in the Americas is tied to 15th-19th centuries' cultural imaginaries. This, Saunders reminds us, comes back to the 'devious invention of modernity' established during Renaissance according to Mignolo. With *Cuban Underground Hip Hop*, sociologists, cultural studies theorists, and Latinx Studies and Latin Americanists, have a reference to recognize art as a part of politics; to engage cultural studies with sociological theories of social change; and to define art not as "prepolitical" or just affective release (16-17).

Artivism, Saunders explains, provides a contemporary, non-European aesthetic, and is not centered on the 'economy' (13). The CUHHM is defined as artivism that produces and contributes to Black thought, Black Modernity, and Black Revolution with an essential set of concepts. Chapter 5: "Never Has Anyone Spoken to You Like This': Examining the Lexicon of Cuban Underground Hip Hop Artivist Discourses" provides us with definitions to use in our studies (revolution; revolutionary; material poverty versus spiritual and conceptual poverty; etc.)(117).

The artivism coming out of CUHHM is placed front and center with detailed analyses of lyrics and MCs' experiential theories on hip-hop, poverty, gender, race and revolution, in Chapters 3-6. The Krudxs group, the main focus at the end of the book, pushes Cuban underground hip hop and Latinx Studies, Latin American Studies, Black Feminism, Queer and Gender and Women's Studies, Queer of Color Studies, Cultural Studies, Sociology, and Black Studies, with a Krudx

perspective on activism and knowledge production and art. Learning from the Krudxs, one finds strategies to build communities in the face of multiple oppressions, including "invisible oppressions."

We sit with Saunders in that taxi watching her "pass as Cuban" and come to understand how one practices an intersectional semi-longitudinal sociological study (3). We can smell the sauce in the kitchen while four women discuss being mulatt@, trigueñ@, Black, and show their ID cards with racial nomenclatures to help Saunders understand whiteness, mulatt@ness, Blackness, and *queeridad* in CUHHM in Cuba (143-44).

"Whiteness, Mulat@nes, Blackness: Racial Identities and Politics within the Cuban Underground Hip Hop Movement" (Chapter 4) presents how different kinds of Blackness exist in CUHHM and how MCS engage their blackness as political engagement, with a crucial section on the importance of trying to understand the difficulty that mulatt@ness poses to Cuba's racial structure and to individuals in CUHHM, in Cuba, in Black modernity, Black thought, in queer of color studies: "It is an in-between space where others are always trying to tell him what his identity is, what his subject position is, and to which racial group he belongs. In his experience, he is never fully accepted anywhere… also suffered the traumas of slavery… and seeing those close to him dealing with racism." (146-47).

Cuban Underground Hip Hop offers a manual on how to study Cuba from the perspective of a sociologist who describes her challenges as an undergraduate, graduate, and faculty member while navigating the Cuban sociopolitical landscape. This is scholarly work in the Black, queer, American regional sense of the word, a hemispheric Black feminist and queer of color hip-hop studies work. Chapter 6 "I'm A Feminist, but I don't Hate Men" traces a multilayered study of Black feminism in CUHHM from 2000-2006, from Havana to Santiago de Cuba, including Omegas KILAY in Santiago de Cuba, NoNo12, Cristiane MC, among other MCS, with the the 2004 Hip Hop Symposium and Magia MC as central examples of increasingly diverse views and open dialogues on gender and sexuality among Black women in CUHHM.

The Krudx are Black feminists from planet earth who break apart national borders and create revolutionary coalitions (153). "Kruda Knowledge, Kruda Discourse: Las Krudas CUBENSI, Transnational Black Feminism, and the Queer of Color Critique" (Chapter 7) wraps us with an epistemological climax in which Krudas CUBENSI (Cuban? Sí! … Cuban? Yes!) create an anti-racist, anti-capitalist, non-heteronormative critique that intervenes into queer theory with a hemispheric, anticolonial *queeridad*.

The place, the race of the place, and the sexuality of artivists and scholars within this place, this place that has made political activism nonexistent, blackness nonexistent, and queerness abject, all the while Black Cuba is not understood in Latinx identity at the time when this book is being written… makes…

Cuban Underground Hip Hop.
Black Thoughts.
Black Revolution.
Black Modernity.
A thriving threat of queeridad.

As I read/breathed/put the book down because it was too much to handle, I saw the Cuban streets and felt myself in Krudxs' apartment and Cuban hip-hop concerts…. I heard Lorde's anti-heterosexist reflections in *Sister Outsider*, the crucial contribution of José Esteban Muñoz on queer political performance of disidentification in American (in the regional sense of the word) Black feminist / queer of color studies. I read what felt as an equal to *Global Designs/Local Histories* by Walter Mignolo, to Anibal Quijano's body of work on coloniality as a continuing condition and political state, and could note the resonance with Alice Walker's *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens* and Jacqui Alexander's *Pedagogies of Crossing*.

Diasporic identities are not bound to coloniality's geopolitical borders. *Cuban Underground Hip Hop* defines identity in Black America (in the regional sense) and Black Queer America and Hip Hop as subjectivities that are carried and reproduced *within sound*, no matter the geopolitical location (Weheliye 2005). I hear it, I read it but I also *hear and feel* it: identity in underground Hip Hop Studies (and beyond!!) is bound to sound *and* blackness/race/gender.

The Krudxs parallel the Combahee River Collective's work as they intervene in national and cultural spheres and discourses that do not address queer black feminist identities (socialism, anti-racism), and link their oppression to colonialism, slavery, imperialism. The raw, crude, hip hop artivists rhyme and provide us with language, art, experience, and other feminisms: elemental feminism (reminiscent of elements of hip hop), indigenous Cuban feminism, crude feminism, *mujerista*, and *queeridad*.

They show love is possible "We are demonstrating to the world that we have been together for almost ten years that it's possible that two women love each other and show it to everyone, not just in hip hop, but to all of Cuba that sees with your false heterosexual morals! We've been here for almost ten years, together, loving each other and inseperable, what to you want?! What's up?! So I think, as the community has said, this is an example. You understand me?" (282)

The Krudx work as artivists for love and life and "plant a seed for people to reflect on: embracing human diversity also means embracing sexual diversity" (283). They advocate for the right to love and to live: "as heterosexuality exists, homosexuality exists," *and* their lyrics move towards future discourses (283). Readers can think with Krudxs and Saunders about future discourses, where to go from here, the ability to

imagine and the requirement for imagination/future within the present in order to survive and resist.

Hip-hop allows both Krudxs and the author to confront institutional blocks with transnational solidarity building blocks. *Cuban Underground Hip Hop* challenges the Eurocentric humanist Cuban culture, what and who counts as *Cuban*, and what and who counts as a "worthy" contributor to U.S. Latin Americanist discourse. With strategies to navigate complex heteronormative, racist, patriarchal, capitalist systems of U.S. Higher Education, U.S.-Cuba relations, Cuban racism and sexism, *Cuban Underground Hip Hop* complicates the Latino identities of Latino Studies, the Cuban identities in Cuban studies, the male cisgender hip hop identities in hip hop studies, the American identities in African American Studies and American Studies, and the lack of intersectional practices in Sociology.

Are we trying to keep secret that we are black or our Latin American nations are Black? Are we trying to keep secret that Latinx is *also* black? When we choose to (not) answer this, and to (not) focus on Black women and queer of color studies, to (not) redefine modernity, Cuban studies, Latin American Studies, then we contribute to the same conundrum that pretends that Western modernity is white, European, and somehow North American and not American (when the Americas are in the West, in the regional sense). For those of us who answer yes, *with* this book, we can work to let the secrets out.

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Book Review

Nelson Estupiñán Bass: una introducción a sus escritos. Traducida por Gabriela Díaz Cortez y Valentina Goldraij por Marvin A. Lewis

Paulette A. Ramsay • University of West Indies-Mona

Quito: CCE Benjamin Carrión, 2017. 247 pages. $39.90, cloth. ISBN: 9789978629505

El gran maestro – Marvin Lewis, el investigador *par excellence*, que no deja de desarraigar información única sobre las comunidades afro hispanas del mundo, nos ha dado otra publicación magnífica. Esta vez, una publicación sobre el autor fenomenal del Ecuador – Nelson Estupiñán Bass. En la introducción del libro, Lewis nos presenta al autor como el escritor más importante del siglo veinte en el Ecuador. Entendemos que él publicó su primera obra en 1954 y nos dejó un legado de cuarenta años de literatura, conocido dentro y fuera de su país, en todos los géneros – poesía, teatro, novela y ensayo.

Lewis caracteriza la obra literaria de Estupiñán Bass como literatura comprometida en la cual defendía a los pobres y tomaba una posición anti-imperialista. La introducción explica la organización del libro por géneros y presenta la posición de Estupiñán Bass que la teoría postcolonial es la más apropiada para estudiar la literatura de Estupiñán Bass. Este es el estudio más exhaustivo de la obra del autor Estupiñán Bass.

Capítulo I: Poesía

En una sección sobre la poesía, Lewis analiza seis volúmenes de poesía publicados entre 1956 – 1991 y enfatiza que Estupiñán Bass tuvo una carrera larga como escritor. Lewis declara que Estupiñán Bass fue el primero de publicar poesía negra en el Ecuador. Según Lewis, la poesía de este autor ha rendido atención crítica principalmente, de críticos de los Estados Unidos – como los destacados académicos – Miriam DeCosta-Willis, Ian Smart, Carol Beane, Martha Cobb, Michael Handelsman y Henry Richards quien fue su mejor crítico (14).

Mediante la poesía, Estupiñán Bass ganó reconocimiento por su poesía tanto a nivel nacional como internacional con la antología *Canto negro por la luz* (1954) recibiendo la mejor parte de la crítica, por ser la primera colección en donde se estableció como escritor negro. Entre las colecciones, *Timarán y Cuabú* es considerado por Lewis la que menos atención ha recibido. Consiste en poesía popular que sigue la rima de la décima. Lewis hace un análisis profundo y extenso de la décima que se presenta en forma de contrapunto entre dos rivales que participan en un combate verbal. Todos los poemas líricos que se encuentran en el libro de Lewis desde los primeros hasta los más recientes revelan la postura del poeta frente a la historia, la cultura y la injusticia y reflejan "una tendencia estilística" (102).

Capítulo II: Cuento y Teatro

Esta sección está dividida en dos secciones y analiza dos colecciones de cuentos y la obra teatral de Estupiñán Bass. El dinamismo del autor en incluir cuentos y obras teatrales en colecciones de poesía – especialmente- "Las hojas en el viento" y "El perdón" (poesía) y "La otra" y "Las frutas verdes" (obras teatrales) en *Las tres carabelas* (1973) es subrayada. Estas obras enfocan en temas similares – el racismo, la injusticia social y económica y otros polémicos que se debaten acerca de la diáspora Africana. Estos cuentos demuestran la capacidad de Estupiñán Bass para utilizar técnicas modernas e iluminar problemas. En este capítulo, Lewis también analiza "El milagro", que según él es el cuento más estudiado y leído de Estupiñán Bass. Este cuento famoso, narrado en primera voz anónima mediante una exploración de lo fantástico y un personaje que practica la telepatía, enfoca en temas como la violencia, el racismo y la hipocresía. "El milagro" refleja las tendencias del autor de usar "técnicas narrativas innovadores e interpreta lo local con estrategias universales" (115).

"El gualajo" es el cuento más breve. El gualajo es usado como un símbolo de los retos que el protagonista Crispiniano debe superarse para llegar a la madurez. En el desarrollo del

viaje de Crispiniano, el autor discute muchas de las ideas que explora en otras obras como el folclor y asuntos relacionados a la sociedad ecuatoriana.

Los cuatro cuentos que reciben la atención crítica de Lewis en este libro muestran la gran variedad de temas y técnicas que Estupiñán Bass utiliza en sus obras. La segunda sección del capítulo enfoca en dos obras teatrales "La otra (pieza en dos actos)" y "Las frutas verdes". Las dos obras enfocan en la identidad, la etnicidad y las diferencias entre las clases sociales y el racismo. Al centro de este drama son el racismo, la identidad y los objetos en las relaciones amorosas que forman los temas centrales. La riqueza de la protagonista negra no la excluye de ser tratada con desprecio por la sociedad.

"Las frutas verdes" también tratan con problemas sociales. El capítulo está dividida en diez escenas con la mejor parte de la acción desarrollada en una casa. Semejante a "La otra", "Las frutas verdes" llaman atención a la posición de los blancos, la pobreza y el contraste entre la realidad y la ficción. Las dos obras emplean una gama amplia de técnicas dramáticas y enfatizan el hecho de que Estupiñán Bass fue/es un escritor comprometido.

Capítulo III: Las novelas

El Capítulo III es el más largo del libro bien indagado de Lewis, - donde discute ante novelístico de Estupiñán Bass, que empieza con un artículo por Estupiñán Bass mismo en el que discute la teoría de Estupiñán Bass tocante esta forma artística, y su argumento que el/la novelista interpreta la experiencia humana mejor que el historiador. Esta reflexión precede dos secciones – la primera – dos novelas, *Cuando los guayacanes florecían*, *El paraíso* y la segunda enfoca en sus otras ocho novelas. Lewis presenta un examen profundo de cada novela – sus mensajes sociales, el viaje al Ecuador y la identidad ecuatoriana. Este capítulo muestra la profundidad del autor y su larga carrera desarrollando sus características que presentó en sus reflexiones sobre la novela; además según Lewis, muestra que el autor podría "combinar interpretaciones culturalistas de la sociedad con las últimas innovaciones técnicas. Las ideas socialistas de Estupiñán se desarrollan a la par de técnicas de la 'nueva novela', como la metaficción, 'lo real maravilloso', lo fantástico y otros dispositivos que son constantes en sus trabajos" (215). Sin duda el autor entendió todos los aspectos de la sociedad, el sistema político, la marginalidad de los negros y los retos enfrentados por grupos étnicos en una sociedad como el Ecuador.

Capítulo IV: El ensayo

El último capítulo ("Prosa no ficcional") discute los ensayos en que Estupiñán Bass trata de un tema o un objeto de manera analítica. Lewis incluye y discute ensayos escritos entre 1977-2000 – declarando que Estupiñán Bass produjo los ensayos como resultado de sus experiencias como ser humano y escritor que ha observado la vida humana. Entre sus temas y sujetos tratados en las seis colecciones de ensayos, incluyen aspectos de su vida como escritor, comentario sobre personalidades históricos y otros aspectos culturales.

También, hay recuerdos del autor y relatos de los períodos destacados de su vida como escritor. En *Luces que titilan* por ejemplo escribe sobre personas reconocidas al nivel nacional y también sobre gente ordinaria. *Vargas Torres en la prosa y la poesía* centra en el coronel Luis Vargas Torres que fue fusilado en Cuenca en 1887. Habla de la contribución de Vargas Torres y los distinguidos intelectuales ecuatorianos. Subraya los sacrificios de Vargas Torres como mártir de su tierra. Subraya los logros de muchas de sus colegas y otras personas que han contribuido al desarrollo y éxito de diferentes aspectos de la sociedad como Tacho Mercado que desarrolló medicinas contra la tuberculosis.

Otras personas alabadas por sus contribuciones a la educación y las artes plásticas afro-ecuatorianas a la música, a la política y al servicio político para asegurar su inclusión en la 'historia'. Incluido es una dedicación a la memoria de su hijo negando su muerte y declarando sus virtudes. Además presenta un desfile de nombres que él no quiere que se olvide: Nahúm Cortés Arroyo, Coronel Carlos Concha, Efraín Andrade Viteri, José Ortiz Urriola, Benito Quintero y Jaime Hurtado González – que indica su conocimiento de una gama amplia de figuras de la historia, y el desarrollo político, social y cultural de diferentes comunidades en el Ecuador en general.

La discusión sobre los ensayos en *Desde un balcón volado* indica un colmo de su desarrollo literario. Muestra su dedicación y fascinación con la palabra y un enfoque en temas negros, y la ampliación de los temas que se encuentra en otras colecciones. La última colección de ensayos que recibe la atención de Lewis es *Este largo camino* que se puede ver como un resume autobiográfico que traza su vida personal y profesional como escritor. Se puede decir que elabora la metáfora de su vida. Además presenta una ampliación de la poesía.

Lewis ha presentado una obra de investigación impresionante en la que demuestra la obra amplia, rica, profunda y compleja de un hombre que era, de tremenda inteligencia y poseía un gran conocimiento de su país, historia y cultura y tenía un compromiso admirable a la negritud.

Este libro será muy útil tanto para los investigadores como para los estudiantes a diferentes niveles. Adicionalmente, el libro es un buen ejemplo del acercamiento al análisis literario. Gracias Prof. Lewis.

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Call for Essays *PALARA* 23 (Fall 2019)

Special Issue: Afro-Latin American and Afro-Latinx Cinema

Guest Editor: Vanessa K. Valdés

Palara (Publication of Afro-Latin American Research Association) is a multi-disciplinary journal that publishes research and creativity relevant to diaspora studies in the Americas. The editors of the journal, Dr. Sonja Watson and Dr. Dorothy Mosby, invite you to send your abstracts to this special issue on Afro-Latin American and Afro-Latinx Cinema, edited by Dr. Vanessa Valdés. Valdés is an Associate Professor of Spanish and Portuguese at The City College of New York—CUNY. Her research interests include comparative studies of the literatures of the Americas, particularly Afro-Hispanic, African-American, Spanish Caribbean, and U.S. Latina/o Literatures. She currently serves as Book Review Editor of s/x salon, an online literary salon on Caribbean literature and culture. Her articles and reviews have appeared in such journals as Hispania, Chasqui, MELUS Journal, CLA Journal, Callaloo, *PALARA*, Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas, LSE Review of Books, and Wadabagei. She is the editor of *The Future Is Now: A New Look at African Diaspora Studies* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012) and *Let Spirit Speak! Cultural Journeys through the African Diaspora* (SUNY Press, 2012). She is the author of *Oshun's Daughters: The Search for Womanhood in the Americas* (SUNY Press 2014) and *Diasporic Blackness: The Life and Times of Arturo Alfonso Schomburg* (SUNY Press 2017). She is the series editor of the Afro-Latinx Futures Series from SUNY Press.

2019 marks the fifth year of the United Nations' International Decade for People of African descent; to this end, we invite essays that examine Afro-Latin American and Afro-Latinx cinema. The twenty-first century alone has seen a slow proliferation of films that not only aim to recover lost and marginalized histories but also to explore Black subjectivities. We endeavor for this issue to serve as an evaluation of the representation of peoples of African descent as well their participation behind the camera. While a great deal of scholarship has been written about the Cuban and Brazilian film industries for their inclusion of Black actresses, actors, and story lines, we greatly encourage essays about films (long-form, short-form all genres) produced and filmed in other countries of the Americas, particularly those of the Circum-Caribbean, the Pacific Coast, and the Southern Cone. Afro-Latin American and Afro-Latinx film has not yet received ample scholarly attention; we intend for this issue to bring much-needed consideration of this mode of cultural production.

Here we present a select filmography that may be subjects of essays: *Bus 174* (2002, Brazil); *Madame Satã* (2002, Brazil); *Las manos de dios* (2005, Peru); *A Dios Momo* (2005, Uruguay); *El Cimarrón* (2007, Puerto Rico); *La Playa D.C.* (2012, Colombia); *Tango negro* (2013, France-Argentina); *Pelo malo* (2013, Venezuela); *Dólares de arena* (2013, Dominican Republic); *O dia de Jerusa* (2013, Brazil); *Manos sucias* (2014, Colombia); *Ventos de Agosto* (2014, Brazil); *Los inocentes* (2015, Argentina)

We will also consider examinations of the films of Sara Gómez; Gloria Rolando; Raoul Peck; Carlos Diegues, among others.

Deadlines

Abstracts of 250 words due November 1, 2018
Invitations for full-length essays will be sent by December 1, 2018
Essays of 18-25 pages, as per Author Guidelines, due April 1, 2019
Revisions due July 1, 2019

Please send all abstracts to Dr. Vanessa Valdés at vvaldes@ccny.cuny.edu.

SUNY series, Afro-Latinx Futures

Edited by Vanessa K. Valdés

The Afro-Latinx Futures series is committed to publishing scholarly monographs and edited collections that center Blackness and Afrolatinidad from a variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives in the humanities and social sciences. Taking a hemispheric approach, we seek work that foregrounds the lives and contributions of Afro-Latinx peoples across Latin America, the Caribbean, and the diasporic U.S. and Canada. We welcome projects that introduce new historical figures and archival findings, focus on understudied regions and communities, establish innovative interdisciplinary frameworks, and challenge conventional canonical formations. Topics may include but are by no means limited to: afro-indigeneity, migration and exile, marronage/cimarronaje/quilombismo, literature, intellectual history, ethnography, geography, philosophy, performance and visual arts, and gender and sexuality. Above all, by centering Blackness and Afrolatinidad, this series aims to challenge the racial and ethnic frameworks, national imaginaries, and disciplinary constraints that continue to dominate study of the Americas and Caribbean and, more ambitiously, to help shape the future of such fields as Latin American Studies, African American Studies, Black Studies, Latinx Studies, Chicanx Studies, and American Studies.

Proposals should be sent to:

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SUNY PRESS

Nelson Estupiñán Bass, una introducción a sus escritos

Nelson Estupiñán Bass fue el escritor más importante del siglo XX en Ecuador. Nació en Súa, provincia de Esmeraldas, en 1912 y murió en Pensilvania, en el año 2002. Estupiñán Bass expresó su agudeza literaria en varios géneros —poesía, teatro, ensayo y novela— con la intención de captar la esencia de la sociedad ecuatoriana. A partir de Canto negro por la luz (1954), trabajo emblemático sobre la cultura afroecuatoriana, y Cuando los guayacanes florecían (1954), una interpretación de la política y la violencia en Ecuador, hasta Al norte de Dios (1994), un tratado religioso y filosófico, Estupiñán Bass dejó un legado de cuarenta años de excelencia literaria reconocida tanto en su país como en el extranjero.

Publicó los primeros poemas afrocéntricos reconocidos en re-vistas de Ecuador y, junto con Adalberto Ortiz, inauguró el canon al que se subscribieron generaciones de escritores posteriores. Asimismo, publicó literatura 'comprometida, es decir, aquella que apuntaba a producir un cambio social. Sus trabajos abrazan, en un mensaje constante, la causa por el ascenso y la igualdad de los pobres, los desfavorecidos y los discriminados. Desde una perspectiva socialista y con una visión del mundo inclusiva, expresó su posición antiimperialista, a la vez que demostró un profundo conocimiento de las tendencias sociales, políticas y culturales de Ecuador.

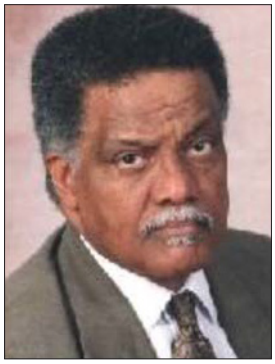
Marvin A. Lewis

Marvin A. Lewis es profesor Emérito de Literatura Hispanoamericana de la Universidad de Missouri, Columbia. Es fundador del Instituto de Lenguas y Literaturas de la Diáspora Africana y la revista Palara. Es autor de siete libros sobre literatura afrohispana; el más reciente de ellos es Equatorial Guinean Literature in its National and Transnational Contexts (2017).

Lewis, Marvin A.Nelson Estupiñan Bass. Una introducción a sus escritos.; Traducido del inglés por Gabriela Díaz Cortez y Valentina Goldraij. Quito: Casa de la Cultura Ecuatoriana Benjamín Carrión. (Colección: Antítesis Ensayos), 2017. First Edition.

Dr. Carlos E. Russell (1934-2018)

This obituary is courtesy of Panama Cyberspace News.



Former CyberNews Subscriber Carlos E. Russell, Ph.D., 84, passed away on July 10, 2018 in the U.S. Carlos was a professor Emeritus of Brooklyn College-CUNY, former Dean of the School of Contemporary Studies at the same University, former Panamanian Ambassador to the U.N. and to the O.A.S., founder of Black Solidarity Day and longtime civil rights and Panamanian activist. He was the author of an insightful and descriptive book that questions the preservation of people of Caribbean ancestry and culture in Panama. The book is titled: "The Last Buffalo, Are Panamanians of Caribbean Ancestry an Endangered Species?." As a creative individual, he published "Miss Anna's Son Remembers," which is known as the first book of Panamanian-West Indian poems outside of Panama. Russell graduated from the National Institute in Panama and subsequently left Panama in 1955 on a student visa for De Paul University in Chicago, Illinois. He lived and worked on the South Side of Chicago, and worked at the Mary McDowell Settlement House. He moved to New York in 1961 and worked at the Albany Community Center in Albany Projects. He eventually moved on to the Fort Greene Community Progress Center in Brooklyn. He was a member of the Society of Friends of the West Indian Museum (SAMAAP). In November 1969, Carlos initiated Black Solidarity Day, celebrated annually on the first Monday in November. Among survivors are his sister Gloria Russell, his children, and other loved ones and many friends. **Listen to Carlos Russell on Voices from Our America:** http://voicesamerica.library.vanderbilt.edu/VfOA/voices_CRussell.php.

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